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Male and Female Modes of Ordering in the *Canterbury Tales*

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Oral Presentation 1.2

**MALE AND FEMALE MODES OF ORDERING
IN THE CANTERBURY TALES**

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In his Canterbury Tales, Chaucer examines a conventional, male mode of imposing order, characterized by destruction and containment. This mode is epitomized by Theseus in the "Knight's Tale," particularly in his construction of the lists. However, for the most part, this mode of ordering fails. So in the "Second Nun's Tale," Chaucer proposes, and prefers, an alternate and productive female mode ordering which starts in containment and expands outward, affecting people and situations exponentially.

The first part of my study focuses on the conventional mode of ordering, as utilized by Theseus, and this order's failure. I then discuss the female mode of ordering as demonstrated by the Second Nun, the Virgin Mary, and finally, St. Cecilia. I close by suggesting that Chaucer's method of ordering the Canterbury Tales parallels the female mode of ordering associated with the "Second Nun's Tale."