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The Anti-Crusade Voice of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

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Abstract

This study reads some Middle English poetry in terms of crusading, and it argues that the most prominent English poets, namely Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, and John Gower, were against the later crusades regardless of their target. However, since the anti-crusade voice of Gower and Langland has been discussed by many other scholars, this study focuses on Chaucer's poems and their implicit opposition of crusading. I argue that despite Chaucer's apparent neutrality to crusading as well as other sociopolitical and cultural matters of England, his poetry can hardly be read but as an indirect critique of war in general and crusading in particular. Thus, to prove such a claim, this study consists of five main chapters. The first chapter discusses the dominance as well as nature of crusading in fourteenth-century England. The second chapter reads Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Langland's *Piers Plowman* as anti-crusade poems. The third chapter reads Chaucer's poems written before the *Canterbury Tales* as a critique of crusading. The fourth chapter argues that one of the central themes of the *Canterbury Tales* is to indirectly denounce crusading and mock crusaders. The fifth chapter revisits Chaucer's bibliography and uses it to explain why his critique of crusading is indirect. Finally, this study concludes that Chaucer is an anti-crusade poet, but his heavy reliance on the English court as a main source of power, prestige, and income explains the main reason of his indirect opposition of crusading.

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Finally, for their endless support and constant belief in my ability to succeed, I would like to thank my deceased grandfather Sroor, my parents Jamal and Mohra, my wife Wala', my children Hashim, Balqees, Shaheen, and Ryan, my brothers and sisters, and my friends.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my understanding wife Wala' and my four little children, Hashim, Balqees, Shaheen, and Ryan. Also, I dedicate it to my grandfather Sroor, my father Jamal, my mother Mohra, and my lovely Yarmouk University.

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I.   Introduction

"Deeth shal be deed" (*CT* VI, 710) is the embedded theme for which Chaucer's Pardoner ultimately argues. After his illustrated sermon against sins, such as drunkenness and gaming as well as their awful offspring like blasphemy and manslaughter (643-660), the Pardoner tells how three rioters went to kill Death, but ended up losing that battle and their lives as well (661-895).[1] Regardless of whether these three young men died as sinful or innocent, it is noteworthy how, similar to the biblical maxim that "all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52), the Pardoner portrays death as a product that will always turn against its own architects. Thus, the youngest among the three companions, as the Pardoner narrates, went "Into the toun, unto a pothecarie, / And preyde hym that he hym wolde selle / Som poyson, that he myghte his rattes quelle" (852-54). He planned to slay his own companions, who he viewed as rats. As he arrived "his rattes," "they han hym slayn, and that anon" (881). Later, his slayers received their share of death. Celebrating the success of their plot, one of the conspirators "[took] the botel ther the poyson was, / And drank, and yaf his felawe drynke also, / For which anon they storven bothe two" (886-88). The three makers, or agents, of death fell victim to their own plots: "Thus ended been thise homycides two, / And eek the false empoysonere also" (893-94).

Next to this unsympathetic couplet, the Pardoner pours out against the cursedness and absolute profanity of people's cruelty against each other:

> O cursed synne of alle cursednesse!
> O traytours homycide, O wikkednesse!
> O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!

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[1] The sermon nature of the Pardoner's Tale is explained in Coolidge Chapman, "The Pardoner's Tale: A Medieval Sermon," *MLN*, 41 (1928): 506-09. See also Fred Robinson, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2ed ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 729, Siegfried Wenzel, "Chaucer and the Language of Contemporary Preaching," *SP*, 73 (1976): 138-61, and Robert P. Merrix, "Sermon Structure in the Pardoner's 'Tale'," *The Chaucer Review* 17, No. 3 (Winter, 1983): 235-249.

> Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileynye
> And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
> Allas, mankynde…
> Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas? (895-903)

For the speaker, homicide, gluttony, lust, and gambling are sins replete with cursedness, wickedness, and blasphemy as they all stem from *cupiditas* that contradicts with Christ's original plan, "which that the wroghte / And with his precious herte-blood thee boghte" (*CT* VI, 901-02).[2] This means that whatever might produce unkindness or violence, i.e. war, is always sinful and can never be a way to attain eternal salvation and joy. Thus, while understanding the *Canterbury Tales* and Chaucer's other works, as Donald Howard concludes, is a "game" of "guessing,"[3] the Pardoner's logic and tone leave no doubt that Chaucer views war, whether we call it invasion or pilgrimage, as "a cancer inside the body of Christendom" that true Christians should resist.[4]

In contrast with the restricted viewpoint that Chaucer's temper was heated neither by crusading nor any other serious matter, this study contends that the poet was not neutral to his England's polemic, especially that of crusading.[5] In light of some extrinsic and intrinsic facts about Chaucer's life and culture, I argue that crusading could not have been anything less than a central topic, or theme, of the *Tales* and Chaucer's other works. In fact, the fourteenth century was the

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[2] For a full discussion of how these sins constitute man's *cupiditas*, see Alfred Kellogg, "An Augustian Interpretation of Chaucer's Pardoner," *Speculum* 26 (1951): 465-81.

[3] Donald Roy Howard, *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives and Their Posterity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 96.

[4] Colin Morris, "Picturing the Crusades: The Uses of Visual Propaganda c.1095-1250," in *Crusades and their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, eds., J. France and W. Zajac (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 195-216, 201.

[5] For a full survey and discussion of this viewpoint in Chaucer scholarship, see Roger Sherman Loomis and Ruth Roberts, *Studies in Medieval Literature: A Memorial Collection of Essays* (New York: B. Franklin, 1970), Grace Eleanor Hadow, *Chaucer and His Times* (New York: H. Holt, 1914), 156, and Robert Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer: A Guide to its Study and Appreciation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922), 29.

age of civil as well as armed pilgrimage, which "was undertaken by a wide range of people."[6] It was a matter of interest for people from the different classes since besides its spiritual value,[7] "pilgrimage was also of course, major export business, especially lucrative for money-lenders, shipbuilders, seamen, hostellers and suppliers."[8] Simultaneously, the fourteenth century was, as Aziz Atyia states, "the age of the late Crusade in its fuller sense…the real age of propaganda for the Crusade,"[9] which was not only a form of "Christian Holy War,"[10] but a political and economic phenomenon from which emerged "major institutions of capitalist enterprise, acting as banker and financers as well as territorial empire builders."[11] In brief, pilgrimage and crusading had dominated many aspects and trends of life in fourteenth-century England; therefore, it is unlikely that Chaucer was deaf to England's polemic of crusading.[12]

Moreover, the poet's friendship and acquaintance with some theologians, pilgrims, and crusaders on one hand and propagandists as well as opponents of crusading on the other makes his neutrality to the matter of pilgrimage and crusading impossible. Chaucer served as a courtier for crusading patrons, such as John of Gaunt, Richard II, and Henry IV. He lived in their courts and was therefore acquainted with crusading as a courtly, or political, matter. Also, Chaucer was part

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[6] See Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London; New York: Hambledon and London, 2000), XVI.

[7] See Christian K Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 50.

[8] Sheila Delany, "Geographies of Desire: Orientalism in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*," in *Chaucer's Cultural Desire*, ed. Kathryn L. Lynch (New York: Routledge, 2002), 229-230, 227.

[9] Aziz Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce, and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 92.

[10] Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson, eds. *The medieval World* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 134.

[11] Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 206.

[12] See Benjamin Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* (England: The Commissioners of the Public Records of the Kingdom, 1840).

of the 1386 Scropes-Grosvenor "controversy," an event that testifies to his chivalric status and his acquaintance with contemporary crusaders, such as Lewis Clifford, John Montagu, and John Clanvowe.[13] In addition, Chaucer was familiar with the Lollards, including John Wycliffe, and their opposition to the Church's use of religion to launch secular wars, as declared in the 1395 *Twelve Conclusions*.[14] More importantly, Chaucer was acquainted with the literature of pilgrimage and crusading, such as John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*,[15] William Langland's *Piers Plowman*,[16] and Philippe de Mézières' *Letter to King Richard II*.[17] Overall, pilgrimage dominated most of the civil as well as military trends of Chaucer's culture and society; therefore, his Chaucer's works could not have been indifferent to the matter of crusading.

In addition, war in England, as Froissart reported, was "civilized" and "made part of the aristocratic ideal of chivalry."[18] Englishmen, including the king, the aristocrats, the Appellants, the

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[13] Maurice Keen, *Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London; Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1996), 110. See also Celia M. Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade in The *Canterbury Tales*," *Chaucer Review 42*, no. 4 (April 2008): 353-382, 357.

[14] For a full discussion of Chaucer's acquaintance with Wycliffe, see John S. P. Tatlock, "Chaucer and Wyclif," *Modern Philology* 14, No. 5 (Sep., 1916): 257-68. See also Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 368-69.

[15] For a concise discussion of Gower and Langland's involvement in the polemic of crusading, see Elizabeth Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading in Fourteenth-Century England," in *Crusade and Settlement: Papers Read at the First Conference of the Society for the Study of Crusades and the Latin East and presented to R. C. Smail*, ed., Peter W. Edbury (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985): 127–34.

[16] See Michael Bush, "The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Pilgrimage Tradition of Holy War," in *Pilgrimage*, eds., Morris and Roberts, 178-98.

[17] Philippe de Mézières, *Letter to King Richard II: A Plea Made in 1395 for Peace between England and France*, trans. G. W. Coopland (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1976). For Chaucer's acquaintance with Mézières' order, see Thomas Patrick Murphy, *The Holy War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 2. For more information about Mézières' order, see Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 875.

[18] Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 69.

magnates, and other members of the highest levels of the society saw war as part of their religious and national identity –history, heritage, culture, and future. The Black Prince "was never happy unless he was fighting," his brother Lionel "was mostly [fighting] in Ireland," and John of Gaunt too, though he spent most of his time in England, was known as a crusader, at least against the Castilian court. [19] Henry Bolingbroke also was known as a crusader due to his campaigns in Prussia and his pilgrimage to the Holy Land.[20] In such a crusading court, Chaucer could not have ignored the theological, political, social, and economic polemic of crusading entirely.[21]

Also, Chaucer's works could not be innocent to the matter of crusading due to the linguistic relationship between crusading and pilgrimage. As a term "crusading" had no existence before the nineteenth century,[22] and therefore that term and all its linguistic derivatives were expressed only through pilgrimage diction, "an association that crusading never cast off and from which it was often hard put to distinguish itself."[23] Such a linguistic construct is significant as it fuses pilgrimage and crusading together, and as it reflects the two concepts' cultural and religious connection that was declared, if not invented, by Urban II at Clermont in 1095.[24] Highlighting the pilgrimage-crusading linguistic relationship in Urban II's 1095 speech, Jonathan Riley-Smith writes:

> At any rate, while on the one hand the pope used of the coming crusade the language of pilgrimage – *iter*, *via*, *labor* – on the other he employed the military term 'Jerusalem expedition' (*Jherosolimitana expeditio*). The pilgrim terms *peregrinatio*, *via*, *iter*, *iter beatum*, *iter Domini* and *sanctum iter* were used in letters written on the march and in these the crusaders occasionally referred to themselves

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[19] Ibid., 56.

[20] Webb, *Pilgrimage*, 134.

[21] See Terry Jones, *Chaucer's Knight: The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 11.

[22] See Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-2, and Webb, *Pilgrimage*, XII.

[23] Linehan and Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 137.

[24] See Palmer A. Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade: A Study of Public Opinion and Crusade Propaganda* (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1940), 7.

as 'pilgrims', but they also wrote of the 'army' (*exercitus*) in which they were serving.[25]

Obviously, to refer to crusaders as pilgrims was not the invention of Middle English writers; rather, it was the only putative linguistic option.[26] Fourteenth-century English writers needed to use pilgrimage jargon in order to tackle the matter of crusading; therefore, though it does not directly condemn slaughtering the Saracens or critique going on armed pilgrimage, the *Tales*, similar to Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, is by default a crusading poem. Its pilgrimage structure makes it an ideal genre for handling the polemic of crusading.

Accordingly, this study argues that crusading is a central theme in the *Tales* as well as Chaucer's other works. In contrast with scholars like Elizabeth Siberry who argues that Chaucer's poetry does not tackle crusading at all, I argue that Chaucer's poetry is replete with anti-crusade references, but they are expressed indirectly.[27] Instead of saying a statement as direct as Gower's "to werre and sle the Sarazin, /… that hiere I noght" (*Confessio* 3.2488-95) or that of Langland's "That sola fides suffict to save with lewed peple. / And so may Sarsens be saved, scribes and [Grekis]" (*Piers* B, 15.389-90), the *Tales* critiques crusading by promoting peace and reconciliation over war and vengeance as in the Tale of Melibee, and by celebrating heavenly rather than earthly Jerusalem as the real destination of man's lifelong pilgrimage as in the Parson's Tale (*CT* X, 48-51). Also, it critiques crusading by focusing on the impertinences of both pilgrimage and chivalry, the two main components of crusading.[28] I contend that Chaucer's *Tales* creates a quasi-Christian pilgrimage in which pilgrims spend most of their time speaking about

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[25] Jonathan Simon Christopher Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67. See also, Zacher, *Curiosity*, 46.
[26] See Stefan Erik Vander Elst, "Chaucer and the Crusades: A Study in Late Medieval Literary and Political Thought" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 1-2.
[27] "Criticism of Crusading," 127–34.
[28] See Throop, Criticism, 206-06.

profane topics like secular love as in the tales of the Knight and Franklin, sex as in the tales of the Miller and Merchant, and deception as in the tales of the Reeve and Friar. In doing so, the poet constructs a mocking model of pilgrimage that is worth of nothing other than readers' detest and critique. Thus, I argue that Chaucer constructs the *Tales*' deformed journey in order to encourage readers to express their abomination of any irreligious version of pilgrimage, e.g. crusading, but at their own risk.

Furthermore, the *Tales* critiques crusading by focusing on the impertinences of its military component, namely chivalry. Chaucer introduces the three main representatives of chivalry –the Knight (*CT* I, 43-78), the Squire (*CT* I, 80-100), and the Yeoman (*CT* I, 103-16)- as pilgrims whose devotion is suspect, not admired. The Knight is introduced as a professional armed man whose Christian devotion and belonging to celestial Jerusalem did not prevent him from fighting for "the lord of Palatye / Agayn another hethen in Turkye" (*CT* I, 65-66).[29] Likewise, the Squire is a crusader whose main enemies are the *schismatics* who live "In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie" (*CT* I, 85-6). Interestingly, this Squire does not fight for Christ or heavenly Jerusalem, but "In hope to stonden in his lady grace" (*CT* I, 88). Despite the apparent compatibility between chivalry and love, at least for Geoffroi de Charny and Sir Thomas Malory, the Squire's devotion to his lady contradicts with the Christian convention that in order to receive the remission of sins, a pilgrim's

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[29] For the pro-crusade connotations of the Knight's portrait, see John Matthews Manly, "A Knight Ther Was," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 38 (1907): 89-107, Nevill Coghill, *The Poet Chaucer* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 128-29, David Wright, introduction to *The Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford [Oxfordshire]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 14, and Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 179. For the counter argument, see Jones, *Chaucer's Knight*, 1980).

devotion should be directed only to God.[30] Thus, the Squire's devotion to a lady rather than God

annihilates the spirituality of his crusading expeditions.

Similarly, the Squire's Yeoman's portrait is completely irreligious, as it stands as a

combination of war's military components and pilgrimage's civil components. Chaucer writes:

> …he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
> A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
> Under his belt he bar ful thriftily,
> (wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly:
> His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe)
> And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
> …Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
> And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
> And on that oother syde a gay daggere
> Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere
> A Cristopher on his brest of silver sheene.
> An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene (*CT* I, 103-16).

Nothing in the portrait reflects the Yeoman's pilgrim-personality except the first and last lines,

which focus on the man's green attire that ironically sandwiches the Yeoman's military identity.

Yet, though the color green is by itself a problem, as it associates the pilgrim with the devil more

than with God, the poet's focus on the Yeoman's weapons, which are "kene" and "gay,"

undermines the pilgrim's spirituality.[31] Even if one argues that pilgrims needed to carry some

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[30] Geoffroi de Charny states, "men should love secretly, protect, serve, and honor all those ladies and damsels who inspire knights, men-at-arms and squires to undertake worthy deeds which bring them honor and increase their renown" (*A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry: Geoffroi De Charny*, trans. Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 120). Likewise, Malory says, "Love is not allowed to interfere with the customs of knight-errantry. As a true knight-errant, what Tristram values above all is not the presence of his beloved, nor the joy of sharing every moment of his life with her, but the high privilege of fighting in her name" (Thomas Malory, *Works,* ed. Eugène Vinaver, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, quoted in Richard W. Kaeuper and Montgomery Bohna*,* "War and Chivalry," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture C.1350-C.1500*, ed. Peter Brown, 273-291 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 281).
[31] The devilish connotation of the Yeoman's green attire is discussed in Clarence H. Miller, "The Devil's Bow and Arrows: Another Clue to the Identity of the Yeoman in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale,*" *The Chaucer Review* 30, No. 2 (1995): 211-14.

weapons to protect themselves from thieves and other dangers on the way to Canterbury, Chaucer's viewpoint about the incompatibility between peaceful pilgrimage and armed people is direct and clear: those who "bereth a spere… bere a swerd… hem and hir conseil eschewe" (*CT* VII, 12-13).[32] Armed men are worthy neither as companions on a journey nor as advisers, a viewpoint that makes armed *pilgrims*, whether those of Canterbury or those of Jerusalem, untrustworthy. Interestingly, Chaucer's opposition to reconciling peaceful pilgrimage with deadly weapons coincides with the Christian convention that a pilgrim should prove his total submission and belief in the "mercy and protection of God" by carrying only "his purse and his staff," not sword and spear.[33] Thus, as the Yeoman's weapons' "gay" nature "does not take away the fact that they are also very deadly," the Yeoman's spirituality is suspect.[34]

Overall, though the *Tales* does not tackle crusading directly, and focuses instead on secular chivalry, courtly love, sex, deception, hypocrisy, and other secular as well as religious themes, its sporadic sort of anti-chivalric portraits, scenes, and ironic statements demonstrate that crusading was present in Chaucer's mind when the *Tales* was under composition.[35] They also suggest that Chaucer, similar to Gower and Langland, did not see crusading as a holy project, but as a banner that fourteenth-century England's court and Church, similar to their equivalents in the rest of Europe, used in order to justify and finance their secular wars and other materialistic policies.[36] Accordingly, this study argues that Chaucer was an opponent of crusading. Nevertheless, for a set

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[32] For further information about carrying weapons to pilgrimage, see H. E. J. Cowdrey, "The Genesis of the Crusades," in *The Holy War*, ed. Thomas Murphy (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 26.

[33] Ibid., 22.

[34] Elst, "Chaucer and the Crusades," 4.

[35] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 355.

[36] For a discussion of Gower and Langland's anti-crusade perspective, see Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading," 129-130.

of *personal* reasons, such as his heavy reliance on the court, the poet was not able to declare his anti-crusade viewpoint.[37] Consequently, he used certain techniques of indirection like irony through which he was able to inveigh against crusading with impunity.

Since this study discusses Chaucer's involvement in the polemic of crusading and explains why he was too hesitant to declare his anti-crusade viewpoint, it is worth mentioning that some scholars have already discussed the treatment of crusading in Chaucer's poetry. In his outstanding book *Chaucer's Knight: The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary*,[38] Terry Jones examines the image of Chaucer's Knight throughout the *Tales* and concludes that by portraying his "soldier of Christ" as a mercenary, Chaucer critiques the "wars in which the innocent suffered."[39] While this conclusion coincides with my own argument, Jones' insistence on Christianizing and nationalizing Chaucer's critique of crusading does not decipher the Knight's portrait and maneuver throughout the *Tales*. What the *Tales* blames, as Jones infers, is "the extension of the holy war within the borders of Christendom itself [which] was a scandal, and the readiness of some Englishmen to sell their services to wither side in the Pope's wars [which was] a source of shame and anger."[40] Jones restricts Chaucer's opposition to Christian-against-Christian crusades, and he attributes that opposition to *Chaucer's patriotic affiliation*. While such a conclusion seems valid, the Knight's

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[37] Earle Birney, *Essays on Chaucerian Irony* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

[38] See also Terry Jones, Robert Yeager, Terry Dolay, Alan Fletcher, and Juliette Dor, *Who Murdered Chaucer? A Medieval Mystery* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/ St. Martin's Press, 2003).

[39] *Chaucer's Knight*, 56, 144.

[40] Ibid., 41-42. See also 55-56 and 87-88. Similar to Jones' argument with its restricted view of Chaucer's anti-crusade voice, Siberry argues that Gower and Langland were the only two English poets whose works include some hints and phrases that partially oppose materialistic crusading in favor of "missionary work." She says, all Langland and Gower, similar to Wycliffe whose main "objections centered upon the use of the crusade against fellow Christians," were concerned about "the church's preoccupation with worldly matters than spiritual affairs" (Criticism of Crusading," 130, 128, 129-130).

overall pacifist maneuver throughout the *Tales*, as manifested by his armless appearance, his tale, and his reconciliation of the Pardoner-Host quarrel, does not necessarily reflect Christian or patriotic motivations. Obviously, the Knight's Tale does not praise ideal paganism in order to promote Christianity. Likewise, the Knight's interruption of the other pilgrims' quibbles does not have any obvious patriotic explanation. Thus, my study concurs with Jones' reading of the Knight's portrait as an anti-crusade piece; yet, I argue that Chaucer's denouncement of crusading and his condemnation of warfare can be restricted neither to a religion nor a country. Chaucer's anti-crusade viewpoint, as this study argues, is driven by purely humanistic intents.

Another relevant treatment of Chaucer's involvement in the polemic of crusading is *Chaucer and the Crusades: A Study in Late Medieval Literary and Political Thought* by Stefan Erik Vander Elst. In his study, Elst reads the Knight and the Squire's tales in light of Nicolaus von Jeroschin's *Kronike von Pruzinlant*, *Bâtard de Bouillon* as well as *Baudouin de Sebourc*, and Guillaume de Machaut's *La Prise d'Alixandre* and celebrates the intertextuality of Chaucer's works. Elst concludes that Chaucer's greatness as a poet is due to his ability to deploy the poetic conventions that he learned from French, Italian, and Latin texts in order to respond to his society's concerns, such as the corruption of crusading. Elst argues that the Knight's Tale represents a crusade-propaganda that is intended "to return the crusade to its eleventh and twelfth-century origins," and that the Squire's Tale is meant "to associate the crusade with romance adventure done for the love of ladies, and the crusader frontier with the Arthurian otherworld."[41] While such conclusions seem valid, they fail to pay attention to the ironic connotations of the Knight and Squire's portraits. Instead of viewing the Knight and Squire' portraits as models Chaucer wants people to condemn, Elst takes these portraits as a representation of a more civilized and ideal past.

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[41] "Chaucer and the Crusades," abstract, 1-2.

Still, though such a decoding of Chaucer's ironic constructs might be valid, the Knight's Tale's implicit call for love and pacifism among people, as manifested by Theseus' relinquishing of war in favor of marrying Ypolita (*CT* I, 880-81), his decree to substitute the mortal combat of Arcite and Palamon for a friendly tournament (2537-60), and his outstanding support of Emelye-Palamon marriage as a way to relinquish the sad agonies of war and death (3075-89), is hard to reconcile with any pro-crusade argument. Thus, in opposition to Elst's pro-crusade interpretation and Houseman's viewpoint that the Knight's Tale is an unsuccessful poem that has no clear purpose, I argue that reconciling humans and promoting peace among them are Chaucer's main concerns throughout the *Tales* in general and the Knight's Tale in particular.[42]

Another study of Chaucer's treatment of crusading is Celia M. Lewis' "History, Mission, and Crusade in The *Canterbury Tales*," which argues that "crusade is of a deeper significance in the *Tale* than scholars have noted."[43] Lewis examines the Man of Law's Tale, part of the Monk's Tale, and a little portion of the Parson's Tale as anti-crusade messages, and she concludes that "[even] though violence may be ordained by as high a power as the pope, surely such acts cannot to the pious individual be without the taint of sin, or the prick of conscience."[44] While this argument is accurate and invaluable, Chaucer's anti-crusade sentiment cannot be restricted to the Man of Law's Tale or to a few parts of the Monk and the Parson's tales. Rather, it dominates all of his poetry, especially the *Tales*, which critiques crusading through its pilgrimage framework, Prologue, panoply of tales, and Retraction. In other words, the *Tales*' anti-crusade voice can be limited neither to the poet's direct voice in the Prologue, Retraction, and his personal tales, nor to any of his pilgrims' voices. In fact, critiquing crusading is part of almost every part of the *Tales*;

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[42] J. A. Burrow, *Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Anthology* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 136.
[43] 355.
[44] Ibid., 374-75.

therefore, I argue that to understand the *Tales'* anti-crusade voice, one needs to scrutinize not only the tales of chivalry like those of the Knight and Man of Law, but also other tales like the Miller's Tale and the Rhyme of Sir Thopas in addition to the poem's general pilgrimage framework and use of irony.

Overall, this dissertation views the *Tales* as Chaucer's anti-crusade manifesto, and argues that the poet's anti-crusade voice in his last major work is a continuation of the prevalent pacifist sentiment of *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, *ABC*, *Lack of Steadfastness*, *Former Age*, and Chaucer's other poems. Thus, to achieve this goal, I divide this study into five main chapters. The first chapter focuses on the prevalence of crusading in fourteenth-century England. It argues that due to certain materialistic considerations, crusading was guarded by the English court and Church against any sort of critiquing, a matter that remarkably reduced the dissenters of crusading among whom are John Gower, William Langland, and, as I argue, Geoffrey Chaucer. The second chapter discusses the perception of crusading in Middle English poetry and argues that Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* are the most explicit anti-crusade voices of England. After this, the third chapter discusses Chaucer's anti-crusade viewpoint in the poems that are written before the *Tales*, such as *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, *Former Age*, *ABC*, and others. I view Chaucer's promotion of peace, common good, love, and harmony versus war, cupidity, hatred, and animosity among people as a critique against crusading and its violent products.

Next, the fourth chapter argues that the *Tales* is Chaucer's main work that inveighs against crusading, but from behind a veil. For a fuller understanding of such a veil, this chapter discusses the *Tales'* pilgrimage framework and irony as the two main techniques of indirection that Chaucer uses for critiquing crusading. Among the various tales that I discuss in this chapter, I focus on the

Knight's Tale, which is the most chivalric among the tales and therefore has most of Chaucer's anti-crusade ironies. After this, the fifth chapter explains why Chaucer, different from Gower and Langland to a certain degree, was hesitant to critique crusading directly. I attribute such a perplexing hesitation to two main facts: first, the poet's heavy reliance on the court in a very turbulent political period; second, the poet's courtly training and education. Thus, the study concludes that regardless of why Chaucer critiqued crusading, his vociferous call of pacifism, advocacy of love, and implicit anti-crusade arguments are central to his poetry and should not be ignored.

II.   Chapter One: The Status of Crusading in Fourteenth-Century England

   A- Introduction:

For a thoughtful analysis of the perception of crusading in fourteenth-century English poetry, it is important to provide first a historical description of the crusading phenomenon, focusing on its prominence and status in medieval Europe, especially England. This chapter, therefore, aims to demonstrate that the "crusade was very much in men's minds in England, and was a live issue in political society, among the highest and most influential in the realm."[45] Yet, trying not to merely echo what historians say about crusading in the later Middle Ages, this chapter focuses on the later crusades' materialism, which seems to be the main motivation for many crusaders to take up the cross and fight against schismatics, non-Christians, and Christians as well. Thus, in addition to Atiya's belief that the main reasons for fourteenth-century crusading were "political, religious, and economic," I argue that most, if not all, of the later crusades demonstrate almost total absence of the theological concerns.[46] Even if the spiritual value of crusading was a major impetus, the economic-political as well as social benefits of crusading, this chapter argues, were the real stimulators of people's apparent devotion and belonging to the Holy Sepulcher. In fact, crusaders adopted the ideals of crusading in the later Middle Ages because "the crusade was

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[45] Keen, "Chaucer's Knight, the English Aristocracy and the Crusade," in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Scattergood and Sherborne (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 57. Similarly, Delany concludes "that both the theory and practise of crusade continued to enjoy a great deal of prestige in Chaucer's day" ("Geographies," 229-230). Also, "[for] Edward Gibbon, the crusades concerned nothing less than 'the world's debate'. Two centuries later, it can still be argued that crusading 'was of central importance to nearly every country in Europe and the Near East until the reformation' with profound implications for modern politics…'" (Linehan and Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 131). Humbert of Romans, an eminent thirteenth-century theologian and critic, says, "It should not by thought for a moment that the holy war was over" (Throop, *Criticism*, 94).
[46] *The Crusades in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1938), 4.

the great proof of knightly honor and virtues,"[47] and because it was a way to gain ladies' love and people's respect[48] as well as a way to secure a good source of income.[49] Overall, this chapter explains how crusading was very dominant in fourteenth-century England, and it argues that the main motivations of crusading were materialistic, mainly political and economic.

B- The Dominance of Crusading in Fourteenth-Century England:

Crusaders "almost invariably saw themselves as pilgrims…In English, surprisingly, 'crusade' and 'crusader' only established themselves in the nineteenth century… [Thus] 'pilgrim' continued to be the word that came most readily to medieval minds."[50] Obviously, the linguistic fusion between crusading and pilgrimage has resulted from the lack of English to words for "crusade;" yet, such a lack should not eliminate the remarkable social and cultural inclination to promote war as a form of pilgrimage.[51] English was rich in words that could express the image of fighters, or soldiers; nevertheless, the word "pilgrim" was used probably to associate English knights and soldiers with a more spiritual context. It seems that England wanted its army be viewed as the physical embodiment of Christ's spiritual power, and, in consequence, its wars against

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[47] Throop, *Criticism*, 205. See also Cowdrey, "The Genesis of Crusades," 23, and Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 130.

[48] Chaucer reports that the Squire "… hadde been somtyme in chyvachie / In flaundres, in artoys, and pycardie, / And born hym weel, as of so litel space, / In hope to stonden in his lady grace" (The General Prologue, 85-88).

[49] "While they [people] were engaged on the crusade, they could have the revenues of their benefices, expecting daily distributions, provided they supplied vicars to maintain the services and the cure of souls" (William Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England* ((Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1939-1962), 536).

[50] Morris and Roberts, *Pilgrimage*, 1-2.

[51] Discussing the integrality of the crusading ideology to the culture of England in the fourteenth century, Linehan and Nelson declare that "from its inception, crusading was a phenomenon of the culture of Western Christendom even where its implementation was not" (*The Medieval World*, 133).

Scotland, Ireland, France, and other political rivals become more righteous and lawful.[52] Thus, through the linguistic connection between crusading and pilgrimage, fighting in Scotland, France, Gascony, Normandy, Britany, Spain, and Prussia was viewed as equal, if not a substitution, for fighting the Saracens in Spain and the East, and for going on pilgrimage to the holy sites and shrines in Gargano, Compostela, Rome, Canterbury, and Jerusalem. In fact, Englishmen looked at the two traditions as equally significant steps for recovering the Holy Land through eliminating the internal and external enemies of God.[53]

Crusading and pilgrimage were viewed as two interrelated levels, or forms, of the same holy tradition; therefore, crusading was perceived as a purely holy tradition through which crusaders could express their complete devotion and submission to Christ and consequently gain a plenary remission of sins.[54] Instead of viewing crusading as a form of violent war, the linguistic connection between pilgrimage and crusading enabled the latter to disguise its violent nature and be seen as peaceful and just war.[55] As the crusading songs of the troubadors and trouveres display:

> The Crusader did not really go forth to war, he went on a pilgrimage, as a pilgrim.
> He did not join an army – at least not a secular one; rather he made a personal
> decision, more in the nature of a conversion, to join the sacred army of God's saints.

[52] "Knicht," "cnihten," "knyght," "cniht," "cniȝt," "werrayure," "worreours," "werriouris," "werreyoure," "horsemen," "baneur," "banere," "sauders," "sawders," "Souldeour," "Souldyours," "mercenarye," "ledere," "archere," "combataunt," and others.
[53] "[Although] the Holy Land retained its primacy of respect and ambition, contemporaries looked on all expeditions against the infidels as equivalent in some informal fashion" (Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988,) 266). See also, (Norman Housley, *The Later Crusade from Lyons to Alcazar* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3). See also Richard L. Crocker, "Early Crusade Songs," in *Holy War*, ed., Murphy, 96-97.
[54] For more information about the perception of crusade as pilgrimage, see Bush, "The Pilgrimage of Grace," 195.
[55] "The crusades represented a blending of the tradition of pilgrimage with that of holy war" (Zacher, *Curiosity*, 46). Also, "pilgrimage and crusading continued to be inseparably, at times indistinguishably, woven together" (Linehan and Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 137).

> The foes he was to fight were internal foes… The external foes, the Saracens, are merely extensions of the inner ones.[56]

Instead of seeing crusaders as soldiers, whose profession demanded "killing and destroying men whom God has created and for whom Christ died," Europe, because of the pilgrimage-crusade conflation, looked at crusaders as the armed saints of Christ.[57] Crusaders viewed themselves and were viewed by others as true pilgrims whose main goal was to serve Christ and the Holy Church and whose power stemmed from their devotion and purity rather than from swords and greed. As Bush reads in *Piers Plowman*, "[the] pilgrimage of Grace…became a crusade to preserve a holy institution against the barbaric designs of an alien sect," and that "[the] Northern revolts only qualify as pilgrimage in the form of a crusade to rescue the Church from the heretic."[58] Regardless of whether Piers could be tolerant to crusading under any condition, the poem testifies to the cultural reciprocity between crusading and pilgrimage, through which crusading became known as "armed pilgrimage."[59] In brief, the many references to "crusaders" as "pilgrims" in English literature as well as the different historical and juridical documents demonstrate that the reputation of crusading arose mainly from its fusion with pilgrimage.

    1- The Prevalence of Pilgrimage:

Pilgrimage was a structural part of life in fourteenth-century England.[60] The many people who died on their way to Jerusalem and other holy sites and the many pilgrimage writings such as *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (1356), *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1414), and Chaucer's

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[56] Crocker, "Early Crusade Songs," 96-97.

[57] Quoted in Bernice Hamilton, *Political Thought in Sixteenth-Century Spain*: *A Study of the Political Ideas of Vitoria, De Soto, Suárez, and Molina* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 157.

[58] "The Pilgrimage of Grace," 186, 195.

[59] Christopher Tyerman, "What the Crusades Meant to Europe," in *The Medieval World*, eds., Linehan and Nelson, 131-145, 134.

[60] See Morris and Roberts, *Pilgrimage*, 7.

the Wife of Bath's Tale demonstrate that people from different classes took the pilgrimage journey and were seriously concerned about maintaining its continuity.[61] Some people such as Chaucer's pilgrims went on a pilgrimage to heal sickness,[62] others went to receive full remission of sins,[63] and some went as a penalty.[64] Simultaneously, others invested in pilgrimage for materialistic reasons, such as escaping a debt, penalty, or duty,[65] and that is why, "King Richard II," as Donald Howard states, "found it necessary to require anyone on a 'far pilgrimage' to obtain 'a letters patent under the king's seal, which states the purpose of his journey and the time appointed for his homecoming, if he is to return'."[66] Though Richard's attempt to manage pilgrimage could have been motivated by a purely political reason, which might be not to let English knights and soldiers leave the nation while they were needed, such an event demonstrates that pilgrimage was widespread to the point that it caught the attention of the King himself.[67]

In fact, Richard II was interested in sponsoring the tradition of pilgrimage, as Froissart's *Chronicles* reports, and he viewed it in the context of both royal and spiritual traditions. As a royal tradition, the kings, queens, knights, dukes, barons, monks, and common people of medieval

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[61] *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* is intended to remind people of the Holy Land "For als moche as it is long tyme passed that ther was no generalle passage… and many men desiren for to here speke of the Holy Land and han thereof great solace and comfort." *The Travels* invites Christians "to conquere oure heritage and chacen out alle the mysbeleeuynge men." (1-4) However, for a concise magnificent explanation of why *The Travels of Mandeville* is extremely important to the tradition of pilgrimage as well as crusade in England. See Howard, *Writes and Pilgrims*, 53-76. In addition, for a list of pilgrims' names, see Tyerman, *England and Crusade*, 283-84.

[62] "The hooly blisful martir for to seke, / That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke" (Chaucer, The General Prologue, 17-18).

[63] Murphy, *The Holy War*, 22. See also, Webb, *Pilgrimage*, XV.

[64] Alan Kendall, *Medieval Pilgrims* (New York: Putnam, 1970), 19.

[65] Howard, *Writers and Pilgrims*, 15. See also, Zacher, *Curiosity*.

[66] Ibid., 15.

[67] Referring to the reign of Richard II, Zacher reports that "'never was any land or realm in such great danger as England at that time" (*Curiosity*, 90-91).

England took pilgrimages to various holy destinations, such as Boulogne, Canterbury, and Jerusalem. Notably, in 1326, the queen of Edward II, accompanied by her young son Edward III, the earl of Kent, and Sir Roger Mortimer, went on a pilgrimage to Saint Thomas Becket, Winchelsea, and Boulogne.[68] Likewise, in 1328, John of Hainault, the uncle of Philippa who married Edward III, went on a pilgrimage to Lady Boulogne with some of his coterie,[69] and in 1383, the countess of Biscay, the wife of Sir Peter of Beam, accompanied her son and daughter on a pilgrimage to Saint James.[70] In brief, the significance and prevalence of pilgrimage in the royal tradition of Europe was one of the main reasons that motivated Richard II to adopt and sponsor pilgrimage.

Another possible reason for Richard's sponsorship of and interest in pilgrimage is the king's sincere devotion to Christ and the saints. Froissart reports that he visited King Richard II in 1395, gifted him a book, and heard from people about how deeply the King was touched by pilgrimage. Froissart writes:

> I came to Canterbury to Saint Thomas' shrine and to the tomb of the noble Prince of Wales, who is there interred right richly. There I heard mass and made mine offering to the holy saint, and then dined at my lodging, and there I was informed how king Richard should be there the next day on pilgrimage, which was after his return out of Ireland, where he had been the space of nine months or thereabout. The king had a devotion to visit Saint Thomas' shrine, and also because the prince his father was there buried.[71]

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[68] Froissart, *The Chronicles of Froissart*, trans. John Bourcher, lord Berners, ed. G. C. Macaulay (London: Macmillan and co., limited, 1930), VI & VII, 4-5. I am quoting Froissart's *Chronicles* throughout my dissertation from this edition.
[69] Ibid., VIII & XIX, 24-25.
[70] Ibid., XXVII, 334-35.
[71] Ibid., CXCVI, 424.

Besides the direct reference to Richard's connection to Canterbury, the location of his father's tomb, Froissart explains that Richard viewed pilgrimage as an act of devotion, considering it a way to thank God for granting victory to the English and for protecting him in his expeditions.

In addition, Richard's devotion to pilgrimage might be the result of his political desire to gain common people's support and respect, taking into account that England was obsessed with the idea of pilgrimage. Sidney Heath writes, "[at] the shrine of Becket at Canterbury the annual number of pilgrims exceeded for many years the remarkable figure of two hundred thousand, and the extraordinary devotion paid to this saint appears at one time to have almost, if not quite, effaced the adoration of the Deity."[72] Thus, if Becket had attracted this number of pilgrims and alms, then it is easy to imagine how widely pilgrimage was prevalent and influential in medieval England.[73] Again, celebrating the influence of pilgrimage on the different phases of life in the later Middle Ages, Sheila Delany says, "[pilgrimage] was also, of course, major export business, especially lucrative for money-lenders, shipbuilders, seamen, hostellers and suppliers."[74] Having men of business, such as merchants, bankers, landlords, and manufacturers, investing their money in pilgrimage testifies to how such a tradition was phenomenally attractive to a great number of people from the different classes. Pilgrimage was not an exclusive tradition for a certain social

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[72] *Pilgrim Life in the Middle Ages* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1971), 29.

[73] Thomas Becket, with respect to his miracles and high status for many Christians, is seen in this study as a controversial person, a man with "different faces to different people" (Webb, *Pilgrimage*, 45). While Becket's super talent in curing disease, especially leprosy, is not to ignore (Carol Rawcliffe, "Curing Bodies and Healing Souls," in *Pilgrimage*, Morris and Roberts, 119), I believe that Piers' decision not to give a farthing to Becket should also not be ignored. Langland writes: "'Nay, by [the peril of] my soule!' quod Piers and gan to swere, / 'I nolde fange a ferthyng, for Seint Thomas shrine!'" (Langland, *Piers* B, 5.557-58).

[74] "Geographies," 227. Likewise, Heath says, "[there] is little reason to doubt that the organization of bands of pilgrims for transmarine voyages developed into a regular trade, and one that may be said to have been the first great commercial speculation of medieval days" (*Pilgrim Life*, 30).

class or special type of people; instead, it meant something for everyone. Thus, it was necessary for the King to be viewed as part of such a phenomenon.

However, pilgrimage in England was more of an economic-social and political fashion rather than an innocent religious tradition.[75] Viewing Chaucer's *Tales* as a panoramic view of its English society, Zacher declares that besides their spiritual motivation, English pilgrims took the holy journey to Canterbury and other destinations for different nonreligious reasons. For the Wife of Bath, pilgrimage is "an opportunity for *daliaunce* (III, 566 ff); that the merchant in the *Shipman's Tale* looks upon pilgrimage as one convenient way of eluding creditors (VII, 233-34), and the Friar thinks the pilgrims, as they 'ryde by the weye' here, 'Nedeth not to speken but of game' (III, 1274-75)."[76] Still, such contamination of pilgrimage's original intent should not overshadow the fact that the different classes of England showed a great "avidity with which the credulous of all classes, men and more especially women, sought to buy the plenary remissions."[77] In other words, many English people from different classes were seriously working to gain a plenary remission of sins whether by visiting the shrine of Becket or paying money for indulgences. Thus, crusading, viewed as no more than a version of pilgrimage, was an option for English people as it granted "a rare opportunity to those who wanted the joy of fighting along with the reward of heaven."[78] Consequently, many Englishmen took the cross and fought under the crusading banners as innocent pilgrims whose main purpose was to serve Christ and the Holy

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[75] In fact, pilgrimage as an-economic-social fashion became more importance than being a merely religious practice or tradition since the moment it became lucrative, it becomes more important for politicians and merchants, of course, out of their love for people. Therefore, beside the Pope and his archbishops, pilgrimage in medieval England was supported and protected by merchants and politicians, including Richard II. See *Chronicles* Ch. CXCVI, 424.

[76] *Curiosity*, 88.

[77] May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307-1399* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 431.

[78] Throop, *Criticism*, 205.

Church, a fact that shows how the understanding of crusading in the fourteenth century stemmed originally from the prevalence of pilgrimage.

2- The Popularity of Crusading:

Besides the reputation that it gained through its linguistic unity with pilgrimage, the importance of crusading was maximized through the royal adoption of the ideals of Holy War. Froissart reports how King Philip of France, encouraged by the Pope, with the company of many lords, dukes, earls, barons, and knights, including King Charles of Bohemia, the King of Navarre, and King Peter of Aragon, led the preparations for a crusade in 1337 against the heretics of Bohemia. The French King sent letters to the King of Hungary, the King of Cyprus, and the King of Sicily asking each of them "to open the passages of his country to receive the pilgrims of God."[79] Significantly too in demonstrating the involvement of many kings of Christendom in the crusading project is the French royal letter to the Hungarian King in 1396 speaking about the Turks who were approaching the Danube:

> therefore sith he hath said it, by all likelihood he will do it, and if he pass not the Dunoe to come hither to this side, then let us pass over and enter into Turkey with puissance: for the king of Hungary with such aid as he hath of strangers shall well make an hundred thousand men, and such a number of such men are well able to conquer all Turkey and to go into the empire of Perse; and if we may have one journey of victory upon the great Turk, we shall do after what we list, and shall conquer Syria and all the holy land of Jerusalem, and shall deliver it from the hands of the soudan and the enemies of God. For at the summer next coming the French king and the king of England, who will conjoin together, shall raise up a great number of men of arms and of archers and shall find the passages open to receive them. Then nothing shall abide before us, but all shall be conquered and put in our obeisance, when we shall go all together.[80]

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[79] *Chronicles* Ch. XXVII, 38-39.
[80] *Chronicles*, CCVI, 436. See also CCVI-CCXV, 435-453 where Froissart describes the various preparations and actions that took place as part of the Saracen-Christian conflicts/ crusades of the 1396.

Clearly, crusading constituted an integral part of the political and military strategies of medieval Europe, and its ideals were the skeleton of the various defensive and offensive wars of Christendom inside and outside Europe.

Another example that shows the involvement of the kings of medieval Christendom in crusading is the political conspiracy of some Christian kings against King Don Peter of Castile in 1364-66. As Froissart reports, in an attempt to depose King Don Peter of Castile in favor of his bastard brother Henry, a huge group of armed men led by the King of Aragon and Henry the Bastard received the Pope's blessings and then launched a mission against Peter of Castile in the name of Christ. They sent a message to Peter of Castile "desiring him to open the straits of his country and to give free passage to the *pilgrims of God*, who had enterprised by great devotion to go into the realm of Granade, to revenge the death and passion of our Lord Jesu Christ and destroy the infidels and to exalt the Christian faith."[81] Obviously, besides the rhetorical use of "pilgrims" to refer to crusaders, this royal conspiracy shows that crusading was deployed to serve political goals, and that it was central to the life and politics of many European countries, including England.

As in other Christian countries, crusading in England too was a dominant and influential phenomenon. The promises of Edward I and Edward II to go on crusade for the recovery of the Holy Land did not go unfulfilled.[82] In the 1280s, Edward I expressed to Pope Nicholas III his deep remorse for being too busy to wage crusades.[83] Also, from a letter written by Edward I in 1294 to Florent of Hainault, prince of Achaea in Frankish Greece, one can tell that the English King was

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[81] *Chronicles* CCXXIX, 155. Italic mine.
[82] See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 229-245.
[83] James Raine, ed., *Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers* (London: Longman, 1873), 63.

truly interested in crusading. He explained with anger the various circumstances that made his planned crusading expedition of the East impossible then.[84] Moreover, Edward I, insisting to be the Christian ambassador to Il-Khan, the Mongol ruler of Persia, declared, "I have the sign of the cross on my body; this affair is my chief concern. My heart swells at the thought of that."[85] Furthermore, in 1306, Edward I swore that after defeating the Scot Robert Bruce, he would never bear a sword except in a crusade of the Holy Land.[86] In short, Edward I was a crusader; therefore, the influence of crusading on his court, policies, and legacy should not be overlooked.[87]

Correspondingly, Edward II received the cross with his wife, Isabella, and her father Philip IV in 1313. After that, the King asked for papal advice "on whether he should be reanointed with a mysterious oil, said to have been given by the Virgin Mary to the exiled Thomas Becket with the promise that if the fifth king in succession of Henry II (i.e., Edward II) received his unction he would recover the Holy Land."[88] This incident indicates that crusading in the reign of Edward II was as significant as it was in the reign of Edward I.[89] Similarly, King Edward III kept crusading

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[84] See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 236; Michael Prestwich, *War, Politics, and Finance under Edward I* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972) 190. In a similar letter sent to the master of Templars, Edward I apologized for the reasons that prevented him from "'going to Jerusalem as he had vowed … upon which journey he has fixed his whole heart'" (qtd., in Tyerman, E*ngland and the Crusades*, 233).

[85] Frederick Maurice Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward; the Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, The Clarendon press, 1947), 731.

[86] Nicholas Trivet, *Annales sex Regum Angliae* (London: Oxford, 1719), 408-09. The eminent historian Thomas Walsingham reports that Edward I, encouraged by the archbishop of Canterbury to stop fighting the Scots, swore: "By God's Blood! For Zion's sake I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be at rest, but with all my strength I will defend my right that is known to all the world." (*Historia Anglicana*, ed., Henry Thomas Riley, vol. 1 (London: Longman, 1863-64), 82. See also William Brown, ed., *The Register of William Wickwane*, *Lord Archbishop of York, 1279-1285* (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1907), 467.

[87] See Attila Barany, "The Last *Rex Crucesignatus*, Edward I, and the Mongol Alliance," *Annual of Medieval Studies at Central European University* 16 (2010): 202-23.

[88] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 245.

[89] "Between 1308 and July 1310, ten royal licenses were issued to people departing for the East" (Ibid., 242).

as part of the royal heritage and strategic polices. He started his reign by joining the King of Aragon

in an expedition (1331-33) against the Moors of Spain and by "declaring himself [in 1337] willing

to supply one thousand men-at-arms for a crusade."[90] Froissart reports that in 1340, Edward III,

followed by his nobles, aristocrats, knights, and people, led a war "by the grace of God and Saint

George" against the French army on the sea before Sluys in Flanders. After winning the battle,

Edward "went [on] a pilgrimage to our Lady of Ardembourg."[91]

    Maintaining crusading as a "royal" practice and tradition, the Black Prince, John of Gaunt,

and Richard II adopted crusading ideals and were known as crusaders.[92] The Black Prince was

fully involved in the crusading of the mid-1360s. He asked Lord d'Albert for help in his Spanish

expeditions,[93] and he also intervened in the Castilian succession of 1367. Similarly, John of Gaunt

led a campaign in 1386 against the Spanish Moors, where one of his knights was Richard II's

brother, John Holland, the earl of Huntingdon.[94] In addition, Gaunt's legitimate son, Henry

Bolingbroke, fought as a crusader in Lithuania and Prussia in 1390-92 after his failure to join the

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[90] See Ibid., 249. Still, despite of his great contributions to the project of crusade, Edward III is referred to by some historians as "the first English king since Stephen not to take the cross" (Ibid., 247). That is to say, his participation of the Christian campaign against the Spanish Moors is seen as a purely political step, to save the English interests in the Castile. Moreover, Christopher Tyerman states that there is no indication of the king's serious interest in the crusade. Some of the points historians take against Edward III is that most of his promises to support the crusade died in their cradles, and that he once announced that he does not have any money to spend on crusade (Ibid., 246-47). Though these charges might be valid, it is significant to mention here that Edward III did never prevent any of his men, nobles, high class members, knights, and other followers, from taking the cross or joining crusades (Keen, "Chaucer's Knight").

[91] *Chronicles* L, 61-63.

[92] See Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: the Baltic and the Catholic frontier, 1100-1525* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 150-56.

[93] See Froissart, *Chronicles*, vol. 2, 356, John Barnie, *War in Medieval English Society: Social Values in the Hundred Years War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), 86.

[94] See Keen, "Chaucer's Knight," 56.

French expedition against Tunis in 1390.[95] Likewise, besides having three of his uncles and his half-brother, John Holland, fully involved in Mezieres' Order of Passion, Richard II personally was involved in crusading.[96] Richard II sent Holland as the king's ambassador to the Hungarian King Sigismund in 1386 asking for military assistance against the Ottomans.[97] He also sent the duke of Gloucester in September 1391 to Prussia "to negotiate 'on certain matters' with the grand master of the Teutonic Knights on behalf of Richard II."[98]

Because of such royal adoption of crusading, noble families, "including the Beauchamps, Uffords, Bohuns, Percies, Despensers, Fitzwalters, Beaumonts, Scropes, Courtnays, and Montagues"[99] adopted that tradition. Many of Richard II's closest men, such as the William Neville, John Clanvow, the earl of Hereford, and the earl of Warwick and his son, joined the Tunis crusade in 1383 and 1386.[100] Some other Englishmen led by the bishop of Norwich marched against the "Clementines" in 1383. Froissart reports that Englishmen "provided themselves for the matter, and passage was delivered them at Dover and at Sandwich, and this was about Easter; and so… this voyage was in the manner of a *croisey*… the bishop and other captains were fully ready; for the bishop and sir Hugh Calverley, sir Thomas Trivet and sir William Helmon were with the

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[95] See Richard Kyngeston, *Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land Made by Henry Earl of Derby*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (Westminster: Camden Society, 1894), XLIII, XLV, and 117. See also, Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 266-276; Keen, "Chaucer's Knight;" and F. R. H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron, eds., *The Reign of Richard II* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1971), 153-72.

[96] Keen, "Chaucer's Knight," 56-57. See also Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 263.

[97] Lunt, *Financial Relations*, 541.

[98] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 273-74. The significance of having this person as the king's personal envoy is that Thomas of Gloucester was an enthusiastic crusader as he "responded with hostility to arguments presented in 1390 in favour of peace with France in the interests of a crusade against Islam" (Ibid., 293).

[99] Ibid., 268.

[100] See Ibid., 262-296, and Keen, "Chaucer's Knight,"46 for information of the participation of Richard II's knights in the 1390-91 crusades in the East.

king and his council."[101] As Tyerman explains, England's involvement in crusading was apparent through three different levels: "the court, individual nobles and knights, and the English free companies, which were organized, autonomous bands of mercenaries left without employment by the 1360 Treaty of Bretigny between England and France."[102] In short, Richard's England supported crusading, yet unofficially, with whatever means needed to guarantee the progress of that *holy* tradition.[103]

Moreover, as expressed in his *Letter to King Richard II* (1395), the structure of Mezieres' Order of Passion consists of three main categories, namely kings and princes, common people, and finally knights, merchants, barons, and squires.[104] Besides the Mezieres' Order, there appeared all over Europe other crusading orders, such as the Order of the King of Cyprus; the 'Toison d'Oro,' which was patronized by the Dukes of Burgundy; the 'Escu d'Or,' which was commanded by Good Duke, Louis II de Bourbon; the Teutonic Order; the Order of Acre, the "super Order;" and the Order of the Golden Fleece (1431).[105] Regardless of why these orders were designed, their existence testifies to the popularity of crusading in the fourteenth century, the involvement of the whole society in the crusading, and the materialistic nature of such a phenomenon.

In fact, crusading in the fourteenth century was not a purely theological project, but, "even for the Church they [the later crusades] were more than a spiritual exercise."[106] The abundance of

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[101] *Chronicles*, Ch. CCCCXXIX, 296. Italic mine.

[102] *England and the Crusades*, 290.

[103] "Unofficially" here means that fourteenth-century England was not, as Richard I's England, sanctioned as a crusading country by the Pope, and that England's crusades during that period were merely defensive or for purely non-religious goals. As Charles Tipton puts it, "the English government was in no way officially involved in the crusade" ("The English at Nicopolis," *Speculum* 37, no. 4 (October 1962): 528-40). See also Keen, "Chaucer's Knight," 55.

[104] Mézières, *Letter*.

[105] For more information, see Atiya, *The Crusades*, 14, Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 209-10, and Tyerman, *God's War*, 859-61.

[106] Delany, "Geographies," 227. See also, Zacher, *Curiosity*, 58.

crusades' indulgences and taxation[107] suggests that crusading was an "institution" that dominated the Christian society entirely, not only by providing crusaders and their patrons with the opportunity to get a full remission of sins, but also by securing for crusaders a source of income, prestige, and power.[108] Investigating the history of crusading in England, Keen concludes, "There were indeed certain so-called crusades in which a good many English knights took part in Richard II's day, but they were crusades in name only."[109] All in all, while the fourteenth century is the age of crusading, the materialistic nature of some expeditions such as that of Peter of Cyprus in 1365, demonstrates that the spiritual motivations of crusading were inferior to its materialistic ones, typically, the political, and economic.

C- The Materialism of Crusading:

Instead of functioning as an influential factor in defining England's Christian identity as part of Christendom, crusading did the opposite. It promoted England's national interests, politically and financially speaking, over the religious ones, and thus "[became] a political and military matter rather than a theological one."[110] However, to fully understand the materialism of crusading in fourteenth-century England, it is necessary theoretically to classify that materialism into three main categories of politics: personal politics, national politics, and episcopal politics. The first category refers to the deployment of crusading at the service of the individual interests of a person, class, or group. An example of this category is the English expeditions against Spain due to John of Gaunt's desire to reclaim the Castilian throne on behalf of his wife. Second, national

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[107] See Lunt, *The Financial Relations*, and Tyerman, *God's War*, 832.

[108] For more details, see Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 290-332, and *God's War*, 853. See also, Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading," 127–34; Keen, "Chaucer's Knight," 47–58.

[109] "Chaucer's Knight" 46. In Throop's words, crusading was "turned to other ends" (*Criticism*, 284).

[110] Housley, *The Avignon Papacy and the Crusades, 1305-1378* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1986), 115.

politics refers to the various events and occasions in which the ideals of crusading were sacrificed for the sake of England's materialistic interests. This category includes England's wars against Christian countries such as France, Scotland, and Ireland in support of England's political and economic goals. Last, episcopal politics refers to the involvement of the papacy or some of its allies, including the Popes, in the business of crusading for purely secular reasons such as to resolve English-French hostilities or to export violence and chaos outside the borders of Christendom.[111]

1- Personal politics:

One of the remarkable English crusades that was launched for personally political and financial reasons is Gaunt's crusade against the Castilian throne in 1383-86. Gaunt potentially had three main reasons for this crusade: recovering the throne of his wife,[112] marrying his daughter Catherine to Henry III, and forcing the Castilians to maximize the financial compensation they were paying in exchange for stopping the expedition.[113] Yet, despite these potential concerns, the main reason for the Castilian expedition was Gaunt's desire to keep receiving the vast governmental and episcopal support for leading a *crusade*. As Tyerman explains, "Gaunt depended on a complementary parliamentary grant, obtained late in 1385, as well as papal bulls originally issued in 1383."[114] Spirituality was not part of the project or any of its motivations; rather, it was a banner that Gaunt used in order to get the funds he needed for sponsoring his personal *just* war and encourage people to join it for free. This is not to say that Gaunt's religious devotion was not sincere, but that Christianity had little or nothing to do with the Castilian expedition. In brief, one

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[111] See John Joseph Norman Palmer, *England, France, and Christendom, 1377-99* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972), 28-29, 44.
[112] Lunt, *Financial Relations*, 537-38 and 544-48.
[113] See Delany, "Geographies," 231.
[114] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 338-39.

calls it a "crusade" or "invasion," the Castilian campaign could not be anything but a projection of Gaunt's personal politics.

Richard II's involvement in the Castilian expedition also demonstrates its materialism. The King encouraged Gaunt to carry on the campaign against Spain by announcing him as the King of Castile and by granting him a golden crown in an official ceremony in 1386.[115] If Richard's motivation for supporting Gaunt was not their blood relationship, then there would be no reason other than the King's desire to get rid of Gaunt, his most powerful internal rival. In fact, Richard supported Gaunt's expedition as it might lead in Gaunt's self-deportation. The expedition was expected to result in one of three possible scenarios. First, it was possible that Gaunt would achieve full victory over the Spanish, and in consequence become the King of Castile. Second, it was probable that Gaunt might lose his war, becoming weaker in comparison to his king. Third, it was also possible that the Spaniards would kill Gaunt and eliminate his coterie and knights entirely. Any of these scenarios would definitely cause Gaunt to remain stuck in a place, be it throne or grave, outside the borders of England, a crucial step towards Richard II's main goal, to stabilize his throne.

In fact, stabilizing his throne is the main concern for why Richard II adopted the ideals of crusading and sponsored it. In addition to taking the cross in 1392,[116] Richard assigned many important court positions to retired as well as active crusaders such as John Montagu, John Clanvow, William Neville, Lewis Clifford, John Beaufort, and Thomas Percy.[117] For these reasons, people referred to Richard as the crusader-king (*Bellator Rex*),[118] and in 1395 the king

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[115] See Delany, "Geographies," 231.

[116] Palmer, *England, France, and Christendom*, 149-50, 184-85, 198-99, and 242-44.

[117] See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 262, 270, and 297.

[118] See Riely-Smith, *The Crusades*, 209-10. Also, Richard II as an English crusader kings is discussed in Delany, "Geographies," 229-230, and Tyerman, *England and Crusades*, 253.

was portrayed as "a beautiful youth supported by saints and martyrs… whose cults had sustained crusaders of earlier centuries."[119] This image deified the king's status, made his cause "just and holy," and made people's obedience and submission to the king purely theological.[120] However, to secure people's loyalty, Richard kept showering retired crusaders and knights with royal blessings and annuities, similar to the conditions that were in the court of his predecessor, Edward III. "The 'peerage' of Richard II merely confirmed the eminence of families whose fortune was the result of participation in the wars of his grandfather, and it is reasonable, therefore, to see a distinct phase in the emergence of a coherent noble order in the service exacted by Edward III from old families and new men alike."[121] Richard's crusaders were rewarded and compensated by progressive annuities, privileges, and other benefits. As Housley says, "[waging] holy war was an attractive prospect because of the extra resources which it placed at the disposal of a king or prince. Apart from the material resources… there were less tangible, but nonetheless important assets such as prestige, the various benefits of papal backing, and the spiritual value of prayers and processions." [122] In other words, "crusading acted as a mechanism of social advancement. Service in holy war acted as a means of entry to the ranks of the knightly and respectable for parvenus, a ticket of admission into the secular social elite… crusading… attracted especially rewarding recognition."[123] Thus, Richard's court was one of the most hospitable institutions for crusaders

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[119] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 297.
[120] Ibid., 327.
[121] Jeremy Catto, "Religion and English Nobility in the Later Fourteenth Century," in *History and Imagination: Essays in Honor of H.R. Trevor-Roper*, eds., Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl, and Blair Worden (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1981), 43-55, 44.
[122] *The Avignon*, 88.
[123] Tyerman, *God's War*, 885.

and "nobles on the make," and thus its stability was seen by English crusaders as the main guarantee for their social prestige and economic well-being.[124]

    2- National politics:

In addition to using it to further his own personal politics, Richard II used crusading to protect England's political and economic interests. As a reaction to November 1382 French victory over the Flemish townsmen, "On December 1382 Richard II authorized his lay and clerical subjects to join the *crusade* which Urban VI had ordered the bishop of Norwich to lead"[125] against the city of Ghent, which was supporting the (anti)-pope Clement VII. Though it is possible that he was completely convinced in the episcopal cause of Urban VI, Richard's decision to join that expedition was also for the purpose of either avenging England's Flemish ally or defeating England's chief enemy, France.[126] In fact, on many other occasions, Richard tried to undermine and attack France under a crusading banner. In preparation for one of his campaigns against France, Richard officially asked the Pope to declare the Kings of France, Spain, and Scotland as heretics, and his envoys to Rome informed the Pope that their instructions did not permit them to consent to any crusade unless the kingdoms of France, Spain, and Scotland were definitely mentioned."[127] In this way, Richard was trying to convince the Pope that France was the main

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[124] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 270. For further information on the idea of "the nobles on the make," see Robert Somerville, *History of the Duchy at Lancaster, I, 1265-1603* (London: The Chancellor and Council of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1953), 90-133. Also, "It has been shown that English participants in the *Reisen* displayed a growing tendency, as the fourteenth century progressed, to join the retinue of magnates, who would pay their expenses, protect them, and increase the chance of their seeing action through the influence which they could exercise on the Teutonic Order" (Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 432).

[125] Lunt, *Financial Relations*, 538. See also Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 243

[126] "There is no good reason to doubt that the English government intervened in Flanders [in 1382] for political [as well as economic] reasons" (Palmer, *England, France, and Christendom*, 21).

[127] Lunt, *Financial Relations*, 537.

internal enemy of Jerusalem crusading and that any plan for the recovery of the Holy Land should start by invading France.

It was necessary for Richard II to portray France as the nest of the devil, so that his war against the French would become just and lawful. Thus, in 1383, Richard's propagandists and spokesmen were calling for "'a crusade for the defence of the Holy Church and the realm of England' [against the French], the worst schismatics and 'the chief enemy of the King and the Kingdom of England'."[128] Richard wanted his people and the Church to believe that fighting the French was as important as fighting the Turks and the Saracens in Jerusalem. His archbishop, Courtney, declared that joining the English army against the French would result in the same plenary indulgence as would be gained in a crusade to the Holy Land.[129] People therefore became extremely enthusiastic to satisfy the needs of the newly-defined holy land, England in our case,[130] by fighting against the crusader-king's foes – regardless of the foes' religious orientation.[131]

Regardless of the declared reasons of Richard's insistence that the papacy should sanction England's wars against France, it is noteworthy that crusading was the *ideal* way to lower the costs of national wars. Having national wars promoted as crusades meant that the Church would be responsible for a great amount of the costs.[132] Also, promoting national wars as crusades for the sake of the Holy Church would cause the masses to fight for indulgences and salvation, rather than for money.[133] Moreover, such strategy would give the king and his government complete authority

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[128] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 337.

[129] Plenary indulgence is "that pardon for sins which has customarily been granted to those who set out in aid of the Holy Land" (Housley, *The Avignon*, 129).

[130] On elevating England to be a holy land, see Tyerman, *God's War*, 907.

[131] See Throop, *Criticism*, 26-56.

[132] See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 272.

[133] It is important to remember here that "crusading armies in [this] period were composed of professional fighters who were usually getting paid for their services" (Housley, *The Avignon*, 151-152).

over issuing crusading taxes and managing the coffers of the Churches and monasteries in England and its territories. This process enabled Richard to secure a good source of money for filling the coffers of his court and magnates.[134] Overall, Richard's strategy of unifying the national cause of England with that of the Church was intended to achieve a largely economic as well as political purpose.

3- Episcopal politics:

To legitimize for English Christians the fight against whoever the king saw as a threat to England's national security, it was necessary to promote the religious wars as crusading. Thus, many English theorists and propagandists of national wars portrayed God as an "Englishman" and "ally of the new Israelites," the English.[135] A monumental example of the national propaganda that dominated fourteenth-century Britain are the statements of William Colwyll[136] who preached, "[to] fight in defense of justice against both infidels and Christians is holy and permissible… God himself has upheld just wars of this kind and indeed often ordered his chosen people to fight."[137] In addition to the obvious perversion of the Christian doctrine in Colwyll's propaganda, this excerpt encourages one to conclude that the English Church must have been influenced, if not completely controlled, by kings and secular lords. In fact, the use of God's name and doctrine in the national wars of England was permitted, even sanctioned, by English archbishops and other churchmen. Still, this does not mean that the English Church prioritized the national interests of the nation over the spiritual doctrine of the papacy; rather, surprisingly, the attitude of the English

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[134] "Most money raised for the crusade, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as in the past, found its way into the coffers of princes" (Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 416).

[135] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 332.

[136] Colwyll was a fourteenth-century Cambridge professor.

[137] William W. Capes, ed., *The Register of John Trefnant, the Bishop of Hereford (A. D. 1389 – 1404)* (Hereford: Wilson, 1914-1915), 377-378.

Church towards England's national wars was in line with the papacy's attitude. Both institutions supported England's wars against infidels as well as Christians.

To resolve the mystery of the papacy's support of England's national wars against Christians, it is noteworthy that the Church not only supported secular wars, but also was one of the chief managers and main beneficiaries of war. As Pantin concludes, "[the] main wars of the cross against Christians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries revolved around the temporal position of the papacy in Italy, the defence of the Papal States, church rights, access to ecclesiastical wealth and fears of territorial encirclement."[138] That is to say, the Church itself had had its own wars; therefore, it was necessary for the papacy to be part of some political and military leagues. As a result of such inevitable need, the papacy fell under the influence of secular lords and kings who were more concerned with the political and economic needs of their countries. A good example of the harmony between the English court and papacy is the unequalled readiness that Clement VI showed for serving the English court. As William Pantin indicates, "[the] courtly pope Clement VI is reported to have said that if the king of England asked him to make an ass a bishop, he would do so."[139] The influence of the English court on the papacy was large and unequivocal.

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[138] Tyerman, *God's War*, 895. In Housley's words, "No pope between 1274 and 1580 could wholly ignore the crusade… during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was a major weapon in the defence and recovery of temporal power in Italy, and then in the defeat of rivals during the Great Schism; it represented some material advantage, in the shape of the Camera's share of crusade funds; and it was a key attribute in the Curia's self-perception, and in its projection of its role" (*The Later Crusades*, 427).

[139] "The Fourteenth Century," in *The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. H. Lawrence (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965), 157-94, 188. Also, in the same article, Pantin writes that "[in] more than a situation, there were attempts to establish a formal concordat between the English crown and the papacy, first between 1373 and 1377, and again in 1398" (192).

Another reason for the papacy's involvement in the secular wars of Europe was that the Popes and the *Curia* gained most of their power and effectiveness in medieval Europe through crusades. In fact, "[during] a crusade a pope was the supreme arbiter politically as well as spiritually."[140] Without crusading, the Pope would not have any opportunity to be as significant as kings of Christendom and the papacy would not be able to claim any significant role in the life and growth of Europe. Thus, "[the] popes exhorted selected rulers to take action, promising liberal grants of taxes and other privileges if they agreed to do so; and they issued general appeals for action in the hope that individual nobles, cities, and groups of individuals would respond."[141] Moreover, it is through crusading taxation and indulgences that the papacy secured most of its income, and since "Northern crusades were enormously more profitable to the Church than the unfruitful crusades in the Orient," the papacy supported the internal crusades of Europe at the costs of recovering the Holy Land.[142]

D- Conclusion:

Although Jerusalem continued to be the ultimate holy destination of most Christian projects during the late Middle Ages, crusading was executed only inside Europe.[143] As Tyerman notes:

> [The ideal of crusading was] applied to a variety of political conflicts. Preaching of the cross was ordered against Fredrick II; his son Conrad IV; the duke of Bavaria; Hohnestaufen supporters generally; Livs and Balts in Livonia and Prussia; Mongols; the irreligious in Sardinia; Muslims in Spain, Africa and Palestine; Greeks threatening the Latin Empire of Constantinople; alleged heretics in Italy, Lombardy and Bosnia; and Ezzelino of Romano.[144]

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[140] Throop, *Criticism*, 3. See also, Housley, *The Avignon*, 82-92
[141] Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 425-26.
[142] Throop, *Criticism*, 110. See also 284. In fact, the "papal taxation" is a great embodiment of the financial importance of crusading to the church" (Housley *Contesting*, 154). See also, Delany, "Geographies," 230, and Throop, *Criticism*, 72-92.
[143] Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 260-610.
[144] Tyerman, *God's War*, 834-5.

This means that crusading was deployed as part of the internal politics of Christendom in the fourteenth-century; therefore, it was inevitable that the flames of war scorched Christian countries more than the East.

In fact, the "crusades against Christian enemies of the papacy became the most characteristic − and most controversial − form of crusading in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."[145] Rather than Jerusalem, the Saracens, or the Moors being the target of crusaders' swords, Christians were the main target of the armed crusades in fourteenth-century Europe, especially as these crusades were executed by England, as evidenced by the Despenser crusade (1383), John of Gaunt's Spanish crusades (1383-90), and Richard II's Scottish, Irish, and French expeditions. Consequently, the later crusades, especially the ones waged against Christians, "never sat as comfortably in the mentalities of the faithful as wars against infidels."[146] People looked at those crusades as an evidence that "the ruling classes were no longer willing to sacrifice their interests for a distant holy war. The papacy itself sacrificed the Holy Land to its European interests."[147] Thus, the Church lost most of its prestige and power as the fulcrum of peace for Christendom, and crusading was seen by some intellectuals as "nothing more than a long act of intolerance in the name of God, which is the sin against the Holy Spirit"[148] and as "a vehicle of a persecuting society."[149] In brief, because of the personal, national, and episcopal political abuses of the crusading ideals, some intellectuals, such as John Wycliffe, William Langland, and John

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[145] Linehan and Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 136.

[146] Tyerman, *God's War*, 894. See also Kendall, *Medieval Pilgrimage*, 119-120, and Linehan and Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 143.

[147] Throop, *Criticism*, 284.

[148] Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951-54), 3: 480. See also, Cowdery, "the Genesis of the Crusades," 15-16, and Throop, *Criticism*, 284.

[149] Tyerman, "What the Crusades meant to Europe," 143.

Gower, lamented over the Church's part in administrating such a violence and for taking part in killing humans.[150]

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[150] See Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading."

III-   Chapter 2: The Explicit Anti-Crusade Voice of Fourteenth-Century England

   A- Introduction:

After investigating the wide opposition against deploying crusading to serve political and economic goals at the cost of the spirituality of pilgrimage, Throop concludes that "the most dangerous opponent of the new crusade was not the threatening Saracens in the Holy Land. There was a yet more powerful enemy at home –a bitterly hostile public opinion."[151] Some Christians like the Lollards became angry seeing their monarchs sacrificing the ideals of Christianity in favor of the internal political and economic interests of Europe,[152] while others, for one reason or another, were against the idea of war entirely.[153] Likewise, for some intellectuals, at least the ones whose opinions were written down, the main reason of the profound resentment against the Church and papacy was the use of Christianity for non-Christian goals, such as eliminating non-Christians, heretics, and schismatics, and serving specific lucrative plans and strategies, considering such acts as crimes against the Christian doctrine and Christ himself.[154]

Despite such an opposition against crusading, the dissenters remain the minority; the influence of crusading was extremely prominent in the fourteenth century and grabbed the attention of most of the society. In Housley's words, "it would be wrong to regard the crusade in the fourteenth century as an unpopular movement. There was a broadly based acceptance of the crusade… though criticism of what was happening in practice continued to be vociferous."[155] Again, it is hard to overlook the significance of crusading on the politics and culture of medieval

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[151] Throop, *Criticism*, 25.
[152] See Throop, *Criticism*, 206, 208, and 286
[153] See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 261.
[154] Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3: 480.
[155] Housley, *The Avignon*, 236. Addressing the same issue, Tyerman writes that "[o]pposition to crusading was by no means widespread, and criticism of the ideal was even rarer. The crusade remained a practical and far-from-amateurish concern throughout the century" (*England and the Crusades*, 288).

Europe, particular England, but opposition to crusading was powerful as well. This means that crusading was "'the central drama' of the medieval period' 'to which all other incidents were in some degree subordinate'."[156] Thus, people, regardless of their social status, were exposed to the dominant intellectual polemic of crusading.

People's direct and indirect involvement in the matter of crusading becomes obvious through the treatment of the crusading ideology by poets and men of literature. For example, the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* and Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* attribute King Arthur's legitimacy to the English crown to the unequalled Christian devotion which King Arthur proved through participating in many crusades.[157] Though Arthur and his crusading history are purely fictional, the mere connection of the King with the holy tradition testifies to the significance of crusading to England's cultural identity and heritage. Similarly, *Sir Isumbras* is a romance that tells about a knight, who lost his horse, dog, house, his three sons, and beautiful wife because of his prideful ways of life. However, after being absolved of that sin, he rejoined his family in Jerusalem, and with the help of his wife, his three sons, who had been abducted by beasts, and some angels, Isumbras defeated the entire Saracen army and won the Holy Land. However, while the historical accuracy of such *fantasy* is suspect, *Sir Isumbras* still reflects the centrality of crusading to England's culture. In brief, "[for] ME literature, the Crusades provided rich matter both as an explicit subject and as background or metaphorical material… the proliferation of continental

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[156] Linehan and Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 131.

[157] David Wallace writes, "Arthur's expedition to Rome, the most extended extraterritorial episode of the *Morte*, assumes in Winchester the character of a *crusade*, albeit one with nationalistic inflection . . . In assembling the army that will depart from Rome to enforce its will on Arthur, the Emperor's reach is truly global. It is also compromised by the inclusion of 'Saracens'… The illegitimacy of the Emperor's invading army is thus signaled by miscegenation: unclean mixture of faith, blood, paternity and even body size" ("Imperium, Commerce, and National Crusade: The Romance of *Malory's Morte*," *New Medieval Literatures* 8 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 59).

romances, which elevated and idealized the courtly crusading warrior and crusader culture, influenced romance production in England."[158] In other words, the crusades were not merely religious wars, but a meaningful source of inspiration for intellectuals and poets.

In this context, this chapter illustrates that some fourteenth-century poems were intended to function as crusading propaganda while others such as *Confessio Amantis* and *Piers Plowman* were anti-crusade treatises.[159] Yet, due to the fact that the deployment of Middle English poetry to promote and support crusading is widely celebrated and extremely discussed by many critics and researchers, this chapter instead revisits some explicit anti-crusade poetry, namely Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Langland's *Piers Plowman*.[160] I argue that without considering the anti-crusade voice of these two English poems, the real meaning of Piers' visions and journey and of Amans' passion and voyage would become generic. Accordingly, considering the perilous nature of crusading, this chapter celebrates the clarity, forwardness, and harshness of the two poet's denouncement of crusading. However, to get a full understanding of the anti-crusade voice of these

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[158] Brian Gastle, "Historical Context for Middle English Literature," in *The Medieval British Literature Handbook*, ed. Daniel T. Kline (London, England: Continuum, 2009), 23-40, 26-27.
[159] The list of medieval English pro-crusade poetry is too long as it includes most, if not all, Middle English war-romances such as *Guy of Warwick* (1300), *Richard Coer de Lion* (1300), *Octavian* (1350), *Firumbras* (1380), *Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain* (1400), *Siege of Jerusalem* (1400), *History of the Holy Grail* (1420), and others.
[160] Examples of these scholars are John Tolan, *Medieval Christian perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland Pub., 1996), Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), and Tolan, *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims Through European Eyes in the Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008). Also, Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), Elst, "Chaucer and the Crusades," Leila K. Norako in "The Crusades and Western Cultural Imagination: An Exhibition in the Rossell Hope Robbins Library," (Rochester, N.Y.: Rossell Hope Robbins Library, University of Rochester, 2007), and Suzanne Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient*, *1100-1450* (United States of America: Cornell University Press, 2009).

two poems, it is necessary to look first at the whole anti-crusade stance in fourteenth-century England and the rest of Christendom.

B- The Critique of Crusading in Fourteenth-Century English Poetry:

The main criticism of the later crusades has resulted from the Church's use of the ideals of holy war for secular reasons, such as achieving economic and social gains, and getting rid of the monarchs and Popes' political rivals, whether those rivals were Christians, schismatics, or heathens.[161] In a letter to Boccaccio, condemning the materialistic motivations and purposes of King Peter of Cyprus's troops in 1365, Francis Petrarch says, "'[we] followed the pious king not out of piety but out of greed, departed once they had collected the booty, and, fulfilling their selfish vow, made him incapable of fulfilling his pious vow'."[162] Although Petrarch's criticism attributes the deformation of crusading's spirituality to the materialism of Peter's mercenaries rather than to their leader, the letter still demonstrates that crusaders in the later Middle Ages, with few exceptions, were concerned with their pockets rather than with the Holy Church or even the Holy Land.[163] As Lunt points out, Froissart notes that "English nobles would not undertake military

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[161] For more information on other reasons for criticizing the later crusades, see Kendall *Medieval Pilgrimage*, 119, Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3: 480, Throop, *Criticism*, Tyerman, *God's War* and *England and the Crusades*, Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, and Atiya, *The Crusades*.

[162] Quoted in Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 353-382. See also Francis Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age: Rerum senilium libri I-XVIII*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin, and Reta A. Bernardo (Baltimore, 1992), 303.

[163] Against Petrarch's interpretation of Alexandria expedition, Peter W. Edbury believes that the main goals of the whole expeditions were economic. Peter of Cyprus intended to achieve certain commercial objectives since Alexandria was the most prosperous part in the East, especially after the fall of Latin Syria (*The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 141-79). Peter wanted the Sultan to grant Cypriot merchants "more favourable trading terms there" (Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, 127). Moreover, Tyerman explains that Peter launched the expedition "to protect Cypriot trade in the Levant by destabilizing the Mamluk regime and its grip over the trade routes that passed through Alexandria" (*God's War*, 831). Also, Terry Jones, bringing in a new phase of the materialism of Alexandria crusade, writes, "[Peter's] crusade was openly used by the Pope and many of the

expeditions for all the absolutions in the world unless they were preceded by offers of money. 'Men of arms,' he said, 'cannot live on pardons, not do they pay much attention to them except at the point of death'."[164] Thus, since Peter's crusading army consisted mainly of mercenaries from England and other countries of Christendom, the spirituality of the whole expedition has been critiqued by some of its contemporaries, such as Petrarch.

Moreover, regarding the use of the crusading banner to launch national wars inside and outside Europe and consequently to kill people, especially Christians, Wycliffe's Oxford colleague, John Corringham, once declared that "neither the bishop of Norwich nor any other crusader was permitted to kill a heretic or schismatic."[165] Regardless of the reasons for why Corringham adopting and declared such opinion, he obviously denounced the use of power against Christians and non-Christians under any conditions. Correspondingly, Walter Von der Vogelweide, a thirteenth-century theologian, considered crusading unchristian and "repellent to God;" therefore, he blamed the Pope and his clergy for taking part in such a profane project and considered them betrayers of Christ.[166] In brief, many intellectuals lost confidence in the papacy's ability to lead Christendom, and the Church "lost a chance to speak unequivocally as the champion

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crowned heads of Europe as an opportunity to draw off the military detritus left behind by the cessation of hostilities between England and France" (*Chaucer's Knight*, 48).

[164] Lunt, *Financial Relations*, 541. Similar to Froissart, Bertran Carbonel notes that crusaders – soldiers and priests- "have no other God but riches and lechery" (Throop, *Criticism*, 187).

[165] A. K. Mchardy, "Bishop Buckingham and the Lollards of Lincoln Diocese," in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. Derek Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 131-46, 131.

[166] Throop, *Criticism*, 185, 42. Investigating the history of the crusading tradition and polemic, Runciman concludes that "faith without wisdom is a dangerous thing… the Crusades were a tragic and destructive episode. The historian as he gazes back across the centuries at their gallant story must find his admiration overcast by sorrow at the witness that it bears to the limitations of human nature" (*A History of the Crusades*, 3: 480).

of peace for European Christendom."[167] Consequently, the door was opened wide, not only for critiquing the various malpractices of crusading in the later Middle Ages, but also for disparaging the whole tradition of crusading and pilgrimage as well.[168]

Some Christian intellectuals, especially theologians, criticized the use of religion for achieving worldly benefits. In England, for instance, John Wycliffe condemned "the use of the crusade against fellow Christians,"[169] and his followers, the Lollards, denounced the authority of the Pope to launch wars in the name of God.[170] The Lollards' vociferous opposition against crusading is clearly expressed in a treatise that was found nailed on the door of St. Paul's Cathedral

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[167] Kahrl, "Introduction," *The Holy War*, ed. Murphy, 4. Expressing the doubt and distrust that encompassed the crusading project in in the later Middle Ages and the years that came after, Erasmus' *Consultatio* (1530) goes thus:

> 'Every time that this farce has been acted out by the popes, the result has been ridiculous. Either nothing came of it, or the cause actually deteriorated. The money, people say, stays stuck to the hands of the popes, cardinals, monks, dukes, and princes. Instead of the wages, the ordinary soldier is given license to pillage. So many times we have heard the announcement of a crusade, of the recovery of the Holy Land; so many times we have seen the red cross surmounted on the papal tiara, and the red chest; so many times we have attended solemn gatherings and heard lavish promises, splendid deeds, the most sweeping expectations. And yet the only winner has been money. We are informed by the proverb that it is shameful to hit yourself on the same stone twice; so how can we trust such promises, however splendid, when we have been tricked more than thirty times, misled so often and so openly?' (qtd. In Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 415).

[168] See Throop, *Criticism*, 98-100. However, to deny any connection between the violence of crusading and Christianity, Webb declared, "Pilgrimage had never been a requirement of the Christian faith" (*Pilgrimage*, 239).

[169] Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading," 128. Also, Zacher writes, "John wyclif's numerous objections to pilgrimage typified late-medieval antagonism to the abuses of the institution" (*Curiosity*, 56).

[170] For information on the development of Wycliffe's ideas into the doctrine of Lollards, see K. B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity* (London: English Universities Press, 1952) and *The Origins of Religious Dissent in England* (New York: Collier, 1952), Richard Rex, *The Lollards: Social History in Perspective* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), and Gervase Mathew, *The Court of Richard II* (London: Camelot Press, 1968), 149.

in 1395. The treatise includes a number of theological takes against the abuse of religion by the

Church and its men in all aspects of life. *The Tenth Conclusion* says:

> Þe tenþe conclusiun is þat manslaute be batayle or pretense lawe if rythwysnesse
> for temporal cause or spirituel withouten special reuelaciun is expres contrarious to
> þe newe testament, þe qwiche is a lawe of grace and ful of mercy. Þis conclusiun
> is opinly proud be exsample of Cristis preching here in erthe þe qwiche most taute
> for to loue and to haue mercy on his enemys, and nout for to slen hem. Þe resun is
> of þis þat for þe more partye þere men fyȝte, aftir þe firste stroke, charite is ibroken;
> and qwoso deyth out of charite goth þe heye weye to helle… þe lawe of mercy þat
> is þe newe testament, forbad al mannisslaute… And knythtis, þat rennen to
> hethenesse to geten hem a name in sleinge of men geten miche maugre of þe King
> of Pes; for be mekenesse and suffraunce oure beleue was multiplied, and fythteres
> and mansleeris Iesu Cryst hatith and manasit.[171]

This conclusion directly condemns using God's name to slaughter people, whether heathen or

Christian, and it views crusading as a quasi-religious act that violates Christ's original teachings.

This "conclusion" declares that God is "þe King of Pes," so it is illogical, for the Lollards, to

execute confusion, violence, fear, and war in His name regardless of the reasons or purposes. Thus,

the voice of the Lollards was probably the most powerful anti-crusade voice in England; yet, those

dissenters were not alone. Some sympathetic intellectuals such as John Gower and William

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[171] Anne Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Canada: Toronto, 1997), 28.
See also a transcription of Roger Dymok's ca. 1396 manuscript in (H. S. Cronin, "The Twelve
Conclusions of the Lollards," *The English Historical Review* 22 (1907): 302). This conclusion, as
translated on "The Geoffrey Chaucer Page" says:
> The tenth conclusion is that manslaughter by battle or law of righteousness for
> temporal cause or spiritual without special revelation is express contrary to the
> New Testament, the which is a law of grace and full of mercy. This conclusion is
> openly proved by example of Christ's preaching here on earth. The which most
> taught to love and to have mercy on his enemies, and not for to slay them. The
> reason is of this, that for the more party, there men fight, after the first stroke
> charity is broken; and who so dyeth out of charity goth the high way to hell… the
> law of mercy, that is the New Testament, forbade all manslaughter... And knights,
> that run to heathenness to get them a name in slaying of men, get much maugré of
> the King of Peace; for the meekness and sufferance our belief was multiplied, and
> fighters and manslayers Jesu Christ hateth and menaceth.
> (http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/varia/lollards/lollconc.htm)

Langland declared their opposition and contempt against killing people in the name of God and using armed men to preach Christianity. Accordingly, the next section argues that though the *Confessio* and *Piers* have been widely celebrated and discussed by many scholars, like Maurice Keen, in terms of the East-West internecine, only a few of them refer to the anti-crusade voice of these poems.[172]

1- The Treatment of Crusading in *Piers Plowman* and *Confessio Amantis*:

William E. Rogers convincingly argues that Langland had English crusading, as manifested by Gaunt's Spanish campaign, the Despenser's crusades, and the crusade of Flanders, in mind while making the C-version of *Piers*. Rogers writes, "Langland was in the period of the C-revisions thinking about the crusades, and that his conclusion was that their suspect goals and their notorious failures were the responsibility of clergy not kinghood."[173] Nevertheless, Rogers hesitates to consider *Piers* as an anti-crusade poem; instead, he concludes, "it would seem hasty to conclude either that Langland is not criticizing the crusades, or that Langland's patron, if any, was not a Despenser."[174] This means that even if Langland was criticizing crusading, he would be referencing something else, such as the corruption of the Church and clergy.[175] For Rogers, having the Despenser, a crusader himself, as Langland's patron refutes the assumption that one of *Piers'* purposes is to critique crusading. While this interpretation seems valid, Langland's dependence on a crusader patron does not necessarily silences *Piers'* anti-crusade voice. Possibly, it is through his

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[172] Besides Keen, "Chaucer's Knight," 1983, see also Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading", and Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Pagans Tartars, Moslems, and Jews in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

[173] William E. Rogers, "The C-Revisions and The Crusades in *Piers Plowman*," in *The Medieval Crusade*, ed. Susan J Ridyard (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2004), 145-56, 155-56.

[174] Ibid., 156.

[175] Rogers concludes, "Langland's main point about the crusades… is that they represent a failure of the clergy" ("The C-Revisions," 155).

crusader patron that Langland knew so much about the spiritual fickleness of crusading and about the perilous task of tackling such a phenomenon, and thus decided to critique it through a dreamer's vision. This chapter argues that *Piers* criticizes and even denounces crusading, which, regardless of its motivations and purposes, does not comply with the spiritual nature of Piers' pilgrimage to St. Truth.

Likewise, other scholars of *Piers* and the *Confessio* overlook the anti-crusade voice of these two poems. For instance, Siobhain Calkin celebrates the role of Middle English literature, especially poetry, in defining English identity and defending England's political and economic interests, but he overlooks the anti-crusade voice of Middle English poetry.[176] Calkin argues that the main purpose of Middle English literature is to define the English identity regionally, continentally, and internationally. Through such a definition, the martial confrontation between Christendom and non-Christians becomes an embodiment of the hardships that Europe has suffered to establish its communal Christian identity. Calkin explains that having romance and religious poetry bound side by side in most, if not all, medieval English manuscripts demonstrates that the martial confrontations between the East and West were extremely significant to establish Europe's Christian identity.[177] While this approach of reading poetry correctly focuses on the

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[176] Clakin considers the use of Middle English romance to form, rather than describe, the English identity a process of "hailing": "they hail a specific readership and audience, and in the act of hailing that readership as already extant, they bring it into existence. The term 'interpellation' thus denotes a process of identity formation rather than an invocation *tout court* of an already-established identity" *(Saracens, 8)*. This means that Middle English romances were theorizing, idealizing, and reforming, rather than portraying, chivalry and knighthood that were both religious and patriotic. Similarly, Thorlac Truville-Petre argues that Middle English crusade-romance constituted what can be referred to as "communal identity" since the crusade provided England as well as Europe with an ideal opportunity to define itself as a unified Christian nation (*England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[177] Explaining the important role of religious confrontations for establishing the English identity, Heng says, "nationalism… in the Middle Ages is always and fundamentally traversed,

cultural value of literature, it depends on a sort of an implicit belief that Middle English poetry could not sympathize with non-Christians. That is to say, Calkin's approach celebrates Middle English writings as a cultural vehicle only when they promote Christianity and support crusading; otherwise, such poems should be dismissed. In contrast with this restricted viewpoint, this chapter argues that crusading was prevalent in England, and denouncing it was among the main concerns of Middle English poems, such as Langland's *Piers* and Gower's *Confessio*. Accordingly, I revisit these two poems and argue that their anti-crusade voice, expressed implicitly and explicitly, is too vociferous and should not be ignored.[178]

    i.   The Anti-Crusade Voice of *Piers Plowman*:

Throughout *Piers*, Langland critiques crusading by denouncing whatever causes people to deviate from God's merciful way and by attributing that deviation to the imperfection of man in contrast with God's perfection. The poet attributes love, mercy, and righteousness to the ideal way of God; on the contrary, he attributes hate, violence, and war to the imperfection of "rude men that litel reson konneth" (*Piers* B, 15.476). Laying out the unbridgeable gap between the mercy of God and the rudeness of some people, Langland, surprisingly, declares that the men of the Church are the "rude" ones whose approach is incompatible with that of Christ. Thus, after exalting the glory and greatness of Christ,[179] Langland sarcastically asks:

> Ac who beth that excuseth hem that aren persounes and prestes,
> That hevedes of Holy Cherche ben, that han hir wille here,
> Withouten travaille the tithe del that trewe men biswynken?
> Thei wil be wroth for I write thus, ac to witnesse I take

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determined, and articulated by religious investments: a specificity of medieval nationalism" (*The Empire*, 72).

[178] A similarly critical attitude for reading *Piers* appeared in the sixteenth century as "For the Protestant readers… the significance of *Piers Plowman* was not as a major work of medieval literature but as the manifestation of a particular religious ideology" (Sarah A. Kelen, *Langland's Early Modern Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 44).

[179] See *Piers* 15.464-485.

> Bothe Mathew and Marke and *Memento-Domine* David:
> *Ecce, audivimus eam in Effrata, etc.*
> What pope or prelate now parfourneth that Cryst highte,
> *Ite in universum mundum et predicatem etc.?* (*Piers* B, 15.486-93)

Langland contrasts the authoritativeness of churchmen with that of some Biblical figures, as if he wants people to decide who to follow: the Bible or men of the Church. By raising such a question, the poet sows the idea that the Bible rather than men of the Church is the main source of Truth and therefore should be followed.[180] While such a *blameless* claim encourages Christians to reconsider their attitude to the Bible as well as the Church, it is noteworthy that Langland's Wycliffite tone here implicitly suggests that people should not trust the Church and that they should not beg salvation from the "pope or [his] prelate" because they have no control over it. Thus, Langland denies the Church any power to help people attain eternal salvation neither through indulgences nor through crusading.

Again, Langland highlights the crucial difference between the original doctrine of Christ and the corrupted way of the Church by attributing all the honor and peace on earth to Christ's doctrine while attributing war, violence, and death to the Church, which ironically governs in the name of Christ. Langland praises the spirituality of true Christians who lived with Christ and accompanied him (*Piers* B, 15.531-37), and then he contrasts that spirituality to the Church's materialistic policy and agenda:

> And tho was plente and pees amonges pore and riche,
> And now is routhe to rede how the red noble
> Is reverenced [er] the Rode, receyved for the worthier
> Than Crystes Crosse that overcam deth and dedly synne.

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[180] For more information about the similarity between Langland and Wycliffe, see Anna P. Baldwin, "The Historical Context," in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. John A. Alford (California: California University Press, 1988), 67-86, 68. See also, Morton Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1962), 7, and see also, Robert Adams, "Langland's Theology," in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. Alford (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 87-114, 109-11.

> And now is werre and wo, and whoso why axeth:
> For coveityse after crosse; the croune stant in golde!
> Bothe richc and religious,that rode thei honoure
> That in grotes is y-grave and in golde nobles (*Piers* B, 15.538-45).

The speaker contrasts Christ's pity and willingness to redeem others, which are forms of *caritas*, with "coveityse," which is the acme of *cupiditas*, and he points out that the substitution of *caritas* for *cupiditas* has enabled "werre and wo" to replace "plente and pees."

However, despite the clarity of the speaker's sort of Christian sermon, which declares that man's deviation from the original way of Christ should result into hardships, like war and wretchedness, the remarkable association of war with the anti-Christ *doctrine* leaves no doubt that Langland considers war unchristian. In his explanation of the nature of war, Langland connects it with "coveityse," an association that makes war not only the mere physical act of killing people, but a form of *cupiditas*.[181] Thus while Siberry convincingly concludes that Langland was exasperated by the Christian-against-Christian crusading and that *Piers* "accused the pope of equipping armies to slaughter fellow Christians,"[182] the poem's communal tone, as expressed in "Sarsens [can] be saved, scribes and [Grekis]" (*Piers* B, 15.390) seems more tolerable of religions and people outside Christianity.

In fact, Langland considers non-Christians, including the Saracens, as an integral part of his anti-war proposal. Trying to resist the Church's covetous wars,[183] Langland declares a solution

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[181] For more understanding of Langland's discussion of the evil products of covetousness, see *Piers* B, 15.414-16.

[182] "Criticism of Crusading," 129.

[183] Explaining in details the materialistic concerns of the Pope and his allies, and their negative impact on the Christian doctrine, Langland writes:
> For coveityse of that crosse [clerkes] of Holy Kirke
> Shul [overtourne] as Templeres did; the tyme approcheth faste.
> ' [Mynne] ye noght, wyse men, how tho men honoured
> More tresore than treuthe: I dar noght telle the sothe;
> Reson and rightful dome tho religious [dampned].

of two stages: first, the Church should "feden us and festen us for evermore at ones" (*Piers* B, 15.485); second, pastors should preach the Gospels to "Crystene and uncristene" (*Piers* B, 15.499).[184] In the first step, the Church should relinquish warfare and function instead as a peacemaker among all people. Though it is true that that the pronoun "us" could stand as a reference to a group to which the poet would have belonged, i.e. England or Christianity, the poet's humanistic tone throughout the poem supports the idea that "us" refers to the whole body of humanity rather than to a specific country or religion. Promoting the notion that the Christians, the Saracens, and the Jews are part of one communal body, Langland says: "And sith that thise Sarsens, scribes and Jewes / Han a lippe of oure bileve, the lightloker, me thynketh, / Thei sholde turne, whoso travaile wolde to teche hem of the Trinite" (*Piers* B, 15.499-501). Though these lines might suggest that Langland's opposition of war was motivated by his belief that the Saracens would convert, the poet's focus on what connects rather than disperse people is a clear condemnation of war in general and crusading in particular.[185]

Piers' promotion of pacifism over war, wisdom over violence, and patience over anger makes Langland an opponent of war regardless of its causes and motivations. Langland's

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> Right so, ye clerkes, for yowre coveityse er [come aughte] longe,
> Shal thei demen dos ecclesiae, and [depose yow for yowre pryde].
> *Deposuit potentes de sede, etc.*
> 'Yif knyghthod and kynde wytte, and [the] Commune [and] Conscience
> Togideres love lelly, leveth it wel, ye bisshopes--
> The lordship of londes for evere shal ye lese,
> And lyven as *Levitici*, as Owre Lord yow techeth:
> *Per primicias et decimas, etc.* (*Piers* B, 15.546-57)

Moreover, Langland also writes, "Ac for drede of the deeth I dar noght telle truthe, / How Englisshe clerkes a colvere fede that Coveitise highte, / And ben manered after Makometh, that no man useth trouthe" (*Piers* B, 15.414-16).
[183] See *Piers* B, 15.531-37.
[184] See also 15.493-500.
[185] See Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading," 129.

denouncement of crusading fits into the development of *Piers* as an anti-war, or anti-crusade treatise that celebrates peace as the ultimate goal and purest approach that all humans should consider. Affirming the extermination of weapons and battles from the heavenly world, Langland declares that "Batailles shal non be, ne no man bere wepene, / And what smyth that ony [smytheth] be smyte therwith to dethe. / *Non levabit gens contra gentem gladium, etc.*" (*Piers* B, 3.323-24).[186] Since "God is not the author of confusion,"[187] weapons, wars, and death do not belong to His kingdom and do not gain anything from Him, except profound resentment as they deviate from His way, which mainly consists of love, peace, and mercy. In his defense of the anti-war aspects of the eternal world, Langland introduces love as the medicine and guide in Heaven:

> 'For Trewhe telleth that love is triacle of hevene.
> May no synne be on hym sene that that useth that spise.
> And alle his werkes he wroughte with love as hym liste,
> And lered it Moises for the leveste thing and moste like to hevene,
> And also the plante of pees, moost precious of vertues…'
> … 'Forthi is love leder of the Lordes folke of hevene,
> And a mene, as the maire is bitwene the kyng and the comune' (*Piers* B, 1.148-60).

For Langland, an advocate of peace against war, love against hatred, and goodness against wickedness,[188] crusading is to despise because it violates "pees, [the] moost precious of vertues" (*Piers* B, 1.152).[189] Thus, churchmen who claim responsibility for guiding people through the way

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[186] See also 3.305-08.

[187] 1Corinthians 14.33.

[188] An interesting quote about Langland's profound devotion to the peaceful, merciful, and lovely phases of Christianity, see *Piers* B, 18.409-23.

[189] On the same vein, addressing his Clergy, Conscious says:
> If Pacience be owre partyng felawe and pryve with us bothe,
> Ther nys wo in this worlde that we ne shulde amende;
> And confourmen kynges to pees, and alkynnes londes,
> Sarasenes and Surre, and so forth alle the Jewes,
> Turne into the trewe feith and intil one byleve' (*Piers* B, 13.206-10).

of God should rely on love and mercy rather than war to communicate with other people, including the Saracens.

In more than one episode and passus, Langland mocks war and its connotations – violence, chaos, bloodshed, and hatred. He states that the perfect status Piers the pilgrim searches for is the opposite of what the Church is accomplishing through crusading. Piers searches for a peaceful utopia that adopts Christ's *caritas* as its constitution:

> For as the cow thorugh kynde mylk the calf norisseth til an oxe,
> So love and lewte lele men susteyneth,
> And maydenes and mylde men mercy desiren
> Right as the cow calf coveyteth swete melk;
> So [menen] rightfulle men [after] mercy and treuthe. (*Piers* B, 15.467-71)

The speaker connects love and mercy, two components of Christian *caritas*, with the righteousness of man, a step that reflects the poet's belief in the non-ideological and non-racial nature of love, mercy, and pity.[190]

In light of the Christian concept of c*aritas*, the poet believes that the Church as well as all Christians should try to covert non-Christians by preaching the Gospels rather than fighting with the sword. In Passus 3, for instance, Langland expresses his ultimate hope that when peace gets full control over life, and war goes away, "Saracenes… shulle synge *gloria in excelsis, etc.*" (*Piers* B, 3.328).[191] The salvation of people is Langland's ultimate goal, so while speaking about redemption, ascending to heaven, love, peace, and other theological issues, the poet does not demarcate between Christians and non-Christians. Instead, he stresses what brings the Christians and the Saracens together:

> For Sarasenes han somwhat semynge to owre bileve,
> For thei love and bileve in o [Lord] almighty,

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[190] The word [Grekis] is original in the quote; however, in other editions, it appears as "Jews."
[191] See also, *Piers* B, 10.349-356; 11.119-122; 12.277-284; 13.206-210; 15.389-510; 19.221-223, and some other passages.

And we, lered and lewede in on God bileveth;
[Cristene and uncristene in on God bileveth] (*Piers* B, 15.393-96).[192]

Noticeably, Langland views the Saracens as a group that Christians should try to approach peacefully as they, the Saracens, are similar to Christians in their belief although their means for communicating with God are apparently different.[193]

In addition, instead of encouraging fighting against the Saracens as well as schismatics, Langland encourages Christians to fight the real enemy, Covetousness, which is "…armed hym in avarice and hungriliche lyvede. His wepne was al wiles, / to wynnen and to hiden; / With glosynges and with gabbynges he giled the peple" (*Piers* B, 20.123-25). Since such an enemy is armed with spiritual wiles and weapons, it is inevitable that fighting against it requires certain spiritual weapons, such as patience, humility, and sanctity. Thus, describing the weapons a good Christian needs for waging a holy crusade against the anti-Christ, Grace says:

'For I wil dele todaye and dyvyde grace
To alkynnes creatures that kan her fyve wittes,
Tresore to lyve by to her lyves ende,
And *wepne* to fyghte with that wil nevre faille.
For Antecryst and his al the worlde shal greve,
And acombre the, Conscience, but if Cryst the helpe.
'*And fals prophetes fele, flatereres and glosers,*
Shullen come and be curatoures over kynges and erlis;
And *pryde shal be Pope, Prynce of Holy Cherche,*
Coveytyse and Unkyndenesse Cardinales hym to lede.
'Forthi,' quod Grace, 'er I go, I wil gyve yow tresore,
And *wepne* to fighte with whan Antecryst yow assailleth'
And gaf ech man a grace to gye with hymselven,
That Ydelnesse encombre hym noght, ne Envye ne Pride (*Piers* B, 19.215-28).[194]

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[192] For more information about the similarity between the Saracens and the Christians as Langland views it, see also 15.390-416 and 15.501-510.
[193] See *Piers* B, 15.507 and 397-416.
[194] Italics mine.

The poet is an advocate of the spiritual war that does not deploy any swords, lances, or metal shields; rather, its weapons, similar to the nature of the enemy, are completely spiritual.[195] Langland's call for *spiritual* war therefore is an attempt to motivate Christians to return to the original way of Christ whose chivalry is spiritual, not physical, and to banish the materialistic ways of the Church that is now headed by "pryde" and served by "Coveytyse and Unkyndenesse."[196] By helping Christ against his main enemy, Christians are responsible for fighting spiritually, as pilgrims, by preaching the Gospels and spreading peace, love, and charity rather than violence, fear, bloodshed and war.[197]

Throughout *Piers*, Langland declares that *communal* love, not hatred, is what represents Christian charity–peace and mercy- that Christians should adopt entirely. Thus, by reminding Christians of the original way of Christ and contrasting it with some materialistic projects of the Church, Langland's *Piers* stands as a direct criticism of the Church and its materialistic projects, such as crusading. As Russell puts it, "it seems safe to say that the poet's central concern is with the search for salvation – the salvation of the individual soul of the fictional dreamer and the salvation (or, more properly, the regeneration) of society and, through this, the establishment of an order of justice and charity."[198] Langland has an absolute belief that preaching the Gospels is

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[195] In fact, there is no place in *Piers* where Langland promotes the use of bloody weapons, except in the episode where to introduce marriage as a blessed social cord, he says, "Wisely go wedde, and ware hym fro synne; / For lecherie in likynge is lymeyerd of helle. / Whiles thow art yong, and thi *wepene* kene" (*Piers* B, 9.180-182).

[196] Promoting the notion that Christ's heroism is made of patience, tolerance, and selflessness, Langland writes, "Crist, that on Calvarie upon the cros deadest" (*Piers* B, 5.465).

[197] "The foes he [pilgrim or crusader] was to fight were internal foes, those perennial temptations and obstacles to the pure life…" (Crocker, "Early Crusade Songs," 96).

[198] G. H. Russell, "The Salvation of the Heathen: The Exploration of a Theme in *Piers Plowman*," *Journal of The Warburg And Courtauld Institutes* 29, (1966):101-16.

the main task for pastors and religious men because the success of Christianity is when people are

saved by the word of God, rather than exterminated by the sword of the Church.

ii.   The Anti-Crusade Voice of *Confessio Amantis*:

Similar to Langland's *Piers*, in an attempt to mock and denounce crusading, Gower's

Confessio Amantis promotes spiritual war over the martial one, mercy over violence, and love over

hatred. Throughout the eight books of the poem, Amans and Genius, discussing the seven deadly

sins, clearly state that love is the ideal approach that people should adopt in order to receive the

grace of God and enjoy the peacefulness of His kingdom.[199] Gower introduces love as the main

issue of the whole pilgrimage-poem:

> Fro this day forth I thenke change
> And speke of thing is *noght so strange*,
> Which *every kinde* hath upon honde,
> And wherupon the world mot stonde,
> And hath don sithen it began,
> And schal whil ther is *any man*;
> And that is love, of which I mene
> To trete, as after schal be sene.
> In which ther can *noman* him reule (*Confessio* 1.9-17).[200]

It is obvious that Gower views love as a dominant issue that all people, including the Saracens,

have been blessed with. Love in the *Confessio*, therefore, is not merely a romantic passion, a level

of *cupiditas*, but a cord that binds all humans together. The *Confessio* introduces love as a fountain

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[199] Pride (Book 1), Envy (Book II), Wrath (Book III), Sloth (Book IV), Avarice (Book V),
Gluttony (Book VI), and Lechery (Book VIII).
[200] Italics mine. Also, in the fourth book, Gower refers to love as one of the main virtues:
> To speke of love if I schal seke,
> Among the holi bokes wise
> I finde write in such a wise,
> 'Who loveth noght is hier as ded';
> For love above alle othre is hed,
> Which hath the vertus forto lede,
> Of al that unto mannes dede
> Belongeth (*Confessio* 4.2322-29).

of communal repose, satisfaction, and peace, which can benefit all humans. That passion is holy, as it "is founded on mutuality, on what both Gower and Chaucer call 'common profit,' [it] is the only love which is consistently satisfactory and fruitful."[201] Thus, in the last thirty-four lines of the *Confessio*, Gower rejects earthly love in favor of an eternal one that "is goodly forto have, / Such love mai the bodi save, / Such love mai the soule amende, / The hyhe god such love ous sende" (*Confessio* 8.3165-68). Love here is the complete absence of sins and their manifestations. It is the exact opposite of *cupiditas* and absentmindedness. Thus, "the person who [is] finally…won over in the *Confessio* is not the lady, but Amans himself."[202] That is to say, the whole *Confessio* stands as a report of Amans' *peaceful* pilgrimage to self-recognition[203]–"a twofold process" for rediscovering the natural abilities that should help in finding the true self of Amans, who probably stands for England, Europe, or Christianity.[204]

To highlight the significance of love in leading Amans, symbolic of Christianity, to find himself, Gower exalts the virtue of love, which involves pity and mercy; simultaneously, he warns

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[201] Peck, *Confessio*, XVI.

[202] James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 217. See also Peter Nicholas, *Love and Ethics in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

[203] It is necessary to mention here that the whole poem is a documentation of Amans' journey from the inability to answer Venus' questions, "What are thou, Sone?" (*Confessio* 1.154) to the full realization of his own abilities and true personality which sparkled in the eight book as the speaker finds out that his name is "John Gower" (*Confessio* 8.2321). However, Explaining the importance of self-recognition as a criterion of successful pilgrimage, Thomas Merton says:

> Our task now is to learn that if we can voyage to the ends of the earth and there find ourselves in the aborigine who most differs from ourselves, we will have made a fruitful pilgrimage. That is why pilgrimage is necessary, in some shape or other. Mere sitting at home and meditating on the divine presence is not enough for our time, though it still retains its right place, integrated in a 'Catholic' whole. We have to come to the end of a long journey and see that the stranger we meet there is no other than ourselves—which is the same as saying that we find Christ in him ("From Pilgrimage to Crusade," *Cithara*, 48 (Nov, 2008): 5-21, 17).

[204] See Peck, *Confessio*, xvi-xvii.

against losing or relegating that unifying virtue among humans. As the seventh book of the poem declares: "It is the *vertu* of Pite, / Thurgh which the *hihe mageste* / Was stered, whan his Sone alyhte" (*Confessio Amantis* 7.3107-09). Since pity is the paternal relationship between God and "his Sone," being pitiful, merciful, and patient becomes part of such a holy doctrine.[205] That is to say, if people are still interested in maintaining the original way of God, then they should keep pity as their guide of approaching life. Genius preaches that pity, when employed as humanity's governing principle becomes a source of communal good and benefit:

> Pite was cause of *thilke good*,
> Wherof that we *ben alle save*:
> Wel oghte a man Pite to have
> And the *vertu* to sette in pris,
> Whan he himself which is al wys
> Hath schewed why it schal be preised (*Confessio* 7.3112-17).

Genius demonstrates that pity is a source of earthly goodness, and it is the value that all people should praise and set superior to anything else. Genius recommends that each person should be first and foremost piteous in all the different ways of life, so, instead of defining pity through his own personal experience, Genius encourages people to practice it directly. He wants people to see the significance of pity by examining its productivity by themselves.

Preaching for the same purpose, to set pity as the value that all humans should praise and deploy in their lives, Genius says: "Pite may noght be conterpeised / Of tirannie with no peis" (*Confessio* 7.3118-19). Genius warns against substituting pity for mercilessness, which is the opposite of God's way. In this context, Genius argues that as pity is central to God's Kingdom and relationship with people, earthly kings and kingdoms, if they want to keep the holiness of their

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[205] For a concise definition of the doctrine of God in the *Confessio*, see 3.2494-2500.

roles, should depend on pity as their scaffold for ruling. Justifying his political viewpoint, Genius says:

> For Pite makth a king *courteis*
> Bothe in his word and in his dede.
> It sit wel every liege drede
> His king and to his heste obeie,
> And *riht* so be the same weie
> It sit a king to be *pitous*
> Toward his poeple and *gracious*
> Upon the reule of governance,
> So that he worche *no vengance*,
> Which mai be cleped *crualte*.
> *Justice* which doth equite (*Confessio* 7.3120-30).[206]

These lines suggest that cruelty annihilates courtesy, so if kings are interested in promoting themselves as courteous, then pity should be their royal garment.

For Genius, "To Pite forto be servant, / Of al the worldes remenant / He is worthi to ben a lord" (*Confessio* 7.3139-3141).[207] It is pity that can help a person to be a noble or a lord. This means that Genius's understanding of royal courtesy has nothing to do with courtly conventions and governmental protocols, it is all about the moral values through which kings should treat their people and manage the various affairs of their nations. Genius demonstrates, when piety becomes the way of kings and governments, there will be no vengeance, anger, or hate among people, and consequently, justice, love and contentment, the main components of Christianity, will prevail. In other words, the original way of God demands promoting pity over vengeance, love over hate, and peace over war, an equation that sets crusading and love as an irreconcilable ways of life, at least in the *Confessio*. Pity, a form of love, is the way of righteousness, peace, justice, and salvation;

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[206] Italics mine.
[207] See also 3.1829-1862.

thus, the absence of pity, war –the dominance of tyranny, vengeance, cruelty, and animosities, "*no peis*" – could not be part of God's plan, as Genius believes.

Moreover, Genius views substituting pity for cruelty, vengeance, and violence, as a reflection of people's imperfect and sinful nature. Cruelty, one of the main manifestations and components of crusading, is "the felonie / Engendred is of tirannie" (*Confessio* 7.3249-50) that could gain no respect in the kingdom of God due to its association with destroying, rather than saving, God's creatures. Thus, Gower cautions that such a felony is one of humanity's main enemies that God Himself will eliminate from the world:

> God is himself the champion,
> Whos strengthe mai noman withstonde.
> For evere yit it hath so stonde,
> That god a *tirant* overladde,
> Bot wher Pite the regne ladde,
> Ther mihte no fortune laste
> Which was grevous, bot ate laste
> The god himself it hath redresced (*Confessio* 7.3252-59).

Out of His perfect care for man's life and salvations, God sets Himself responsible for defeating tyranny and eliminating cruelty as they both go against His piteous plan and demeanor towards humans. Genius says, cruelty, war in his case, is always to lose, and so even if it achieves some fortune, such achievements are ephemeral and will be overthrown by God.

Stressing the difference between tyranny and pity, and how the followers of the former will always lose while the followers of the latter will always be the winner, Gower writes:

> Pite is thilke vertu blessed
> Which nevere let his Maister falle;
> Bot *crualte*, thogh it so falle
> That it mai regne for a throwe,
> God wole it schal ben overthrowe (*Confessio* 7.3260-64).

Piteous people are always successful because their way is that of God, while cruel people are the losers because their way is incompatible with God's doctrine and intent. Accordingly, cruel

activities, such as war, crusading in this study, have no place in God's plan and can be nothing but "a prostitution of a holy cause"–a felony committed in the name of God.[208]

Still, some scholars argue that Gower's promotion of *common profit* and *love* does not actually prove that the poet is against the medieval Church's crusading, especially when launched against the Saracens. Elizabeth Siberry believes that neither Gower nor Langland was against crusading entirely, but were against a few of its consequences and abuses. She writes, "John Gower lamented that the expedition reflected the Church's preoccupation with worldly matters than spiritual affairs."[209] Justifying her viewpoint, Siberry explains that Gower does not exhibit the same harsh attitude against crusading in his other main works, so he should be seen as merely a reformer rather than dissenter.[210] Moreover, Siberry does not believe that crusading against the Saracens was a reason for Gower's revolt against the medieval Church's materialism. However, though this viewpoint might be accurate, one wonders how to read the dialogue between Amans and Genius about crusading in the third book of the *Confessio*. Responding to Amans' inquiry whether it is fine "to passé over the grete See / to werre and sle the Sarazin," Gower's Genius states, "Sone myn, / To preche and soffre for the feith, / That have I herd the gospel seith; / Bot forto slee, that hiere I noght. / Crist with his oghne deth hath boght / Alle other men, and made hem fre" (*Confessio* 3.2488-89, 2490-95). Besides their explicit opposition to manslaughter, the tone and theme of this excerpt contradict with the original motto of crusading, *Deus lo volt*! Gower preaches that all people are set free by Christ who, according to Gower, has paid his life for men's salvation and joy regardless of their religion.[211] Thus, as crusading licenses killing people and

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[208] Throop, *Criticism*, 284.
[209] Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading," 129.
[210] *Vox Clamantis* and *Mirour de l'Omme*.
[211] The backbone of crusading is "perfect hatred" which stems from the biblical verse: "Have I not hated them, O Lord, who hated thee: and pined away because of my enemies? I have hated

promoting hatred over love, it is natural that Gower condemns it. In fact, crusading demeans

Christ's death on the cross and undermines his original message, the message of life, love, and

freedom.

Still, Siberry argues that even if the *Confessio* has some anti-crusade touches, "[it] should

be remembered that this poem belonged to the tradition of courtly love and to a certain extent at

least its style was dictated by the demands of this literary genre. The lover's remark may also have

been intended to be ironic, lightening the absence of chivalric values amongst the knightly

class."[212] Siberry believes that the structural and generic conventions of the *Confessio* as a love

poem, or romance, contradict with any possible anti-crusade meanings of the poem; therefore, the

latter, as she argues, should be relegated in favor of the former. While such an argument regarding

the genre of the poem seems valid and thoughtful, it overlooks the confession of the lover Amans

in the fourth book of the *Confessio*:

> That me were levere hir *love winne*
> Than *Kaire* and al that is ther inne:
> And forto slen the hethen alle,
> I not what good ther mihte falle,
> So *mochel blod thogh ther be schad*. (*Confessio* 4.1657-61)

The innocent lover, Amans, is sure that love, harmony and intimacy, can unify all people. Thus, if

Christians are truly interested in deploying God's name to unify humans, including their enemy in

Cairo, the East, love then is the best approach for that mission. Such a recommendation

demonstrates that Amans' dream is more related with the conversion, rather than the eradication,

of non-Christians, a viewpoint that reflects the lover's anti-crusade stance. In the last two lines of

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them with a perfect hatred" (Psalms 138. 21). See also Peter the Venerable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed., Giles Constable (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 327-30, and J. A. Watt, "The Crusades and the Persecution of the Jews," in *The Medieval World*, eds. Linehan and Nelson, 146-162, 154.
[212] Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading," 130.

the excerpt, the speaker wonders what man could gain by spilling blood, a crime that violates the

law that Christ "tawhte himselve" to "hise [tuelve] Apostles," "The holi feith to prechen oute"

(*Confessio* 3.2496-2500). Thus, by denying war any real benefits and by affirming that it is always

violent and destructive, Amans successfully delivers his message that crusading cannot be

Christian.

Furthermore, without calling crusading by name, Amans expresses his unconditional

denouncement of it by introducing war as a violation of Christ's doctrine:

> This finde I writen, hou Crist bad
> That noman other scholde sle.
> What scholde I winne over the Se,
> If I mi ladi loste at hom?
> Bot passe thei the salte fom,
> To whom Crist bad thei scholden preche
> To al the world and his feith teche:
> Bot now thei rucken in here nest
> And resten as hem liketh best
> In all the swetnesse of delices. (*Confessio* 4.1662-71)

The speaker points out the Biblical foundations of his anti-war viewpoint and declares that Christ

forbids killing people for any reason. Amans does not believe that Christ wanted his followers to

travel to kill others, but that Christ's original mission was to preach the true faith to all people.

After setting a clear picture of the original Christian viewpoint against fighting, Amans

critiques Christians' sinful violation of Christ's instructions:

> Thus thei defenden ous the vices,
> And sitte hemselven al amidde;
> To slen and feihten thei ous bidde
> Hem whom thei scholde, as the bok seith,
> Converten unto Cristes feith.
> Bot hierof have I gret mervaile,
> Hou thei wol bidde me travaile:
> A Sarazin if I sle schal,
> I sle the Soule forth withal,
> And that was nevere Cristes lore (*Confessio* 4.1672-81).

Obviously, Gower's message here is that killing, even fighting, people, regardless of their religion and regardless of the motivation for fighting, is unchristian. The speaker suggests that instead of fighting and killing non-Christians, Christians should preach the Gospels and teach people, including the Saracens, about the merciful and piteous ways of Christ. Accordingly, whether the *Confessio* is read as a romance of courtly love or as a pilgrimage poem, the anti-crusade voice of Genius, Amans, and Gower is prominent enough not to ignore.

C- Conclusion:

Scrutinizing the spiritual pacifism of *Piers* and the *Confessio*, one can conclude that Gower and Langland were not indifferent to manslaughter, as Siberry and some other scholars suggest, but they both were intolerant of abusing religion, demoting spirituality, and killing humans under any condition. By celebrating Piers' search for St. Truth and by reporting Amans' search for his true self, Langland and Gower were actually condemning the corruption of their age and, at the same time, expressing a sincere desire to turn back the clock towards the age of Truth and perfection. The gradual movement of Amans and Piers towards the best of their souls and societies definitely indicates that the poems are not merely an "analysis of late fourteenth-century economic, religious and political questions;" rather, they speak about the catastrophic consequences of the society's alienation from God.[213] Therefore, Amans and Piers wend from a state fully contaminated with ignorance, schism, and materialism, into a long search for perfection, which is viewed by Langland and Gower as the epitome of spiritual life.

For Langland, this perfection can be achieved by restoring the original sense of pilgrimage. As Conscious concludes, "I wole bicome a pilgrym, / And walken as wide as the world lasteth" (*Piers* B, 20.381-82). Conscience's words demonstrate that God wants man to be a pilgrim – a

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[213] Claire Marshall, *William Langland, Piers Plowman* (Horndon, Tavistock, Devon: Northcote House, 2001), 9.

pure, harmless, and spiritual person whose life is dedicated to Truth. Similarly, in the last three

lines of the *Confessio*, Amans connects the main object of his voyage, "love and alle pes," as a

manifestation of God's kingdom only in which "Oure joie mai ben endeles" (*Confessio* 8.3172).

This means that the ideal state that Amans has been looking for while journeying with Genius is

purely spiritual, and thus, acquitting the pilgrim Amans from the grave sins of man is a requirement

for achieving that ideal spirituality. In addition, part of maintaining the structure, development,

and success of Piers and Amans' pilgrimages is to oppose all the various manifestations of

materialism, such as crusading that embodies both "'meed' (money, the acquisitive instinct) and

'will' (willfulness, 'singularity,' personal ambition)."[214] Thus, besides their intolerance to

misrepresenting the message of God, Langland and Gower were against crusading because it

embodied excessive "racism," "capitalism," and "patriotism."[215] As Yunck says, *Piers* and the

Confessio were "a vehicle of protest against a new world of nationalism, money, taxes, and

collectors, in favor of a world long passed and idealized…."[216] There is no scene, episode, dream,

or line of either the *Confessio* or *Piers* that justifies crusading or proposes that war can be lawful.[217]

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[214] John A. Alford, "The Design of the Poem," in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. Alford, 29-66, 33.

[215] Though these terms were not actually part of the diction of the fourteenth-century culture, it noteworthy to mention here that most historians use such jargon for describing the different events of the medieval era. See Peter Linehan and Janet Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 131.

[216] John A. Yunck, *The Lineage of Lady Meed: The Development of Mediaeval Venality* Satire (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 219.

[217] I am referring here to Augustine of Hippo's concept of "just war":

> [The] earthly city is generally divided against itself. There are litigations; there are wars and battles; there is pursuit of victories that either cut lives short or at any rate are short-lived… It is incorrect, however, to say that the goods that this city covets are not good, since through them even the city itself is better after its own human fashion. Thus to gain the lowest kind of goods it covets an earthly peace, one that it seeks to attain by warfare; for if it is victorious and no one remains to resist it, there will be peace… Such is the peace that the toilsome wars are waged to gain; such is the peace that the reputedly glorious victory achieves

War in *Piers* and the *Confessio* is always violent, lawless, and sinful; therefore, it cannot be part of the Christian tradition, at least in Piers and Amans' dreams.

Gower's *Confessio* and Langland's *Piers* denounce crusading by attacking it directly, by promoting peace and spirituality over war and materialism, and by preaching unity, love, and wisdom over the various outcomes of crusading, such as disarray, hatred, and narrow-mindedness. Still, what makes Gower and Langland's anti-crusade pacifism crucially significant to the literature and history of England is the fact that these two poets were directly connected with the English court and Church. For Gower, dedicating the *Confessio* to Richard II and rededicating the 1399 version to Henry IV proves that the poem was intended to be read before the King, or at least in the English court.[218] Likewise, Langland was a "chronicler" of the society,[219] and his *Piers* was "immediately influential and widely disseminated; it was read, quoted, copied, and imitated throughout the last decades of the fourteenth century."[220] Because of this fact, the anti-crusade voice of Langland and Gower's poems is not to be restricted to literature or viewed in isolation from its English context; rather, the two poems prove that the polemic of crusading was prevalent

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(*The City of God against the Pagans*, trans., George E. McCracken (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), XV.4.425).
See also, Linda V. Seidel, "Holy Warriors: The Romanesque Rider and the Fight against Islam," in *Holy War*, ed., Murphy, 33-54.

[218] See Stefan Vander Elst, "Chivalry, Crusade, and Romance on the Baltic Frontier," *Mediaeval Studies* 73 (2011): 288. Similar to Gower, Wycliffe and the Lollards got the protection of Richard II, John of Gaunt, and Joan Princess of Wales for a considerable period (Catto, "Religion and the English Nobility," 53-54). See also Anne Hudson, 28, and Jones, *Who Murdered Chaucer?*

[219] *Piers* discusses most, if not all, of the various social, political, and economic matters of his ages, such as the feudal system, the Black Death, and the Peasant Revolution; therefore, it can be viewed as a document in the social history of England. See Anna P. Baldwin, "The Historical Context," 68. See also, Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman*.

[220] John M. Bowers, *Chaucer and Langland: The Antagonistic Tradition*, http://undpress.nd.edu/book/P01140.

among the members of the English nobility, aristocracy, laity, and Church.[221] They show that the matter of crusading was everywhere in England; therefore, one wonders, is it true then that Chaucer was deaf to the matter of crusading entirely, his literature was not serious,[222] and "[h]is references… [were] purely casual, and indicate[d] no attitude whatsoever"?[223] In fact, no. Similar to his contemporaries, Chaucer was an advocate of pacifism, and his poetry was among the most vociferous anti-crusade voices in England; yet, his critique of war in general and crusading in particular had always been implicit.

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[221] See Siberry, "Criticism of Crusading," 129 and Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 288.
[222] Matthew Arnold denies Chaucer "the high and excellent seriousness which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry" (Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," 1889, 31). See also, Ruth Fulton, "The High Seriousness of Chaucer," *Vassar Miscellany*, Volume XXXVII no. 1 (1 October 1907): 1-6, Chaucer, *Chaucer*, *The Portable Chaucer: Revised Edition*, ed. and trans., Theodore Morrison (United States of America: Penguin, 1977).
[223] Loomis and Roberts, *Studies*, 259.

IV-   Chapter Three: The Implicit Anti-Crusade Voice of Chaucer

  A- Introduction:

In contrast with Gower and Langland, Geoffrey Chaucer does not criticize crusading

directly. None of his works, including the *Tales*, has an anti-crusade statement as direct as Genius's

answer to Amans' question about the righteousness of killing Saracens: "to passé over the grete

See / to werre and sle the Sarazin, /… that hiere I noght" (*Confessio* 3. 2488-95). Likewise, neither

the *Tales* nor Chaucer's other works is as explicit as "That *sola fides sufficit* to save with lewed

peple. / And so may Sarsens be saved, scribes and [Grekis]" (*Piers* B, 15.389-90). Simultaneously,

with the exception of the controversial portrait of the Knight,[224] Chaucer's works "advance a

politically and ideologically inspired Crusade program"[225] neither by exalting crusaders nor by

mocking their enemies.[226] As Jones states, Chaucer has avoided "open political commentary, in

contrast to other contemporary English writers like Langland…or John Gower."[227] Though this

might suggest that Chaucer has been silent or indifferent to the matter of crusading or war, in light

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[224] The existence of Jones' argument that the Knight's portrait in the Prologue is a criticism against the corruption of chivalry and the lawlessness of crusading against Manly's argument that the Knight's portrait embodies ideal chivalry in the later Middle Ages demonstrates that Chaucer's lines about the Knight and in consequence his viewpoint about crusading have always been controversial. However, I am not tackling the Knight's portrait now because it will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter.

[225] Brenda Deen Shildgen, *Pagans, Tartars, Moslems, and Jews in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001)*,* 54.

[226] See R. F. Yeager, "Pax Poetica: On the Pacifism of Chaucer and Gower," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer: The Yearbook of the New Chaucer Society* 9 (1987): 97-121, 98.

[227] Schildgen, *Pagans, Tartars, Moslems, and Jews*, 8. Likewise, Pearsall writes, "Langland and Gower, in the vigour of their response to contemporary problems of class conflict, of poverty and oppression, of the rights of common people, offer plenty of invitations to both applause and derision. Chaucer, by contrast, exhibits scarcely a sign of any direct response to the political and social movements of his day" (*The Life*, 147). See also William Quinn, "The 'Silly' Pacifism of Geoffrey Chaucer and Terry Jones," in *The Medieval Python*, ed. R. F. Yeager and Tushiyuke Takamyia, 167-180 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 167-68.

of the dominant pacifist tone that dominates *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, the *Canterbury Tales*, and some of his other works, Chaucer is an adversary of crusading.[228]

This chapter argues that despite the hypersensitive intolerance of England against the critique of war in general and crusading in particular, Chaucer has been one of England's anti-crusade voices.[229] I argue that the poet has expressed his anti-crusade by promoting common profit over cupidity, pacifism over warfare, love over hatred, and reconciliation over chaos.[230] Chaucer, though himself a knight, has condemned warfare, including crusading, by advocating peace and unity among humans regardless of their race or religion in most of his poetry. Thus, this chapter reads *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, and Chaucer's other poems, focusing on their call for common profit and pacifism, which is "[a] moral or religious opposition to war or violence and a consequent refusal to bear arms."[231] The purpose of such an argument is to demonstrate that though Chaucer's poems do not have an explicit anti-crusade message, their pacifist voice is nothing less than an anti-crusade pose.

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[228] Many scholars argue that Chaucer was indifferent to the matter of war and peace. John Edwin Wells, for instance, concludes, "Among a nation of writers who had been and were concerned especially for the welfare of their fellows and society, in a period when the literature was responding particularly to the impulse of great political and religious and social needs and movements, Chaucer exhibits scarcely a sign of any reforming spirit, or indeed any direct reflection of those needs and movements" (Wells, *A Manuel of Writings*, 602). Against such a viewpoint, John Pratt writes, "Chaucer, the writer, could not have failed to produce commentary on war, for he lived in an age of military conflict" (*Chaucer and War* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2000), 3). For more viewpoints on the topic, see Loomis, "Was Chaucer a Laodicean?" 260.

[229] For the value of war to fourteenth-century England, see Barnie, *War*, 132.

[230] See Yeager, "Pax Poetica,"

[231] *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), s.v. *Pacifism*. Quoted in Yeager, "Pax Poetica," 98.

B- Chaucer's Pacifist Voice:

Chaucer was one of England's advocates of pacifism, as manifested in most of his poetry. *Troilus and Criseyde*, for instance, speaks about love and circuitously places it as the ideal substitution for war. From the inception of the poem, Chaucer promotes love by contrasting its pleasurable connotations to the detested ones of war. Troilus, "the kyng Priamus sone of Troye" (*Troilus* I, 2) is exalted neither for his royal lineage nor for his chivalric deeds in the battlefield, but for being an ideal lover. In fact, the matter of war is not celebrated in *Troilus*; rather, it functions as a context for Troilus' love story.[232] The poet invokes the muses to help him portray the agony of lovers and "write hire wo, and lyue in charite" (49). After declaring the main subject of his poem, Chaucer turns to construct the historical background of his story, which takes place during the Greek siege of Troy. Ironically, Chaucer praises neither the Greeks nor the Trojans, but he summarizes their dreadful history by referring to Calchas' treason against the Trojans, as if he wants to associate war with treason and the similar bad deeds.

Concluding his initial report on the war, Chaucer writes, "But how this toun com to destruccioun / Ne falleth nought to purpos me to telle; / For it were a long digressioun" (*Troilus* I, 141-43). The poet ironically encourages fans of history and war to read about their favorite subject matters "In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dyte" (146). Without any further explanation, Chaucer dismisses the theme of war and focuses instead on love: "But though that Grekes hem of Troie shetten / And hir cite biseged al aboute, / Hire olde vsage nolde they nat letten" (148-50). Since "hire olde vsage" refers to an old Trojan custom, i.e. celebrating spring, life, and love, Chaucer's

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[232] For how *Troilus* is a narration of love, see Spearing, *Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde* (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), 23-35; Davis Taylor, "The Terms of Love: a Study of Troilus's Style," *Speculum* 51 (1976): 69-90; Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 44-86, and Pratt, *Chaucer and War*, 49-50.

statement contrasts the Greek's siege of Troy to the Trojans' spring celebration, which is filled with "swote smellen floures white and rede, / … so many a lusty knight, / So many a lady fressh and mayden bright, / fful wel arayed, both moeste, mene, and leste" (158-67). By focusing on the spring celebration rather than the siege of Troy, Chaucer points out both his preference of love over hatred and his belief that war and love, similar to *caritas* and *cupiditas*, are irreconcilable.[233]

Likewise, in one of the most notable scenes of the poem,[234] Troilus is portrayed as a victorious knight whose "heigh prowesse," experienced "helm," and "sheeld" make "swich a knyghtly sighte trewely / As was on hym, was nought, withouten faille, / To loke on Mars, that god is of bataille" (*Troilus* II, 628-30). Despite the chivalric atmosphere of these lines, the whole scene is devoted neither to Troilus' chivalry nor to Troy's involvement in war but to pave the way for Criseyde's decision, "I on hym have mercy and pitee" (655). Chaucer uses everything in this scene "to preface a prolonged exploration … of Criseyde's inner processes as she 'decides' to love Troilus."[235] The scene is not about Troilus the knight or his chivalric coterie; rather, it explains how Criseyde accepts Troilus' love due to his physical appearance. In brief, Troilus' chivalry is deployed in order to justify Criseyde's love and to show love's ability to overcome war and achieve what war cannot.

Elaborating on such a theme, at the very end of the third book of *Troilus*, Chaucer concludes, "My thridde bok now ende ich in this wyse, / And Troilus in lust and in quiete / Is with Criseyde, his owen herte swete" (III, 1819-21). In contrast, at the very beginning of the fourth

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[233] See Durant. W. Robertson, Jr. "Chaucerian Tragedy," *ELH* 19, no. 1 (March 1952): 1-37, and *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

[234] See *Troilus* II, 624-644.

[235] Barbara Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition of Roman Antique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 238.

book, he complains, "But al to litel, weylaway the whyle, / Lasteth swich joie… / For which myn herte right now gynneth blede, / And now my penne, allas, with which I write, / Quaketh for drede of that I moste endite" (IV, 1-14). The shift from excessive optimism to pessimism reflects the poet's belief that war and love could not coexist. Despite his focus on Troilus' love in the first three books of the poem, Chaucer focuses on the matter of the Trojan War in Book IV and V. Book IV reports that the Greeks and Trojans had many deadly combats, in which "The folk of Troie hemselven so mysledden / That with the worse at nyght homward they fledden" (IV, 49-50). In one of these combats, Antenore was captured, and as a result, a treaty for exchanging prisoners was issued, and Criseyde was to join her father in the Greek camp.[236] Criseyde left Troilus who, after being the most happy and lively man in the poem, started cursing "that day which that Nature / Shop me to ben a lyves creature!" and called himself the "wrecche of wrecches" (IV, 251-52, 272). If Criseyde's absence is taken as the absence of Troilus' emotional and social equilibrium, then the turn in Troilus' mood probably reflects the difference between love and war. The former manifests man's fortune and good luck while the latter represents man's misfortune and bad luck.

The detrimental consequences, or products, of war are explored further throughout Book IV and V. Criseyde arrived at the Greek camp, and she kindly thanked Diomede for his offer of friendship.[237] While her overt kindness towards Diomede can suggest either the lady is treacherous or innocent, Chaucer attributes all of Criseyde's controversial attitudes, at this specific situation, to her being "with sorwe oppressed" (V, 177) for not hearing anything about Troilus.[238] As Pratt puts it:

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[236] *Troilus* IV, 50-231.
[237] For the full conversation in which Diomede offers Criseyde his friendship and in which she thanks him kindly, see *Troilus* V, 117-194.
[238] Troilus V, 176-79.

Chaucer is non-committal about how much she understands of Diomede's line. All this disruption of her little world has confused her. The military escort, the chattering of a stranger, anguished memory and grief, all this has left her confused and lost. Chaucer has not portrayed anything but a victim at this point. She is a casualty of warfare.[239]

The process of exchanging Criseyde with Antenor caused Criseyde and Troilus to deviate from their normal attitudes and cheerful personalities. Criseyde became apparently unfaithful, and Troilus became desperate. That is to say, Chaucer focused on Criseyde's departure for the Greek camp and the subsequent changes in order to associate war with the substitution of happiness for agony, peace for suffering, love for hatred, and faithfulness for treason, a series of casualties that would testify to how the poet was against war regardless of its motivations.

In support of such an anti-war stance, Chaucer reminds his audience, "loveres, that bathen in gladnesse" and have "any drope of pyte in yow be," (I, 22-23) that *Troilus* is all about love:

And if I hadde ytaken for to write
The armes of this ilke worthi man,
Than wolde ich of his batailles endite;
But for that I to writen first bigan
Of his love, I have seyd as I kan --
His worthi dedes, whoso list hem heere,
Rede Dares, he kan telle hem alle ifeere – (V, 1765-71).

This demonstrates that the various images of war throughout the poem were an indirect approach to highlight the more important theme of love.[240] Similarly, the scene of Troilus' ascending to the eighth sphere and experiencing the difference between the heavenly and earthly worlds proves that the whole poem is about true love,[241] which is "to deny man's normal perception and experience

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[239] Pratt, *Chaucer and War*, 65.

[240] See George Lyman Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915), 9, 29, John Livingston Lowes, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 133-137, C. S. Lewis, The *Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 161, and Percy Van Dyke Shelly, *The Living Chaucer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1940), 2, 12.

[241] *Troilus* V. 1807-19.

of things, bringing opposites into a union which both he and we can only intuitively and darkly understand."[242] After rising to the eighth sphere, Troilus realized that true love is the harmony of the heavenly world and the sacred cord that can connect people with each other as well as with their God.[243] Therefore, Troilus "dampned al oure werk that foloweth so / The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste, / And sholden al oure herte on heven caste" (V, 1824-26). Though the speaker did not explain the damned works that people ought to abandon for the sake of God, it is likely that war, the antithesis of love in *Troilus*, should be among the practices that must be abandoned.

However, despite such pervasive reiteration of pacifist sentiment, some scholars still deny Chaucer any serious viewpoint regarding crusading. Pratt concludes that Chaucer knew that "a war was just when it was waged to secure peace, when the legally constituted authority figure could show that no peace could last unless an aggressor was defeated, when it was carried out against people who had injury to innocent parties, and when it was waged to recover property lost to an aggressor."[244] Fro Pratt, Chaucer's pacifism was motivated by his extreme devotion to Christianity rather than humanity; therefore, it did not include the Saracens in its zone of safety and love. While this viewpoint seems justified, towards the end of *Troilus*, Chaucer proves that his "specialty was mankind."[245] He advices his audience to "Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte, / And of youre herte up casteth the visage / To thilke God that after his ymage" (V, 1937-39). In contrast to his irreligious tone from the beginning of the poem, Chaucer encourages *Troilus*' audience, "Ye

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[242] Donald W. Rowe, *O Love O Charite! Contraries Harmonized in Chaucer's Troilus* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Press, 1976), 4.

[243] "In terms of medieval number symbolism, eight is the traditional number of rebirth and resurrection" (Edmund Reiss, "Chaucer's Parodies of Love," in *Chaucer the Love Poet*, eds. Jerome Mitchell and William Provost (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1973, 35).

[244] *Chaucer and War*, 134.

[245] Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, 9.

loveres," to deny whatever might disturb their love of God who "nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye, / That wol his herte al holly on hym leye" (V, 1845-46). Such a call proves that for Chaucer all humans have been redeemed by Christ who is willing to save all humans if they adopt *caritas* as a way of life. In other words, Chaucer does not restrict the mercy of God to Christians; rather, he views it as a heavenly blessing that all humans can attain.

The same concern of advocating pacifism against war is voiced in the *Legend of Good Women*, which argues that injustice and tyranny–war's products- should not be adopted by any good ruler. In her account of an ideal lord, "Alceste, the worthyeste queene," states:

> This shulde a ryghtwys lord han in his thought,
> And not ben lyk tyraunts of Lumbardye,
> That usen wilfulhed and tyrannye.
> For he that kyng or lord is naturel,
> Hym oughte nat be tyraunt and crewel
> As is a fermour, to don the harm he can (*Legend* G, 353-58).[246]

Though the speech is undoubtedly focused on the relationship between the god of love and "his lige man," it is still logical to argue that such a call is applicable to the real world.[247]

Through the words of Alceste, Chaucer delivers a universal call for peace, compassion, harmony, and piety among people and their rulers. In her closing statement on the ruler-citizen relationship, Alceste views rulers as equals, and their rights to rule their people and demand obedience are equal too: "As it is ryght and skylful that they be / Enhaunsed and honoured, [and] most dere -- / For they ben half-goddes in this world here" (*Legend* G, 372-74). Regardless of the direct references to the English Queen throughout the poem, the poet's indirect call for equity is not restricted to England because the poet's direct patron here is the god of love who does not

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[246] Similar to Alceste's description of the good lord is Chaucer's lord-addressee in the last part of *Lak of Stedfastnesse* (22-28).

[247] See Howard Rollin Patch, "Chaucer and the Common People," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 29, No. 3 (Jul., 1930): 376-84, 5-6.

belong to any specific race or country.[248] Also, in light of the fact that love is the only doctrine and faith of the god of love, then there is no way to restrict the poet's call for equity to Christianity rather than other religions. Even though it is possible that the poet has made his stance against tyranny by relying on his overt Catholicism, the *Legend*'s call for peace and justice is not governed by the poet's religious affiliation or racial orientation.[249]

The *Legend*'s call for pacifism is humanistic entirely. While advocating equity versus injustice, the poet does not attempt to convert his readers to Catholicism or to reform their understanding of it. Alceste condemns tyranny and recommends, "Yow ughte to ben the lyghter merciable; / Leteth youre yre, and beth somwhat tretable," (*Legend* G, 396-7) without restricting her speech to any religious context. In response to Alceste's petition for mercy and love on behalf of the dreamer, the god of love says: "'Madame,' quod he, 'it is so longe agon / That I yow knew so charytable and trewe, /…Al lyth in yow, doth with hym what yow leste" (*Legend* G, 331-9). The god of love attributes Alceste's defense of justice, kindness, wisdom, and forgiveness versus tyranny, cruelty, wrath, and vengeance to her natural love of righteousness and charity—two universal concerns of humanity.[250] Thus, without supporting any religious or ideological projects, the *Legend* views peace as the epitome of charity, wisdom, and righteousness, while war as the epitome of selfishness, nearsightedness, and unrighteousness.

The same viewpoint is celebrated in *Lak of Stedfastnesse* and the *Former Age*. *Lak of Stedfastnesse* laments the loss of truth and stability, two aspects of a peaceful society. It laments

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[248] Against this argument, Delany believes that Chaucer's poem is limited to geographically and religiously. See Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 150.

[249] See Delany, *The Naked Text*, 150-51.

[250] Patch, mentions that the *Legend* asks the King to "have compassion on poor folk [without restricting this call to a specific race, religion, or gender]" ("Chaucer and the Common People," 5-6).

also the prevalence of "oppressioun," "wrecchednesse," "wrong," and "fikelnesse," the main

aspects of violent and covetous societies. Similarly, the *Former Age* laments the loss of peace and

happiness and blames people's inclination for war:

> A blisful lyf, a paisible and a swete,
> Ledden the peples in the former age.
> … [when] No flesh ne wiste offence of egge or spere.
> No coyn ne knew man which was fals or trewe,
> No ship yit karf the wawes grene and blewe,
> No marchaunt yit ne fette outlandish ware.
> No trompes for the werres folk ne knewe,
> Ne toures heye and walles rounde or square (1-24).

The poet openly yearns for the former age of simplicity, which embodies the absence of animosity

and war. While this stands as a direct denunciation of war, Chaucer restricts the reason of war to

economics, as if he wants to mock whatever justification of war, including obtaining peace.[251] The

poet explains that as people did not know "coyn," and were not interested in "international" trade

and economic competition, there was no need to "explore" foreign lands or to carry "egge or spere"

against others. Chaucer wonders, "What sholde it han avayled to werreye? / Ther lay no profit,

ther was no richesse" (25-6). The poet attributes the "invention" of warfare to "the cursednesse of

coveytyse," (31-2) which deformed the essence of humanity and caused people, led by covetous

"tyraunts," to fight each other.[252] Such a connection between war and covetousness viewed war as

an absolute sin against Christ and His peaceful way of life.[253]

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[251] For Augustine, just war "geritur ut pax acquiratur" (Epsitola CLXXXIX, 6).

[252] In his description of the decline of humanity, Chaucer writes,
> Allas, allas, now may men wepe and crye!
> For in oure dayes nis but covetyse,
> Doublenesse, and tresoun, and envye,
> Poyson, manslawhtre, and mordre in sondry wyse. (*The Former Age* 60-63)

[253] It is interesting that Chaucer's indirect identification of war as a manifestation or result of covetousness clicks with Gower's viewpoint, "Outwardly, greedy lords deal in the blessings of peace, but inwardly, war still stand first with them. As long as it can store up more loot through war than peace, avarice does not know how to love the good things of peace" (*Vox Clementis*

Like in *Lak* and the *Former Age*, Chaucer's treatment of war in *ABC* demonstrates that "He was certainly a poet of humanity" who viewed people's peace as a reflection of God's grace.[254] In the "P-stanza" for instance, Chaucer declares that God has sent Christ on earth in order to save people and redeem them peacefully:

> Purpos I have sum time for to enquere
> Wherfore and whi the Holi Gost thee soughte
> Whan Gabrielles vois cam to thin ere.
> He not to werre us swich a wonder wroughte,
> But for to save us that he sithen boughte.
> Thanne needeth us no wepen us for to save,
> But oonly ther we dide not, as us oughte,
> Doo penitence, and merci axe and have. (*ABC* 113-20)

Not only does the speaker celebrate the peacefulness and purposefulness of Mary's pregnancy, but he also stresses that war has not been part of such miraculous event. The line that "Thanne needeth us no wepen us for to save" diminishes the significance of weapons as they are used for slaughtering people and invading their lands. At the same time, Chaucer points out that the divine purpose of Mary and her son is "to save," not kill, humans, and that to attain God's mercy, people need to repent their sins and adopt God's peaceful approach. This means that war and its inhumane products are not part of the divine decree for humanity; therefore, humans should denounce them entirely. Thus, the "P-stanza" as well as the rest of *ABC* is a pacifist call that stands in opposition to the military approach that has dominated fourteenth-century Christendom.

7.33-36, in Gower, *Works*, ed., Macaulay, vol. 4. As translated by Eric W. Stockton, *The Major Latin Works of John Gower* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962). However, for information about the role of peacefulness and charity in Christ's way of life, see Yeager, "Pax Poetica," 105.

[254] William Provost, introduction to *Chaucer the Love Poet*, eds., Jerome Mitchell and William Provost (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1973), 1-8, 8.

Furthermore, in an attempt to demote war in favor of promoting peace and love among humans, Chaucer, similar to Gower and Langland,[255] celebrates the ideal of "commune profit,"[256] which detests war and hatred and praises peace and love,[257] in some of his poetry. The *Parliament of Fowls*, for instance, proposes that "common profyt" is the only way "to achieve celestial bliss. Here deviators from law and convention will forever lose salvation."[258] In praise of common profit, Africanus preaches, "man, lered other lewed, / That lovede commune profyt, wel ithewed, / He shulde into a blysful place wende / There as joye is that last withouten ende" (47-50).[259] Adopting

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[255] For a full discussion of how Gower tackles the notion of "common profit" in his poetry, see Russell Peck, *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), and for the perception of common profit in *Piers Plowman*, see Dorothy Chadwick, *Social Life in the Days of Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1922).

[256] To see Chaucer's manipulation of the term "commune profit," look Chaucer's translation of *Boece*, II, pr. Vii, II. 530-35 and the *Parliament of Fowls*, II, 47 and 75. Also, see Patch, "Chaucer and the Common People."

[257] According to Thomas Aquinas, common good stands as "the universal good, as the object of love, as the goal of justice, as the life of virtue, and as the continuation in existence of the species." "Opposition to the common good of the *res publica*, he argues, is, strictly speaking, *seditio*, a form of conflict which is distinct from both strife (*rixa*) and war (*bellum*)" (M. S. Kempshall, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 77, 125). See also, 56 and 319. For more information about the awareness of fourteenth-century England about the ideal of common good, see Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole and Materials for His Biography* (New York: Heath; London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 176, n.1; Mary M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, and Yasunari Takada, "'Commune Profit' and Libidinal Dissemination in Chaucer," in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature,* eds., Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 107-122.

[258] Jean E. Jost, "Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* as a Valentine Fable: The Subversive Poetics of Feminine Desire," *Papers in Medieval Studies* (1999), 71.

[259] Similar to this explicit call in praise of common profit, in response to the Scipion's demand, "to telle hym al / The wey to come into that hevene blisse" (71-2), Affrycan says,

> … Know thyself first immortal,
> And loke ay besyly thow werche and wysse
> To commune profit, and thow shalt not mysse
> To comen swiftly to that place deere
> That ful of blysse is and of soules cleere. (73-77)

common profit and supporting its various manifestations constitute an irreplaceable obligation that people should fulfill in order to attain God's eternal blessings and everlasting love. McDonald points out that the *Parliament* establishes "a really direct connection between love and salvation"[260] since it portrays love as a divine cord that binds peopletogether,[261] regardless of their race, religion, education, and social origin, and encourages them to work for one purpose, to attain evergreen "joye." Thus, though the setting and actions of the poem stress love's sensuality, the poem's ultimate theme is spiritual love, which stands as a synonym of Christian charity and common profit in general.[262]

Common profit in the *Parliament* is as important for humanity as charity is important for the Christian faith.[263] Therefore, not only does Africanus encourage Scipio to adopt such an ideal, but he warns him against violating any of its conventions:

> But brekers of the lawe, soth to seyne,
> And likerous folk, after that they ben dede,
> Shul whirle aboute th' erthe alwey in peyne,
> Tyl many a world be passed, out of drede,
> And than, foryeven al hir wikked dede,
> Than shul they come into that blysful place,
> To which to comen God the sende his grace. (78-84)

Not to adopt the ideal of common good or to violate any of that ideal's conventions is a sin that people should regret because it goes against God's will and humans' nature. By analogy, people

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[260] See Charles O. McDonald, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*," *Speculum* 30, No. 3 (Jul., 1955): 444-457, 446.
[261] For some scholars, love or common profit unifies all creatures, including people, together. See Victoria Rothschild, "*The Parliament of Fowls*: Chaucer's Mirror up to Nature?" *The Review of English Studies* 35, No. 138 (May, 1984): 164-184.
[262] See Paul A. Olson, "The Parlement of Foules: Aristotle's Politics and the Foundations of Human Society," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 2, (1980): 53-69.
[263] See Bernard F. Huppe and D. W. Robertson, Jr., *Fruyt and Chaf: Studies in Chaucer's Allegories* (Princeton, 1963), 101-48, and Rhoda H. Selvin, "Shades of Love in the *Parlement of Foules*," *SN*, 37 (1965), 146-60.

should denounce whatever does not abide with the ideal of common profit, such as hatred and violence, which are essentially the main products of war and the exact opposites of peace, love, common profit, and charity.[264]

The *Parliament*, though a love poem in which birds deliver the poet's viewpoint on love-related matters, is "politically and culturally suggestive."[265] Chaucer in the *Parliament* "invites speculation concerning the relationship between self-righteous nationalistic war and 'commune profyt'…. Such speculations would be relevant in his own society locked in the long, destructive war with France."[266] The *Parliament*'s call for common profit, or *caritas*, therefore, is an indirect call for peace and a denunciation of war among all people. In Olson's words, the *Parliament* is "a very great civic poem, concerned not only with British institutions but also with the foundation of the human community in its recognition of the weakness of our physical nature, which makes the interdependency of corporate groups necessary, and…which makes sacrifice meaningful and corporate action fruitful."[267] That is to say, promoting peace and condemning war are among Chaucer's main concerns in the *Parliament*, and though the poem does not explicitly condemn war, its defense of common profit makes it, similar to *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Former Age*, *Lak of Stead*, and the *Legend of Good Women*, a pacifist poem.

The *Tales* too advocates peace and denounces war by introducing common profit as an ideal way of life. In the Clerk's Tale, for instance, Chaucer introduces common profit as a very

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[264] See Helen Phillips, "Register, Politics, and The *Legend of Good Women*," *The Chaucer Review* 37, No. 2 (2002): 101-28, 101 and Yeager, "Pax Poetica," 97-121.
[265] Jean E. Jost, "Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*," 58. See also Bruce Kent Cowgill, "The *Parlement of Foules* and the Body Politic," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 74, No. 3 (Jul., 1975): 315-35, and Russell A. Peck, "Love, Politics, and Plot in the *Parlement of Foules*," *The Chaucer Review* 24, No. 4 (Spring, 1990): 290-305, 296.
[266] David Aers, "*The Parliament of Fowls*: Authority, the Knower and the Known," *The Chaucer Review* 16, No. 1 (Summer, 1981): 1-17, 4.
[267] "The Parlement of Foules," 69.

useful policy that only wise people could recognize. In an attempt to show the practicality of such

an ideal, he celebrates Griselda thus:

> Nat oonly this Grisildis thurgh hir wit
> Koude al the feet of wyfly hoomlinesse,
> But eek, whan that the cas required it,
> The commune profit koude she redresse.
> Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
> In al that land that she ne koude apese,
> And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese. (*CT* IV, 428-34)

Griselda, more than any of her contemporaries, was viewed by her people as the sponsor of

common profit against "discord, rancour, [and] hevynesse." For her involvement in the policy of

common profit, people admired her and saw her as a messenger or even an angel "That…from

hevene sent was…Peple to save and every wrong t'amende" (*CT* IV, 440-41). Griselda was the

actual embodiment of common profit, so "Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse / In al that land

that she ne koude apese, / And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese" (*CT* IV, 432-34). Thus,

since people's safety and peace were the two main goals of Griselda's heavenly project, whatever

might cause war and animosity among people was against Griselda's desire and precepts.[268]

Similarly, the Parson's Tale advocates common profit as the policy that all people should

adopt and advocate in order to avoid confusion creeping into their lives and destroying their

happiness. Chaucer writes:

> the pope calleth hymself servant of the Servantz of god; but for as muche as the
> estaat Of hooly chirche ne myghte nat han be, Ne the commune profit myghte nat
> han be kept, Ne pees and rest in erthe, but if God hadde Ordeyned that som men
> hadde hyer degree and Som men lower, / therfore was sovereyntee ordeyned, To
> kepe and mayntene and deffenden Hire underlynges or hire subgetz in resoun, as
> Ferforth as it lith in hire power, and nat to destroyen Hem ne confounde. (*CT* X,
> 774-74)

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[268] Griselda is seen by many scholars, like Geraldine Heng as a Virgin-Mary-figure. See *The Empire*.

For Chaucer, common profit is among God's greatest blessings for people. In the passage, it is part of God's ordinance that has caused the Holy Church to exist and the Pope to be as a servant of God's servants. Also, common profit is the "*ordinate concordia*" that could reconcile the various discrepancies among people and make earth a friendly place to inhabit.[269] The absence of "pees and rest in erthe," which results from ignoring common profit, is the main reason that can disturb people's lives and cause them to wage wars. As Yeager phrases St. Augustine's words in this regard, "As an aspect of the good, peace to Augustine is the natural state of man and the universe; war, like all other evil, therefore has no separate presence but is an absence of good."[270] Accordingly, the Parson's Tale concludes that war and common profit are always irreconcilable, and the existence of one results in the absence of the other.

Similarly, the Tale of Melibee testifies to the impossibility of reconciling war and revenge with peace and solace. Besides Dame Prudence's invaluable devotion to peace, love, forgiveness, patience, and wisdom versus chaos, hatred, revenge, wrath, and war,[271] the Tale of Melibee' pacifist theme is made clear by the "surgien" who advises Melibee:

> 'Sire,' … where as we been withholde, and to oure pacientz that we do no damage, wherfore it happeth many tyme and ofte that when twey men han everich wounded

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[269] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 13 (Migne, ed., *PL*, vol. 40, col. 640). Quoted in Jesús D. Rodríguez Velasco, *Order and Chivalry: Knighthood and Citizenship in Late Medieval Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 4.

[270] Yeager, "Pax Poetica," 100.

[271] See the Tale of Melibee 1283-1294 where Dame Prudence concludes:
> certes, wikkednesse shal be warisshed by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of othere thynges. And heerto accordeth Seint Paul the Apostle in manye places. He seith, 'Ne yeldeth nat harm for harm, ne wikked speche for wikked speche, but do wel to hym that dooth thee harm and blesse hym that seith to thee harm'.

Also, Dame Prudence advices Melibee to adopt peace instead of war and vengeance in 1675-1680 and 1779-1783. Yet, explaining Prudence antiwar stance, Yeager writes that "because warfare provides neither peace not honor, Prudence argues the way of patience and forgiveness to Melibee" ("Pax Poetica," 116). See also Donald Howard, *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 314-12.

oother, oon same surgien heeleth hem bothe; wherfore unto oure art it is nat pertinent to norice werre ne parties to supporte. But certes, as to the warisshynge of youre doghter, al be it so that she perilously be wounded, we shullen do so ententif bisynesse fro day to nyght that with the grace of God she shal be hool and sound as soone as is possible (1011-15).

The "surgien" declares that supporting war or any of its parties is not "pertinent" to his career, and therefore curing Melibee's wounded daughter is achievable by both "ententif bisynesse" and "the grace of God." As the grace of God (*Dei Gratia*) does not consist of war, violence, hatred, vengeance, or manslaughter, then the words of the "surgien" constitute an indirect call for patience and forgiveness.[272] More importantly, to combine the constant peaceful work with the "grace of God" is actually a way to warn Melibee against ignoring the pacifist suggestion of the "surgien," which functions as "a definitive statement of the working of Christian charity."[273]

Still, despite this overt pacifist sentiment, Pratt believes that in the Tale of Melibee "lies the principle that war is justified if it is sanctioned or called for by the proper legal official, i.e. a public war rather than a private one."[274] For Pratt, Chaucer's overt pacifism in the Tale of Melibee and other tales and poems is a call for intimacy and peace among Christians exclusively; therefore, the advice of the "surgien" does not mean that Melibee should not fight against the infidel tyrants. Though Pratt's viewpoint seems valid, there is no considerable evidence that can disavow

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[272] Medieval people viewed the grace of God as a source of humans' salvation; therefore, whatever might cause man to sin or be killed could not be part of God's grace. See Alan F Johnson and Robert Webber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical & Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993), 214-221; Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 128-138, and Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency Book: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996.

[273] Reiss, "Chaucer's Parodies of Love," 44.

[274] *Chaucer and War*, 135. The line on which Pratt builds his argument is when Prudence says to her husband, "Certes," quod Prudence, "I graunte yow that over-muchel suffraunce is nat good. But yet ne folweth it nat therof that every persone to whom men doon vileynye take of it vengeance, for that aperteneth and longeth al oonly to the juges, for they shul venge the vileynyes and injuries" (*Melibee* 1466-68).

Chaucer's radical, still implicit, denunciation of war regardless of its reasons. The words of the "surgien" refute the viewpoint that Chaucer was not against just war. As the "surgien" declares that treating damage should not result in any other damages, his syllogism makes revenge and invading nations for punishing them unjustifiable actions. In contrast with Augustine's message to Boniface that "Non enim pax quaeritur ut bellum excitetur, sed bellum geritur ut pax acquiratur," the "surgien" encourages Melibee to supplicate to God day and night and ask Him for a remedy.[275] In other words, whether launched to promote peace, to defend the Holy Church, or to recover a lost property, war is unjustifiable in the world of the "surgien." [276]

The whole idea of war, regardless of its justifications, is improper for the "surgien" and consequently for Chaucer the pilgrim. In his transitional statement, "Almoost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that they seyden a fewe woordes moore" (*CT* VII, 1016), Chaucer the pilgrim considers the Surgeon's opinion as "wise." This judgmental opinion proves that the Surgeon's antiwar viewpoint is the same as that of Chaucer the poet.[277] Likewise, Melibee's last statement leaves no doubt that Chaucer wants his tale to be remembered as a personal call for pacifism and intimacy among all humans:

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[275] "For peace is not sought for war to be aroused, but war is waged for peace to be obtained" (quoted as translated in Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes, eds., *England Before the Conquest; Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 272.

[276] See "Epistle 189, 'To Boniface'," line 6 in *Dei civitate Dei* 13 (Migne, ed., PL, vol. 40, col. 856), *Summa aurea* (Cologne, 1612), 1, rubric 34, col. 313, *Etymologiae* 18. 1 in W. M. Lindsay, ed., *Etymologiarum sive originum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911; rpt., 1971) vol. 2, and Pratt, *Chaucer and War*, 134.

[277] Yeager correctly argues that "because he carries the poet's name, speaks in the first person, and apparently follows Chaucer's merrier of storyteller, there is necessarily a more intimate relationship between "Geoffrey" and his creator than between Chaucer and any of the other Canterbury pilgrims" ("Pax Poetica," 116-17). In support of the belief that Chaucer the pilgrim reflects the viewpoints of Chaucer the poet, see Howard, *The Idea*, 315, and for the counter argument, see E. T. Donaldson, "Chaucer the Pilgrim," in *Speaking of Chaucer*, eds. Ethelbert T. Donaldson (New York: Norton, 1970), 1-12.

> Al be it so that of youre pride and heigh presumpcioun and folie, and of youre necligence and unkonnynge, ye have mysborn yow and trespassed unto me…I receyve yow to my grace and foryeve yow outrely alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges that ye have doon agayn me and myne, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endelees mercy wole at the tyme of oure diynge foryeven us oure giltes that we han trespassed to hym in this wrecched world (*CT* VII, 1874-84).

In addition to pardoning his ferocious enemies and encouraging them to repent to God, the speaker denies himself the power to punish and forgive sins, and attributes all of these to "that God of his endelees mercy." Melibee declares that God is the only one who can forgive sins, while people, including himself, are usually sinful and cannot therefore forgive each other's sins. Thus, though Barnie convincingly contends that pacifism in the Tale of Melibee is part of a general antiwar sentiment that dominated fourteenth-century England as a reaction against the Hundred Years' War, the universality of Melibee's pacifism is too big to be restricted to a specific time or event.[278] In fact, the Tale of Melibee is not a normal antiwar statement that aims only "to make some contribution to the debate on society and war," but it is part of the pacifist voice and call of love that dominate most, if not all, of Chaucer's poetry.[279]

   C- Conclusion:

Throughout reading Chaucer's poems, especially *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, the *Legend of Good Women*, the *Former Age*, *Lak* of *Stedfastnesse*, some sections of *ABC*, and certain stories of the *Tales*, it is hard not to notice that "Chaucer was a man of peace."[280] Therefore, though Chaucer's poetry does not declare any sort of critique against warfare, their calls for love should not be flattened and viewed as free from warfare polemic. Love for Chaucer is not a pointless maneuver or erotic attitude, but it is "the endelees blisse of hevene" (*CT* X, 1076) and

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[278] See *War*, 131-33.
[279] Barnie, *War*, 131.
[280] Yeager, "Pax Poetica," 99.

the power that "alle thing may bynde, / For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde" (*Troilus* I, 237-38). Love in Chaucer's world is "life's invisible and ungraspable guiding principle of being."[281] Accordingly, even when his love poetry seems more sensual and free from solemn messages, as manifested in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer's speech of love is impregnated with pacifism, a theme that by default constitutes a call against warfare in general and crusading in particular. In light of this and of the fact that "until he did the *Canterbury Tales* [Chaucer] wrote virtually nothing but poems dealing in one way or another with the subject of love," the *Tales*, being Chaucer's last and probably most *mature* work, can hardly be unbound from the poet's anti-crusade viewpoint.[282]

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[281] Taylor, *Chaucer's Chain of Love*, 15.
[282] Shelly, *The Living Chaucer*, 2.

V-	Chapter Four: The *Tales*' Anti-Crusade Voice

A- Introduction:

Similar to his other poems, the *Tales* has its own anti-crusade message, which the poet expresses through a strategy that consists of mocking the two main components of crusading, namely chivalry as in the Man of Law's Tale and pilgrimage as in the quasi-Christian journey of the *Tales*. The Man of Law's Tale indirectly critiques crusading by condemning the decline of chivalry. Among the many hints that Chaucer uses to establish his anti-chivalry viewpoint is the involvement of some knights in the hideous actions of deception and rape (*CT* II, 582-620) as well as revenge and brutality (960-66). Due to its focus on such detestable situations, the Man of Law's Tale embodies Chaucer's profound contempt of corrupted chivalry.[283] However, what makes such a critique of chivalry a sort of anti-crusade, rather than anti-Lollard,[284] message is the tale's oriental setting, "Surrye," (*CT* II, 134, 173, 441) the Islamic connotations of "Alla, kyng of al Northhumbrelond" (II, 578), and the basic idea that the Sultaness's brutality is just "the counter-productivity" of Constance's crusading mission.[285] In brief, though the Man of Law's Tale does not directly condemn killing the Saracens or invading their countries, as one can find in Gower's *Confessio*, Chaucer's focus on the impertinent products of chivalry makes the Man of Law's Tale an anti-crusade call.

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[283] G. G. Coulton, *Chaucer and His England* (London: Bracken, 1993), 191.

[284] See Elizabeth Robertson, "The 'Elvyssh' Power of Constance: Christian Feminism in Geoffrey Chaucer's The Man of Law's Tale," *Studies In The Age Of Chaucer: The Yearbook Of The New Chaucer Society* 23 (2001): 143-80.

[285] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 363-64. For further explanation of how Sultaness' diction makes this tale a poem on crusading, see Ibid., 371 and Nicholas Birns, "Christian-Islamic Relations in Dante and Chaucer: Reflections on Recent Criticism," in *Proceedings of the Northeast Regional Meeting of the Conference On Christianity and Literature*, ed. Joan F. Hallisey and Mary-Anne Vetterling (Worcester, Mass.,1996), 19-24.

Likewise, the poet devotes most of the *Tales* to construct a detestable version of pilgrimage. He portrays a group of people on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket, and he implicitly points out that such *pilgrims*, except for a few members like the Parson and his brother the Ploughman (*CT* I, 478-541), could be similar to anything except Christian pilgrims. To construct such an irreligious party, the poet provides the company, through his Host, with the tale-telling game, which reflects and supports the pilgrims' irreligious personalities and intents. Accordingly, this chapter deciphers the two main approaches of indirection that Chaucer uses to criticize crusading. I contend that besides its sporadic implicit calls for common good and love among all humans, Chaucer's *Tales* uses its pilgrimage framework and anti-chivalric irony in an attempt to mock crusading and undermine its spirituality. By creating a quasi-religious version of pilgrimage on one hand and adopting an anti-crusade ironic voice on the other, the *Tales*, this chapter argues, critiques crusading without causing the poet any troubles with his patrons or any other person.

B- The Pilgrimage Framework of the *Tales*:

In light of its pilgrimage context, one expects the *Tales* to celebrate the various spiritual manifestations of pilgrimage. However, the poem scarcely speaks about the spiritual values of the journey, the miracles of Becket, the many blessings of God, or other matters of religion. The majority of the *Tales* focuses on chivalry, love, sex, marriage, adultery, dreams, rape, and many other secular topics. For instance, the Knight's Tale speaks about courtly love and chivalry; the Miller's Tale speaks about sex; the Friar's Tale speaks about deception and cheating; and the Nun's Priest's Tale speaks about dreams as well as free will and destiny. More importantly, many pilgrims, such as the Miller, the Friar, and the Summoner, make fun of religion and mock some religious institutions and figures. With the exception of a few stories, the *Tales* is devoted ironically to laughing at pilgrims and making fun of them, criticizing religious figures and

institutions, and undermining the spiritual devotion of Chaucer's pilgrims.[286] As Christian Zacher says, "Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is a work in which pilgrim piety is confronted by *curiositas* in almost all its imaginable ramifications and in which the social order ideally symbolized by pilgrimage is shown to be threatened by the questionable motivations of many of the pilgrims."[287] This means that the *Tales*' journey does not comply with the ideal of pilgrimage; subsequently, one wonders whether the deformed pilgrimage of the *Tales* results from either the poet's ignorance or his ignoring of the original nature of Christian pilgrimage.

A good example that depicts ideal pilgrimage and shows how it was perceived during Chaucer's days is *Piers Plowman*, which stands as the most explicit pilgrimage-poem of fourteenth-century England. This poem explains that in true pilgrimage, a person should experience a form of spiritual self-recognition during or after the journey; otherwise, the journey becomes fruitless. Towards the closure of *Piers*, Langland declares Piers the pilgrim's spiritual self-recognition thus:

> 'By Crist!' quod Conscience tho, 'I wole bicome a pilgrym,
> And walken as wide as the world lasteth,
> To seken Piers the Plowman, that Pryde myghte destruye,
> And that freres hadde a fyndyng, that for nede flateren
> And countrepledeth me, Conscience. Now Kynde me avenge,
> And sende me hap and heele, til I have Piers the Plowman!'
> And siththe he gradde after Grace, til I gan awake (20, 381-387).

Throughout the words of Conscience, Langland infers that life is a pilgrimage through which people should get rid of pride and other manifestations of moral corruption. The poet contends that each human should seek God's help and look inside themselves for "Piers the Plowman," the

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[286] The Parson's Tale, the Second Nun's Tale, and the Prioress' Tale.

[287] *Curiosity*, 5. See also Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin, eds., *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in The Canterbury Tales* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 74.

symbol of humility and purity as well as the opponent of secularism. Thus, if they want to fulfill the ultimate purpose of their lives, humans, in Langland's viewpoint, should deny what connects them with the secular world's materialism in favor of what brings them closer to the heavenly world. Accordingly, as Chaucer's Retraction embodies such a condemnation of secularism in favor of spirituality, the *Tales*' mocking pilgrimage is likely to be an intentional, rather than accidental, construct.[288]

As Paul Taylor says, "Retcacciouns are retracings of words to find the redeeming intent behind them…Retracing is erasure by speaking out or writing over a deed. It is the use of word to purify."[289] That is to say, the Retraction's penitential tone testifies to Chaucer's awareness that "pilgrimage was to remain a 'form of hermit life' and a logical, though exceptional, constitute of the monastic vocation."[290] The Retraction shows how Chaucer views pilgrimage as an opportunity to repent sins, refresh one's own spiritual devotion, and ask God for forgiveness. In the Retraction, Chaucer blames himself for deviating from the ideal pathway of Christianity, and then he denounces all his irreligious writings in favor of eternal salvation. In addition, the poet begs his audience to "preye for me that Crist have mercy on me and me my giltes; / and namely of my translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees, / …and ... that Crist for his grete mercy foryeve me the synne" (X, 1084-1091). This process of denying one's secular identity and achievements in order to attain heavenly reward embodies the spiritual self-recognition that a true pilgrim would experience in a real pilgrimage. A pilgrim knight, for instance, should give up "his knightly status and activities; for it [is] demanded of a pilgrim that he travel unarmed. He [carries] only his purse

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[288] See Howard, *The Idea*, 326-32.
[289] Taylor, *Chaucer's Chain of Love*, 144.
[290] Thomas Merton, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 7.

and staff, so he [abandons] himself to the mercy and protection of God."[291] Overall, the Retraction proves that Chaucer was aware of the main purposes of pilgrimage, and that the *Tales'* mocking pilgrimage is part of the poet's strategy of critiquing the decay of pilgrimage in general and crusading in particular.

The first ten lines of the General Prologue depict beautiful spring blossoming flowers, singing birds, and blowing breeze, which most scholars view as an embodiment of the spiritual values of pilgrimage. Scholars argue that similar to actual spring in which sweet showers water the roots, trees blossom, the wind gently blows, plants and crops become tender, and birds chant, the *Tales'* pilgrimage represents a season of spiritual life, rebirth, freshness, purity, and happiness.[292] While this allegorical reading of the *Tales'* setting seems perfect so far, we have to notice that it all stems from the poet's report, "Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages / And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes, / To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes" (*CT* I, 12-14). Before reading line 12 of the Prologue, readers cannot tell if Chaucer is writing a pilgrimage poem, a romance, or a fabliau. There is no logical reason not to take the first ten lines of the Prologue as a suitable setting for the appearance of a young maid like Emelye of the Knight's Tale, Alisoun of the Miller's Tale, or May of the Merchant's Tale. The spring setting, as portrayed in the General Prologue, is typical for erotic rather than spiritual love, yet readers, especially the allegorists, diminish the sensuality of the poem's temporal setting, the spring season, in favor of the religiosity of its spatial setting, the pilgrimage journey.[293]

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[291] Cowdrey, "The Genesis of the Crusades," 22. See also Webb, *Pilgrimage*, XIV and Morris and Roberts, *Pilgrimage*, 14.

[292] For information about the role of the pilgrimage journey to refresh man's relationship with his God and the revitalize his religious devotion in general, see Morris and Roberts, *Pilgrimage*, 14.

[293] See Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, R. E. Kaske, "Patristic Exegesis: The Defense," *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature*, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (New York: Colombia University Press, 1960), 27-60, and Francis Lee Utley, "Chaucer and Patristic Exegesis,"

Suzanne Akbari downgrades the erotic atmosphere of the Prologue and maximizes its potential spirituality. She believes that "the nonlinear nature of pilgrimage is apathy symbolized in the labyrinth found in some medieval cathedral, which found be used by those unable to make the journey to Jerusalem."[294] Akbari correctly views Chaucer's fictitious pilgrimage as a progression of the structure of certain medieval cathedrals. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that medieval cathedrals, despite their labyrinthine structure, might not be tolerant of eroticism and making fun of religion, as happens in Chaucer's Prologue. In fact, the labyrinthine structure of some medieval cathedrals stems from the belief that life is an endless quest for "the place of resurrection"[295] rather than a "just endless and aimless wandering for its own sake."[296] Thus, to view the Prologue's sarcastic fusion of pilgrimage with some irreligious references, like spring as part of the *Tales*' overall religious atmosphere is a bold step for establishing a "foundational moment" to order the poem's chaotic world.[297] Nevertheless, the allegorical labyrinth of pilgrimage with the prominent sexuality of the Miller's Tale or extreme silliness of the Rhyme of Sir Thopas.

Carrying on with his perplexing tone, Chaucer, depicting the popularity of pilgrimage among Englishmen, says, "from every shires ende / Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende, / The hooly blisful martir for to seke, / That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke" (*CT* I, 15-18). Pilgrimage unifies people, enables them to attain the grace of heaven, and "takes the faithful

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Chaucer's Mind and Art, ed. A.C. Cawley (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), 69-85, and many others.

[294] Akbari, "Orientalism and Nation in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*," in *Chaucer's Cultural Desire*, ed. by Kathryn L. Lynch (New York: Routledge, 2002), 102-134, 105.

[295] Nora K. Chadwick, *The Age of Saints in the Early Celtic Church* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 82-83.

[296] Merton, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 8.

[297] Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 236.

back to the source and center of the religion itself, the place of theophany, of cleansing, renewal and salvation."[298] Yet, is it possible that all of these blessings result from visiting the Shrine of Thomas Becket? No. The recollection of Becket ironically undermines the supposedly sincere piety of the whole scene. Becket was connected with curing diseases, especially leprosy "which pollutes the soul" and which was "often seen as punishment for sexual depravity."[299] Simultansouly, he was also known as a traitor[300] and a two-faced man[301] whose life was devoted to "external glory and love for money."[302] More importantly, though Becket might stand as a "perfect imitator of Christ in his life and passion," he represented only the secular versus heavenly, and the physical versus spiritual, aspects of Christ.[303] As Gameson puts it, "the blood of Becket was conducive to the health of the body," while Christ's blood was conducive to the health of the soul.[304] In short, though Becket's image is usually taken by readers to establish and support the Prologue's religious tone, the quasi-religious image of the Saint mirrors the corruption of

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[298] Merton, "From Pilgrimage," 5.

[299] Carole Rawcliffe, "Curing Bodies and Healing Souls: Pilgrimage and the Sick in Medieval East Anglia," in *Pilgrimage*, eds., Morris and Roberts, 108-40, 119.

[300] See J. F. Davis, *Lollards, Reformers and St Thomas of Canterbury* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1963), 8-12, J. Brewer et al., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestics, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-47*, 21 vols., 33 parts (London, 1862-1910), Vol. v, no. 1271, Peter Roberts, "Politics, Drama, and Cult of Thomas Becket in the Sixteenth Century," in *Pilgrimage,* eds., Morris and Roberts, 199-237, and Webb, *Pilgrimage*, 184.

[301] See Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly, 939-1210*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 63 and 255.

[302] John of Salisbury, *Entheticus Maior and Minor, Volume 2*, ed., Jan Van Laarhoven (Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1987), 87. See also Roberts, "Politics, Drama, and Cult of Thomas Becket," 230, Webb, *Pilgrimage*, 45, and Jeremy Collier, *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain*, vol. I (London: Printed for Samuel Keble, and Benjamin Tooke, 1708-14), 39.

[303] Richard Gameson, "The Early Imagery of Thomas Becket," in *Pilgrimage*, eds., Morris and Roberts, 46-89, 59.

[304] Gameson, "The Early Imagery," 59.

pilgrimage, as if the poet wants to persuade people to adopt a Wycliffite attitude against the Church's secular projects.[305]

Still, Becket's ambivalent personality does not debase the Prologue's spirituality entirely. The poet wants his audience to explore the nature of pilgrimage. Therefore, the focus shifts from the complex image of Becket to the poet's actual pilgrimage experience, where Chaucer introduces himself as a pilgrim who, on the way to Canterbury, met "nyne and twenty in a compaignye" (24) and automatically joined them. At this point, Chaucer gets closer to the alleged topic of his Prologue, but he insists, surprisingly, not to attain any sort of trustworthiness or seriousness. The company of pilgrim "by aventure yfalle" (25). Though it is possible for twenty-nine persons to meet by chance and to head the same way, it seems strange that they all make the same violations against religion, but in various ways. To name a few, the Knight left his communal crusades for the sake of a "personal spiritual renewal."[306] Likewise, with the exception of her swearing by saint Eloy, the Prioress has no resemblance to saintly people; rather, her portrait mocks them and questions their significance and devotion. Above all, the Host violates religion directly. Instead of "[generating] a true Christian fellowship among the pilgrims, [he]...provided them with a game as a distraction from pilgrimage."[307] In brief, the implicit consensus of Chaucer's pilgrims on deforming the ideals of pilgrimage suggests that the "aventure" that causes such a company to convene is neither a miracle nor a blessing, in the religious sense. It is a moment from which stems the perplexity that dominates the General Prologue entirely.

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[305] For a brief, yet insightful, discussion of Wycliffe's protest against the Church and for information about the relationship between Wycliffe and Chaucer, see Tatlock, "Chaucer and Wyclif," 257-68.

[306] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 374.

[307] Zacher, *Curiosity*, 88.

Not to yield to the negative connotations of the chance-basis-meeting, Chaucer highlights the spiritual identity of his companion pilgrims. He briefly writes, "In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle, / That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde" (26-27). The appearance of the twenty-nine persons expresses the reality of their religious mission. Yet, the speaker does not elaborate on that, but shifts to focus on the surrounding: "The chambres and the stables weren wyde, / And wel we weren esed atte beste" (*CT* I, 28-29). Though there seems to be no problem in the poet's focus on the Inn's convenience, it is noteworthy that the speaker here is a pilgrim, if not a spokesperson of a pilgrims' company. Thus, Chaucer's epicurean description of the Tabard Inn is a direct violation of the typical behavior of true pilgrims. As Merton writes, "The penitent pilgrimage was driven forth as an outcast, dressed in rags or sackcloth, barefoot, perhaps even wearing a chain. He was under strict obligation or keep moving, for he was a 'wanderer' ('let him not spend the night twice in the same place')."[308] This means that the overt hedonistic tone of Chaucer's description of the Inn's furniture and how it was convenient goes against the spiritual kernel of the journey.

Chaucer next completely deviates from the typical attitude of sincere pilgrimage-writers, such as Mandeville. Instead of celebrating his companions' spiritual devotion, his purpose throughout the rest of his Prologue is "To telle yow al the condicioun / Of ech of hem, so as it semed me, / And whiche they weren, and of what degree, / And eek in what array that they were inne" (*CT* I, 38-41). Though it seems normal for a traveler to focus on his companions' visage, attire, habits, accents, and life-stories, it is ironic that our traveler here is a pilgrim –a person who should avoid, at least temporarily, criticizing other people and making fun of them.[309] As Webb

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[308] "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 9-10. Similarly, Thorpe reports that pilgrims should "travel far barefoot, and nowhere pass a second night, and fast, and watch much, and pray fervently, by day and by night, and voluntarily suffer fatigue, and be so squalid, that iron come not on hair, nor on nail" (*Ancient Laws*, 411-12, no. 10).

[309] See Zacher, *Curiosity*, 96-7.

reports, pilgrimage "should be performed barefoot, in fetters or under certain dietary restrictions, all of which enhanced its penitential character."[310] The journey demands that pilgrims renounce their secular interests and materialistic desires in favor of the spiritual ones.[311] Pilgrims are required to spend their time praying to God and contemplating his omnipotence; otherwise, their pilgrimage becomes fruitless. Accordingly, the alleged spiritual atmosphere of the *Tales* or, at least, that of the General Prologue, becomes unreliable, especially after the poet avoids the denial of worldly concerns throughout almost seven hundred lines of the 858-line Prologue.[312]

The majority of the General Prologue highlights the irreligious intent of the poem as well as that of the majority of its characters. Starting with line 43, Chaucer undercuts the spiritual devotion of most, if not all, of his companion pilgrims. He uses a project-undercut, or build-destroy, game, through which the pilgrim's image is constructed in order to be destroy. In the Knight's portrait, for instance, Chaucer introduces one of his companion pilgrims as "a worthy man" who loved "chivalrie, Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie" (*CT* I, 45-46) and who also fought against the enemies of his "lord" inside and outside Christendom, and "everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys" (67). Simultaneously, "he was wys… as meeke as is a mayde / He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde" (69-70). Though this portrait seems easy to decipher, the continued polemic about the Knight's portrait demonstrates that such a characterization is indirect and hard to understand. Examining the Knight's portrait, Keen concludes, "what Chaucer was trying to portray in his Prologue was the best kind of knight of his time, one who had expressed his love of 'honour' and 'chivalrie' by his dedication to the noblest activity for a knight."[313] In contrast, Jones

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[310] *Pilgrimage*, XII.
[311] See Cowdrey, "The Genesis of the Crusades," 22-23.
[312] See the General Prologue, 43-714.
[313] "Chaucer's Knight" 57-58. See also Manly, "A Knight Ther Was," Fred Robinson, *The Complete Works*, 652, David M. Zesmer, *Guide to English Literature from Beowulf through*

considers the portrait of the Knight an embodiment of the decline of chivalry as well as the corruption of crusading in Chaucer's time.[314] It is interesting that some scholars consider the Knight a quintessence of chivalry, while others consider him a critique of chivalry and a reference to the Free Companies. Regardless of how each of these viewpoints is made and supported, scholars' disagreement on what the Knight stands for stems from the discrepancy between the direct and ironic meanings of Chaucer's words. A literal reading of the Knight's portrait makes him a perfect embodiment of ideal chivalry, while reading the possible ironic connotations and references of the portrait makes the Knight an embodiment of the decline of chivalry.

A similar strategy may be used to highlight the hypocrisy of the Prioress who "was cleped madame eglentyne" (*CT* I, 121). Chaucer introduces the Prioress as a nun who swears "by seinte loy," speaks French "fetisly… For frenssh of parys was to hire unknowe," "leet no morsel from hir lippes falle," "In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest" and "peyned hireto countrefete cheere / Of court, and to been estatlich of manere, / And to ben holden digne of reverence" (*CT* I, 120-141). As these characteristics produce the Prioress's portrait, none of them, except the devotion to the Saint of goldsmiths and blacksmiths, testifies to the woman's saintly being.[315] Richard Rex

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Chaucer and Medieval Drama (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1961), 213, Muriel Amanda Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1948), 45, Chaucer, *Chaucer's Poetry*, ed. E. T. Donaldson (England: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1975), 881-82, and Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estate Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 113.

[314] See *Chaucer's Knight*. For information about the Free Companies of medieval Europe, see Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (University of Toronto Press, 1965), Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), and William Caferro, *Mercenary Companies and the Decline of Siena* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[315] For information on Saint Eloy as the master of blacksmithing and other metalwork, see Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Skeat (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 42 and Alban Butler, *Butler's Lives of the Saints* (Great Britain: Burns and Oates, 1999), 6-9.

argues that it is possible that the Prioress "wants to be thought worthy of both [religion and courtly manners], but her first concern is for recognition and appearance. Chaucer, we notice, places religion significantly at the end of the list."[316] In other words, throughout the Prioress' portrait, which one might expect to celebrate the spiritual devotion of English people, Chaucer highlights the religious decline of the English society, especially among persons of the church's circles and offices.

Even when the poet tries to project the Prioress's righteousness by celebrating her "conscience," or her "so charitable and so pitous" personality (*CT* I, 43), the Prioress's spirituality is also undercut. Chaucer briefly speaks about the Nun's attitudes towards pets, her "smale houndes. Simultaneously, he reports that she used to feed them "With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed." While feeding little dogs with roasted meat, milk, and white bread testifies to the Prioress's great compassion and love for animals, it demonstrates that the Nun was not poor and so could not be a saintly human. As Rex puts it, "For all her excellent table manners, the Prioress…indulges freely in the sin of gluttony, and, by giving meat, wastrel bread, and milk to her dogs, demonstrates her lack of charity."[317] The Prioress's portrait could apply to any woman in fourteenth-century England, except a nun.[318] Consequently, as Chaucer speaks about the Prioress's "brooch of gold" (*CT* I, 160), "Amor vincit Omnia" becomes a reference to sensual love, and therefore debases the Prioress's spiritual image.

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[316] Richard Rex, *"The Sins of Madame Eglentyne" and Other Essays on Chaucer* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 116.

[317] Ibid. For more information on how poverty was among the basic vows of nuns and monks, see H. P. Palmer, "Medieval Nunneries," *The Churchman* 47.2, BiblicalStudies.org.uk, 170, and Eileen Edna Power, *Medieval English Nunneries, 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1922).

[318] For a different, more literal, reading of the Nun's portrait, see H. P. Palmer, "Medieval Nunneries," 169-175.

Likewise, Chaucer undercuts the spiritual role of the Host. The poet depicts "oure hoost," welcoming pilgrims and providing them with "the soper" and "the wyn" (*CT* I, 747-50). Merton explains, "It was a sacred duty to protect him [pilgrim], feed him, give him shelter and show him his way. Failure to shelter and protect pilgrims was declared to be the reason for [eternal] punishment."[319] In light of this, Harry Bailey's hospitality of Chaucer's pilgrims embodies the ideal attitude towards pilgrimage and also mimics –in a quasi-religious behavior- Christ himself at the Last Supper. Still, his role in convincing pilgrims "to talen and to pleye" (*CT* I, 772) destroys the religious significance of his image.[320] The Host has no spiritual reason to join the pilgrims, but all he is concerned about is directing the pilgrims' tale-telling competition and deciding the "Tales of best sentence and moost solaas / [that] Shal have a soper at oure aller cost" (*CT* I, 798-99). The Host is the one who manages how pilgrims should violate the solemn conventions of their journey and ignore its reality. Thus, in the course of forty-two lines, the Host becomes a sort of anti-Christ-figure whose main concern is to persuade pilgrims to forget the spiritual purpose of their journey.

Chaucer's pilgrims yielded to the Host, and without discussing or even thinking of the compatibility between his proposal and the ongoing journey, "This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore / With ful glad herte" (*CT* I, 810-11). The main focus of pilgrims becomes now more directed towards pleasing their companions as well as their governor and judge in that tale-telling. The Host, as Chaucer declares, was like a "cok" while other pilgrims were "gradrede …togidre alle in a flok" (*CT* I, 823-24), whose main concern was to win the free supper. In other words, the religious kernel of the journey becomes of secondary importance in favor of a free supper. As Quinn says, "As the pilgrims start out from the Tabard Inn with the innkeeper as their self-

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[319] Merton, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 10.
[320] See Zacher, *Curiosity*, 88.

proclaimed guide, having agreed to participate in his tale-telling game, the religious, especially the penitential, aspect of the pilgrimage is minimized."[321] To make things worse, Chaucer highlights the Host's playful or irresponsible personality. After alluding to his devotion to wine,[322] the Host justifies his call for the Knight to tell the first tale simply as, "Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas" (844). In contrast with the principle that true pilgrims should have spiritual equity and unity, Chaucer's pilgrims maintain the social hierarchy of their society throughout their drawing of lots: "the Knight is first then the Prioress, followed the Clerk."[323] Thus, though it is not necessary that social hierarchy is the main reason of why the Knight was chosen as the first speaker, the Host's hesitation to justify that coincidence causes one to question, not only the Host's personality, but also the overall religious atmosphere of the Prologue.

Nevertheless, the Knight starts the tale-telling game. He tells a story about courtly love and ideal chivalry in a pagan context. After the Knight's Tale is finished, the Miller tells a fabliau about adultery and treachery, a direct parody of the Knight's Tale's themes. After the Miller, the Reeve tells his tale opposing the Miller, and thus the pilgrims continue their verbal jousting until the silliness of the Rhyme of Sir Thopas is "quitted" by the solemnity of the Tale of Melibee and the Parson's Tale. Finally, almost the whole project of the *Tales* is renounced by the Retraction. While this "dramatic interplay has an urgent vitality, serves as a useful guide to some ways of approaching the tales, and provides an anticipation of Chaucer's Retraction,"[324] due to this conglomerate interplay, the *Tales*' framework becomes, for many readers, "an external organizing

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[321] Esther C. Quinn, "Religion in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: A Study in Language and Structure," in *Geoffrey Chaucer: A Collection of Original Articles*, ed. George D. Economou (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 59.
[322] "mote I drynke wyn or al" (GP 832)
[323] Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 46.
[324] Ibid., 60.

device,"[325] "not a plot or an argument."[326] Many readers belittle the *Tales*' religious tone and theme in favor of "[focusing] attention on the relation of teller to tale,"[327] on what makes the panoply of tales one unit, on how to organize tales in Fragments and classify pilgrims in categories, on what constitutes the poem's social significance, and on other questions that have nothing to do with the *Tales*' pilgrimage context.

Interestingly, while the *Tales*' dramatic interplay causes readers to ignore its religious context, to focus merely on the *Tales*' secular themes at the cost of its religious messages is by itself one of the poem's main intents. As Ruggiers explains, "'we, the reading and listening audience' participate in Chaucer's poetry and work with the poet to effect its fullest manifestation."[328] Thus, Chaucer wants his readers to experience the outcomes of sacrificing religion for secularism, or materialism, by themselves. As readers laugh at the pilgrims' game of "quitting," their laughing testifies to the poet's skill to establish a sort of "conspiratorial cord" between himself and his readers.[329] Through that cord, readers become part of the poem's mockery of real life, and their "familiarity and knowledge…[as well as] their ability to arbiter, evaluate, and judge"[330] become integral to the poem's overall purpose, to criticize the decline of religion in general and of pilgrimage in particular. In fact, readers' laughing at the *Tales*' mocking pilgrimage, though apparently pointless, reflects their natural denunciation of decay, deception, corruption, and wrongdoing in the actual world. Accordingly, though it does not critique crusading directly,

[325] Katharine Slater Gittes "The Canterbury Tales and the Arabic Frame Tradition," Kathryn L. Lynch, ed., *Chaucer's Cultural Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 169.
[326] Zacher, *Curiosity*, 90.
[327] Richmond, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, 49.
[328] Edmund Reiss, "Chaucer and His Audience," *The Chaucer Review* 14, No. 4 (Spring, 1980): 390-402, 391. See also, Paul Ruggiers, *The Art of the Canterbury Tales* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1967), 29.
[329] Howard, *The Idea*, 185.
[330] Reiss, "Chaucer and His Audience," 399.

the *Tales'* pilgrimage texture, especially in light of the linguistic pilgrimage-crusade fusion, makes

crusading, which is the chief deficiency of Christian pilgrimage throughout history, one of the

poem's subject matters, which Chaucer tackles through irony as well.[331]

C- The Substantial Anti-Crusade Irony of the *Tales*:

Chaucer's use of irony has been widely discussed by many scholars.[332] John Dart, for

instance, considers irony a strategic technique that Chaucer used in order "not to exasperate a Court

by which he was supported" when expressing a certain critical viewpoint towards any matter.[333]

Likewise, Pearsall views Chaucer's "habitual irony" as the embodiment of the poet's "positioning

of himself in relation to the political and social matter of his writing… [It] is defensive and self-

protective as well as innovative and daring."[334] Also, in his defense of Chaucer against Daniel

Defoe, William Webbe states that Chaucer "by his delightsome vayne so gulled the eares of men

with his deuises…without controllment myght hee gyrde at the vices and abuses of all states, and

gawle with very sharpe and eger inuentions, which he did so learnedly and pleasantly that none

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[331] Tyerman writes, "the Crusades have appeared almost uniquely disreputable because of the apparent diametric and exultant reversal of the teaching of Christ and the appropriation of the language of spiritual struggle and the doctrine of peace for the promotion of war, exquisitely demonstrated in the ubiquitous use of the image of the cross" (*The Crusades* (Canada: Sterling Publishing Company, Inc., 2007), 79). Likewise, Jones writes, "the extension of the holy war within the borders of Christendom itself was a scandal, and the readiness of some Englishmen to sell their services to wither side in the Pope's wars a source of shame and anger" (*Chaucer's Knight*, 41-42). See also Throop, *Criticism*.

[332] For a comprehensive survey of scholarship on Chaucer's irony, see Caroline Frances Eleanor Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion* (Cambridge: The University press, 1925), Howard Rollin Patch, *On Rereading Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1939), 5, Vance Ramsey, "Modes of Irony in the *Canterbury Tales*," in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. Beryl Rowland (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 352-79, Sanford B. Meech, *Design in Chaucer's Troilus* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1959), 372-73, and Germaine Collette Dempster, *Dramatic Irony in Chaucer* (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1932).

[333] "Life of Geoffrey Chaucer (1721)," in *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer*, ed. Spurgeon I (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1914-25), 358-66, 360.

[334] *The Life*, 252.

therefore would call him into question."[335] That is to say, Chaucer used irony to cope with certain literary conventions, and at the same time, to tackle the impertinent of the social classes with impunity. Similarly, Ackroyd explains, "[Chaucer's] irony is in part fuelled by his observations of those [powerful men of the court] around him."[336] Moreover, Green states that "the relationship between the poet and his audience certainly encouraged irony manipulation of the narrative voice and created an atmosphere in which a poet of Chaucer's natural inclination was given full rein."[337] Overall, scholars view Chaucer's irony as a technique that is used by the poet in order to approach, with some freedom, some hypersensitive topics, like crusading, without angering his audience.[338]

Instead of imitating the straightforward anti-chivalry criticism of Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*[339] and Deschamps' *Lay de Vaülanc*,[340] Chaucer used "a mask of irony [that was] never easy to penetrate."[341] J. B. Priestly argues that what distinguishes Chaucer's poetry from other Middle English works is 'an irony so quiet, so delicate, that many readers never notice it is there

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[335] "A Discourse of English Poetrie," in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed., G. Gregory Smith (England: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1904), 1-174, 17.

[336] *Chaucer* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2004), 82

[337] *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 113.

[338] For a full discussion of the nature of Chaucer's audience and its influence on the tone and subject matters of Chaucer's poetry, see Reiss, "Chaucer and His Audience," and David R. Carlson, "Chaucer, Humanism, and Printing," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 64, No. 2 (spring, 1995): 274-88.

[339] Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*, ll. 23979-81, 23986-88 says, "but everyone alive nowadays can see that knighthood has been ruined; true prowess has been overcome...for (as I am told) knighthood is upheld nowadays by pride and wantonness" (John Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme*, trans. William Burton Wilson (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1992), 314.

[340] Deschamps' *Lay de Vaülance*, ll. 188-93 says, "They want to spend their youth and use their time in pleasures, eating and drinking, paying badly and borrowing a lot, polishing themselves like white ivory, sleeping well and resting..." (Jordi Sánchez Martí, "The Representation of Chivalry in The Knight's Tale," *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 13 (2000): 161-73, 163.

[341] Chaucer, *Chaucer Lyric and Allegory*, ed. James Reeves (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), 6.

at all or mistake it for naiveté."[342] Chaucer needed that kind of complex irony to tackle crusading

because when the *Tales* was under composition, crusading "was a line issue in political society,

and among the highest and most influential in the realm."[343] However, for a fuller understanding

of Chaucer's anti-crusade irony, this section, following the steps of Terry Jones, revisits the

Knight's portrait in the General Prologue and reads his tale in an attempt to demonstrate that

through the use of irony Chaucer critiques crusaders and views crusading as the antithesis of ideal

chivalry, Christianity, patriotism, and even *humanity*.

In his description of the Knight, Chaucer describes the history of a long crusading career.

The Knight went on many crusades in Asia, and Africa, as well as Europe, and he fought against

infidels and schismatics, "for oure feith" (*CT* I, 63). This Knight had never lost a battle, but "ay

slayn his foo;" consequently, he deserved to be "a verray, parfit gentil knight" (*CT* I, 71-2). From

a religious perspective, which probably applies only to one level of Chaucer's words, the Knight's

perfection results from the spirituality of his many expeditions.[344] From a more historical or

skeptical perspective, the extended career of Chaucer's Knight "points to the decay of any coherent

purpose of chivalry, while his campaigns historicize the randomness of Crusade warfare and his

own obsolescence."[345] The ironic fusion of fighting in different expeditions inside and outside

Christendom, and serving Christian and pagan lords at the same time, result in the mercenary

image of the Knight whose devotion to money and other materialistic benefits makes him an

embodiment of "what had happened to the military world of his day—how chivalry and

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[342] J. B. Priestley, *English Humor* (London: Longmans, 1929), 63.

[343] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 355.

[344] For the pro-crusade connotations of the Knight's portrait, see Manly, "A Knight Ther Was,"
89-107, Robinson, *The Complete Works*, 652, Zasmer, *Guide to English Literature*, 213,
Bowden, *A Commentary*, 45, and others.

[345] Schildgen, *Pagans, Tartars, Moslems, and Jews*, 24.

knighthood, divorced from their underlying ideals, had become the tools of tyranny and destruction."[346] Instead of being a protector of women, children, and peace, the Knight is portrayed as a desensitized crusader whose insatiable inclination for materialistic concerns and bloodshed undermines his own piety and patriotism.[347]

The portrait of the Knight results from a quasi-miraculous fusion of two irreconcilable elements, a "cristen man… foughten for oure feith" on one hand, and a man who outlived "mortal batailles" on the other. Though Donaldson and Mann believe that the religious nature of the Knight's wars can reconcile merciful Christianity with "mortal batailles," the way Chaucer uses the word "lord" refutes any associations of the Knight's brutal career with Christianity.[348] Throughout the Knight's portrait, Chaucer uses the word "lord" in two phrases, "the lord of Palatye" and "his lordes were." In none of these, God is a possible denotation. In the first phrase, the speech is obviously about the king or "emir" of Palatye.[349] In the second phrase, the pronoun "his" associates the word "lord" with the Knight in a negative way. In contrast with the communal pronoun in the phrase "oure faith" (34), to modify the word "lord" by the pronoun "his" suggests that the Knight's lord is not everyone's. Chaucer associates the Knight with worldly lords "in cristendom as in hethenesse" whom the Knight served, potentially for materialistic, rather than religious, reasons.[350] Accordingly, "oughten for oure feith at Tramyssene" should not be taken

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[346] Jones, *Chaucer's Knight*, 216.
[347] See M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade: The Liturgy of Departure, 1095-1300," *Speculum* 88.1 (January 2013): 44-91, 51.
[348] Donaldson, *Chaucer's Poetry*, 881-82, and Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estate Satire*, 113. See also Pratt, *Chaucer and War*.
[349] For information about the position of Palatye in the crusading history, see Albert S. Cook, *The Historical Background of Chaucer's Knight* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), 235.
[350] See Machiavelli, *Prince*, 90, Jones, *Chaucer's Knight*, and Bernard F. Huppe, *A Reading of the Canterbury Tales*, 31.

literally. It is an ironic statement that involves a complex historical background in light of which crusading becomes a destructive project that epitomizes the corruption and decay of people's religious devotion and national belonging.

Chaucer mentions the battle of Tramyssene in which the crusading army consisted of mercenaries[351] and in which Peter of Cyprus, the devout leader, "was amiably allied with… all God's enemies and infidels" and thus was viewed by his own men as a traitor of "God's churches."[352] Furthermore, the battle of Tramyssene, similar to the Knight's other expeditions, had nothing to do with England or its political interests. The English Knight was fighting for the sake of his "lord," who was potentially Peter of Cyprus or his Pope, at a time when England was fighting against France in the Hundred Year's War. Obviously, Chaucer blames the Knight for ignoring his own country's call for help in favor of pleasing the Pope by "expanding the borders of Christendom."[353] Not only does this suggest that the Knight favored the Church over his patriotic obligations, but it also suggests that it was possible for such a knight to ride against England and fight against his own people.[354]

In the last part of the Knight's portrait, Chaucer concludes, "He was a verray, parfit gentil knight." While this statement seems like an overt celebration of the Knight, Chaucer ironically

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[351] See Jones, *Chaucer's Knight*, 55, 66, 126, 145, and 190-91.

[352] Cook, *The Historical Background*, 234.

[353] Jones, *Chaucer's Knight*, 35. For a similar viewpoint, see Thomas J. Hatton, "Chaucer's Crusading Knight, a Slanted Ideal," *Chaucer Review* 3, no. 2 (1968):77-87, 80, and Gardiner Stillwell and Henry J. Webb, "Chaucer's Knight and the Hundred Years' War," *Modern Language Notes* 59, no. 1 (January 1944): 45-47.

[354] Regarding the political and military threat of crusaders against Christians in general and their own people and countries in particular, see Linehan and Nelson, *The Medieval World*, 136. In addition, the Church, Jones explains, "had grown over time into the richest and most powerful institution in Europe. In [fourteenth-century] England, it rivalled and sometimes threatened the royal power and dominated much of the cultural life of the country" (*Who Murdered Chaucer?* 62).

undermines such a literal interpretation by referring to how the Knight "Of fustian he wered a gypon / Al bismotered with his habergeon" (*CT* I, 75-76). A fustian jupon, as Jones affirms, indicates "its wearer as a non-noble professional man-at-arms. For Chaucer's contemporaries, the fustian jupon symbolized the decline of chivalry."[355] From a more skeptical perspective, the Knight's jupon is "a mark of war's physical brutality."[356] Therefore, for the Knight to join the pilgrims' company while dressing in a jupon "Al bismotered with his habergeon" (76) simply suggests a form of transformation from a corrupted crusader into an equivalent civil pilgrim. Even though his intent to go on pilgrimage to Canterbury might be sincere, the Knight's companion pilgrims with their involvement in the tale-telling game execute the religious atmosphere of the journey entirely. Thus, the Knight's pilgrimage is not different from his involvement in the Battle of Tramyssene and other crusading expeditions as none of them can be religious. Again, though the Knight joined the pilgrims' company for probably a desire to repent of his brutal crusades, "he was late" (77). Literally, he was late, in time, to join the company of pilgrimage. However, from an allegorical perspective, the Knight's decision to relinquish armed pilgrimage in favor of its civil phase was too late for repentance. In brief, the same lack of religious devotion and national belonging that are associated with the Battle of Tramyssene can apply to the Knight's pilgrimage journey to Canterbury.

Still, though the Knight's portrait was finished, Chaucer's ironic attitude against England's crusading chivalry was still in progress. The portrait of the Squire, the Knight's son, embodies the future development of the Knight's corrupted chivalry. Clearly, the Knight's fustian jupon is transformed into the Squire's colorful dress that is "ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede" (*CT* I,

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[355] Ibid., 247. For more explanation of how the Knight's portrait embodies the decline of chivalry in fourteenth-century England, See Schildgen, *Pagans, Tartars, Muslims, and Jews*, 25-26.
[356] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 374.

91). This shift indicates how "the idealism of the crusades had given way to the doctrine and attitudes of courtly love."[357] Regardless of the nobility of courtly love, the shift of focus from religiously-motivated crusades to love-motivated expeditions suggests the turn from fighting for the sake of God into fighting for the sake of young maids and other materialistic benefits. In Merton's words, "The Crusade becomes merged with the romance of courtly love. At the same time the sacred element tends to be neglected by those who…are engrossed in the martial glory and exploits of the knights."[358] This means that Chaucer's report, "In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie, / And born hym weel, as of so litel space, / In hope to stonden in his lady grace" (*CT* I, 86-88), is intended basically to undermine the crusading Squire' spiritual devotion. The mere shift from the Knight's crusading context into the Squire's world of love embodies the decline of crusading chivalry. Therefore, while George Engelhardt argues that the Squire "is not deficient but proficient," the Squire's portrait embodies the anticipated decay that crusading chivalry was heading for, especially the shift from crusading against the Saracens into crusading against Christians.[359]

The Squire's crusading history fulfills Chaucer's implicit speculations about the possible dangers of crusaders against their own countries and people. The Knight's expeditions against the infidels and schismatics in Pruce, Ruce, Gernade, Algezir, Belmarye, Lyeys, Satalye, the Grete See, Tramyssene, Palatye, and Turkye are transformed into the Squire's "chyvachie [in] Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie" (*CT* I, 86-87). Such a shift does not merely minimize the significance of chivalric activity in fourteenth-century England, but it also "point[s] ironically to the descent

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[357] Phyllis Hodgson, ed., *Chaucer: General Prologue [to] the Canterbury Tales* (London: Athlone Press, 1969), 77.
[358] "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 15.
[359] "The Lay Pilgrims of the Canterbury Tales: a Study in Ethology," *Mediaeval Studies* 36 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974): 278-330, 291.

from…[fighting] against non-Christians, an ideal of earlier times in which all Christians united, to the corrupt present time when Christians are fighting Christians and the highest prelates in the Church support these fights as Crusades."[360] In other words, the father-son relation between the Knight and the Squire is to establish a context for portraying the declining future of Christian chivalry, which, for Chaucer, might turn against its own foundations.

The Knight was aware of such a decline, and thus he appeared regretful of his own participation in the crusading project. Therefore, out of his "moral compunction at having taken the lives of others, even those of the infidels," the Knight renounces crusading and works hard to erase it from his memory completely.[361] In fact, the Knight's Tale implicitly expresses a profound contempt against martialistic chivalry in general and crusading in particular. Despite his long crusading career, the Knight neither tells a story about war, chivalry, mortal combats, victory, fame, or other knightly matters nor does he say a word about the miracles of Christ or the saints in the battle field. Instead, the Knight's Tales celebrates courtly love in a pagan world. The Knight tells how Arcite and Palamon fell in love with Emelye. Palamon fell on his knees and pleaded to Venus while Arcite, "with a sigh he seyde pitously, /…And but I have hir mercy and hir grace, / That I may seen hire atte leeste weye, / I nam but deed; ther nis namoore to seye" (I, 1116-1122). However, though it might be normal to have a knight celebrating courtly love, it is ironic to have a crusader, who has just returned from the battlefield and who has just joined a pilgrimage company, to focus on the matter of love.[362] Eric Rabkin says, "if we know the world to which a reader [or speaker] escapes, then we know the world from which he comes."[363] That is to say, the

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[360] Schildgen, *Pagans, Tartars, Moslems, and Jews*, 24-25.
[361] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 358.
[362] See Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[363] *The Fantastic in Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 63.

Knight's focus on love represents a sincere attempt to flee into the world of love from the world

of hatred and violence, which the Knight experienced throughout his crusading career.

Simultaneously, the Knight's contextualization of his story in a pagan world is a reflection of his

desire to flee the Christian world.[364]

In one of the most interesting passages of the tale, Palamon attributes warfare to cruel gods

and mockingly asks if there can be a valid justification for their tyrannical actions:

> …o crueel goddes that governe
> This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
> And writen in the table of atthamaunt
> Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,
> What is mankynde moore unto you holde
> Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde? (I, 1303-08)

Not only does the speaker view gods of war as cruel and consider them responsible for the

omnipresent evil and violence on earth, but he also wonders why humans are still obedient to such

cruel gods. After questioning if gods do care about humans at all, Palamon justifies his bold heretic

questions and viewpoint by referring to the detestable conditions of humanity:

> For slayn is man right as another beest,
> And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,
> And hath siknesse and greet adversitee,
> And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.
> What governance is in this prescience,
> That giltelees tormenteth innocence? (I, 1309-14)

Chaucer thus condemns slaughtering people and treating them mercilessly, and he views the

inhumane actions as a disease or plague that might infect and destroy the heart of humanity. Since

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[364] For more information about the significance of Chaucer's celebration a pagan world, see
Alastair J. Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Totowa, N.J., USA:
Rowman & Littlefield, 1982), 205-246, A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English
Poetry* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15-58, J. D. Burnley,
Chaucer's Language and the Philosopher's Tradition (Ipswich: Brewer; Totowa, N.J.: Rowman
& Littlefield, 1979), and Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition*, 3.

cruel gods do not mind evil and violence, then humans should not obey and worship them. However, while such a perspective seems a mix of theology and blasphemy, it is obvious that the poet is speaking about *earthly gods*, not God. He probably speaks about people who view themselves as either ultimate rulers or as agents of God and use that to justify their violence and cruelty. However, the poet indirectly recommends that people should not obey those cruel rulers, political or religious, not only because they produce violence but because their product is a reversal of God's mercy. In brief, Palamon's condemnation of cruel gods reflects the poet's detest of cruelty, which functions as the backbone of war and thus contradicts with Christianity.[365]

Furthermore, in opposition to the belief that crusading was just as it "emphasized the defense of the Church against the cruelty of pagans under the protection of God," the Knight's Tale insists that crusading, the offspring of intolerance and hatred, can never be justified.[366] Similar to Palamon's condemnation of cruel gods and their prevalent violence, Theseus, the ideal man of warfare in the Knight's Tale, does not promote war as a way of life. He instead introduces love as the divine cord that "The Firste Moevere of the cause above" (2987) uses to shape the symmetrical body of humanity.[367] Theseus advocates love and unity versus hatred and war, considering the former pair as "a universal connection that emanates from God and contains all perfect forms of nature."[368] In the course of his support of love, Theseus' says, "with that faire cheyne of love he

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[365] For the contradiction between crusading and Christianity, see Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 358.
[366] Gaposchkin, "From pilgrimage to Crusade," 52.
[367] Explaining the meaning of love in God's perfect decree, Theseus says:
  Whan he [the Firste Moevere] first made the faire cheyne of love,
  Greet was th' effect, and heigh was his entente.
  Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente,
  For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
  The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
  In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee (2988-93).
[368] Taylor, *Chaucer's Chain of Love*, 23.

bond / The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond" (2991-92). This allegorical statement proposes that as the four natural elements of fire, air, water, and earth constitute life by working together harmoniously, people should view their racial, ideological, religious, and political differences as elements of diversity through which the world can become a better place to inhabit.

In addition to viewing love as an essential part of the divine order and intent that all people should adopt in the course of their life, Theseus behaves as a peacemaker whose actions testify to his hypersensitivity against war and its violent outcomes. First, he finishes his military expedition against the "Amazones" (880) by marrying Ypolita (881), "[showing] the felicity of the modern slogan 'Make love, not war."[369] Second, he releases Arcite from prison and allows him to seek his own peace. Third, he stops the fierce quarrel between Arcite and Palamon (2537-60). Finally, he decides that Emelye should marry Palamon in an attempt to erase the sad memories of the past. He views marriage as "a way of continuing in this wretched world…creating one perfect joy of two sorrows… Marriage is society's sign of unity, a conjunction of opposites both personal and public; it provides an assurance of the continuity of the human race."[370] In other words, the marriage of Palamon and Emelye testifies to the power of love, and how union substitutes jealousy for happiness. It also testifies to the fact that pagans have what is necessary to make earth a place of harmony, peace, happiness, and other heavenly blessings. As the Knight's Tale concludes, because of the outcomes of the union between Palamon and Emelye, "nevere was ther no word hem bitwene / Of jalousie or any oother teene" (3105-06). Marriage, the main product of love and reconciliation, substitutes the various forms of hatred and violence, which are the main products of war.

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[369] Richmond, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, 67.
[370] Ibid., 66.

In line with his story of love and reconciliation, the pilgrim Knight proves himself a man of peace and harmony despite his crusading experience. Throughout the *Tales*, the Knight behaves as the spokesperson of peace and love versus fighting and hatred. He does not participate in the lively and aggressive exchanges that follow his tale. Rather, he functions as a peacemaker. For instance, he forces the reconciliation of the Pardoner and the Host after a violent exchange of personal insult (VI, 941-68), and he saves the company from the tedium of the Monk's long series of tragedies (VII, 2767).[371] Reacting against the "funny" squabbling between the Host and the Pardoner, the Knight cries, "Namoore of this, for it is right ynough!" (X, 961) Though it seems logical for "the person of highest rank and greatest authority among the pilgrims" to protect the safety of his companions against any internal and external threats, it is ironic that the Knight's pacifist voice here goes against the violent nature of his own crusading career.[372] In opposition to the seriousness and relentlessness of the battlefield, the Knight begs the Pardoner and the Host, "Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere; / And ye, sire Hoost, that been to me so deere, / I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner" (X, 963-65). Such a call, as Quinn infers, "functions as a redemptive moment: the mercenary becomes a peacekeeper with the invitation" 'lat us laughe and pleye' (*CT* VI, 967)."[373]

Likewise, after hearing the Monk's story about war, misery, tragedy, and the loss of fortune, the Knight shouts:

> 'Hoo!' quod the Knyght, 'good sire, namoore of this!
> That ye han seyd is right ynough, ywis,
> And muchel moore; for litel hevynesse
> Is right ynough to muche folk, I gesse. (VII, 2767-70)

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[371] Ibid., 50.

[372] R. E. Kaske, "The Knight's Interruption of the Monk's Tale," *ELH* 24, No. 4 (Dec., 1957): 249-68, 261.

[373] Quinn, "The 'Silly' Pacifism," 175.

Possibly, the Knight says these words because the Monk's Tale does not satisfy his literary taste, which can be marked by its lack of "a keen and discriminating appreciation of the niceties of literature."[374] Also, it might be possible that such an interruption is nothing more than "a protest against the philosophical limitations of the Monk's Tale, as well as a reminder that philosophical truth may also be found in works dealing with obvious good fortune."[375] If not, then "[perhaps] the Knight's interruption of the Monk figures a warrior's discomfort in sustaining the spiritual contradictions of which a representative of the Church seems unaware."[376] Nevertheless, there is no logical reason not to view the Knight's speech here as an attempt to undermine the Monk's promotion of war as the way to "Glorie and honour."[377] The Knight did not like the Monk's story about war and tragedy probably because the Monk's "bookish" report was completely different from the Knight's actual experience. For the Monk, tragedy is "noon oother maner thing / Ne kan in syngyng crie ne biwaille / But that Fortune alwey wole assaille / With unwar strook the regnes that been proude" (VII, 2761-64), while for the Knight, "who knows firsthand the horrible violence and consequences of war," tragedy is the main outcome of war.[378] Overall, the Knight's call for peace and harmony among his companion pilgrims is a tactful way to critique actual warfare, or crusading, which results in tragedy and misery for all humans.

To conclude, in line with the pilgrim Knight's pacifist image and attitudes, Chaucer's celebration of love in a pagan setting, Theseus' proposal for productive diversity, and Palamon's allegorical advocacy of unity and harmony among people constitute a call for pacifism that "would

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[374] Kemp Malone, *Chapters on Chaucer* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), 173.
[375] Kaske, "The Knight's Interruption," 261.
[376] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 362
[377] In each of his story's fragments, the Monk connects people's violent history with glory and honor. See the Monk's Tale, 2075-76, 2143-50, 2210-14, and 2375.
[378] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 360.

hardly have been lost upon Chaucer's original audience for crusading was a very real concern of the English court in the last two decades of the fourteenth century."[379] That is to say, the Knight's Tale, which says in one of its outstanding lines, "we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro" (1848), is not an innocent adoption of certain poetic conventions or a mere "literal" translation of a non-English original. Rather, it is an ironic piece, which implicitly says, probably before a skeptical Christian audience in a very "turbulent and dangerous place, in which commitment could lead to real consequences, as with Usk," that war, crusading in the Knight's cultural repertoire, is always cruel and can never be justified.[380]

D- Conclusion:

Although crusading is not the declared subject matter of any of the *Tales'* stories, to critique crusading and encourage people to adopt an anti-crusade stance are among the *Tales'* most significant purposes. In fact, the majority of the tales tackles crusading in one way or another. For instance, the Clerk's Tale critiques crusading by promoting common profit, which is the opposite of *cupiditas*, as the best way that humans should adopt throughout their lives. The Knight's Tale introduces love as the doctrine that God wants all humans to adopt, sponsor, and defend against its antitheses, namely hatred and war. Likewise, the Parson's Tale and the Tale of Melibee critique crusading by promoting pacifism and reconciliation over animosity and revenge. The Man of Law's Tale says its word against crusading by showing, through Constance's marriage to Alla, how prosperous the contact of Christians and non-Christians can be if violence is left aside.

Likewise, the Squire's Tale with its focus on the "[admirable] qualities for which Islamic cultures were well known"[381] makes a call to reconsider the cultural value of the Saracens, the

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[379] Hatton, "Chaucer's Crusading Knight," 82.
[380] Pearsall, *The Life*, 253.
[381] Schildgen, *Pagans, Tartars, Moslems, and Jews*, 41.

makers of Canacee's gifts, instead of killing them.[382] Similarly, though the Monk's Tale refers to

Peter of Cyprus as a "worthy" crusader (*CT* VI, 2391-98), the way Peter is introduced "sandwiched

between two other notorious tyrants, Bernabo Visconti of Italy and Peter of Spain" seems to have

a certain anti-crusade reverberation.[383] Also, the tales of the Wife of Bath and the Franklin, despite

their apparent innocence to war and politics, critique crusading by highlighting the insolent face

of chivalry. Throughout their focus on knights' eroticism, roughness, and lack of gentleness, these

two tales suggest that "knighthood becomes utterly empty, only a shell. Thus what they [knights]

practice is not true knightly service, but plundering; not *militia*, but *rapina*."[384] Still, though such

a message does not critique crusading directly, the mere focus on the moral corruption of knights

is actually a way to highlight the moral corruption of the age, culture, and "institution" to which

such knights belong.[385] Moreover, the Pardoner's Tale establishes its anti-crusade stance by calling

out, yet indirectly: "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the

sword" (Matthew 26:52).In short, due to its implicit advocacy of pacifism and communal love, its

satirical form of pilgrimage, and its many anti-crusade ironies, the *Tales* implicitly expresses

Chaucer's anti-crusade voice that, for a set of reasons, the poet needed to disguise through irony

and other techniques of indirection.

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[382] Ibid., 52.
[383] Lewis, "History, Mission, and Crusade," 362.
[384] Quoted in Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 76-77. See also 276-77 for Raymond Lull's critique against crusading knights. See also J. N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976-1978), 41, 60.
[385] See Jones, *Chaucer's Knight*, 135, and Hatton, "Chaucer's Crusading Knight," 77.

VI-	Chapter Five: Why Was Chaucer Hesitant to Criticize Crusading Directly?

A- Introduction:

In an attempt to justify Chaucer's reticence to show any seriousness towards his England's matters, Earle Birney refers to the poet's kind of humble origin and concludes that due to his heavy reliance on the court in a very turbulent period, "it was vital for [Chaucer] to guard himself continually"[386] from the "murderous, treacherous" face of the court.[387] Chaucer's humble origin demanded that he obeys his patrons and supports their plans, regardless of his personal sentiments and principals. In Birney's words, "[Chaucer] could not allow his sophistications or boredoms to outstrip the pace of those who held his fortunes in their hands." [388] Due to crusading's lucrative outcomes on behalf of the English court and Church, there was no way for Chaucer to criticize that phenomenon with impunity, except through an indirect technique like irony. Pearsall explains, "Chaucer kept a low profile in the political conflicts of his day, steering clear of potential trouble in his public life and never mentioning anything controversial in his poetry. In this way, with the instinct of the artist, he kept secure his poetic career."[389] In other words, Chaucer's apparent neutrality to England's politics, economics, and religion was part of the poet's attempt to save his courtly benefits, and the *Tales'* lack of clarity was caused by certain materialistic, rather than artistic, circumstances in which the poet was fully immersed.

However, though Pearsall and Birney's justification of the *Tales'* indirection and apparent neutrality seems valid, they both view Chaucer's fear for his courtly fortune as a form of cowardice. Notably, Birney says, "to have argued openly against church doctrine would have been

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[386] *Essays*, 61.
[387] Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness,* 56.
[388] Birney, *Essays*, 6.
[389] Pearsall, *The Life*, 96.

to risk burning for heresy; and Chaucer was no Wiclif."[390] Likewise, Pearsall writes, "Langland and Gower, in the vigour of their response to contemporary problems of class conflict, of poverty and oppression, of the rights of common people, offer plenty of invitations of both applause and derision. Chaucer, by contrast, exhibits scarcely a sign of any direct response to the political and social movements of his day."[391] Both Pearsall and Birney believe that while Gower, Langland, and Wycliffe were courageous and thus responded to England's main polemic, Chaucer ignored most of these polemic either because he did not see them or because he was too afraid to respond. Though this reasoning seems logical, the poet's undeniable pacifist voice throughout all of his poetry and the *Tales*' implicit anti-crusade perspective refute the idea that Chaucer did not respond to England's polemic, especially that of crusading. Therefore, this chapter revisits Chaucer's life history, contending that the poet's courtly fortune on one hand and his courtly education and training on the other are the two main reasons for his hesitation to critique crusading directly.[392]

For achieving such a purpose, this chapter is divided into two main parts. The first section discusses the impact of Chaucer's courtly fortune on his life and literary career, while the second discusses the influence of his courtly training and education in forming the style, tone, structure as well as subject matter of his poetry. With reference to Chaucer's life-records and biographies, the first part discusses the poet's courtly fortune and contends that the size of that fortune was immense

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[390] *Essays*, 14. See also Loomis, "Was Chaucer a Laodicean?" 271.

[391] *The Life*, 147. See also 62.

[392] I refer to Chaucer's fortune as courtly because his entire life and happiness were heavily dependent on his patrons. See Green, *Poets*, 148, Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1, 10, Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 17, Pearsall, *The Life*, 29-34, Thomas Frederick Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England* (Manchester, The University press; London, New York, Longmans, Green & co., 1920-33), 48-9, 57, 64, and "Literature and Learning in the English Civil Service in the Fourteenth Century," *Speculum* 4, No. 4 (Oct., 1929): 365-89, 382, John Matthews Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer: Lectures Delivered at the Lowell Institute* (New York: H. Holt, 1926), 3-30, and Coghill, *The Poet*, 37.

enough to cause any wise person not to anger his masters.[393] Thus, I conclude that Chaucer's indirect and self-disparaging style was a safety-strategy through which the poet critiqued crusading without losing his courtly position. After this, the second part of the chapter views Chaucer's strategic use of irony and other literary techniques as a reflection of the educational training and curriculum, to which Chaucer was exposed in the course of his court service.[394] I argue that Chaucer was taught the various conventions of courtly life and was trained in how to deal with men of the court, especially the king, the royal households, and the aristocracy.[395] Thus, the second section concludes that Chaucer's poetic indirection and heavy reliance on irony were an essential part of the "court culture which created him."[396]

B- Chaucer's Courtly Fortune:

Chaucer came from a rather successful family that moved from Ipswich to London before the poet was born.[397] His father and grandfather were "vintners"[398] whose wealth and influence in

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[393] This chapter consults with some of Chaucer biographies, such as Ackroyd, *Chaucer,* David Aers, *Chaucer* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1986), George Kane, *Chaucer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), John Leyerle, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), Pearsall, *The Life*; Rosalyn Rossignol, *Chaucer: A to Z. The Essential Reference to His Life and Works* (New York: Facts on File, 1999, Richard West, *Chaucer 1340-1400: The Life and Times of the First English Poet* (New York: Carroll and Graf; London: Constable, 2000), Catherine Richardson, *Chaucer: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2001), Ellyn Sanna, "Biography of Geoffrey Chaucer," in *Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chesea House, 2003), 5-36, Tom Shippey, "Geoffrey Chaucer," in *Literary Genius: 25 Classic Writers Who Define English & American Literature*, ed. Joseph Epstein (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2007), 8-15, and others.

[394] Mathew, *The Court of Richard II*, 13.

[395] Green, *Poets*, 73, 40, and Pearsall, *The Life*, 29, 34-40.

[396] Pearsall, *The Life*, 62.

[397] See Donald R. Howard, *Chaucer: His Life, His Work, His World* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1987).

[398] See Derek. S. Brewer, "Class Distinction in Chaucer," *Speculum* 43, No. 2 (Apr., 1968): 290-305, 304.

London's economics enabled them to become part of London's powerful bourgeois.[399] Because of this social status, the Chaucers were known to England's aristocracy and were introduced to the court, where they worked for the rest of their lives.[400] Robert Le Chaucer became a mercer of Edward II,[401] and John Chaucer became a butler of Edward III and was one of his men in the English campaign against Scotland in 1327.[402] Consequently, without being part of the aristocracy,[403] the Chaucers were allowed to enjoy the gentry's privileges, including "power, prestige, and wealth."[404] Among these courtly benefits was John Chaucer's marriage to Agnes de Copton, who "was niece and ward of the keeper of the Royal Mint."[405] Through this marriage, not only did John Chaucer achieve a sort of personal social advancement, but he was able to secure a prosperous future for his descendants.[406]

As the son of two courtiers, or court servants, Geoffrey Chaucer was sent to study at the court schools where he received "the excellent education which… [only] the household of a king, or one of the greater magnates, could give to its junior members."[407] Then he was introduced in 1375 to the court of Edward III's daughter-in-law, Elizabeth the Countess of Ulster,[408] where he received his professional training and his first experience serving in the court. Chaucer served Countess Elizabeth and Prince Lionel and stayed in their court until he became "quite an important

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[399] See Pearsall, *The Life*, 12-16, and Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 1-2, 12.
[400] Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 1. See also Strohm, *Social*, 3.
[401] See Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 2.
[402] See *Life-Records*, 5; Strohm, *Social*, 10, and Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 2.
[403] See Coghill, *The Poet*, 1.
[404] Green, *Poets*, 33.
[405] Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 2.
[406] See Kenneth B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1972), 230-32, Pearsall, *The Life*, 100, Strohm, *Social*, 11-12, and Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 31.
[407] Tout, *Chapters*, 34-35. Similarly, Green writes, "Children of good family might be sent to court both to receive an education in the manners of polite society and to establish themselves in the profession of household service" (*Poets*, 40).
[408] See Mathew, *The Court,* and Pearsall, *The Life*, 12, 16.

person… at home and abroad and firmly accepted in court circles."[409] After that, he moved to serve Edward III and was one of the king's men in the English campaigns against France in the 1360s. Later, he became a courtier of John of Gaunt, Richard II, and Henry IV respectively.[410] In these courts, Chaucer occupied many offices and went overseas on different political and diplomatic missions, and in consequence, he gained many benefits, including "advantageous marriages, annuities and grants of offices, and gentle status."[411]

It is likely due to his courtly service and connections that Chaucer married Philippa Roet, who was the daughter of "a knight of Hainault," the lady in waiting of Queen Philippa, and the sister of Katherine Swynford who was the mistress and later became the wife of John of Gaunt.[412] Though seen by some scholars as part of a tradition through which court servants used to "unite themselves,"[413] marrying Philippa was "a step up for Geoffrey."[414] As Chaucer was from a non-noble family, his marriage to Philippa, similar to his father's marriage to Agnes de Copton, was assumed to be a sort of business deal. Chaucer needed that marriage in order to achieve some advancement in the social hierarchy. As Pearsall puts it, "A young unlanded esquire did well to marry a lady of the queen's household and the daughter of a knight."[415] Thus, besides securing his courtly position through Philippa's connections with courtly figures, like Gaunt, Chaucer marriage to Philippa benefited his descendants and guaranteed the progress of their courtly wealth.

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[409] Pearsall, *The Life*, 128.

[410] For more details about Chaucer's service in the English court, see Pearsall, *The Life*, 34-40; Chaucer, *Chaucer Lyric*, 1-2, and Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 18-19.

[411] Strohm, *Social*, 11-12. See also Pearsall, *The Life*, 16 and Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 2.

[412] See Chaucer, *Chaucer Lyric*, 2; Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 36, and Pearsall, *The Life*, 35.

[413] Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 30.

[414] Coghill, *The Poet*, 7.

[415] *The Life*, 50.

Due to their father's courtly status, Thomas and Elizabeth Chaucer were admitted and supported by the English court and royal households. Elizabeth Chaucer was admitted to Gaunt's court, which sponsored her stay in the Black Nuns of Bishopsgate Street in 1381.[416] Likewise, Thomas Chaucer was admitted to the English court where he became a courtier of Henry IV,[417] then Sheriff in 1400, a knight in 1401, a representative of Oxfordshire in many parliaments from 1407 until 1421, and finally a forester between 1405 and 1434.[418] Similarly, Chaucer's granddaughter, Alice, married a duke's son and later become the Duchess of Suffolk.[419] Though it is possible that Chaucer's descendants had some other qualifications that enabled them to become part of the aristocracy and gentility,[420] it is noteworthy that in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, similar to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a person "was received into the *familia regis* largely for his social rather than his professional qualities."[421] That is to say, as John Chaucer and Agnes de Copton's courtly connections and service were among the main reasons for why

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[416] Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 31. In fact, the extreme mutuality between Chaucer's family and Gaunt's court led Chaucer's biographers to infer that "both Thomas and Elizabeth were in fact the children of Gaunt by Philippa Chaucer, and that the poet was used willingly or unwillingly to confer legitimacy upon them" (Ibid.). For more information about Chaucer's children, see Pearsall, *The Life*, 50.

[417] See Mathew, *The Court*, 63, and Jones, *Who Murdered Chaucer*, 264.

[418] See M. B. Rudd, *Thomas Chaucer*, Ch. 2, Pearsall, *The Life*, 223, 277-79, and Kenneth B. McFarlane, "Henry V, Bishop Beaufort and the Red Hat," *The English Historical Review* 60, No. 238 (Sep., 1945): 316-48.

[419] Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 31.

[420] Thomas Chaucer for instance was "a self-made man of great wealth, acquisitive yet circumspect, politic and affairé, well-versed in all branches of administration and diplomacy, a practised chairman and envoy, influential and respected" (McFarlane, " Henry V," 102).

[421] Green, *Poets*, 61. While I am convinced in Green's viewpoint that people were hired by the court for their social lineage more than anything else, people also were hired in the court "through the skilled and specialized services they were able to provide" (Strohm, *Social*, 1). However, similar to Green, McFarlane says, "the better their [people's] birth and connections the more rapid their rise" (*Lancastrian Kings*, 162).

Geoffrey was admitted to the English court, our poet's courtly reputation and position constituted

the main foundation for Thomas, Elizabeth, and Alice Chaucer's courtly future.

Besides such familial gains, working for the court resulted in other considerable benefits,

such as the involvement of the court on behalf of Chaucer in the Chaumpaigne case of rape.[422] To

have Sir William Deauchamp, Sir John Clanvowe, and Sir William Nevill working on behalf of

Chaucer in such a case, though potentially motivated by their friendship, demonstrates that the

poet's reputation was connected with his masters' and their social status. Similarly, the royal

protection which Chaucer received from Richard II for being the king's personal envoy and

diplomat in many trips also proves the significance of Chaucer to the court.[423] In 1398, Richard II

issued a letter that orders officials and men in charge to help Chaucer, the king's envoy, in

whatever he might need, and that also warns against harming or bothering the royal envoy for any

reason. The letter runs thus:

> ad quamplura ardua et urgencia negocia nostra tarn in absencia quam presencia
> nostris in diversis partibus infra regnum nos trum Anglie facienda et expendienda
> ordinaverimus. . . se per quosdam emulos suos per quamplures querelas sive sectas
> dum sic negociis intenderit inquietari molestari sive implacitari. . .[424]

This letter, as Sanderline writes, is "an unusual mark of favor from the king designed to relieve

Chaucer of any further actions against him."[425] It demonstrates that the king, regardless of his real

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[422] See Derek Brewer, *Chaucer and His World*, 144, Strohm, *Social*, 39-40; Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 69-70, 88-90, 137, Mathew, *The Court*, 62, and Pearsall, *The Life*, 208, 222.

[423] As Mathew puts it, Chaucer's courtly fortune consisted of "protection and… recompense" (*The Court*, 62).

[424] *Life-Records*, 62-63. As translated by Sanderline, this letter says, "We have ordered [him] to conduct and settle many arduous and urgent negotiations as much in our absence as in our presence in various parts of our kingdom of England . . . he would be disturbed, molested, or disquieted through certain actions in some quarrels or parties while so engaged in our negotiations. . . ." ("Chaucer and Ricardian Politics," *The Chaucer Review* 22, No. 3 (Winter, 1988): 171-84, 180-81).

[425] "Chaucer and the Ricardian Politics," 181. Explaining the significance of the same letter, Ackroyd writes that Chaucer received "letters of protection by the king in order to travel 'ad

motivation, was personally concerned about Chaucer's safety and security inside and outside the court.

In addition to getting the King's full protection, marrying Philippa, and securing a good future for his children, Chaucer, for his courtly service, gained many royal and governmental annuities and gifts. As reported in his life-records, Chaucer received annuities from different patrons, including Edward III, John of Gaunt, Richard II, and Henry IV.[426] In 1367, Edward III granted Chaucer a "valet," an annuity of twenty marks for life. Seven years later, Edward granted Chaucer a rent-free house above Aldgate and a daily pitcher of wine for the course of his life. At the same time, Chaucer and his wife were receiving a considerable annuity from John of Gaunt and were considered among Gaunt's closest servants. Likewise, Richard II granted Chaucer annuities in 1381, 1393, and 1394; while in 1399, Chaucer's annuity was again approved by Henry IV.[427] Overall, Chaucer was not a usual member of the high bourgeois, and his courtly fortune was immense. Therefore, it would be illogical for him to challenge overtly his patrons' plans. As Coghill's puts it:

> [Chaucer] could not have taken an open stand either against the persons of power
> in the court, or against the beliefs which kept their power unquestioned. As with
> Gaunt and his circle, so with monarchy itself, Chaucer could not have received his

partes transmarinas'; these letters of protection were designed to protect the king's envoy from any legal suits that might be raised against him while he was out of England, a necessary precaution in such a litigious age" (*Chaucer*, 43).

[426] See Crow and Olson, *Chaucer Life-Records*, 514-24, 533, Jones, *Who Murdered Chaucer?* 58, 169, Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 30-31, 50-55, Strohm, *Social*, 23, Pearsall, *The Life*, 97, Mathew, *The Court*, 62, Chaucer, *Chaucer Lyric*, 2, Howard, *Chaucer: His Life*, James R. Hulbert, *Chaucer's Official Life* (Menasha: WI, 1912), Alfred Kern, *The Ancestry of Chaucer* (Baltimore: MD, 1906), Derek Brewer, *Chaucer and His World* (NY: Dodd, Mead, 1977), and Albert C. Baugh, "Chaucer the Man," in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. Beryl Rowland (NY: Oxford UP, 1979), 1-20.

[427] Though many Chaucer scholars, such as Strohm in his *Social* (11-12), do not refer to Chaucer as a servant of Henry IV, I believe that the tone of "Chaucer's Lament to His Empty Purse" and the fact that Thomas Chaucer was a courtier of Henry IV prove that the poet had a respectful status at the court of Henry IV.

living from them with the right hand of the esquire and struck against them with the left of the writer.[428]

That is to say, Chaucer did not critique crusading directly because doing so would cost him his courtly benefits, if not his life. Obviously, the poet's indirection or pretentious neutrality towards the matter of crusading, the Great Schism, or the Peasant Revolution should not be viewed as a sign of cowardice. Instead, it testifies to Chaucer's praiseworthy wisdom and even *courage*.

Taking into consideration that Chaucer could have not tackled any perilous topic at all, his poetry's indirection becomes a remarkable courageous attempt to critique the corruption of his England and Church. It should be noted that Chaucer was not writing in a liberal environment or for a careless audience.[429] Chaucer's England was ferocious, and his audience was intolerant to whatever stood against its taste and desire, especially if such as opposition was made by a non-noble courtier like Chaucer. In fact, Richard II's England was not the best place for non-noble courtiers because their receiving of royal rewards and benefits was against the will of some powerful men like the Appellants. Many aristocrats such as Thomas of Woodstock opposed that non-noble "men of ability and intelligence," such as Michael de la Pole, Simon Burley, William Bagot, and John Beauchamp were hired and generously rewarded by the court.[430] Most members of England's gentility viewed the non-nobles' social advancement as a threat against their own status and exclusive privileges.[431] In fact, the aristocrats detested the non-noble's upward mobility because upgrading the social status of a non-noble involved "a demotion of the knights and a promotion of certain categories of tradesmen."[432] Thus, one of the main priorities of England's

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[428] Qtd in Birney, *Essays*, 4.
[429] For information about the nature of Chaucer's audience, see Reiss, "Chaucer and His Audience," Mathew, *The Court*, 64-73; Strohm, *Social*, 48-65, and Pearsall, *The Life*, 181.
[430] Jones, *Who Murdered Chaucer?* 53.
[431] See Tuck, *Crown and Nobility* (Oxford [England]: Blackwell, 1999), 154-156.
[432] Strohm, *Social*, 4. See also p. 6.

gentility was to eliminate the non-noble courtiers, especially the "genius," who had the various qualifications that could convince the king or any of his household to set them in equal or superior position to noble and aristocratic figures.[433]

The merciless trial of Richard's men in 1387-88 proves the aristocrats' ruthlessness against any threat to the nobility and its privileges from the non-noble courtiers. The Merciless Parliament accused Richard's courtiers with "accroaching royal power, taking advantage of the king's tender years, and using their influence over the king for their own private profit."[434] Whether such charges were true or false and whether the king was part of a conspiracy against his men or was unable to protect them,[435] it is noteworthy that all of Richard's men who were eliminated during the political conflict of the late 1380s were from the most "turbulent and ill-defined middle ranks of society,"[436] to which Chaucer belonged.[437] Chris Given-Wilson writes:

> Those whom he [Richard II] favoured–such as Robert de Vere earl of Oxford, and Michael de le Pole (whom he created earl of Suffolk and chancellor of England)–were also those whose advice he sought. As a result, resentment spread among the less favoured but (in their own estimation) more deserving men, such as Thomas Woodstock duke of Gloucester (the king's uncle), Richard Fitzalan, the irascible earl of Arundel, and his more circumspect but no less formidable brother Thomas Arundel, who eventually rose to the archbishop of Canterbury.[438]

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[433] Jones, *Who Murdered Chaucer?* 53.

[434] Tuck, *Crown*, 168.

[435] However, most historians do not think that Richard agreed to let the Appellants eliminate his courtiers by imprisoning, exiling, and executing them. But I believe that the King could not be innocent to the execution of his own courtiers. If it is true that Sir Simon Burley was killed against Richard's will (John L. Leland, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004–14), online edn, May 2011 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4036, accessed 29 May 2014]), then the King's inability to protect his courtiers substituted his agreement to have them killed. In other words, the king's inability to protect his courtiers and his treason of them led to the same outcome, the death of courtiers.

[436] Strohm, *Social*, 10.

[437] See Chesterton, *Chaucer*, 39.

[438] "Late Medieval England, 1215-1485," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England*, ed. Nigel Soul (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 102-36, 121-22.

Again, though the official report stated that Michael de la Pole was sentenced to die because of his abuse of the royal power and his negative influence over the king, especially regarding "the policy of conciliation towards France,"[439] it is likely that the man was executed because he was named as the Earl of Suffolk without being a descendant of a noble family.[440] Some of the aristocrats, especially the Appellants, considered de la Pole "more suited to commerce than war"[441] and as "a creature of the king, unworthy of the dignity of an earldom."[442] Similarly, the execution of Sir Simon Burley, Richard's tutor and advisor, demonstrates the gentility's cruelty against non-noble courtiers. Though Burley came from a non-noble family,[443] he was declared by Richard II as the Earl of Huntingdon in 1385.[444] By gaining the title of earldom and achieving a considerable level of social status, Burley, similar to de la Pole,[445] was resented by most of the aristocrats, who viewed him as a social threat against their class.[446] Eventually, he was "charged with abusing his influence over the young king in various ways"[447] and was accordingly beheaded by the three senior Appellants in 1388.[448] Burley was executed against the will of Richard, the Queen, the King's uncle, the younger Appellants of Derby and Nottingham, who all cried out that Burley was

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[439] Given-Wilson, "Late Medieval England," 122. See Tuck, *Crown*, 168, and Jones, *Who Murdered Chaucer?* 53.

[440] See Tuck, *Crown*, 155 and Pearsall, *The Life*, 17.

[441] Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, II, 141.

[442] Tuck, *Crown*, 155.

[443] See Leland, *Oxford*.

[444] See Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1997), 112-117 and Tuck, *Crown*, 156.

[445] It was reported that Michael de la Pole was executed because he raised "from a low estate to this honour of earl" (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, iii, 216-17).

[446] See George Frederick Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter: From Its Foundation to the Present Time* (London: William Pickering, 1841), 257-260 and Tuck, *Crown*, 166.

[447] Leland, *Oxford*.

[448] Discussing the social formation of England, Pearsall writes, "The fourteenth century did see an increasing mobility in society, and the rise of the de la Pole family from Hull merchants to the earldom of Suffolk in two generations is commonly cited as a spectacular example of such mobility" (*The Life*, 17).

guilty of nothing.[449] This incident proves that the royal tutor's real crime was, similar to de la Pole's, him being honored as a noble by Richard in spite of his non-noble origin.

As a close friend and colleague of Burley as well as de la Pole,[450] Chaucer was aware that despite his closeness to the king, "[the] courtier's life, dependent as it was on favour and patronage, could never have been wholly sure… [and that] not only might a well-placed servant suddenly find himself fallen from grace, but he had also to face the fact that his fortunes were inextricably mixed with those of his master."[451] Consequently, in light of the political and social chaos of the late 1380s, Chaucer surrendered most of his courtly fortune to his superiors without being asked to do so. He "resigned his job, left his house and gave up his annuities, all of them actions that he took in anticipation of disagreeable moves on the part of the opposition party to purge the king's household and withdraw privileges from those who had enjoyed his personal patronage."[452]

Chaucer did not wait for the Merciless Parliament to punish him for receiving any royal benefits, so along with giving up his courtly position and fortune, the poet left for Kent.[453] Nevertheless, the poet's departure to Kent was not an exile or a sort of coward retirement from court service, as some scholars argue;[454] rather, it was a strategic step to escape the ruthless actions that were taking place in London, as manifested by executing eight of Richard's non-noble

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[449] Leland, *Oxford*.

[450] See Pearsall, *The Life*, 201-205.

[451] Green, *Poets*, 148. See also, Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 17, Pearsall, *The Life*, 29-34, Tout, *Chapters*, 48-9, 57, 64 and "Literature and Learning, 382, and Manly, *Some New Light*, 3-30.

[452] Pearsall, *The Life*, 209.

[453] Sanderline sees Chaucer's leave to Kent as a way to escape the "royal appointment" of him as a "spare servant," which was not as lucrative as he wanted it to be. She argues that after leaving the Clerkship in 1391, Chaucer decided to leave to Kent in an attempt "to find other resources" of living. If not, then the man left to Kent, as Sanderline believes, to escape the heavy taxations that Londoners suffered from ("Chaucer and the Ricardian Politics," 179-180).

[454] See Strohm, *Social*, 37, Green, *Poets*, 36-37, and Pearsall, *The Life*, 255.

courtiers.[455] Thus, Chaucer's indirect critique of crusading is a form of absolute courage, and his poetry's indirection is a sort of practical discretion and wisdom. By using irony, constructing the *Tales*' mockery pilgrimage, and adopting other self-disparaging techniques, the poet succeeded in critiquing crusading without calling the attention of his masters, taking into account that Chaucer acquired all these techniques of indirection through his education, training, and service in the court.

C- The Courtly Training of the Poet:

At the age of fourteen, Chaucer started his court service as a page in Countess Elizabeth of Ulster's court, where he received most of his courtly education and training.[456] In the "court school,"[457] Chaucer's education was focused on two main areas: "'noriture,' the art of genteel behaviour, and 'lettrure,' basic scholastic accomplishment… an education in the manners of polite society."[458] The court demanded that its servants, especially those from the non-aristocratic families, be enrolled in professional education and training sessions in order to succeed in serving their masters and superiors. As Green explains, "the household servant ministered to the physical and spiritual needs of his master–defending his body, protecting his interest, and fostering his reputation."[459] Thus, Chaucer was trained to be a soldier and a gentleman, a diplomat and a clerk,

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[455] Given-Wilson, "Late Medieval England," 122.

[456] Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, XVI.

[457] Green, *Poets*, 173. Against Green's belief, some scholars, such as Pearsall, argue that there was no official education or schools in the English court. Nevertheless, they do not refute the fact that servants of the court were required to get a certain level of education and mastery of some manners and academic skills. This means that Pearsall does not have a different perception of Chaucer's education in the court, but all he says is that Chaucer did not start his court carrier as a school student in the full sense of the word. Rather, getting education in the court was part of any servant's carrier (*The Life*, 29, 34-40). See also Tout, *Chapters*, 48-9, 57, 64; Manly, *Some New Light*, 3-30; Tout, "Literature and Learning," 382, and Green, *Poets*, 40.

[458] Green, *Poets*, 73, 40.

[459] Ibid., 13. See also pp. 13-45, and Mathew, *The Court*, 29-30.

a secretary and a "fool."[460] While Chaucer was trained in how to serve his patrons at wartime,[461]

he was also educated "'in athletics, moral integrity and good manners'… grammar and language…

all the arts of diplomacy. [He was also taught] the arts of civilized behaviour… the arts of

conversation… in French [and] Latin… the basic elements of music."[462] This means that Chaucer's

literary attitudes were cultivated in the course of his study and service in the court, and that his

poetic talent was tamed in order to cope with the conventions of the court culture.[463]

The subject matter, tone, structure, diction, and themes of Chaucer's poetry were clearly

all in line with the English court's cultural conventions and policies. When translating the

Melibeus, for instance, Chaucer omitted the page that speaks about the dangers of being ruled by

a boy-king because his king at the time was Richard II.[464] Likewise, while discussing jobs and

people's social positions in the General Prologue, the poet was careful not to mock victuallers and

clothiers or prefer one as more important or less influential than the other because the first group

was supported by Richard II, and the latter was supported by Gaunt.[465] Moreover, Chaucer

deployed poetry to keep the status of "a free agent between parties or even wholly free of factional

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[460] Birney, *Essays*, 4.

[461] See Paul Strohm, "The Social and Literary Scene of England," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, eds. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-18, 3, Oliver Farrar Emerson, *Poems of Chaucer* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), XXIX; Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 43-44, 73; Sanderline, "Chaucer and the Ricardian," 180-181, and Mathew, *The Court*, 9.

[462] Ackroyd, *Chaucer*, 18-19. Similarly, Green argues that in England "a degree of literary expertise became recognized as one of the marks of a gentleman, and practice in handling the forms of light, social poetry came to be included within the scope of a genteel education" (*Poets* 109). See also, Tout, *Chapters*, 34-35 and Pearsall, *The Life*, 34.

[463] See Green, *Poets*, 18.

[464] "Woe to the land that has a child as king." See Lloyd J. Matthews, "The date of Chaucer's Melibee and the stages of the tale's incorporation in *the Canterbury Tales*," *Chaucer Review* 20, no. 3 (1986): 221-234. See also, Lee Patterson, "'What Man Artow?' Authorial Self-Definition in *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and *The Tale of Melibee*." *Studies in The Age Of Chaucer: The Yearbook Of The New Chaucer Society* 11 (1989): 117-75.

[465] See Birney, *Essays*, 8.

ties."[466] He wrote the *Book of the Duchess* for John of Gaunt,[467] and the *Parliament of Fowls* for Richard II,[468] and his "Complaint to His Purse" to Henry IV.[469] In brief, the poet never wrote in favor of one of his patrons or superiors if it would anger others, and he never allowed his closeness to Gaunt and Henry of Derby to prevent him from being close also to Richard II or any other person on the Ricardian side.[470]

The nature of Chaucer's poetry reflects the man's professional experience in the court structure and culture. Many lines of *The Book of Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The Legend of Good Women*, and *The Tales* leave no doubt that the poet was influenced by the taste of his courtly audience.[471] As demonstrated in the prologue of *The Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer, the dreamer, composed the *Legend* due to Queen Alceste's judgment that the "sinful" poet should denounce his anti-love viewpoint that is expressed in some of his other poems, and he also should express that denouncement through writing a poem "Of wommen trewe in lovyng al hire lyve, / Wherso ye wol, of mayden or of wyve" (Prologue F, 438-39). Though Queen Alceste is a fictitious figure, the use of the literary convention of writing a poem in response to a royal order reflects the influence of the court culture on Chaucer's poetry.[472] Likewise, to dedicate the finished

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[466] Strohm, *Social*, 25.

[467] See Michael Foster, *Chaucer's Narrators and the Rhetoric of Self-representation* (Bern: International Academic Publishers, 2008), 79.

[468] See Gillian A. Rudd, *The Complete Critical Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: Routledge, 2001), 49.

[469] See Pratt, *Chaucer and War*, 4, and Rosalyn Rossignol, *Critical Companion to Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York : Facts On File, 2007), 91.

[470] Sanderline writes, "as well as being the king's protégé, he [Chaucer] was still John of Gaunt's old retainer" ("Chaucer and the Ricardian," 181). See also Loomis, 258; Hulbert, *Chaucer's Official Life*, 70 f, and Strohm, *Social*, 32.

[471] Pearsall writes that Chaucer's audience's "tastes and responses both acted as an encouragement in the task of writing and also had an influence in shaping the manner in which that task was carried out" (*The Life*, 178).

[472] As discussed by many eminent scholars, the *Legend* is replete with references that demonstrate the relationship between Queen Alceste and the god of love on one hand and Queen

Legend to the real "queen… at Eltham or at Sheene" (Prologue F, 496-97) demonstrates that Chaucer was writing for a courtly audience, and that his poems' subject matter, structure, tone, and diction were all influenced by that audience.

Similar to the *Legend*, the *Parliament of Fowls* demonstrates the heavy influence of the court culture on Chaucer's poetry. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, a poem about love, Chaucer amazingly does not introduce himself as a lover or an expert in love. Instead, he attributes his knowledge of love to books:

> For al be that I knowe nat Love in dede,
> Ne wot how that he quiteth folk here hyre,
> Yit happeth me ful ofte in bokes reede
> Of his myrakles and his crewel yre.
> There rede I wel he wol be lord and syre;
> I dar nat seyn, his strokes been so sore,
> But 'God save swich a lord!' – I can na moore (8-14).

The poet does not use any word that might suggest a personal knowledge of love; instead, he refers to it by using *general* phrases and expressions, such as "myrakles and his crewel yre," "lord and syre," and "his strokes been so sore." These phrases speak about the theory, rather than the practice, of love, as if the poet does not want his audience to view him as an authority in that field. As Jones explains, "[the] capacity to love had long been regarded as an aristocratic prerogative, and no new-style court poet could set himself up as an authority on such a subject when his audience were his social superiors in such matters."[473] That is to say, Chaucer was aware of the sensitivity of tackling a topic like love before the court, especially due to his non-noble origin and young age. Therefore,

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Ann of Bohemia and Richard II on the other. See John Tatlock, *The Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works* (London: Trübner & Co., Limited, 1907), 102-130, Samuel Moore, "The Prologue to Chaucer's 'Legend of Good Women' in Relation to Queen Anne and Richard," *The Modern Language Review* 7, no. 4 (Oct., 1912): 488-93, and Florence Percival, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), especially 88-95.

[473] *Who Murdered Chaucer?* 32.

his poetry's apparently disinterested tone regarding crusading might be simply an outcome of the

poet's carefulness not to violate similar courtly conventions and restrictions.

The Book of the Duchess also testifies to Chaucer's professional talent in discussing some

of his patrons' personal affairs without violating any court conventions. Through a group of steps,

Chaucer successfully addresses Gaunt's personal issues without becoming disrespectful or

offensive.[474] For instance, Chaucer used the dream-vision to create a suitable setting for a fictional

meeting with his royal patron.[475] Though it was possible for the poet to speak with his patron in a

more direct way,[476] the dream-vision was "a useful device for evading authorial authority."[477] It

enabled the poet to express his advice about Gaunt's loss of Blanche publicly without angering

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[474] *The Book of the Duchess*, in light of the many intrinsic and extrinsic evidences, was written mainly to console John of Gaunt by commemorating the death of Blache of Lancaster. As stated in *The Riverside Chaucer*,

> In the prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* Chaucer says that he wrote a poem called "the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse" and this almost certainly is what he later calls "the book of the Duchesse" (Retr. X.1086). A note in the Fairfax Manuscript, evidently in the hand of the Elizabethan antiquary John Stow, says that this poem was written at John of Gaunt's request. In the poem it seems likely that the word *white* is a translation pun in several instances, notably in line 948, "And goode faire White she het." There is also an apparent series of word plays in 1318-19, where *white* appears and John of Gaunt is hinted at in "seynt Johan" and where there are probable references to Richmond and Lancaster (Gaunt was Earl of Richmond and Duke of Lancaster) (*The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 329).

[475] For information about the use of the dream-vision strategy in Chaucer's poetry, see Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin, *A Companion to Old and Middle English Literature* (Westport, Conn. [u.a.]: Greenwood Press, 2002), 178, and Kathryn L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1988).

[476] *The Book* shows "Chaucer's existing and potential relations with Gaunt, in a form at once tactful and quietly self-promotional" (Srohm, *Social*, 52).

[477] J. Stephen Russell, *The English Dream Vision*, 195. Again, Russell explains, "In the hands of Chaucer and Langland and the Pearl poet, the dream vision genre with its accompanying rhetorical effects is essential to the themes and contents of the poems and not simply a convenient fiction" (*English Dream Vision*, 2).

Gaunt or any of his aristocratic coterie.[478] However, after setting the background of the *Book*'s

scene, Chaucer the dreamer approached the silent black Knight, and greeted him thus:

> 'A, goode sir, no fors,' quod y,
> 'I am ryght sory yif I have ought
> Destroubled yow out of your thought.
> Foryive me, yif I have mystake.' (521-24)

The speaker is apologetic from the inception of the conversation, and his diction highlights the

social difference between himself and the addressee's higher status. The poet's use of "sir," "sory,"

and the formal pronoun "yow" serves one of the poem's implicit strategies, which is not to violate

any social borders and conventions. Interestingly, in response to the Knight who keeps addressing

the dreamer by using the informal "thow" and "thee,"[479] the dreamer uses the formal "yow" and

in other places "ye." [480] Obviously, the poet tries to lessen the impact of his presumption to speak

to Gaunt at all.

After setting the apologetic background of the dream, Chaucer appears uncertain of how

to phrase his words and convince the Knight to speak. Therefore, instead of asking the Knight

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[478] For information about Chaucer's rhetorical approach in consoling his master without violating the regulations of the social system of England, see Foster, *Chaucer's Narrators*, 33-80.

[479] For instance, "He sayde, 'I prey thee, be not wrooth, / I herde thee not, to sayn the sooth, / Ne I saw thee not, sir, trewely'"(*The Book*, 519-521). See also 561, 750-53, 847, 1088, 1181, and 1303.

[480] The shift between the formal "ye/yow " and the informal "thee/thy/thow" is obvious in this excerpt:

> 'Blythly,' quod he, 'com sit adoun,
> I telle thee up condicioun
> That thou hoolly, with al thy wit,
> Do thyn entente to herkene hit.'
> 'Yis, sir.' 'Swere thy trouthe therto.'
> 'Gladly.' 'Do than holde herto!'
> 'I shal right blythly, so God me save,
> Hoolly, with al the wit I have,
> Here yow, as wel as I can' (*The Book*, 749-757).

See also 521, 544, 547-48, 553, 711, 716, 717, 756, 760, and others.

about his silence and melancholy, the poet speaks about hunting, which is a courtly sport that courtiers like Chaucer were allowed to discuss. Chaucer speaks to the Knight thus: "Sir…this game is doon. / I holde that this hert be goon; / These huntes konne hym nowher see" (*The Book* 539-41). Chaucer chooses such a topic as a starter for a conversation with the Knight. The poet wants to cause the Knight to break off his silence and to move, after that, to speak about a more personal issue. Interestingly, as a response to Chaucer's declaration that the game of hunting was over, the black Knight says, "Y do no fors therof" (542). Though such a response is negative, it is obvious that causing the silent Knight to speak is the main goal of the dreamer.[481] Thus, regardless of its content and tone, the Knight's speech testifies to the poet's ability to explore his master's mind without causing any inconvenience.

As the Knight starts speaking, the dreamer listens without showing any expertise in the articulated topic. The dreamer poet behaves as an obtuse chatterer who is in need for the royal figure to lead the conversation, provide the listener with information, and clarify to him some puzzling issues.[482] The questioning of the black Knight follows a unique investigation process in which the investigator does not function as the director of the setting. As Strohm explains, Chaucer knew that claiming the ability to help royal figures and handle their problems was envied and resented by most of the gentility; therefore, at the end of *The Book*, similar to its beginning, "Gaunt was situated near the very top and Chaucer near the very bottom."[483] Thus, the *Book* ends with the Knight himself declaring the reasons for his own misery and obtaining a sort of self-recovery without needing for the poet.[484] It is true that the dreamer is the main reason and catalyst of the

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[481] "the hert-hunting" (*The Book*, 1313).

[482] See Alfred Davis, *The Strumpet Muse Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 11, Pearsall, *The Life*, 84-85, and Strohm, *Social*, 54.

[483] Strohm, *Social*, 54.

[484] See *The Book*, 1312-1333.

Knight's self-recovery process, but it is noteworthy that the dreamer does not want his audience to see him as Gaunt's rescuer.

While this might suggest that Chaucer is afraid of his audience, it is noteworthy that indirection is one of the most desirable aspects of courtly literature. As Jaeger explains, "all public acts and words are a mask; to reveal one's true sentiments and intentions is the act of a naïve fool. Life is divided into two levels, and the man who cannot maintain this double life has no place at court."[485] This means that Chaucer's indirection is a sign of his professionalism in courtly conventions. Therefore, the *Tales'* notable indirection should not be taken to conclude that the poet was not able to express what he had in mind regarding certain matters, as Birney argues. Instead, Chaucer's indirection and self-disparaging style in the *Tales* as well as his other poems stand as strategic techniques through which Chaucer's simple diction[486] and realistic atmosphere has become more meaningful and worth reading, especially by his courtly audience.[487] In other words, though Chaucer's indirection might be motivated by his heavy reliance on the court, it is reasonable to argue that indirection was a courtly convention that Chaucer professionally used to express himself without angering his courtly audience and causing them to dismiss him for good.

D- Conclusion:

Chaucer's reliance on the court as a source of life, as *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse* demonstrates, and his courtly education and experience, as recorded by his biographers, summarize why the poet's critique of crusading is not as direct as that of Langland and Gower.[488] Regardless of why these two poets have been direct in critiquing crusading, it is likely that

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[485] Ibid., 62.
[486] Chaucer is "the poet of plain speaking, the master of concise, accurate, and pretentious language" (Green, *Poets*, 178).
[487] See George Harrison, "Realism in the 'Canterbury Tales'" (MA diss., Atlanta University, 1934).
[488] See Pearsall, *The Life*, 109.

Chaucer's indirection was motivated by his desire not to lose his position and fortune like John Wycliffe, or even his life like Thomas Usk and Simon Burley. As Birney explains, expressing one's own true viewpoints and sentiments regarding any serious topic in Chaucer's England, especially when that topic stands against the church-court doctrine "would have been to risk" mortal punishment.[489] Simultaneously, it is noteworthy that "being all things to all men" was one of the court's main qualifications of literature; therefore, it is possible that the poet's indirection was an attempt to show his mastery of the court's literary conventions and, in consequence, keep receiving the courtly audience's lucrative appreciation.[490] That is to say, Chaucer's indirection towards crusading is not limited to his *potential* fear from his crusading patrons; rather, it reflects his experience of handling courtly topics with courage and professionalism.[491]

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[489] Birney, *Essays*, 14.

[490] Jaeger, *Origins of Courtliness*, 63. Also, for how significant writing poetry was important to Chaucer's courtly status and life, see Carlson, "Chaucer, Humanism, and Purity," 274-74.

[491] For information about viewing the *Tales*' indirection as a form of the man's cowardice, see Sanderlin, "Chaucer and Ricardian Politics," 179-182; Loomis, "Was Chaucer a Laodicean?" 260, and Birney, *Essays*, 10, 43-44.

VII-   Conclusion

Critiquing crusading is one of the main themes of Chaucer's poetry. It is expressed through *Troilus*'s call for love and condemnation of war, the *Legend*'s humanistic devotion to pacifism, and *Former Age*'s longing for a more peaceful past. It is also expressed through *ABC* and the *Parliament*'s promotion of pacifism and common profit as the ideal way of life. All these poems affirm that peace, love, harmony, and tranquility are the main codes that should bring humans together, and that humans' lack of these codes would cause the destruction of the world. As *Lak of Stedfastnesse* summarizes:

> What maketh this world to be so variable
> But lust that folk have in dissensioun?
> For among us now a man is holde unable,
> But if he can by som collusioun
> Don his neighbour wrong or oppressioun.
> What causeth this but wilful wrecchednesse,
> That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse? (8-14)

Obviously, the poem does not mention crusading as the reason for the wretched state that people were suffering; yet, words like "dissensioun," "collusioun," "unable," "oppressioun," and "wrecchednesse" function in one way or another as warfare diction. In light of this and of the fact that "Chaucer habitually talks about the particular by way of traditional genres and through generalized statements," crusading becomes a possible target of Chaucer's open-ended critique in this poem.[492]

However, after constructing such a realistic view of war –its reasons, aspects, atmosphere, and outcomes- and after referring to it as "lak of stedfastnesse," a term that implies pandemonium,

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[492] John Scattergood, "Social and Political Issues in Chaucer: An Approach to 'Lak of Stedfastnesse'," *The Chaucer Review* 21, No. 4 (spring, 1987): 469-75, 474.

disequilibrium, and other images of war, the poet shifts to focus on the amoral consequences of that war state:

> Trouthe is put doun, resoun is holden fable,
> Vertu hath now no dominacioun;
> Pitee exyled, no man is merciable.
> Through covetyse is blent discrecioun.
> The world hath mad a permutacioun
> Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to fikelnesse,
> That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse. (15-20)

The fulcrum of Chaucer's diction here is covetousness, which stands as the opposite of truth, reason, virtue, pity, and mercy, and which, if it wins the battle against man's pure nature, will result in the dominance of "wrong" and fickleness. That is to say, the poem's main purpose, similar to Langland's *Piers* and Gower's *Vox Clementis*, is to encourage humans to win their battle against covetousness, from which stems all hardships and evils.[493] In doing so, *Lak* warns Christians that their real enemy has nothing to do with the Saracens or any other race. Rather, it is covetousness and other manifestations of *cupiditas* that are the target, which all people should resist and fight against. Thus, through its opposition to covetousness, out of which stems warfare, *Lak*, despite not speaking about crusading directly, represents one of Chaucer's indefinite anti-crusade calls.

Similarly, crusading is everywhere in the *Tales*, and it functions as one of the unifying threads that connects the *Tales*' various fragments despite their thematic and generic differences. Chaucer critiques crusading by pointing out the insolent aspects of chivalry and pilgrimage, which are the two main components of crusading, in tales like that of the Knight, the Man of Law, the Monk, the Clerk, the Franklin, the Pardoner, the Parson, etc. Also, he critiques crusading in other tales, such as the Miller's tale and the Rhyme of Sir Thopas. The Miller's Tale, though a fabliau

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[493] For the description of covetousness as man's real enemy in *Piers*, 20.123-25 and 19.215-28. See also *Vox Clementis* 7.33-36 for the image of covetousness as the enemy of man.

that focuses on "sex…outside the social institution of marriage," highlights the various abuses of religion and their awful consequences.[494] In this tale, Chaucer depicts a Biblical setting in which love functions as the source of harm and wickedness.[495] Because of love, Alisoun the innocent housewife becomes a whore, Absolon the priest becomes a womanizer, and Nicholas the young clerk becomes a fabricator with a ploughed "naked ers" (*CT* I, 3734).[496]

In contrast with its more desirable equivalent in the pagan Knight's Tale, love in the Christian Miller's Tale is animalistic and detestable.[497] This contrasting contextualization of courtly love in a pagan culture and adulterous love in a world that is Christian shows how delightful this world could be when unified by the code of love, even if the context were pagan, versus how detestable the world could be when love is relinquished or abused, even if the context were Christian. Indeed, the Miller's Tale makes fun of the Biblical story of "Nowelis flood" (*CT* I, 3818) in an attempt to tackle a more serious subject matter–the destructive abuse of Christianity.[498] Thus, though there are no references to crusading or its leading figures in the Miller's Tale, it is hard to

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[494] Thomas J. Farrell, "Privacy and the Boundaries of Fabliau in The Miller's Tale," *ELH* 56, No. 4 (winter, 1989): 773-795, 773. A good discussion of the Miller's Tale as a story about the abuse of Christianity for merely profane purposes is in Agustin Coletes Blanco, "An Atypical Fabliau: Genre and Expressions in the Miller's Tale," *Cuadernos De Filologia Inglesa* 2 (1968): 63-8.

[495] For why the setting of the Miller's Tale is to be viewed as Biblical, see Blanco, "An Atypical," 72-73 and Beryl B. Rowland, "The Play of the 'Miller's Tale': A Game within a Game," *The Chaucer Review* 5, No. 2 (Fall, 1970), 140-46.

[496] For more information on how Chaucer portrays his Characters in the Miller's Tale, see Robert P. Miller, "The 'Miller's Tale' as Complaint," *The Chaucer Review* 5, No. 2 (Fall, 1970): 147-60, 148-49.

[497] In light of Payne's three-category diagram of love, which consists of "divine, courtly, and animal," love in the Miller's Tale in is animalistic, while in the Knight's Tale, it is "courtly" (Robert O. Payne, *The Key of Remembrance, a Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (New Haven: Published for the University of Cincinnati [by] Yale University Press, 1963), 159-160. See also Blanco, "An Atypical," 67.

[498] For a comprehensive reading of the Miller's Tale as a protest against the abuse of Christianity by people, especially men of religion, see Robert Miller, "The 'Miller's Tale' as Complaint," 156.

scrutinize Nicholas's deceptive use of Christianity without recalling the Church's abuse of Christianity for the mere sake of attaining materialistic gains. Nicholas is a representation of those who abuse religion, including the Pope; simultaneously, John the carpenter represents those who follow religion without any bit of knowledge, e.g. crusaders.[499]

Likewise, the Rhyme of Sir Thopas critiques crusading, but by establishing an extremely "silly" sense of chivalry.[500] The Rhyme portrays a foolish knight whose silly, still creative, imagination has produced "a geaunt with hevedes three" (*CT* VII, 842) that functions as the fulcrum, or cornerstone, of Thopas' chivalry. As Thopas reports:

> His name was sire Olifaunt,
> A perilous man of dede.
> He seyde, 'Child, by Termagaunt,
> But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
> Anon I sle thy steede
> With mace. (808-13)

The most significant trait of "Olifaunt" is that he is introduced here as a Muslim. "Termagaunt" is a name that stands for the Lord of Mohammed; therefore, the giant's swearing "by Termagaunt" definitely reflects his Islamic identity and background.[501] Consequently, Thopas with his silly understanding of chivalry and lack of gentle demeanor is not only a knight, but an ignorant crusader as well.[502] As Richard Hurd infers, despite its apparent "silliness," the Rhyme of Sir Thopas is "a manifest banter… so managed as with infinite humour to expose the leading

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[499] John the Carpenter is viewed by Rowland as the resemblance of Noah, ("The Play of the 'Miller's Tale'," 145).

[500] See Quinn, "The 'Silly' Pacifism."

[501] The Islamic connotation of "Termagaunt" is discussed with reference to La Chanson de Roland and Sir Guy of Warwick in Jacqueline De Weever, *Chaucer Name Dictionary: A Guide to Astrological, Biblical, Historical, Literary, and Mythological* (New York: Garland Pub., 1988), 344.

[502] For a brief discussion of the Rhyme of Sir Thopas in terms of war and crusading, see William Witherle Lawrence, "Satire in Sir Thopas," *PMLA* 50, No. 1 (Mar., 1935): 81-91.

impertinences of [crusading] chivalry, and their impertinences only."[503] That is to say, while laughing at Thopas' fantastic silliness, one should keep in mind that "for Chaucer…humor is a weapon, sometimes the only effective weapon against the deadly serious sins of *superbia* and *ira* that welcome war."[504] Not only does this mean that the Rhyme of Sir Thopas is one of Chaucer's anti-crusade pieces, but also that regardless of how serious, silly, pagan, Christian, erotic, or historical Chaucer's stories seem, the *Tales*' reader should always be mindful of the poet's strategies of indirection to tackle serious topics, like crusading.

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[503] Richard Hurd and Edith J. Morley, *Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance, with the Third Elizabethan Dialogue* (London: H. Frowde, 1911), 147. See also Quinn, "The 'Silly' Pacifism," 169.

[504] Quinn, "The 'Silly' Pacifism," 169.

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