MEDIEVAL WOMEN AND PATRIARCHAL AGORAPHOBIA: CHAUCER'S THE PRIORESS AND THE WIFE OF BATH*

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Abstract

Spatial limitations have been among the means used by patriarchal societies to assert control over women's gender and sexuality. Similarly, the patriarchal society controlled women's spatial practices in medieval England. Both secular women and religious women were prone to spatial limitations that were regulated according to their social and sexual statuses. While the enclosure was at the core of a religious woman's life at the nunnery, a secular woman's moving beyond her village or city was severely criticized in the Middle Ages. Patriarchal agoraphobia defined such women in the open space as "open space," implying their sexual vulnerability. However, from the fourteenth century onwards, both secular and religious women began rejecting such spatial limitations as exemplified by the Prioress and the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Accordingly, blending Henri Lefebvre's ideas on the production of space with Victor Turner's ideas about liminality, this article aims to discuss how medieval women challenged, through their spatial practices, the idea that women in the open space were defined as "open space" through an analysis of the spatial practices of the Prioress and the Wife of Bath.

K**eywords:** *Spatial practices, Patriarchal agoraphobia, Chaucer, the Prioress, the Wife of Bath.*

ORTAÇAĞ KADINLARI VE ATAERKİL AGORAFOBİ: CHAUCER'IN BAŞ RAHİBESİ VE BATH'LI KADINI

Öz

Mekânsal kısıtlamalar, ataerkil toplumların kadınların cinsiyetlerini ve cinselliklerini kontrol edebilmek için kullandıkları araçlar arasında yer almıştır. Aynı şekilde, Ortaçağ İngiltere'sinde de ataerkil toplum kadınların mekânsal pratiklerini kontrol etmekteydi. Sadece seküler kadınlar değil dindar kadınlar da sosyal ve cinsel statülerine uygun olarak düzenlenmiş olan mekânsal kısıtlamalara tabiydiler. Ortaçağ'da manastırdaki dindar bir kadının hayatının merkezinde dış dünyaya kapanmış olmak yer alırken, seküler bir kadının köyünün ya da şehrinin sınırlarının dışına çıkması sert bir şekilde eleştirilirdi. Ataerkil agorafobi bu tür açık alandaki kadınları, cinsel hassasiyetlerini vurgulayacak şekilde "açık alan" olarak tanımlamaktaydı. Ancak, Chaucer'ın *Canterbury Hikayeleri* eserindeki Baş Rahibe ve Bath'lı Kadın karakterleri tarafından örneklendiği üzere, on dördüncü yüzyıl itibariyle hem seküler hem de dindar kadınların bu tür mekânsal kısıtlamaları reddetmeye başladıkları görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda bu makale, Henri Lefebvre'in mekânın üretimine dair fikirlerini Victor Turner'ın eşiktelik konusundaki fikirleri ile harmanlayarak, Baş Rahibe ve Bath'lı Kadın'ın mekânsal pratiklerinin incelemesiyle, Ortaçağ kadınlarının mekânsal pratikleri aracılığıyla açık alandaki kadını "açık alan" olarak tanımlayan fikre nasıl karşı çıktıklarını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Mekânsal pratikler, Ataerkil agorafobi, Chaucer, Baş Rahibe, Bath'lı Kadın.*

1.INTRODUCTION

The patriarchal medieval English society, which was divided into three estates (the nobility, the clergy, and the commoners), did not offer a separate space for women, as discussed by Shulamith Shahar in her seminal work *The Fourth Estate*.[1] This spatial exclusion in medieval estate structure was in line with the gender hierarchy imposed by religion, which argued for the supremacy of men over women in every constructed binary opposition because of the so-called inferior position of the female as the descendants of Eve. Such misogynistic attitudes towards women led to the marginalization of women, which ended up with not only their social, political, economic, and religious suppression but also spatial suppression. Women's use of space was determined and controlled by the patriarchal society according to the socio-economic and sexual statuses of women. Such spatial control over women contributed to sustaining patriarchal control over women's bodies and sexualities. Hence, women's transgression of their allotted spaces/boundaries became the source of patriarchal agoraphobia, signaling women as transgressors and leading to the othering of women for failing to conform to spatial requirements formulated, regulated, and imposed by the patriarchal medieval English society.

Traditional spatial impositions on women changed in the late Middle Ages when both secular and religious women, through their spatial practices, started to reject the spatial boundaries drawn for them by patriarchal agoraphobia. Women's spatial practices in late medieval England exemplify how space can be produced and reproduced, as Henri Lefebvre (1991) argues, and how personal practices of space can subvert the misogynistic impositions on medieval women regarding their use of space. Accordingly, I will analyze Chaucer's the Prioress and the Wife of Bath in the *Canterbury Tales* as examples of women who subvert the gendered conception of space in medieval England. The Prioress, as the representative of religious women, and the Wife of Bath, as the representative of secular women, stand out as the defenders of their gender identities in the open space, joining a pilgrimage, an outdoor activity, with several men. Blending Lefebvre's ideas on space with Victor Turner's arguments on liminality, I claim that pilgrimage as a liminal space provides the Prioress and the Wife of Bath with the means to deconstruct their spatial boundaries and produce their space against the impositions of patriarchal agoraphobia. They both deconstruct the spatial impositions on their gender and sexuality and confront patriarchal agoraphobia, which defines them as "open space." In other words, their spatial practices challenge the spatial impositions of the patriarchal society on women and shed light on the history of women's spatial practices by displaying the changes in late medieval England.

2.GENDERED DIVISION OF SPACE IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND MEDIEVAL WOMEN'S SPATIAL PRACTICES

In medieval England, women were prone to the boundaries of the gendered space division in line with their imposed secondary social position. As Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka indicate, in the Middle Ages, "women occupied rooms, houses, quarters in the cities and villages, while men's activities took them farther abroad to streets, highways, fields, cities, oceans, battles, and council tables" (2000: x). The spatial limitation was valid for both secular and religious women. While the spatial boundaries for religious women were limited to nunneries, the spatial boundaries for secular women were limited to their homes, cities, and villages. According to the patriarchal medieval English society, the enclosure was the first step for a woman to pursue her life as a nun and to avoid potential sexual threats outside the walls of the nunnery (Burton, 2006: 365). Enclosing women in nunneries by endowing them with religious duties was functional in helping the patriarchy avoid agoraphobia. However, it was not easy for the patriarchy to control secular women's use of space. Ranging from women at court to women in towns, villages, and cities, secular women were more in the open space, creating patriarchal agoraphobia starting from the late Middle Ages onwards. Transgressing the so-called secure boundaries of their homes, those women posed, according to the patriarchy, potential sexual threats in that going out of the private domain of the house meant moving into the public space or open space. That transgression associated women in the open space with sexual vulnerability and with the concept of "women as open space,"[2] since they were assumed to be open to sexual abuse.

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[1] See Shahar (1983) for a detailed analysis and criticism of the three-estate structure and for a discussion of medieval women as a separate estate.

[2] I make use of the term "women as open space" to refer to the misogynistic understanding of the medieval patriarchal society that associated women in the open space with sexual vulnerability.

As in the case of the three-estate structure, the life of a secular woman was divided into three estates determined by their sexual status: virginity, wifehood, and widowhood, and there were specific norms for a female to conform to in each of these estates (Hallissy, 1993: 2, 5). Yet, as Barbara A. Hanawalt explicates, in each estate, "[a] woman's reputation might hinge on her ability to remain in a particular, acceptable space. The space might be a house, village, or city quarter depending on her economic activity and her social class" (1998: 19). In other words, the transgression of spatial limitations/boundaries was directly related to the transgression of sexual limitations/boundaries for secular women. Therefore, the most appropriate places for them to secure their bodies and honor were believed to be enclosed spaces. Although the extent of this spatial suppression changed according to the social estates of women (Hanawalt, 1998: 26), none of them could fully get rid of the spatial boundaries drawn for them by the patriarchal society.

Discussions on space increased after the publication of Henri Lefebvre's seminal work *La Production de l'espace* in 1974 (the first English translation, *The Production of Space*, was published in 1991). Henri Lefebvre argues that there is a close relationship between society and the use of space. Lefebvre's arguments on the production of space highlight that space, "which used to be an empty area" (Hanawalt and Kobialka, 2000: ix), can be produced and reproduced. Grouping space into three divisions, the physical, the mental and the social, Lefebvre argues that physical space refers to nature, mental space to the abstract space, or the space in mind, and social space to the space produced by a society through political and economic means (1991: 11). Lefebvre argues that "([s]ocial) space is a (social) product" and it "works as a tool for the analysis of society" (1991: 26, 34).[3] Thus, social space stands out as the space for social practices to be encoded and decoded. To better show the workings of the production and reproduction of social space, Henri Lefebvre formulates a spatial triad: Firstly, spatial practice refers to the perceived space and to the production and reproduction of performing practices regarding space. Secondly, representations of space refer to the conceived space and to the conceptualized and perceived space. Lastly, representational space refers to the lived space and to the verbal and non-verbal signs of anyone in a certain space (Lefebvre, 1991: 33, 38-39). This triad shows, as Lefebvre argues, that physical space, mental space, and social space are all entangled. Therefore, a subject's perception and experience of any spatial practice informs the reader of a society's production, reproduction, and regulation of space with the possibility and potential of change, as will be discussed by the medieval examples created by Chaucer through the Prioress and the Wife of Bath in his *Canterbury Tales* in a pilgrimage setting.

In the Middle Ages, the journey required by pilgrimage, a highly significant aspect of Christian culture, necessitated a change in the everyday lives of medieval people. Victor Turner argues that leaving behind their daily routine and work, pilgrims were searching for spiritual transformation and cleansing from their sins, which creates liminality (Turner, 1974: 197). At the center of this journey was a change of space for both secular and religious people. Moreover, the pilgrimage was a space where the entanglement of physical, mental, and social spaces, as argued by Lefebvre, can be observed. That is, the pilgrimage was both about spiritual, namely internal, change and about external change (Turner and Turner, 1978: 3-7; Howard, 1980: 11-12), not just through the change of pilgrims' daily routine but also through the change of space and so their spatial practices, which contributes to liminality. In the liminal space of pilgrimage, pilgrims were free from the obligations imposed by their estate, which paved the way for "voluntary liminality" for pilgrims (Turner and Turner, 1978: 9). It is in the liminal space of pilgrimage that pilgrims perform, evaluate, criticize, and change the spatial practices. Hence, blending the arguments on space by Henri Lefebvre with Victor Turner's arguments about liminality, this article suggests that the Prioress and the Wife of Bath's subversion of spatial limitations on them by joining Canterbury pilgrimage creates a liminal space, blurring the lines among social, physical, and mental spaces. The pilgrimage gives them a chance to confront patriarchal agoraphobia in a liminal space through their spatial practices, which exemplify secular and religious women's spatial practices in the late Middle Ages.[4]

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[3] For instance, Azime Pekşen Yakar (2019) analyzes the forest as an ideological space ("'Into a Wyld Forest': The Forest as an Ideological Space in Middle English Metrical Arthurian Romances").

[4] Actually, pilgrim travels were full of danger and difficulty in the Middle Ages, especially for the female; for instance, Huriye Reis analyzes *The Book of Margery Kempe* as an account of medieval women pilgrims in which "Margery's documentation of her journey into the divine is intercepted by fears of rape and/or physical assault" (2005: 152). In this respect, Chaucer's incorporation of the Prioress and the Wife of Bath as women pilgrims among the Canterbury pilgrims is noteworthy in representing the spatial practices of secular and religious women in fourteenth-century England.

Cassidy-Welch argues that "space may [also] be understood as a means by which people locate themselves in their immediate […] surrounds. In this sense, space might be thought of as an idea or a concept that denotes various systems of self and collective identification. Therefore, space has an abstract, conceptual essence relating to, but independent from, mere geographical dimension" (2010: 1-2). Yet, following Henri Lefebvre's arguments about the entanglement of social, physical, and mental spaces, it should be noted that this conceptual dimension of space was still linked to the geographical dimension of space in patriarchal agoraphobia for the female in the Middle Ages because, as in the case of Chaucer's the Prioress and the Wife of Bath, women's activities in the open space reflect both their gender identities and their transgression of geographical boundaries. This draws attention to an individual's ways of understanding, using, and subverting the concept of space within a specific culture. Therefore, space turns out to be "continually generated and shaped by action, by movement, by use" (Cassidy-Welch, 2010: 2), which signals the performativity of space, reflected by the practices of everyday life, as Michel de Certeau argues (1984: 117). Thus, "space [also] colors subjective ideas about self-location in community" (Cassidy-Welch, 2010: 4). After all, each individual is located in a community and this locatedness also influences an individual's ideas about the self through her/his ideas about the space in which s/he is located. Accordingly, medieval women's appearance in the open space was significant not only to display their spatial practices in the open space, the center and reason of patriarchal agoraphobia for medieval women, but also to exhibit the confrontation of this patriarchal agoraphobia by women, as in the case of Chaucer's the Prioress and the Wife of Bath.

Both religious and secular women, who trespassed their spatial boundaries were regarded as misplaced figures by the patriarchal society of medieval England, which led to patriarchal agoraphobia. Such women were criticized for coming out in the open space, which referred to the spaces that were not allowed to them according to the spatial boundaries drawn for them by the patriarchal society. Patriarchal agoraphobia paved the way for the patriarchal society to define these women in the open space as "open space," which implies that they were open to abuses ranging from physical to sexual. Yet, the most problematic one for patriarchal agoraphobia was the sexual one, because the dominant idea was that "women who broke the codes limiting their movement outside their allotted physical space were subject to harassment," placing them "in a vulnerable position" (Hanawalt, 1998: 20, 21). As Hallissy indicates, it was believed that "[t]he virtuous young maiden, wife, or widow demonstrates and preserves her virtue by living behind walls. Threats to chastity are represented by the house's apertures – doors, windows, and gates – and even more strongly by the open street or other undefined spaces. Lingering at the limits of protected space does not merely represent idle curiosity […], but specifically sexual temptation" (1993: 89-90) since wandering signaled "sexual availability" (1993: 90). For instance, in one of the most popular conduct books of the time, "How the Goode Wife Taught Hyr Doughter," the daughter is advised to pay attention to how she walks when she goes out, and she is even warned against the movement of her eyes (57-60).[5] A woman who transgressed her spatial boundaries was considered to be "available for sexual purposes" (Hallissy, 1993: xvi). Similarly, the "[a]rchitectural space, then, serves in medieval literature as a metaphor for the integrity of the female body" (Hallissy, 1993: 111). Hence, the representation of the female body in different spaces highlights, shapes, and challenges these spatial norms as in the cases of Chaucer's the Prioress and the Wife of Bath. In this respect, analyzing medieval women's spatial practices will display the situatedness of the female body in a patriarchal society and their subversion of spatial limitations. Chaucer's the Prioress and the Wife of Bath especially stand out as radical figures as the representatives of religious and secular women, who do not have their imposed bodily integrity according to patriarchy and become rather the source of patriarchal agoraphobia. Yet, their spatial practices in the liminal space of pilgrimage assert that they subvert the patriarchal spatial impositions and add their change to the history of spatial practices through their understanding, subversion, and reproduction of space.

3. THE PRIORESS: A RELIGIOUS WOMAN'S SPATIAL PRACTICE AGAINST PATRIARCHAL AGORAPHOBIA

Nuns were supposed to have enclosed lives in nunneries in the Middle Ages. In other words, spatial limitations constituted the core of a nun's life in the nunnery. The major reason for the emergence of nunneries was directly related to the spatial impositions on women in the Middle Ages. The patriarchal medieval English society defined women through their relation to the head of the house that they lived in. The house (whether this was

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[5] The reference is to the line numbers in "How the Goode Wife Taught Hyr Doughter."

a noble or a peasant house) was the basic spatial unit for women to learn their allotted place in the patriarchal society. Women were known primarily through their relationship with the males in their lives: they were first the daughters of some males and then the wives and the widows of some other males. Both noble women and women from the lower estates were subject to their male relatives. The women had partial freedom from male control only during widowhood, but then they were regarded as a threat due to their sexual experience. Therefore, it was believed that the "convent life provided a way for young women to define themselves not as daughters, wives, or widows, but as individual souls before God" (Hallissy, 1993: 6). Under such a religious mission, women were given an alternative life and a kind of freedom to define themselves, which they lacked in the secular life. However, although nunneries were presented as the space where women were living away from the male (control), nunneries were still under the supervision of the male authorities of the Church and women were in no way away from the spatial limitations. Excluded from secular life, they were rather imprisoned behind the convent walls. Thus, nunneries were indeed the spaces designed to enclose, or rather imprison, women that the patriarchal medieval English society desired to get rid of for socio-political and/or economic reasons (Norris, 1999: 282, 283; Southern, 1970: 228-229).

Religion provided the patriarchal medieval English society with a great opportunity to assign women roles in a religious space through which they were promised salvation from the Original Sin. By leading an enclosed life and renouncing all worldly interests, which included wandering around as temptress figures, nuns were attributed a comparatively higher social status than secular women (Norris, 1999: 292). Yet, the spatial limitations were so strict that they were not allowed to visit their families, deal with the administrative requirements of nunneries, and even go on pilgrimages. It was claimed that nuns abused pilgrimages to leave nunneries, which ended up with the restriction of joining pilgrimages (Hourigan, 1999: 41). Nuns who still insisted on joining pilgrimages were severely criticized because this meant not only that they were not obedient (which evoked the Eve stereotype), but also that they were interested in spending their time outside nunneries, which also provided them with a chance to spend time with males as well. Even going on a pilgrimage was believed to be a potential sexual threat/ adventure for a nun, which can be associated with patriarchal agoraphobia defining women in the open space as "open space."

Chaucer presents a nun, the Prioress, named Madame Eglentyne, among the Canterbury pilgrims (I (A) 121), who transgresses all the spatial limitations of her society. She is the head of her priory and, as an unconventional nun, she uses the liminal space of pilgrimage to challenge the spatial impositions of patriarchal agoraphobia. Her depiction in the "General Prologue" to the *Canterbury Tales* seems to be very much in line with the misogynist idea that women in the open space, even nuns, were regarded as the embodiment of the concept of "women as open space". Yet, the Prioress subverts this idea with the choice of a tale, which directly speaks to and about her estate. In other words, as explained below, her tale helps her challenge the misogynistic definition of women in the open space as "open space" and asserts her production of social space as a nun.

The Prioress's depiction in the "General Prologue" starts with a reference to her "ful simple and coy" smiling (I (A) 119). Although Chaucer the pilgrim states that she sings the divine service very well intoned in her nose (I (A) 122-123), which is a significant part of her religious duty as a prioress, he also gives information about her typical eating habits imitating the court manners and her "tendre herte" (I (A) 150). Such details imply that the true space for the Prioress is rather a court, not a nunnery (Price, 2008: 198; Cooper, 1996: 38). Hence, the Prioress becomes the source of patriarchal agoraphobia as a nun with courtly manners who joins a pilgrimage with a group of men (male characters in the *Canterbury Tales*).

The Prioress's facial beauty is the key part of her depiction that contributes to patriarchal agoraphobia according to misogynistic tradition (I (A) 151-156). The facial beauty of the Prioress, her well-formed nose, her eyes, her small, soft and red mouth, and her fair forehead are in line with the ideals of medieval beauty (Curry, 1916: 42-43, 51-52, 63, 66-67). Yet, it is problematic that this beauty is misplaced since it belongs to a Prioress who is supposed to be a nun leading an enclosed life in her nunnery away from any concerns about beauty and worldly pleasures. However, the Prioress displays her facial beauty in the open space for the Canterbury pilgrims, mostly men, contrary to the expectations about the enclosed feminine ideal. For instance, although it was forbidden for a nun to display her forehead, Chaucer the pilgrim states that "[f]ul semyly hir wympul pynched

was" (I (A) 151), which means that the Prioress displays her forehead in the open space. In line with patriarchal agoraphobia about such a female body in the open space, even one of her early 20th-century critics defined her as "the engagingly imperfect emergence of feminine in the ecclesiastical" (Lowes, 1919: 60). This feminine depiction of a nun in the open space causes patriarchal agoraphobia because her existence and activities in the open space as a beautiful body imply that she might turn into an open space and is vulnerable to, or rather, eager for, sexual adventures.

Despite her profession, the Prioress subverts the spatial practices as signaled by the emphasis on her physical beauty. Her experience of the social as well as the religious space of pilgrimage helps her move beyond the spatial limitations of patriarchal agoraphobia. In the liminal space of pilgrimage, where she is away from her daily duties and routine as a prioress, the Prioress subverts the spatial expectations of the patriarchal society and paves the way for a change in the social space of pilgrimage as a nun. Therefore, her spatial practice of joining a pilgrimage is not just a challenge against patriarchal agoraphobia, but also her contribution to the change in spatial practices, first as a woman and then as a nun.

In this subversion, the Prioress's choice of telling a tale about the miracles of the Virgin is functional. The Prioress tells the story of a little Christian child, who is believed to have been murdered and thrown into a well by the Jews. Miraculously, even after the murder, the child goes on singing *Alma Redemptoris*. When asked by the local abbot how he can sing *Alma Redemptoris* even after his death, the child reveals that it was thanks to the Virgin Mary, who put a grain in his mouth when his throat was cut. Only after the abbot removes the grain, as promised by the Virgin Mary, does the child lie silent. Though antisemitic, such a tale about the Jews appeals to the Prioress's estate and is in line with the general attitude towards the Jews in fourteenth century England.[6] Her tale asserts the Prioress's religious role and, despite her subversion of the spatial limitations, justifies that the Prioress maintains and exhibits her religious identity. In this way, the Prioress displays that her religious profession is not bound to spatial limitations; it rather reaches out as much as she goes out of the closed walls of her nunnery. Speaking against patriarchal agoraphobia as a prioress who voices the doctrines of the Church against the Jews, the Prioress shows, in her production of space, that religious women in the open space are not "open space." Rather, she offers an alternative understanding of the spatial practices of medieval nuns and asserts that moving beyond the spatial limitations of the patriarchal society does not always mean sexual and moral deterioration.

4. THE WIFE OF BATH: A SECULAR WOMAN'S SPATIAL PRACTICE AGAINST PATRIARCHAL AGORAPHOBIA

The Wife of Bath is the only secular woman among the Canterbury pilgrims. Although the workings of patriarchal agoraphobia were the same, the spatial restrictions on secular women in the Middle Ages were different from the restrictions on religious women. The spatial boundaries for different groups among secular women were regulated according to the expected social roles. For instance, while it was expected of a peasant woman to work on the land, it was not regarded as a trespass of spatial boundaries. Yet, she was required to stay within the boundaries of her village. As for a noble woman, she was expected to spend her time either in her castle halls or gardens. What was problematic for her was to go beyond the borders of her castle or manor house (Hanawalt, 1998: 19). However, those impositions were shattered by the growth of trade from the late thirteenth century onwards, which led to the involvement of an increasing number of women in trade activities.[7] Women gained the economic means to sustain their own lives without any dependence on male authority, which meant a breakdown of patriarchal control over women. This breakdown also paved the way for the breakdown of spatial limitations, which then created patriarchal agoraphobia, defining women as "the open space." Moreover, according to patriarchal agoraphobia, the case of the women involved in trade was worse in that they were subverting not just spatial limitations but also social and economic limitations, all bound to those spatial limitations.

The economic freedom resulting from trade activities also provided women with social and spatial freedom. Therefore, Arnade, Howell and Simons state that "[i]f market space was deeply implicated in the production of

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[6] For a detailed discussion of the condition of the Jews in medieval England, see Chazan (2010), Sapir Abulafia (2011) and Edwards (1998).
[7] For the impact of trade on the change in the social status of medieval secular women, see Hallissy (1993: 17-18), Hanawalt (2007: 160-163), Gies and Gies (1978: 175).

gendered space during this age, it was even more intimately connected to the creation of public space" (2002: 546). Gender norms influenced the production of social space and the market space was regarded as masculine space, not proper for the female. Hence, Lefebvre argues that the "commercial revolution" in fourteenth-century England can be regarded as a "tool of terrifying power" (1991: 269) for the female because it destroyed the spatial boundaries for the genders through spatial practices of women involved in trade, which challenged spatial impositions of the patriarchal society. The developments in trade endowed women with many advantages, of which they were deprived due to the land-based feudal system because the land was held in return for male military service, which automatically deprived women of that masculine authority. However, the transformation into a money-based system owing to the developments in trade[8] meant that those new money-based enterprises did not necessarily require a man. Women could also take part in trade activities. This change in the status of women was also confirmed by the civil laws, which provided women with the right to trade as *femme soles*, which meant that they could trade without the assistance of a man (Hallissy, 1993: 18; Gies and Gies, 1978: 175). Namely, from the fourteenth century onwards, women could individually take part in trade activities without the help (or rather control) of their husbands, male guardians, and the like.

Although the trade activities meant a commingling of genders in the urban market space, this did not mean that women were away from patriarchal agoraphobia and its limitations. In the Middle Ages "[w]omen's space could be confined by means other than simple geography: clothing, the way of walking, and even injunctions of speech could regulate a woman's access to physical space" (Hanawalt, 1998: 22). In other words, the patriarchal medieval English society found other means to limit and control women as has already been exemplified by "How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter." If they could not regulate women's spatial movements, they thought that they could control their manners, the way they dress, and the way they move. Namely, they tried to control and limit the physical and physiological means women used in their spatial practices and production of space.

As a woman involved in trade, the Wife of Bath exemplifies the secular women who subverted the traditional spatial boundaries drawn for them by patriarchal agoraphobia. She is such a skillful trader that she is even compared to the male merchants of Ypres and Gaunt: "Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt / She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt" (I (A) 447-448). Her audacity to challenge patriarchal limitations further expands in her depiction in the General Prologue. The depiction of the Wife of Bath reveals a self-assertive woman as displayed both by her bold face (I (A) 458) and by her rich costume (I (A) 456-458, 470-473),[9] as a result of which she is defined as "a worthy womman al hir lyve" (I (A) 459). This depiction asserts the Wife of Bath's powerful transgression of patriarchal agoraphobia. She is not just rich but also bold enough to display her wealth derived from her trade activities (and her former rich husbands). Her use of the market space provides her with the material means to assert her gender identity in the masculine market space and sustain it in the social space outside the market space, as also exemplified in the pilgrimage space, which can be regarded as the source of her worthiness.

In addition to this transgressive woman image, the Wife of Bath is a widow who had "[h]ousbondes at chirche dore [...] fyve / Withouten oother compaignye in youthe" (I (A) 460-461). Despite being associated with comparative freedom from male control, widowhood was problematic because in medieval England "[w]idows were regarded as sexually insatiable, yet at the same time vulnerable" (Hallissy, 1993: xvi). Besides being an experienced woman in the masculine market space, the Wife of Bath is also an experienced woman in the sphere of sexuality in which males were expected to be experienced and dominant. Female sexual experience can be regarded as the source of patriarchal agoraphobia against widows in the Middle Ages. Hence, from a misogynistic perspective, the spatial practices of women were significant for them to avoid being defined as sexually vulnerable. In this respect, the Wife of Bath's spatial practices in the masculine market space assert her efficiency as a female cloth-maker, which provides her with the means to transgress the spatial limitations in the social space. As a secular woman involved in trade, the Wife of Bath joins the Canterbury pilgrimage to add it to the list of the pilgrimage places she has been to. As a woman who rejects conforming to the spatial boundaries, the Wife of Bath is an international traveler since she has been to Jerusalem, Rome, Boloigne, Galicia, and Cologne (I (A) 463-367). As Owst states, the Wife of Bath seems to have a "fatal attraction to the outside world" (1961: 388). Although the spatial references imply that the Wife of Bath is an active and busy pilgrim, the list

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[8] For trade and its impact on feudalism and women, see Shahar (1983: 1-10), Hallissy (1993: 17), Gies and Gies (1978: 165-183).
[9] For a general discussion of the Wife of Bath's costume, see Hodges (1993).

of the cities also contributes to patriarchal agoraphobia, displaying the Wife of Bath as the embodiment of the instability of space.

The Wife of Bath subverts her being associated with the instability of space by the liminal pilgrimage space. She uses the liminal space of pilgrimage to assert not just her gender but also her social status in her production of space as a widow with sexual experience and as a woman involved in trade. In her production of space, the Wife of Bath targets the spatial, sexual, and social limitations imposed by patriarchal agoraphobia as also enhanced by her tale. She chooses a romance in her turn to tell a tale, which is the genre of the nobility. Following her long lecture on the significance of authority in marriages for the female in the prologue to her tale, the Wife of Bath refers to women's use of space and related sexual implications at the beginning of her tale. Reminding that the days of elf-queen dating back to the reign of King Arthur are gone then, the Wife of Bath states that nowadays people do not see an elf-queen wandering around but a begging friar who poses a sexual threat in the fields for women:

> Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself
> In undermeles and in morwenynges,
> And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges
> As he gooth in his lymytacioun.
> Wommen may go saufly up and doun.
> In every bussh or under every tree
> Ther is noon oother incubus but he,
> And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour. (III (D) 874-881)

These lines associate being in the open space explicitly with sexual availability and dishonor in line with patriarchal agoraphobia. Although the friar is actually the source of sexual threat and responsible for transgressing the borders of the female body, women are the ones that end up receiving dishonor. This sexual threat coincides with the following reference to the rape of a maiden in the following lines (III (D) 882-888). Although the Wife does not reveal any spatial details about this rape, rape stands out as both the reflection of the maiden's not conforming to the spatial limitations and also the transgression of her bodily integrity by the knight. Interestingly enough, the Wife does not focus on the maiden but tells the story of the knight who is punished because of this rape and needs to find the answer to the question "what thyng wommen loven moost" (III (D) 921). With the help of an old hag, the knight finds the true answer, which is "sovereynetee" (III (D) 1038). To avoid punishment, he ends up marrying the old hag, who turns into a beautiful young maiden following their marriage and his submission to her authority. Evidently, the Wife of Bath's tale both subverts the patriarchal society's grip on private and public authority and the chronologically designated stages of womanhood, by fantasizing and trading herself as energetic and sexually active as the maiden-turned-hag of her tale. She problematizes both the male authority over the female body and the representation of women in romances by claiming authority as a female who tells romance about the desires of women in the open space.

The Wife of Bath's costume, her wandering around as a pilgrim and her telling a romance in the liminal space of pilgrimage assert and display her gender and social status. Owing to her social status and widowhood, which freed her from being associated with any males, the Wife of Bath produces her own social space through her being involved in trade activities as well as by her individual means (namely, her rich husbands). The Wife of Bath stands out as the "compendium of all negative qualities attributed to women" by patriarchal agoraphobia (Hallissy, 1993: xvi): she is a trader, she is a widow, and she loves wandering around, which was associated with sexual vulnerability/availability in the Middle Ages, all of which creates patriarchal agoraphobia. However, all these negative qualities can be regarded as the products of the Wife of Bath's production of space and a subversion of spatial limitations in the patriarchal medieval English society. Relying on her social status as a woman involved in trade and her experiences of marital life and sexuality, the Wife of Bath moves beyond the limitations on her gender identity, and in her production of space she acts as a widow with feminine attributes, all of which can be regarded as the source of patriarchal agoraphobia in medieval English society. She explicitly displays her femininity in the public space of pilgrimage and shows that she has authority in the matters of love. Moreover, the public seems to be aware of her expertise, as indicated by Chaucer the pilgrim, who states in the depiction of the Wife of Bath in the "General Prologue" that "[i]n felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.

/ Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce, / For she koude of that art the olde daunce" (I (A) 474-476). The liminal pilgrimage space turns out to be functional for the Wife of Bath to transgress the spatial boundaries drawn for her by patriarchal agoraphobia. Her transgression of spatial limitations as a woman involved in trade activities and as a widow who follows her desires in the patriarchal society asserts her production of space.

5.CONCLUSION: SUBVERTING SPATIAL BOUNDARIES AND DISREGARDING PATRIARCHAL AGORAPHOBIA

Chaucer's the Prioress and the Wife of Bath stand out in the *Canterbury Tales* as women who reject the spatial boundaries drawn for them by patriarchal agoraphobia in medieval England, which regarded women in the open space as "open space" through their different strategies. The liminal pilgrimage space allows the Prioress to utilize her religious profession in the open space. Although she is the target of patriarchal agoraphobia transgressing the spatial boundaries drawn for her as a nun by the misogynistic society, the Prioress asserts that she is not "open space" to be seduced by the male. Rather, she gives voice to the dominant ideology of the Church against the Jews in her tale while displaying her facial beauty and performing courtly manners in the open space as revealed in her General Prologue portrait. She, thus, disregards patriarchal agoraphobia and produces her spatial practices as a religious woman in the open space. The Wife of Bath utilizes the liminal pilgrimage space to assert her gender identity as an outspoken widow. While the General Prologue depiction highlights her wealth coming from her trade activities (and her marriages), as revealed through her rich costume, the prologue to her tale unveils how she speaks and acts against patriarchal agoraphobia, giving voice to female desire. Her tale, similarly, contributes to her production of space as a widow, asserting the significance of female authority in marriages. Chaucer places the Prioress and the Wife of Bath among many male pilgrims and displays that joining the Canterbury pilgrimage with several men, the Prioress, as the representative of religious women, and the Wife of Bath, as the representative of secular women, exemplify how religious and secular women could move beyond all the spatial boundaries drawn for them by patriarchal agoraphobia in the late Middle Ages. They display how the social, physical, and mental spaces are entangled as argued by Henri Lefebvre (1991). This entanglement can be observed in the spatial limitations imposed by the patriarchal society and in the productions of space by the Prioress and the Wife of Bath. They subvert the spatial impositions on their gender identities and present themselves as active participants in the masculinized religious and secular spaces. In this way, their spatial practices can be regarded as both the reason and the result of their disregard for patriarchal agoraphobia and their production of a novelty in the history of spatial practices.

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1. The author of this article confirm that their work complies with the principles of research and publication ethics (Bu çalışmanın yazarı, araştırma ve yayın etiği ilkelerine uyduklarını kabul etmektedirler).

2. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author (Yazar tarafından herhangi bir çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir).

3. This article was screened for potential plagiarism using a plagiarism screening program (Bu çalışma, intihal tarama programı kullanılarak intihal taramasından geçirilmiştir).

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