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# The Knight in Chaucers Canterbury Tales

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### Introduction

Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" is a remarkable work of literature that portrays a diverse array of characters, each offering a unique glimpse into medieval society. Among these characters, the Knight holds a prominent position as one of the first pilgrims introduced in the prologue. While often viewed as the embodiment of chivalry, courage, and honor, a closer analysis reveals that the Knight is a character of complexity and contradictions. This essay aims to delve into the multifaceted nature of the Knight, exploring the underlying motivations, virtues, and flaws that make him an intriguing figure in the medieval narrative.

### The Knight's Appearance and Social Status

Chaucer's portrayal of the Knight begins with a physical description that reflects his prestigious social status and unwavering dedication to the military. In the prologue, the Knight is depicted as a "worthy man" (Chaucer 43) who has fought in numerous battles and wars throughout his life. His military accomplishments have earned him considerable recognition and accolades, as evident in his fine attire, which includes a "fustian tunic stained and dark with smudges where his armor left its mark" (Chaucer 69-70). These descriptions paint a picture of a seasoned warrior who has devoted his life to the chivalric code of honor.

### The Knight's Virtues: Chivalry and Nobility

One of the central themes associated with the Knight is the embodiment of chivalry. He is portrayed as a paragon of virtue and nobility, adhering strictly to the code of conduct expected of a medieval knight. Chaucer highlights the Knight's virtue by stating that he "loved truth, honor, courtesy" (Chaucer 46) and was "mild and modest" (Chaucer 63). Furthermore, his participation in numerous battles and his bravery on the battlefield underline his dedication to protecting the weak and defending his faith and country.

### The Knight's Contradictions: Benevolence or Brutality?

Despite the Knight's noble and virtuous exterior, there are moments in the narrative that suggest a darker side to his character. Some critics argue that the Knight's devotion to chivalry may be a façade, masking a more brutal and opportunistic nature. Throughout the tale, he is unapologetic about the violence and bloodshed that took place during his military campaigns, seemingly unbothered by the suffering of those affected. For instance, the Knight recounts an incident during the battle of Algeciras where his actions resulted in the deaths of countless Muslims (Chaucer 68–72). While such actions may have been justified in the context of medieval warfare, they raise questions about the true nature of his chivalrous façade.

### The Knight's Relationship with Religion

The Knight's relationship with religion is another aspect that adds depth to his character. Despite being a devout Christian, the Knight's actions on the battlefield seem to conflict with the Christian principle of love and compassion. Some scholars argue that his religious beliefs might have been selectively applied, serving as a justification for his military endeavors and violent conquests. While he prays fervently before battles, his eagemess to engage in warfare and shed blood for his faith raises concerns about....

# **Craft And Anti Craft In Chaucers Canterbury Tales Studies In Mediaeval Literature V19**

**Huangqi Zhang** 

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