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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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vlastnoruční podpis

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ABSTRACT

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The subject of this bachelor thesis is the exploration of the humour in one of the most famous and most acclaimed medieval work of the father of English literature, English language and humour - Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury tales*. This work inspects the book from a very specific point, the point of humour. At the very beginning this bachelor thesis asks for the origin of the humour, for its purpose and its theories. It focuses on the humour in medieval times, especially on Chaucer's humour and some important moments and events in his life that might influenced him in his writings. Later it returns to *The Canterbury tales* itself and examines the specific humour in the whole work and in selected tales, particularly in *The General Prologue*, *The Knight's Tale* and *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*. The quotations in this bachelor thesis are not written in the medieval English but in consideration of the potential reader are written in modern interpretation of *The Canterbury Tales* by A.S. Kline.

This thesis explores not only the book itself but it also compares the humour in the book with the humour in some film adaptations of *The Canterbury tales*.

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INTRODUCTION

The work by one of the greatest English poets, Geoffrey Chaucer, the Canterbury Tales presents an outstanding insight into medieval society. Chaucer describes the characters with thoroughness and in incredible detail. He “was the first author who discovered character, and drew it individually.” (Bloom, 2008, p. 316). The readers learn from his work about people from all medieval classes, they learn about the way of dressing, about their behaviour, customs, interests, possessions, abnormalities and passions. Chaucer also enables the reader discover the medieval form of living and eating habits. Furthermore Chaucer is presenting the description with an amusing technique by using satire and irony. There are issues in the late medieval society that Chaucer disagrees with, criticizes them and wants to educate people to be aware of them. The main Chaucer’s critical appraisal is towards the hypocrisy of the church. He describes the institution as corrupted and greedy that does not care about the poor people and cares only about its requirements.

Geoffrey Chaucer also paints a portrait of three uncorrupted and ideal characters but only because he sets them in contrast and juxtaposition with other persons. There are many examples, for instance in the way of dressing of the Knight and the Squire. The Knight who concerned himself to the battles and defending the country is dressed very modestly and he even wears the clothes that he had in his last battle form which he is arriving:

His horses fine, he wore no colours gay
Sported a tunic, padded fustian
On which his coat of mail left many a stain;
For he was scarcely back from his voyage,
And going now to make his pilgrimage. (Kline, 2007, p. 8)

And the Squire on the other hand is a self-esteemed person and only cares about his appearance because his priority are women:

Like to a meadow he was embroidered,
One full of fresh flowers white and red. (Kline, 2007, p. 8)

Chaucer frequently expresses the criticism through the description of the character's appearance. His corrupted persons tend to be unhandsome, almost dreadful as for instance in the case of the Summoner:

A Summoner was with us in that place,
Who had a fiery-red cherubim's face,
Carbuncled so, and his eyes were narrow.
He was hot and lecherous as a sparrow,
With scabby black brows and scrubby beard;
Of his visage children were a-feared. (Kline, 2007, p. 23)

His characters and their descriptions are even applicable in our society these days and Chaucer forces the reader to think about the society in all historical periods.

1 HUMOUR IN GENERAL

1.1 TYPES OF HUMOUR

Humour is what makes the reader smile or laugh. It is a “pervasive feature of human life. We find it everywhere – at work, at plays, in private and public affairs.” (Carroll, 2014, p. 6). There are many types of humour in literature and in the Chaucer’s Canterbury tales can be found many of them.

There is an anecdotal humour, a short story used to make a point. Chaucer is using a social anecdote to entertain and draw attention to certain problems in the society.

Also dry humour is used frequently in literature. It is a type of humour that delivers comedic stories or quotations without showing emotions. A reader might not be sure whether the story is serious or whether it is a joke. Can be blunt, sarcastic and witty. Usually occurs in dialogues, quotations, short lines of intelligence in a text.

Another type of humour used in literature is nonsensical humour. Usually delivers messages that do not make a lot of sense. It was frequently used for example by the writer Lewis Carol.

Dry humour, also called black humour, can be found in literary works as well. It makes fun of matters that are taboo. Black humour appears for example in the General Prologue of the Canterbury tales in the description of the Cook:

But a mortal pity, it seemed to me,
That on his shin an ulcerous sore had he.
Yet a fricassee, he made it with the best. (Kline, 2007, p. 16)

Chaucer depicts a great cook with ulcer on his knee with a kind of black humour and irony.

A farce is a usual way of amusing used in literature. It is humorous work that includes gross exaggerations of characters, very often of famous, wealthy and politically involved persons.

A parody, an imitation usually used for comedic effect is also used in literature. There is not much parody found in the Canterbury tales but there exist a lot of parodies of the book either in the cinematic form or in a written form.

There is also a spoof, frequently used in literature that is similar to parody but is more direct. It is a form of humour that makes fun of another work.

A juvenile humour also appears in literature, it is a kind of humour that includes tricks, crude humour and inappropriate elements.

The most commonly used type of humour is a satire which is a work that uses irony and exaggeration to expose problems, hypocrisy and other negative sides of people or events. The satire and irony inseparable part of The Canterbury tales and therefore have a special section in this work.

1.2 SATIRE AND IRONY IN THE CANTERBURY TALES

Chaucer practises humour repeatedly in The Canterbury Tales not only to entertain but also to call attention to the social problems of his days. Through the irony and satire Chaucer attacks two institutions of medieval society, the church and the marriage. The Roman Catholic Church is according to Chaucer permeated with hypocrisy and is only concerned with earning money and the members of the church constantly break their own rules. Chaucer is upset with the church's hypocrisy and he wants to see it changed. The reader can find a lot of remarks and criticisms almost in every tale and prologue. Here follows one specific example occurring in The Pardoner's Prologue to his tale where the Pardoner is describing his own hypocrisy and corruption in the church:

I stand like a cleric in my pulpit,
And after the unlettered people sit,
I preach thus as you have heard before,
And tell a hundred false stories more.
Then I take to stretching forth my neck,
And east and west nod with due effect,
Just like a dove sitting on a barn.
My hands and tongue then work so hard
That it is a joy to view the business.
Of avarice and all such wickedness
Is all my preaching, thus to set them free
To give their pence, and namely, unto me.
For my intent is only gain to win,
Not to correct them when they chance to sin.
For I care nothing, at their burying,

Whether their souls have gone blackberrying! (Kline, 2007, pp. 399-400)

Another institution criticized in the Canterbury Tales is the institution of marriage and the position of women in the society. Women were subordinated to men and they had to completely obey their man. The man could even beat his woman in the situation she would be disobedient. In medieval times there were strictly specified women's roles. For a peasant women it was a childbearing, a housework and a fieldwork and for an aristocratic woman a child breeding, household and a supervision. Chaucer strongly disagrees with this division and submission and criticizes it. He is a first feminised voice in the medieval times, which can especially be seen in the character of the Wife of Bath's that is going to be described in detail later, but also, for instance, in the Clerk's Tale where the reader can feel a strong criticism of patriarchy (exaggerated in this place) as well as criticism of the church itself:

This story is told, not because wives could
Follow Griselda in her humility,
It would be unreasonable if they should;
But that everyone, in their degree,
Should yet be constant in adversity
As was Griselda – that is what Petrarch cites
Of the story, which in high style he writes.

For since a woman showed such patience
To mortal man, then the more so we ought
To accept all willingly what God us sends.
For it is right He tries what he has wrought;
Yet tempts no man for whom His Son has bought
Redemption, as Saint James does truly say.
Though there's no doubt, He tries folk every day.

And suffers us, as if for our exercise,
With sharp scourges of adversity,
To be scourged, full oft, in sundry wise;
Not though to prove our will, for He
Ere we are born knows all our frailty.

And for our best is all His governance;
Let us then live in virtuous sufferance.

But one word, lordings, hearken, ere I go:
It would be hard to find nowadays
Griseldas, in any city here below;
For if that they were put to such assay,
The gold in them is so alloyed, always,
With brass, that though the coin cheat the eye,
It would rather break in two than bend, say I. (Kline, 2007, pp. 295-296)

The criticism of patriarchy is felt in every word of this conclusion of the Clerk's Tale.

Chaucer wants men to be equal to women and he requires women to be treated well, with care and tenderly.

Chaucer's humour is expectable and outstanding. His humour is refined and does not directly affront anyone.

His humour is often directed at human bodily functions and sexuality. Everyone has some kind of imperfection and Chaucer describes these imperfections in a light way. His humour also contains signs of sympathy and the reader easily gets to the stage when he feels regretful for the particular character. Chaucer makes the reader appreciate a character even when he or she is laughing at it. The reader might even appreciate the malevolent Miller at the end of the Reeve's Tale:

So the proud miller they did soundly beat,
And he has lost his grinding of the wheat,
And paid for the supper there as well,
Of Alan and John who wrought as I did tell;
His wife is had, and his daughter else.

Lo, what comes of being a miller false!
And therefore the proverb still proves true:
Don't hope for good if you evil do.
A trickster himself beguiled will be.
And God, that sits in high majesty,

Save all this company, both great and small.

- Now my tale has paid the Miller and all. (Kline, 2007, pp. 131-132)

Chaucer is using satire to make fun of church's hypocrisy on purpose. He is educating the readers to be aware of the church and its corrupted and authentic members. He is pointing out that the religious people are usually well educated and good spokesmen that is why the reader should be aware of them. The best example are the already mentioned Summoner and the Pardoner:

He was in church a noble ecclesiast,

He read a lesson well or a story,

But best of all he sang an Offerstory.

For well he knew, when that song was sung,

He must preach and well tune his tongue

To win silver, as he well knew how;

Therefore he sang more sweetly and loud. (Kline, 2007, p. 25)

The Canterbury Tales is an estate satire which effectively criticize the main social classes of the time described. Chaucer expresses an opinion that person does not necessarily belong to a social class by birth but rather by their effort and work. Many of Chaucer's characters even do not fit in any of the three classes or estates – the clergy, the nobility and the peasantry but they are part of a kind of a middle class as in the case of the Wife of Bath.

2 GEOFFREY CHAUCER

2.1 A VERY SHORT OVERVIEW OF CHAUCER'S LIFE

The date of birth of “the father of English poetry” Geoffrey Chaucer is not known and even the writer himself did not know it. The researchers presume that Chaucer was born somewhere between 1340 -1343. He and wrote at the end of the Middle Ages, in the time of changes when the English society was heading towards Renaissance.

Geoffrey Chaucer is considered the first humourist in English poetry especially due to the estates satire *The Canterbury Tales* to which this bachelor thesis is devoted.

His family members left the countryside, were successful in the city and even in the royal court and thanks to them could Chaucer experienced quite a number of professions. He worked as a squire, a page, a soldier, a courtier, an officeholder and a diplomat. Chaucer was a successful burgher, a gentleman and a modern person with modern tendencies.

He travelled a lot and met plenty of people from different levels of English and European society. He knew English, Italian, Flemish and German courtiers, soldiers, scholars, merchants, monks, clergymen, ladies and maidservants and they were a huge inspiration and models for the characters in his work. He had a huge outlook around European literature that inspired him as well.

Chaucer had an excellent education. He studied law and was fluent in French, Latin and Italian. He is also considered to be a founder of English language. His English was an English of the court and the metropolis. This language is called Late Middle English and contains a lot of words assumed from French and Latin. Chaucer himself applied many of these words as one of the first people in his time. Most people wrote books in Latin and French – for educated upper class but Chaucer wanted his work to be accessible to the common people therefore he wrote in English.

He wrote a lot of poetry for his amusement, the amusement of his friends and also for money. He liked to be a part of his poetry, for example as a narrator in the *Canterbury tales*.

Geoffrey Chaucer died in London on 25th October 1400 and is buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

He influenced and still inspires all the artist to come after him, e.g. William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens and many others.

2.2 CHAUCER'S TIMES

Chaucer's time was called Late Middle Ages and it was a period of cultural and social changes. English literature and English language expanded. This was the age of transition from medievalism to modernism and Chaucer's work contains both features mentioned. Previous High Middle Ages (1000 – 1300) began with Norman Invasion that brought to England romantic languages like French and gave rise to the towns and cities and the feudalism that defined social roles. The system worked relatively well when the knights offered the protection, the peasants worked the land and the lords offered advice and management. But this system collapsed through the Late Middle Ages (1300 – 1450) that began with the crisis. An agricultural decline commenced and the Bubonic Plague attacked the English population. There was a huge demand for food and labour and peasants got paid for their work and therefore the feudal system fell into decline. Peasants also upraised against upper classes and people attacked the church after mysticism was condemned. The Late Middle Ages was a period of blooming chivalry, desire for learning and prosperous romance.

The late medieval society was divided into groups (estates) according to the level of socioeconomic influence. The supreme group of people were the clergy, "those who pray", recipients of the tithe – 10% of the earned money given to the church. This group was specific to men although the clergy included nuns, women were considered as separate class. Clergy were supposed to live in poverty but the reality was diverse. The second considerable group were the nobility, "those who fight" who were never taxed but could collect tax from the peasantry. The last group were peasantry, "those who work", common people. This was the largest group compound of 96% of population and comprise all the people who did not belong to the other two groups. The groups were not about wealth, they were about the person's place in the society, although money matter to all these estates. Literature was pointing to the problems of these groups, making fun of them by means of estate satire.

England in these times was dependant on agriculture and people from towns were as close to the nature as the villagers were. Pilgrims were part of the landscape. The means of transport were limited. The poor walked and the others were riding horses. People were judged according the horses they were riding which is similar to our days and todays judging according the cars people are driving.

3 HUMOUR IN THE CANTERBURY TALES

3.1 HUMOUR IN THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

The General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales is not a type of prologue to a book that might seem unimportant or boring and people would rather avoid it. The General Prologue is absolutely necessary part of the Canterbury Tales and must not be omitted. It is also considered to be the most important part of the whole book.

The General Prologue functions as a frame tale to the rest of the tales. It consists of facetious brief sketches of each character. The sketches describe both the inside and outside of each character.

Chaucer introduces each character through a narrator whose name is also Chaucer but a reader has to be alert and has to carefully distinguish between Chaucer the writer and Chaucer the narrator because they are definitely not the same person. While Chaucer the writer is being very critical, uncharitable and sometimes severe, Chaucer the narrator is naive, unsuspecting, agrees almost with everybody and always says how great the characters are nevertheless their sins and bad behaviour. We cannot trust him. There is an example for instance in the description of the Monk in the General Prologue:

He gave not for that text a plucked hen
That says that hunters are not holy men,
And that monk when he grows heedless
Is like a fish that's all waterless –
That is to say a monk out of his cloister –
But he held that text not worth an oyster.
And I agreed his views were scarcely bad:
What! Should he study, drive himself quite mad,
In his cloister over a book must pore,
Or labour with his hands, and toil the more
As Augustine bids? How would the world run?
Let Augustine keep his labour for his own! (Kline, 2007, pp. 10-11)

Chaucer the narrator confirms the Monk's opinions that a clergy man does not have to stay in the cloister and does not have to obey the church's rules but Chaucer the writer completely

disagrees because he criticizes the church for its hypocrisy and instant violation of its own rules.

Chaucer the writer is wise and sees the things that the narrator does not see. The narrator calls himself social and naive, is robust and is interested in astrology, medicine and dream interpretation. He also presents himself short witted. At the end of the General Prologue is Chaucer preparing kind of “an escaping or excusatory way”. Chaucer the writer knows that he may upset few people therefore he is using the narrator to tell the reader that he is only going to interpret what the pilgrims said and if anyone would feel offended it would not be his fault because he is only reporting stories. He says that he has to tell the truth because 1.) Christ always says to tell the truth, 2.) because Plato said to tell the truth and 3.) because he excuses himself. He says that if he will offend someone it would not be his fault because he is irresponsible:

Though I speak their words literally,
For this you know as well as me,
Whoso tells the tale of another man
Must repeat as closely as he can
Every word, if it be in his power,
However coarse or broad his dower
Of words, or else his tale will be untrue,
Or feign things, inventing words anew.
He may spare none, though it were his brother,
Must say the one word if he says the other,
Christ himself spoke plain in Holy Writ,
And you well know no coarseness is in it.
As Plato says, to any who can read,
The words must be cousin to the deed.
Also I beg you, if you will, forgive me
If I have not placed folk in due degree
Here in this tale, as they indeed should stand;
I lack the wit, you may well understand. (Kline, 2007, pp. 26-27)

Chaucer later in the whole work says what he wants to say and he uses satire and irony not only to entertain but also to teach and educate people. All the characters introduced in the

General Prologue are the future storytellers of particular Tales. Chaucer will make up these stories by himself but he will have these characters to tell them.

There are 29 pilgrims, Chaucer the narrator and the Host Harry Bailey the owner of the Tabard Inn where everything starts and the one who escorts pilgrims on their way to Canterbury.

The General Prologue is kind of a “trailer” by which Chaucer wants to attract reader's attention and make him willing to read more and more. All the characters in the General Prologue are the future storytellers.

Each pilgrim represents a particular group of people and is called by the name of the occupation that he or she represents. Chaucer pays attention to the speech of each person, their clothing, appearance, their possessions, behaviour and other details and he is giving us a great insight to medieval society.

Not all the characters in the General Prologue are satirized or ironized. There are at least 3 persons described as perfect representative of 3 society estates previously described. It is the Plowman a positive and perfect example of peasantry, the Knight a positive and perfect example of nobility and the Parson a positive and perfect example of clergy. They are not satirized, they are examples of uncorrupted, clean persons on the other hand the other characters stands for what people should not be and how people should not behave not only in Middle Ages but even in our time. Chaucer uses an estates satire to analyse the society and its problems.

Chaucer often put people together and he also creates a lot of juxtapositions, ironic contrasts between two details or two characters as for example between the Parson and the Friar and the Monk, the Knight and the Squire when the perfect example of chivalry, the Knight, is imminently followed by his profligate son etc.

The satire appears in the General Prologue from the very beginning when Chaucer describes rising spring with all its beautiful and romantic aspects but the irony is that the pilgrims on their way to Canterbury have to pass 50 miles long muddy roads which are far more from being romantic.

The whole story starts in the Tabard Inn which is situated in an entertainment district of London next to the hotel Bell. Chaucer is using irony because he mentions the hotel Bell as the high class hotel but it is in a matter of fact a disorderly house. The fact that pilgrims meet each other in a pub is also very ironical because the pilgrimage is a holy and religious enterprise and religious people should not spend their time drinking and enjoy themselves in the taverns.

The first pilgrim that Chaucer is describing is the Knight. He is not satirized because he represents what is good about nobility. Nevertheless he is very important character because he stands in contrary to other characters that are satirized. The Knight comes from upper class and is practicing chivalry, the code of knights. Is very honest, truthful, generous gentleman. Is wise and well-travelled. He has just returned from a battle and is dressed modestly and unobtrusively. The knight is not concerned in money and labour, only in battling and defending the country:

There was a Knight and he a worthy man,
That from the day on which he first began,
To ride abroad, had followed chivalry,
Truth, honour, courtesy and charity. (Kline, 2007, p. 7)

In juxtaposition to the Knight stands his son the Squire. He is approximately 20 years old, is a warrior like his father but is fighting for other purposes. He is a lower therefore he proves that he is a great warrior in order to gain ladies. He also fights only in nearby battles for what he can stay near his ladies.

And had served a while in the cavalry,
In Flanders, in Artois and Picardy,
And done so well, and in so short a space,
He hoped for favour from his lady's grace. (Kline, 2007, p. 8)

The Squire did not really enjoy the battles as his father but they were great instrument for attracting women.

Chaucer often describes personality through appearance. This Squire is interested in his appearance, is average height and has outstanding curly hair that look as if they had been pressed. Is well educated, loves to sing, dance, write poetry, songs, play the flute and draws. Chaucer satirizes him for his insincerity. He calls him a player. He is very chivalrous and beneficial only in the case that his father proceeds thereabouts. The Squire is expected to be loyal but he is not. He is only diligent when his father is near:

Courteous he was, humble, attentive, able,

And carved for his father at the table. (Kline, 2007, p. 8)

Together with The Knight and The squire is The Yeoman who was the Knight's servant but is now independent. He is not truly satirized but he wears green clothing to show that he loves hunting. He also wears his weapons visible since they are his passion.

Another character described in the General Prologue in the Nun, the Prioress, Madame Eglentyne. She is the first clergy person described and the first character that is satirized in real terms. Even that the satire and irony used herein in a milder satire than the satire and irony applied in characteristics of the other church members.

The Prioress is an entertaining, pleasant, friendly, attractive and cheerful person who has courtly manners that she is not supposed to have. She likes to pretend she is a part of a court. Chaucer satirizes here her desire for lady-like behaviour and emphasises the contradiction between the nun and her personality:

At meals she had been taught well withal;
And from her lips she let no morsel fall,
Nor dipped her fingers in the sauce too deep;
Well could she take a morsel and then keep
The slightest drop from falling on her breast;
Courtesy it was that pleased her best. (Kline, 2007, p. 9)

All her desire was to maintain courtesy.

She is also concerned with her appearance which is a problem for a nun. She wears a medallion with engraved courtly motto in Latin: "Amor vincit omnia" – Love conquers all" (Kline, 2007, p. 10). She does not only love people but animals as well. She would be very alarmed and worried if someone would hurt even a mouse and she loves her dogs but paradoxically is ignoring the fact that she is feeding them with a meat from another animals. Chaucer also satirizes her desire to speak French. But there is a big problem because the nun cannot speak French, she only knows few French phrases which she repeats all over again and pretends she speaks fluently French. People who does not speak that language would assume that is excellent in it. Chaucer expresses her hypocritical behaviour here:

And fair French she spoke, all elegantly,

After the school of Stratford-atte-Bowe;
For French of Paris was not hers to know. (Kline, 2007, p. 9)

He also describes her appearance by using an irony:

But certainly she had a fair forehead,
It was almost a span broad, I deem,
Fro she was not small of build, I mean. (Kline, 2007, p. 10)

“Not small of build” here or *undurgrowe* in Middle English means in a gentle way that she is quite large because she loves to eat which is another behaviour that prioress would not have acquire because she is supposed to live in a poverty. Her interests and behaviour reflect all the things that a religious person should not have and should not supposed to do.

She is accompanied by another nun and three priests.

The Monk is another religious character in the General Prologue and Chaucer starts to use irony and satire in more graver and sharper form. If a person in the Middle Ages was religious she or he was not allowed to have love affair, he or she was supposed to live in celibacy and the person was also not supposed to be rich on the contrary was supposed to give all the money to the church.

Chaucer expresses a very critical portrait of the Monk who ignores the rules of his order and only believes what he wants himself in the Bible:

The rule of Saint Benedict and Saint Mawr,
As old and somewhat strict he would ignore,
This same monk scorned the old world's pace,
And spurred after the new world, apace. (Kline, 2007, p. 10)

Chaucer amplifies the characterization and description of the Monk's personality, opinions and interests. The Monk likes to spend most of his time outside the cloister riding his ponies, hunting and eats a lot. But he is supposed to be poor, be inside the cloister and pray all day. Chaucer exaggerates even when describes the Monk's favourite food which is a roasted swan, a symbol of luxury. Chaucer satirizes the way of Monk's living and his total disregard of the rules.

Paradoxically Chaucer writes that he agrees with the Monk:

And I agreed his views were scarcely bad:
What! Should he study, drive himself quite mad,
In his cloister over a book must pore,
Or labour with his hands, and toil the more
As Augustine bids? How would the world run?
Let Augustine keep his labour for his own! (Kline, 2007, p. 11)

But the reader have to be cautious because this is not Chaucer the writer but Chaucer the narrator who agrees almost with everybody, not even criticize anybody and who is the exact contraposition of the writer.

In the General Prologue Chaucer expresses his disagreement with the hypocrisy of the church. He describes this hypocrisy in three different shades. First and the tenderness satire Chaucer uses with the nun who pretends to speak French fluently and has courtly manners. Second criticized and ironized religious person is the Monk who is supposed to live inside the cloister and follows the rules of his order but who is the genuine opposite. And the third and the greatest satire is used with the Friar who is the worst of all the religious persons described in the General Prologue.

Chaucer says that the Friar is one of the best in his order but he is very ironical and satirical and Chaucer was attacked for this kind of writing.

The writer says that the Friar is intimate which can have two explanations. Firstly we can explain it in the way that the Friar is friendly but more likely Chaucer intended to express that the Friar have sexual activity going on. He describes him and satirizes him in the most appalling way.

And he had arranged many a marriage
Of young women, granting each a dower. (Kline, 2007, p. 11)

This does not mean that the old good Friar married young women to the men of his church. But this implies that he made them pregnant and only hereafter he let married them to his men.

The Friar also likes to take money from the wealthy people when he hears their confessions and he even says that he has a licence from the Pope which he most probably has not. He likes

to go to the bars and pubs because this is the best place where to sell confessions. Chaucer is making observations of what is wrong with the church of his days.

The reader finds out that the Friar's name is Herbert but this is not certain because the Friar is very untrustworthily.

The Friar is followed by a group of not religious people who are satirized only in a light way.

First is the Merchant who is defined by his clothes and is showing his wealth. Even if he would not have money and if he was in debts people would not discern this.

This worthy man made such use of his wits;
No one knew he was beset by debts,
So stately his manner of behaving,
In his bargaining, and money-lending.
Truly a worthy man then, all in all,
But truth to tell, I know not what he's called. (Kline, 2007, p. 13)

Chaucer says that the narrator does not remember his name which represents another satire because Chaucer does not consider him to be important but the Merchant considers himself to be the most important person in the world.

There is also the Oxford Clerk who is still a student. He is described as a thin, poor person with a hollow look who cares about the money only because he can exchange them for the books. He is eager of education and is very fond of philosophers, especially with Aristotle. He believes in Plato's for virtues: wisdom, courage, discipline and justice. He is not interested in women and money and Chaucer expresses him in the juxtaposition to the holy men – the Monk and the Friar who are corrupted and sleek.

The Sergeant at the law represents a person similar to today's lawyer or a policeman. He is devoted to money and who pretends to be busier than really is:

More business than he had, no man has,
And yet he seemed busier than he was. (Kline, 2007, p. 14)

The narrator again says that he is a very good man and is wise:

Discreet he was, a man for reverence -

Or so he seemed, his words being to wise. (Kline, 2007, p. 14)

But the reader can feel from this fragment that Chaucer the writer is sarcastic and ironical again.

There is the Franklin together with the lawyer. He is a wealthy landowner from upper class. He is very epicureans – lives according to Epicure's dictum: "Eat, drink, be happy for tomorrow we die." He behaves as a celebrity, enjoys to be wealthy and has finest of everything – the food, wine and servants who do exactly what he says. He has a table set all day which was not normal in Chaucer's days. Because of his money he has a political power which helps him gain more money. The reader might not be sure if Chaucer is serious or ironic when describing him, maybe both.

There is a guild fellowship and the people who belong to this group are together because they can demand more money when working together. And they need the money because they are all married and their wives want new clothes, want to be called "madam" and want to be a part of upper middle class:

And wives too who would give their assent,
They would be blamed for sure were it not done,
It is a fine thing to be called 'Madame',
And go to vigil before the celebration,
With mantle royally carried, on occasion. (Kline, 2007, p. 16)

One of the shortest introductions is devoted to the Cook who is an essential part of the group and makes really good meals like a delicious traditional British meal Blancmange. But he has one noticeable and serious problem, an ulcer on his knee which the cook keeps touching while cooking the dishes for the people. Chaucer satirizes how people trust other people and he makes us wonder what is actually going on for example in the restaurants when the cooks are preparing the meals even these days.

Another character is the Shipman, a person whose name is not mentioned in the General Prologue but paradoxically is mentioned the name of his boat – Magdelayne (after St. Mary Magdalene). Chaucer describes him as a dishonest because of the theft of wine. He is very uncomfortable riding a horse because he spends all his life in the sea. This is an entertaining description reminding seasickness on the continent. He is satirized because he drinks a lot and does not always follow the rules. People trust him but he is unfaithful.

The nicer rules of conscience did not keep:
If he fought, and gained the upper hand,
He sent men home by water to every land. (Kline, 2007, p. 17)

This means that he did not hesitate to throw somebody overboard.

Another character, the Doctor, is very fond of money and is guileful. He does not even disregard the basic ethics rules and earns the money on people affected by the plague.

He kept the money won from pestilence.
For gold in physic is a cordial;
Therefore he loved gold above all. (Kline, 2007, p. 18)

Chaucer is making fun of this profession in his days because the doctors cured more by the use of astrology and astronomy than by the use of medicine:

On points of physic and of surgery,
For he was grounded in astronomy.
He knew the best hours for the sick,
By the power of his natural magic.
And could select the right ascendant
For making talismans for his patient. (Kline, 2007, p. 17)

He used stars to cure his patients more frequently than proper medicine and that is why Chaucer criticizes him.

One of the most important characters in the Canterbury Tales is the Wife of Bath. Through the Wife of Bath Chaucer attacks the Aristotelian patriarchy, the understanding that men rule the women and that women belong to the men and have to obey them. Wife of Bath is the exact opposite because she would never be a subordinate and on the contrary she would rule the men. Chaucer expresses very strong feminist opinion and speaks about the fact how women should be taken as equal as the men. The reader does not uncover this fact in the General Prologue but in her own Tale and Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale. She is partially deaf and the reader finds out why in the Prologue of Wife of Bath Tale. She likes to talk and here the reader can mention another Chaucerian irony because he creates a

person who is partially deaf and cannot always hear what the other people say but paradoxically loves to talk all the time.

The Wife of Bath is a cloth maker and hates when somebody wears other clothes that she had made herself.

In cloth-making she was excellent,
Surpassing those of Ypres and of Ghent.
In all the parish there was no wife, so
Before her to the Offertory might go –
And if they did, indeed, so angry she
That she was quite put out of charity. (Kline, 2007, p. 18)

She is very strong minded woman with tremendous self-confidence. She had been married five times and thinks that she knows more about love than other people:

And remedies for love she had, by chance,
For in that art she knew the oldest dance. (Kline, 2007, p. 19)

She has also travelled a lot and made three journeys to Jerusalem, Rome, Bologna, Celicia and Cologne which were all significant targets of pilgrimages in Western Europe in Middle Ages. And therefore she feels that she is more religious than the others because she visited those places and some of them even more than once.

She is described in a humorous way as a “bigger in the middle section” with gapped teeth which might be used in the way as she is good in sexual practices. She is also wearing red colour which is associated with prostitution.

She is definitely a woman who likes to attract attention to herself. She wears big hats and attractive clothes and is good at riding horses which is not usual for women in Chaucer's age.

Chaucer does not only want to entertain but also educate. He attacks the hypocrisy in the church and wants to see it changed. That is why he creates a perfect religious person, a kind of prototype, the good Parson who has got a good reputation, is poor, and gives all his money to poor people. He is a true believer and not a hypocrite as the other religious people described in the book. He is a juxtaposition to the Monk, the Friar and the Summoner and the Pardoner. He is very devoted to the God and church and represents an ideal of religious person.

A holy man there was of good renown,
Who was a poor Parson to a town,
But rich he was in holy thought and works.
He also was a learned man, a clerk,
That Christ's gospel earnestly would preach;
His parishioners devoutly he would teach. (Kline, 2007, p. 19)

Chaucer also criticizes through the Parson the greediness of the church.

Another example of a prototype is the Plowman, the good Parson's brother who does the worst work in the world but does it well. He is extremely holy, pays his tithes and does not complain about his poverty.

Chaucer stops the description of individual characters and because he wants to keep the reader's attention he tells that there are only few characters left:

There was a Reeve also and a Miller,
A Summoner and a Pardoner as well,
A college Manciple, and then myself. (Kline, 2007, p. 20)

The Miller was an immensely huge, comic person with a red beard and head because of which was compared to a fox. Chaucer expresses his bad character by the appearance because the Miller has a mole with red hair on the nose, something that the reader will remember and something that another person has to look at while talking to him. And here Chaucer the writer uses irony again because foxes are sneaky and the Miller is sneaky as well. Chaucer criticizes him, using the satire, his desire for strength over virtues.

He stole corn, and made one toll pay three;
Yet had the golden thumb, a mysleury! (Kline, 2007, p. 21)

His golden thumb described here implies dishonesty as well as rather luck in his dishonest acting.

Chaucer says that he has got a huge mouth and is very vulgar. He plays bagpipes to entertain the others on their way to Canterbury.

The Manciple is a person who is in charge of purchasing food for institutions. He buys products low and sells it high. He is very clever even that he is not formally educated. He learned everything through the school of life. Chaucer is using the irony to show the difference between the “book smart” and “street smart”.

Now is it not a wonder of God's grace
That a man so illiterate can outpace
The wisdom of a host of learned men? (Kline, 2007, p. 21)

He also insults the cook during their journey to Canterbury. His manuscript in the Canterbury Tales is incomplete.

The Reeve is a good protector of all the pilgrims because of his quick eyes. He is one of the few pilgrims that is endowed with a name. He is called Oswald and his stallion is Scot. He is a kind of nowadays manager. He is hard working but always angry and choleric. Then follow two corrupted persons piercingly criticized by Chaucer the writer. He uses very mean satire. They are the Summoner and the Pardoner, both religious people who should follow the rules of the order but they are obviously not.

The Summoner is a kind of a spiritual bounty hunter who search for people with sins and brings them to the Pardoner who pardons their sins for money. Chaucer satirizes corrupted social role through an exaggerated physical appearance. The Summoner has got red face with carbuncles all over it, he has also got black scabby brows and leprosy scars. He had tried everything to get rid of the carbuncles but unsuccessfully. He is lecherous and loves to have affairs but is religious and is not supposed to do this. He has no knowledge of true religion but he knows few phrases in Latin, the language of the church, and repeats them all the time and therefore people believe him.

And when he had drunk, and the wine was in,
Then he would speak no word but Latin.
A few tags he had, some two or three,
That he had learned out of some decree –
No wonder, since he heard them every day. (Kline, 2007, p. 23)

He is a juxtaposition to the Prioress who pretends to speak French but Chaucer criticize her in a more gentle way, the Summoner's criticism is sharper. The writes uses a dark satire to

describe the Summoner and is making distinction between religious persons like the Summoner and the Parson.

He was a noble rogue and a kind;
A better fellow no man could find.
He would allow, for a quart of wine,
A good friend to keep a concubine
A twelvemonth and excuse him fully,
And he could pluck a fool privately. (Kline, 2007, p. 23)

The Summoner is doing a lot of impermissible acts for instance he threaten people to be excommunicated from the church which is a horrible threat because in the 14th century a person that was excommunicated lost everything – a home, friends, family and has to live on his own outside the church.

Together with the Summoner is the Pardoner another corrupted religious character, highly satirized. They use each other to make money. Chaucer again uses satire to describe the Pardoner's appearance. He compares him to the all sorts of animals, describes his hair to the rat tails, his eye to a hare and his physique appearance to a mare and a gelding. He is a liar and a great persuader. He claims to have a holly relics that were blessed by the Pope but they are only ordinary pig bones.

He had a cross of brass set with stones,
And in a glass, he had pigs' bones.
And with these relics, when he had to hand
Some poor parson living on the land,
In one day he gathered in more money
Than the parson in a month of Sundays.
And thus with feigned flattery, his japes
Made people and the parson his apes. (Kline, 2007, p. 25)

He became very wealthy through the use of reverse psychology. He is a juxtaposition to the good Parson.

They are very corrupted persons and Chaucer uses them to satirize and criticize the corruption and hypocrisy inside the church.

At the end of the General Prologue Chaucer justifies himself and apologises in advance for possible indignity. He is very satirical and ironical not only in the General Prologue but in the whole Canterbury Tales.

3.2 HUMOUR IN THE KNIGHT'S TALE

At the first sight a reader might think that there is no humour in the Knight's tale that it is simply a medieval chivalric romance, an adventure story with a beautiful lady involved. But the Knight's tale is more than that. It is a philosophical romance containing a lot of satirical features. The Knight's tale is absurd because it takes place in a Greek city that is ruled over by Roman gods and has English system of aristocracy. This is a bizarre world formed by the mix of cultures.

The story is about two cousins Arcite and Palamon who are nephews of the Duke of Thebes and who are captured by the Duke of Athens, put in the jail. One day is Palamon looking out of the window and sees a beautiful Emily (Emelya) and immediately falls in love with her. He wakes up his cousin and tells him about the girl and Arcite falls in love with her too. They have a dispute about the beautiful girl and are fighting over the beautiful woman. The irony now appears in the tale because they are even prepared to die for her but she does not know that they exist. Arcite talks about this appalling misfortune in his speech to Palamon:

A man must love, despite himself, give heed;
He may not flee it though he die, indeed,
Be she a maid, a widow, or a wife.
And then you are little likely, in this life,
To stand in grace with her; no more shall I.
You know too well, yourself, and no lie,
That you and I are condemned to prison
Perpetually, and granted no ransom
We strive as the hounds did for the bone;
They fought all day and neither did it own.
There came a kite, while they were waxing wrath,
And carried off the bone between them both.
And therefore, at the king's court, my brother,

Each man for himself, law there's none other.
Love if you wish; I love, and ever shall.
And truly believe, brother, this is all:
Here in this prison must we endure;
And each of us our own chance assure. (Kline, 2007, pp. 41-42)

Than an old friend of Arcite, the Duke Pirithons, releases him but he has to promise to the Duke of Athens that he will not stay in his country otherwise he would be killed. Here comes the irony of life. The fates of both knights are dreadfully changing. Arcite is free now but he is not allowed to Athens so he cannot see Emily. There is an irony because Arcite would now rather be in the prison and see his beautiful lady:

How great a sorrow Arcite reveals!
The stroke of death in his heart he feels.
He weeps, he wails, he cries piteously,
He waits to slay himself secretly.
He says: 'Alas the day that I was born!
Now is my prison worse than before;
Now am I doomed eternally to dwell
Not in Purgatory, but in Hell. (Kline, 2007, pp. 42-43)

Palamon is still in the prison and can see Emily every day. They are both ill-fated but from various reasons. This actually lasts for years. Finally Palamon escapes from the prison and Arcite succeeded to infiltrate to the court of the Duke of Athens in disguise and he can see Emily every day. The irony is that Theseus, the Duke of Athens, even starts to love hateful Arcite who works for him disguised as a page Philostrates. Paradoxically is hateful Arcite admired and appreciated:

He was so noble in his low condition
That throughout the court ran his renown.
They said that it would be a charity
If Theseus were to heighten his degree,
And some nobler service then devise
Where he might his virtue exercise.

And thus in a while his name had sprung
To every lip, for deeds and courteous tongue,
So that Theseus advanced him higher
And of his chamber made him a squire,
And gave him gold to maintain his degree.
And men too brought him from his own country
Year by year, and secretly, his rent. (Kline, 2007, pp. 48-49)

One day the cousins run into each other and decide to fight to the death over beautiful Emily. They are interrupted by the Duke of Athens with his wife Hyppolyte and Emily. One man is supposed to be in the jail and the other one is supposed to be in Thebes but they are both in Athens planning a fight. Theseus is very upset and wants to kill them but his wife proposes a proper battle. She suggests that each knight should get 100 knights and the winner would gain Emily. The Duke agrees and lets built spectacular battle field with three shrines dedicated to the three Gods – Mars, the god of war, Venus, the goddess of love and Diana, the goddess of the hunting. Each character prays to a different god before the battle. Emily goes to the shrine of Diana and ironically asks perpetual virginity. She paradoxically does not want to marry anyone. Arcite goes to the shrine of Mars and asks for the victory. Palamon than goes to the shrine of Venus and asks for Emily. The gods refuse only Emily. Arcite wins the battle but falls from a horse and dies. Chaucer expresses a huge irony in the Arcita's character because even that he survived the prison, suffered from unrequited love, worked for Theseus and won the battle but dies because of a banal fall from a horse. The irony runs through all the other characters – Palamon won Emily but lost his bellowed cousin. Emily does not want to get married and wanted a perpetual virginity but has to marry Palamon.

Emily is described as a perfect, obedient, beautiful woman the exact opposite of the Wife of Bath. Emily is devoted to gods and she obeys Theseus's command and marries Palamon even that she does not want to.

'Sister,' quoth he, 'this has my full asset,
With all the agreement of my parliament,
That gentle Palamon, your own true knight,
Who serves you with will, and heart, and might,
And always has, since you first him knew,

You shall take pity on with grace, and you
Shall take him for your husband and your lord. (Kline, 2007, p. 95)

Chaucer uses again irony to criticize the role of women in the society. Another target of Chaucer's satire is chivalry that did not always function as it was supposed to (as well as the church). Arcite and Palamon are depicted so perfect that they became parodies of the perfect knights. They break the chivalry rules constantly as they are selfish, fight with each other and do not hesitate to even betray each other.

3.3 HUMOUR IN THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE AND TALE

Alice, Chaucer's Wife of Bath's, is a very strong feminist character that is challenging patriarchy. The patriarchy in the middle ages was very strong. Women did not have any rights, they had to be obedient and had to follow their man. Already Aristotle declared that men are not equal women, that this is unnatural. The church in the middle ages held the same opinion and men were above women and could even beat them if they were not obedient. But Chaucer creates a woman that is not afraid of men. She even stands in front of them and talks and she even talks to the holy persons in the group which was something unacceptable in the medieval times.

Sex and sexuality are another fundamental elements of the Canterbury tales. It is a theme pervading the whole book but is most significant in the Miller's tale and the Wife of Bath's prologue and tale. There is also a raping act in the Reeve's tale which is not really punished in the end. The knight found the answer for the Queen's question but the raped young lady is being left without any retribution. The carpenter in the Miller's tale is afraid that he would not be able to fulfil his wife Alisoun's sexual appetite because she is younger and more active than he is and that she would cheat on him.

In the case of the Wife of Bath's character appears different kind of love – a carnal love or need. She is exploiting her men with the use of sex. She wants to gain the power over her husbands and gain property by means of the sex.

In wifhood will I use my instrument
As freely as my Maker has it sent.
If I be niggardly, God give me sorrow!
My husband shall have it eve and morrow,

When he would come forth and pay his debt.
A husband I will have, I will as yet,
Who shall be both my debtor and my thrall,
And bear the tribulation withal
On his own flesh, while I am his wife.
I have the power during my whole life
Over his proper body, and not he.
Right thus the Apostle told it me,
And bade our husbands for to love us well;
On that saying I ever like to dwell. (Kline, 2007, p. 186)

Sexual satisfaction is very important for the Wife of Bath's and she does not hesitate to show it, even in front of the clergy men:

My fourth husband was a reveller,
That is to say, he kept a lover.
And I was young, and my spirits high,
Stubborn and strong, and pert as a magpie.
How I danced to the harp, without fail,
And sang, indeed, like any nightingale,
When I had drunk a draught of sweet wine.
Metellius, the foul churl, the swine,
That with a stick robbed his wife of life
For drinking wine, though I had been his wife
Would never have frightened me from drink!
And after wine on Venus I would think,
For as surely as cold engenders hail,
A gluttonous mouth gets a lecherous tail.
A drunken woman has no true defence;
This lechers know from their experience. (Kline, 2007, pp. 194-195)

In the prologue to her tale is Wife of Bath's introducing herself. She has been married five times and she is looking for another husband. This is not common nowadays but it was

unimaginable in medieval times for woman to get married five times. People actually remarried after the great plague but this is completely different situation. She excuses herself and chooses examples from the Bible:

God bade us all to was and multiply.
That gentle text I well can understand!
And I know too He said that my husband
Should leave father and mother and cleave to me;
But of no number mention made He,
Of bigamy or of octogamy.
Why should men then speak of it evilly?
Lo, here, the wise King, old Solomon,
I think he had more wives than one!
As would to God it were permitted me
To be refreshed half so oft as he!
A gift of God had he of all those wives! (Kline, 2007, pp. 182-183)

She wants to be guaranteed the same privileges as men.

The subject of marriage for her is to have mastery over her husband. She wants a husband that'll be her slave.

Pardoner is disgusted with her narration. He wanted to get married but is now worried. But Alice says that she does not want to upset them that she is only offering an amusement. Chaucer already said this in the General prologue when he was excusing himself in advance for that he will be telling the truth. Chaucer is saying this again in the Wife of Bath's prologue because he is going to be a serious iconoclast of the patriarchy.

He gave the bridle all into my hand,
To me the governance of house and land,
And of his tongue and of his hand also,
And I made him burn his book of woe.
And when that I had gotten unto me
By mastery all the sovereignty,
And that he said: 'Mine own true wife,

Do as you wish through all your term of life;
Guard your honour, and my good estate,'
After that day we had no more debate. (Kline, 2007, p. 204)

She definitely breaks the rules of patriarchy. Chaucer is very satirical in this case. She is describing how she used to control men. She is even talking about sex in front of clergy men. She is saying that women love sex as men do which was very controversial in middle ages.

She says that her man always wanted to control her but she did not want to be controlled contrariwise she wanted to control them. She alleged that men are stupid, like sheep and women can easily rule them.

You even liken woman's love to Hell,
To barren land, where water may not dwell.
You liken it then, as well, to a wild fire:
The more it burns, the more it has desire
To consume everything that burnt can be.
You say, that just as insects kill a tree,
Just so a wife destroys her husband;
This they know who to a wife are bound.
Lordings, like this it was, you understand,
I kept my older husbands well in hand
With what they said in their drunkenness;
And all was false, but I had witnesses
In Jankin, and in my niece also. (Kline, 2007, p. 192)

She also admits that she knew that her husband had affairs but she was fed up with this so instead of reproofs she made them to obey her.

She that says that she has made a mistake with her last husband whom she married not for money but because of his appearance. He was young and good looking and tried to control her. He kept reading her from his book full of stories about women's bad behaviour by famous writers and philosophers. She ironically commented on them that if woman wrote such a story it would be completely different. Once she was fed up with his stories and his

pontification that she tore several pages from his book and he smacked her as she became deaf on one ear.

Chaucer uses a satire here and paradoxically the story ends when Alice gained power even over her fifth husband. According to Alice a man can beat a woman but she will never love him. If a man wants his wife to love him he has to give her freedom and let her to do whatever she wants. This is strong critic of patriarchy.

There is a relationship between the Prologue and her tale. The main topic of both is the relationship between men and women. Chaucer attacks not only a patriarchy but hierarchy in the medieval society as well.

Alice's story is set in old days during the reign of King Arthur. There is a knight who sees a beautiful girl and he commits a rape on her. Chaucer here attacks the code of knight and chivalry as well. Real knight should be honest and look after king's dependants. The king is very upset and indignant. He decides that the knight will be executed but his wife the Queen Guinevere asks for the king's grace and the king gave the power over the knight to his wife.

But that the queen and other ladies so
Prayed the King for so long for his grace
That he his life granted him in its place,
And gave him to the Queen, to do her will,
To choose whether she would save or kill. (Kline, 2007, p. 207)

This is very strong anti-patriotic act. The reader can feel the influence of the storyteller, the Wife of Bath. Because it was absurd that man gave such a power to woman.

The Queen requires an answer for the question: "What is the thing that women most desire?" The knight has got one year to find the answer. He travels and asks the women but he gets different answer and is under the pressure. Some of the women said that women want wealth and treasure, some jollity and pleasure, some gorgeous clothes and some fun in bed, to be offed widowed and remarried. Here the reader can again see Chaucer's strong satire and the Wife of Bath's opinions.

Some said women had most love of riches;
Some said honour, some said happiness;
Some rich array, some said lust abed,
And oft times to be widowed and to wed. (Kline, 2007, p. 208)

But the knight does not have just one answer so he is attacked with the stress. Later he sees 24 women dancing on the meadow he decides to ask them but they all vanish when he comes closer. Instead of the beautiful women there is an old and ugly lady who knows the answer but wants him to fulfil any of her wishes. He agrees and they go together to the queen. Then he tells the answer that an old lady told him. According to her every woman wants a power over her man, wants to master him and does not want him to be above her.

‘My liege lady, generally,’ quoth he,
Women desire the self-same sovereignty
Over a husband as they do a lover,
And to hold mastery, he not above her.
That is your great desire, though you me kill;
Do as you wish; I am at your will.’ (Kline, 2007, p. 211)

The reader can feel the influence of the Wife of Bath’s opinions and furthermore Chaucer’s animadversion of the patriarchy.

Every woman in the court agrees with his answer, even the women that previously gave him different answers now agree with him. In so far that his life has been saved. The old lady than asks him before the whole court to marry her and he has to agree because he swore the honour as a knight and he has to obey the chivalry rules at least now.

He is very unhappy and is not excited about all the wedding issues. This represents Chaucer’s comical script because the knight should be really happy when the old lady saved his life. He even does not see her inner beauty.

The lady gives him an opportunity. She gives him a choice because she wants functional and healthy marriage. She suggests him that she will stay as she is, an ugly woman, but she will be the most loyal wife in the world otherwise she could be the most beautiful woman in the world but she cannot guarantee him that she will be loyal.

He asks her to make a decision because she is wise. So she has won the mastery and that is exactly what she (as well as the Wife of Bath’s and Chaucer) wants. She transforms herself to a beautiful goddess and is loyal as well because the knight understands that the dominance belongs to women. The knight learned from his mistake but paradoxically the raped lady did not get her satisfaction and he actually was not punished for his horrible crime.

The Wife of Bath's prays to God at the end of her tale asking him to cut the life of those men that do not want to obey their wives and do not accept their domination. The women can later marry younger men that will obey them.

In perfect joy – and Jesus Christ us send
Husbands meek, young, and fresh abed,
And grace to outlive those that we wed.
And also I pray Jesus, trim the lives
Of those who won't be governed by their wives,
Those old and angry, grudging all expense,
God send them soon indeed the pestilence! (Kline, 2007, p. 217)

3.4 HUMOUR IN THE FILM ADAPTATIONS OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

There exist a lot of film adaptations of the Canterbury Tales and several other recent films do have at least references to the Canterbury Tales. One of the modern and very famous movie is a "*Knight's Tale*" directed by Brian Helgeland with Heath Ledger and Paul Bettany as Geoffrey Chaucer. The film is made in archaic style with modern references is very entertaining but the plot is not similar to the Chaucer's Canterbury Tales at all. One of the main characters in the film is Geoffrey Chaucer himself and makes several references to the Canterbury Tales. He even tells the pardoner and Summoner that he will disgrace them in fiction. The common is the proto-feministic opinion and Chaucer would probably like the change of destiny depicted in the film when poor squire becomes a knight.

In comparison with Chaucer's Canterbury tales which aim is to not only entertain but also enlighten, the Knight's tale film is only entertaining.

One very successful adaptation is Pier Paolo Pasolini's "*Canterbury Tales*" (1972). Pasolini worked up eight of Chaucer's tales. Some are very funny and some are serious, some are very close to the original some fewer.

The Cook's Tale is not completed in the book but is finished in the film.

Pasolini casts himself as Chaucer, the writer who is daydreaming, making fun of his own tales and being berated by his own wife. This fact would appreciate not only Chaucer by himself but definitely Wife of Bath's would be happy about the wife's dominance over her husband.

The film represents not only a successful interpretation of the Canterbury Tales but also a portrayal of Geoffrey Chaucer.

The settings and costumes were period-perfect and in the film is a lot of nudity and sexual acts as well as in the book itself.

The spectator can find in the film a mixture of two cultures – the English and the Italian.

Another successful adaptation is award-winning animated film “*Canterbury Tales*” by different directors. This is a greatly animated series with different animation styles but very entertaining and pleasantly following Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales. As well as the book itself the film contains a lot of ambiguity, sexual thrill and it is really both entertaining and enlightening.

The animated General Prologue truly, pointedly and wittily portrays all the characters of The Canterbury Tales. At the beginning of each tale the wistful narrator describes each participant of the pilgrimage. The whole image is reached by a great animation. For example the portrait of the Friar is an image of a fat man, dressed in impressive tunic in spite of the fact that he is supposed to be ascetic. Then follows the Summoner with disgusting appearance that indicates his character and who is even more satirized and ironized in this way than he is satirized in the book itself.

And, of course, the Wife of Bath, dressed in the beautiful dresses with impressive hat who is very flirtatious and captivating. Ironically it is her who dominates the men on the pilgrimage. She determines herself when it is the right time to tell her story.

The animated adaptation of Wife of Bath Tale directed by Joanna Quinn is a perfectly created adaptation that exactly follows the original story but is told in modern English. The satire in this adaptation is expressed through the exaggeration especially in the attitude of men towards women. The men are depicted in the superior positions, holding their wives’ necks or clapping them over their heads. This actually exposes not the women but paradoxically those men who are behaving preposterously and obtusely.

The old woman is portrayed ludicrously ugly and through her the preposterous pursuit for dominance is satirized very deeply and flawlessly.

The Wife of Bath proposal that she could convert herself to a beautiful lady and the knight’s torment and succeeding decision that the wife should decide it completely the same as in the original. Through the satire it reflects Wife of Bath’s opinions and attitude towards men.

The old woman acquires her allowance and through her character the Wife of Bath laughs at men.

Also the Knight is well portrayed in the animated adaptation of the Canterbury Tales. He looks very sophisticated and undiscerning. The narrator does not satirize him but as well as in the book he ironically stand in the juxtaposition to the squire, his son who is as contrasted to his modest father dressed in a spectacular gown and with his do up hair looks ridiculous and comic next to his father.

The Knight's Tale itself is again greatly performed. At the very beginning the Knight ironically mentioned that the person's fate cannot be changed, that is the main topic of his tale. Through the comparison of the two cousins to the dogs fighting over a bone that cannot be no one's the author satirizes the absurdity of some person's discords and he also criticizes the knights who lack basic upbringing and who break the chivalry rules.

Perfectly portrayed dominance of the king over poor Emily is another ironical and satirical intent to criticize the patriarchy.

This animated series is a perfect adaptation of Chaucer's Canterbury tales that makes the tales even more satirical and ironical by the amazing realization of particular characters, their appearance and character. Each tale is a shortened version of the original which do not decline its values and significance.

CONCLUSION

The major purpose of this bachelor thesis was to find out every possible elements and ways of humour in Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury tales, especially in the General Prologue, The Knight's tale and the Wife of Bath's tale.

The bibliographic research showed that Chaucer used different kinds of humour to show his disagreement with some particular issues in the society of his days. The research detected mainly satire and irony as the instruments used for the critic already mentioned.

The discovered criticism was predominantly led up to criticism of the church and its practices and towards the role of the women in the medieval society. The church did not always followed the rules that has established and Chaucer wanted to draw attention to this tampering and to the corruption inside the church itself. The research detect a plenteous use of satire, irony and exaggerations. The reader can feel that through the use of the tools mentioned Chaucer wants to educate people, wants to attract attention to the corruption inside the church and at least wants people not to sightlessly believe in the church.

The research showed that some of the film adaptations of The Canterbury Tales, especially the animated adaptation are well-done and truly depict its book model. Additionally the animated adaptation is more satirical and ironical because the viewer can hear the particular tale and can see fantastically created characters.

Furthermore the punctual analyses of the Canterbury tales has revealed that Chaucer sharply disagreed with the main issues of his time, the Middle Ages, particularly the patriarchy and the attitude of the church towards women. Surprisingly women were treated very badly and could even be bludgeoned in the middle ages. From the research implies that Chaucer uses exaggerations and reverses the roles in the satire to show that both means of domination are not proper and humane. Chaucer wants to educate the medieval people and does not want them to blindly follow the rules of the medieval church which breaks them alone and which uses the common people to become even wealthier.

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SHRNUTÍ

Hlavním tématem této bakalářské práce je odhalit humor v Canterburyjských povídkách Geoffreyho Chaucera, konkrétně v samotném Prologu, v Rytířově povídce a povídce Ženy z Bathu. Humor použitý autorem je převážně satirický a ironický. Pomocí humoru nechce autor pouze zabavit čtenáře, ale chce jej hlavně poučit a varovat před určitými problémy ve společnosti.

Hlavním problémem, kterým se Chaucer zabývá se zkorumpovanost uvnitř církve. Především kritizuje vybírání desátků, poplatků, nedodržování vlastních pravidel, sexuální aktivitu členů církve apod.

Dalším tématem, které Chaucer kritizuje je postavení žen ve středověké společnosti. Kritizuje jej tím, že zaměňuje role muže a ženy, záměrně používá nadsázku a ironii. Některé ženy, jako například Žena z Bathu, své muže ponižují a chovají se k nim velmi nadřazeně. Ve skutečné středověké společnosti je tomu přesně naopak.

Tato bakalářská práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních částí, z nichž každá se zabývá jedním specifickým tématem, jež zkoumá a analyzuje. První část se zabývá humorem jako takovým, jeho typy a konkrétně se zaměřuje na satiru a ironii, což jsou stěžejní způsoby Chaucerovy kritiky. V první části je také charakterizováno pojetí sexu a sexuality v Canterburyjských povídkách.

Druhá část je věnována době Chaucerově a zkráceném vhledu do jeho života a to z důvodu, aby bylo snadnější pochopit jeho humor a kritiku.

A konečně třetí část se zabývá Canterburyjskými povídkami jako takovými. Je zde věnována část, ve které jsou povídky charakterizovány obecně, a větší část je potom věnována třem vybraným částem. Konkrétně je věnována všeobecnému Prologu, který je nedílnou součástí Canterburyjských povídek a popisuje jednotlivé postavy. Již zde se nachází mnoho ironie a satiry, která se později rozvine, když jednotlivé postavy vypráví své příběhy a také mezi jednotlivými povídkami, když se postavy navzájem oslovují, povídají si a také osočují.

Třetí část je dále věnována Rytířově povídce, která se zprvu zdá vážná, bez jakékoli ironie, ale při bližším zkoumání je zde objevena velká kritika církve a rytířství. V neposlední řadě je zde analýza povídky Ženy z Bathu, která je kritikou patriarchy a postavení žen ve středověké společnosti.