

Changes in the Presentation of Chaucer's Texts: Canterbury Tales and the Victorian Adaption of its Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key

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INTRODUCTION

The "*Canterbury Tales*" book was famous back in the Middle Ages and it was written as short stories by Geoffrey Chaucer. The author wrote his book based on the 30 pilgrims and each of them had his own story. Not all the pilgrims had the opportunity to tell their stories, the reason for this circumstance is that Chaucer did not complete the book. After that, lots of authors recreated Chaucer's book specially for children as described "from the latter half of the nineteenth century on, illustrated prose adaptations of the *Canterbury Tales* have been published specifically for young audience. Such adaptations, modernized, bowdlerized, abridged, argument, and otherwise tampered with." (Miller 1) Later, in the Victorian era, Mrs. rewrote Chaucer's book and dedicated it for children. In fact, she chose 5 tales from *Canterbury tales* which are, *The Knights Tale*, *The Friar's Tale*, *The Clerk's Tale*, *The Franklin's Tale* and *The Pardoner's Tale* in addition to *Chaucer's Prologue* and *Chaucer's Pilgrims*. The "*Franklin's Tale*" was the only one that she changed it a lot from the original tale, she made it more suitable for children. As well as rewriting the tales, she painted different scenes of Chaucer's book, "*She researched medieval paintings to make her own illustrations for the Canterbury Tales correct, and she identified the seal of Thomas Chaucer, reproducing it exactly from the miscellanea at the British Museum and from MS Cotton Julius C.vii.*" (Braswell 402).

This Victorian adaption of Chaucer's text is a lot different from the original text because it was written in a different era. For instance, while reading *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key*, considerable changes are noticeable. First, the religious presentation is not as strong as the presentation in *Canterbury Tales*, especially that Chaucer was known as a pious man. Moreover, Haweis inserted pictures of pilgrims and some of the scenes such as confrontation, competition and fencing throughout the whole book. Furthermore, she translated some of the Middle English words into Modern English. Moreover, poetry was found in this book, but it was not one of Chaucer's writings. In addition to that, at the end of the book, Haweis added her own notes for the audience regarding the book as well as her style of writing by way of clarifying some of her ideas. The format of her writing is unusual and as readers, we are not familiar with it. The aim of the research is to examine the reasons behind the changes made on the original book by the Victorian writer, Mrs. Haweis. Consequently, a close reading and interpretation of *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key* will be used for the analysis.

In the subsequent sections, three tales including "The Knights Tale", "The Franklin's Tale" and "The Friar's Tale" will be studied following the comparative approach to identify the changes and the possible reasons behind them in the two versions of the book. Accordingly, changes in terms of language (style), thematic focus and visual additions are used to discuss the differences between the two versions.

Part One: Language and style differences

Brief description

No doubt, language has a big role in shaping people's culture. Its only way which people use to show, reflect, and use their culture. Through language and special style, a variety of formats may be used to send a specific message that writers intended to send to the audience. In the language writers show clear contexts to setup either positive or negative practices in the community.

The Knight's Tale

This tale is told by the knight in both versions, *Canterbury Tales* and *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key*. It is about two cousins, Palamon and Arcite. both are imprisoned in a high tower together where they see the love of their lives, Emilye, the queen's sister. They start fighting over her love and arguing about who saw her first. After years passing by the king decides to set them free. Arcite was free before Palamon because of one of his dearest friends, who is at the same time, a friend of the king, convinced the king to spare his life and give him his freedom. They meet again, the three main characters, where the king announced to hold a tournament to win Emilye's hand in marriage. He orders the two men to come after a 50 week with an army to fight until death. The night before the battle, all the three main characters pray to different gods (Roman Gods). Emilye prays to keep her virginity for the rest of her life and the Goddess refuses to answer her prayers, while Arcite prays to win the battle and the God answers his prayers. Palamon also prays for love to win, and God answers his prayers as well. On the day of the battle, Arcite wins but dies seconds later as his horse flipped over him. Therefore, he suggests right before his death that Emilye should marry Palamon. The tale is found in the *Canterbury Tales* and *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key* with some differences. Meanwhile, in Chaucer's book, the format of the tale is organized, along the other tales in book. The poetry is clear and well-arranged. Furthermore, the language used in the book is Middle English and the words are hard to read or understand. For instance, in "The Knights Tale" from *Canterbury Tales*, "*Whilom, as olde stories tellen us—Ther was a duc that highte theseus*" (Chaucer lines 1-5) ---analysis---add one more example---most of the words in the previous line are difficult to understand as modern readers are likely not to be familiar with them.

The Franklin's Tale

Franklin started his story with introducing to the readers his tale's main characters, two Bretons (residents of Brittany), Arveragus and Dorigen. Averagus is a proud, an honour and a brave knight while Dorigen is a very beautiful kind lady. They fall in love so deeply, they could not spend their days away from each other, but they are obliged

to do so because Averagus as a knight, must travel frequently to complete his quests. While Dorigen's man is miles away, she spends her days weeping and missing him so bad. Her friends decide to cheer her up and throw her a party in the valley. While everyone is enjoying themselves, Aurelius confesses to Dorigen his hidden love for her which he was hiding for many and many years. She tells him if you cleared the coast from rocks, I shall be yours. In her mind, she knows it is impossible and she want to joke around with him, so she does not worry about that small silly promise. The squire, Aurelius, goes with his brother to a magician for him to do his magic and achieve her impossible wish. The magician agrees but what they do not know that he is a man of knowledge not magic, he uses his mind to calculate a day where the tide is so high that he covers all the rock in the sea. Dorigen is as pale as white while she sees all the rocks are vanished and cries until her husband return. He is miserable and sad as well but reminds her that her promise is more important than his honour. Averagus sends his wife to Aurelius, who spares her from her obligation because her husband is such an honourable man, that he sacrificed his honour to keep her word no matter what.

The Friar's Tale

There is a bad man, a summoner who uses his position to take money from misbehaved people and blackmail them, in exchange of giving him a lot of money. If they pay, he remains silent about their illegal actions. One time, while he was heading to a widow's house to blackmail her and take her money as well, he meets a gentleman farmer or a yeoman. They both become friends very quickly and shares stories about their way of making a living by committing theft. Sometime later, on the way to the widow's house, the yeoman confesses to the summoner, that he is not an ordinary gentleman farmer, actually he is the devil himself, coming all the way from hell in a human shape to extort money from people as well. The summoner gets scared at first but decides to ignore the fear and enjoy the devil's company. As they were on their way, they find a farmer who is in a difficult situation, his truck is stuck in the mud. The farmer is angry and yelling around that the devil got it all, his horse and truck. Immediately after hearing his words, the summoner tells the yeoman to take both the horse and truck, but he refuses because that is not

the literal meaning, the farmer's intention is different. He tells the farmer to pray to God and once he does so, the truck gets out of the mud. Finally, they arrive at the widow's house and the summoner forces her to pay. She gets really upset and curses him; she asks the devil to take him to hell. The devil grants her wish and takes him to the darkest hell of all. At the same time, in *Canterbury Tales*, the format is the same as any other tale in this book, organized and entirely in poetry. Moreover, the vocabulary used in this tale is slightly different than the one used for the other tales; the language is a little bit easier.

Changing Parts of the Original Story

In *the Knights Tale*, the author kept part of the poetry as it was in the original book while changing some of them too much easier parts. This decision might indicate that Hawies found that some of the parts are harder to read or to understand by children or not suitable enough for children as they contained unnecessary information for their ages. Besides, maybe it was a result of the *Canterbury Tales* book was written in middle English and her book was published in the Victorian era, which means they did not speak nor understand middle English back then. In addition to that, it may be referred to the fact that vocabulary is heavy, and she wanted to have a simpler one to deliver the message of the story. For instance, she used familiar selective words to the children's ears like "*these two knights were carried as captives to Theseus' tent, and he sent them off to Athens, where they were imprisoned for life; no ransom would he take*" (Haweis 36). Not only Chaucer's words were difficult to understand but most of the writer before or after his era their words are out of date therefore it needs some explanation or paraphrasing and many lexical and grammatical has changed that is why diachronic/ synchronic approach should be put into consideration when we show the children such old tales.

In *Franklin's Tale*, the author tended to change some of it because most of the tale is about romance which is a sensitive topic when the targeted audience is children. Also, there are so many words and sentences that Hawies changes into much simpler ideas. For instance, when her husband sends her back to Aurelius. In the original tale, he sent her to sleep with Aurelius but in the Children's

adaption, she only gives the general idea that Dorigen was sent to Aurelius by Arviragus no matter what it cost him “*Poor Arviragus, this brave and just knight, bade Dorigenne keep her word at any cost to herself or him, but he could not keep up his cheerful tone. He was too deeply grieved and hurt, and even wept with her for sorrow*” (Hawies 90). Instead of focusing on why Dorigene on her way to Aurluise was, she emphasis on Arviragus’ feelings and emotions to distract the children from figuring out what is the real reason. Furthermore, Hawies did not expose unnecessary sexual information because she is dealing with kids, and it is not ethical nor professional to create a sexual content for them.

In *The Friar’s Tale*, the author kept most of the tale as the original one. She did not change much. It clarifies her wish to deliver the tale as it is, because this tale in specific, delivers a certain ethical lesson, it is not like the rest of the tales. The language used by Chaucer is suitable for children and has nothing off limits which qualifies it to be in *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key* as it is. In addition, in other tales, Hawies recreates them to fit the Victorian era. She could not change the tale because as mentioned before, this is an ethical lesson, and ethical lessons do not change through time. In each era, ages, and generation, they remain the same.

Adding Translations

In *the Knights Tale*, there are lots of middle English translations on the side of each page or next to the poetry section. This addition is mostly because she wanted to teach children a little bit of middle English. Moreover, my thoughts on the matter are, the author aimed to keep some of Chaucer’s writings in order to create something close to the original book not inventing a completely new book. Not only these two reasons but also, she did not want the middle English language to vanish completely from her book.

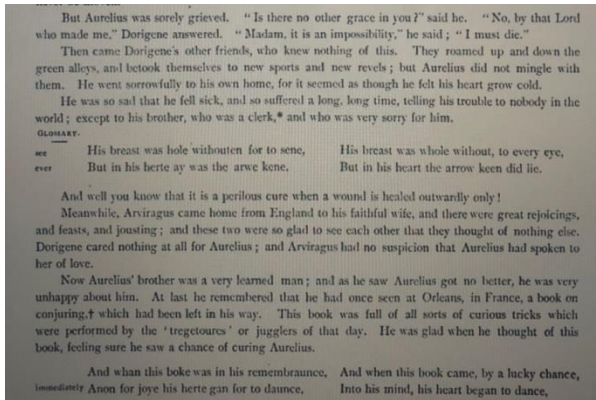
GLOSSARY.		
rays, groves	And with his stremes dryeth in the groves	And in the woods he drieth with his rays
leaves	The silver drops, hongyng on the leeves.	The silvery drops that hang along the sprays.
royal*	And Arcite, that is in the court ryal	Arcite—unknown, yet ever waxing higher
squire	With Theseus, his squyer principal,	In Theseus’ royal court, now chiefest squire—
do, cere- mony	Is risen, and loketh on the merye day. } And for to doon his observaunce to May, Remembryng on the poynt of his desir,	Is risen, and looketh on the merry day : And, fain to offer homage unto May, He, mindful of the point of his desire,
sterring, fire	He on his courser, steryng as the fir,	Upon his courser leapeth, swift as fire,
fields, play	Is riden into the feeldes him to pleye Out of the court, were it a myle or twye.	And rideth to keep joyous holiday Out in the fields, a mile or two away.
yo3	And to the grove of which that I yow tolde,	And, as it chanced, he made towards the grove.

In *Franklin's Tale*, the Victorian adaption, Hawies adds a shorter translation than the one found in the other tales. It is noticeable that she added the translations of general words and lines that are basic in the introduction of learning any new language. For example, "*This garden is full of fragrant leaves and flowers*" (Geoffrey lines 167-170), the words flower and garden are two basic vocabularies in any language around the globe, if someone is willing to learn a new language and starts taking language courses, he will be learning these words from the first three or four sessions. Based on that reason, she is trying to teach the children some of the basic words of the middle English language, so they have a wider knowledge. Moreover, she chose the easiest lines to translate. For example, she translated the following line, "*And to him selve he sayed prevely*" into "*And to himselfe he whispered privily*", the translated words (modern English language) which are close to the original words (in middle English language), to allow the children to learn and remember them in an easy way. These words are considered easy in hearing as well like "him selve" and "himselfe", which again, help kids memorize them.

Parts on Prose and Others on Poetry

Both *Knights Tale* and *Franklin's Tale* were written in a disordered style. Some of the parts are on prose and other parts are on poetry. What does this decision mean? I strongly believe it was considered to keep the reader interested. As in the original book, it was a little bit boring while reading the entire tale, seeing that it was written entirely on poetry. But in *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key*, it was interesting in light of the fact that there are variety of writing methods, which is important for children's literature to keep them interested until the end of the story.

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In *The Friar's Tale*, adding prose was not important but Hawies insisted on adding some because, firstly, if she did not add something, she will not be able to attribute it as her own writings, otherwise it will be as the original book, written by Chaucer. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, this book is dedicated for children which means it should not be boring, and by mixing some prose and some poetry this creates an interesting content for them to read.

Part Two: Thematic focus

The Knight's Tale

Religion is shown strongly throughout the tale especially at the end when all the three main characters pray to different Gods and rely on them to either achieve victory or decide their upcoming future.

Furthermore, the tale falls under the definition of "courtly love". It is a love relationship between unmarried couple like a noble man such as a knight, and a lady from the court only in the medieval ages. Courtly love is a materialistic relationship; it does not contain any physical attachment. the two knights are fighting and battling to win the hand of the queen's sister which makes it perfect to be named as a court love. Moreover, most of the religious leaders in the tale have been represented as cheater, unfaith, and spend most of their time do activities which has not relation with religious values. They use poor people the money to give themselves good and ignore their role in the society. The tale also represents those leaders as

parasitical who cheat people and convince them with these religious values like sells promises of forgiveness etc.

The Franklin's Tale

Most of the other tales rely on romance and religion, but in *The Franklin's tale*, it relies only on romance. Religion is nowhere to be found, on the contrary, magic and knowledge are found. Furthermore, the most important theme is morality: to keep a promise no matter the circumstances. The whole tale focuses only on fulfilling promises. Throughout the promises the writer shows four main values like adventure, love, chivalry, and honour and all these values have been shown very clear in The Knight character.

The Friar's Tale

The tale depends on theology and is considered to be one of the poems which contain a massive religious content.

Religious Content

In *the Knights Tale*, the religious element was almost the same as it was in the *Canterbury Tales*. Both texts talked about the roman gods and the reliability of the characters on them to decide the fate of individuals. I believe that the author kept this part of the tale as it is since religion was the base of the story and she could not change it or manipulate it. As well as that, religious parts which were mentioned in *The Knight's Tale* does not go against the believes of people living in the Victorian era, as it was closer to myths and fairy tales.

There was no religion found in *The Franklin's Tale* just like the original tale. It depends on knowledge and magic. Magic when the two brothers went to the magician and asked for his help, same time it is knowledge because the magician was not really a magician, he was a clever man who used his knowledge and did a calculation to figure out a way to achieve Aurelius wish. Furthermore, back then, a literature work can not contain both religious and scientific content, it has to be one of them because most of the religious belief and ideas realise of the subjective view of the creator and show how they are dealing together while science always focus and depend on the measurement and tests to approve why these creators do so and what

suppose to do to improve the life, believe and concept of the their universe.

In *the Friar's Tale*, religion is presented strongly. this tale has the most religious content of them all. It speaks about God, devil and hell. God is mentioned three times in this tale, firstly, when the devil reveals his identity and refers to himself as an instrument of God "Sometimes God uses us as instruments – And means, to work out His all-wise intest" (Geoffrey lines 125-126). Secondly, when the farmer's truck is stuck, and the devil advises him to pray to God because he is the only one able to help him in this situation. Lastly, when the summoner obliges the widow to give him twelve pence, and she asks God for help "God help me". Moreover, devil is mentioned twice, when the devil confesses to the summoner about himself and when he takes the summoner into hell after the widow curses him. Furthermore, hell is mentioned twice, once when the devil explains hell to the summoner, and once at end of the tale, when the devil takes him to hell. Although the Victorian era's literature did not focus on the religious content, because the focus was on education and literacy to prepare people for the technology movement that is why more economic, industrial and technology development happened in this era, but the lesson behind this tale is considered as a basic teaching of any religion. Children must know that God does exist, that we must pray to God and that hell is where bad people go to.

Part Three: The format

Inserting Pictures

The Knight's tale is much more interesting than the original tale. Hawies adapts the story with many additions or changes. Clearly, the most noticeable addition is that the author inserted pictures between the book's pages. Emilye's picture is the first picture to appear in *The Knights Tale*. I believe she adds pictures to make the image of the character clear to the children's mind, as this book is dedicated to them. Furthermore, to show how beautiful Emilye was, and this would make the children more interested in reading the tale because beauty captures children's attention. Also, it is easier for the children to observe the information's from pictures than hearing or reading them. Additionally, another reason why she inserted paintings or

photos of some scenes or main characters, is to show some diversity in the methods used in the book.



In *The Franklin's Tale*, Hawies inserted a picture as well but not at the beginning of the tale, almost at the end of it. I believe that she wants to give the children a space to expand their imagination and recreate their own image about Dorigen and Arveragus. Furthermore, I think Hawies did not only focus on telling stories to children, but she took care of teaching them methods to use their imagination as well. Other reason might be that the author wanted the children to focus on the sequence of events rather than main characters especially that this tale is teaching a moral lesson.



The Friar's Tale does not have any picture on it for multiple reasons. Firstly, because the tale does not talk about love or colourful scenes in general. Usually in any other children's book or specially in *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key*, the author adds pictures of a hero or a beautiful lady, a picture to make the children fall in love with the character and create a connection with it. This is impossible in this case, because the main character in *The Friar's Tale* is a thief and his friend is the devil. Hawies cannot insert a picture of a thief and treat him as a hero because many children think differently when they saw a photo of a thief that is why he avoid using any kind of photos. Further, to show how important and serious this tale is. By not adding any picture, it creates a slight caution in children's subconscious mind, that this is not only for fun, but it also has a deeper meaning.

Franklin consists of a long poem, almost three pages long with a hard vocabulary.

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but reminds her that her promise is more important than his honour. Averagus sends his wife to Aurelius, who spares her from her obligation because her husband is such an honourable man, that he sacrificed his honour to keep her word no matter what. On the other hand, in *Canterbury Tales*, the tale is not considered as an epic tale, it is not like most of the other tales. Also, it is kind of short or could be one of the shortest tales in the book. It consists of a long poem, almost three pages long with a hard vocabulary. The format is very similar to the rest of the tales, yet the content is different. Most of the other tales rely on romance and religion, but in *The Franklin's tale*, it relies only on romance. Religion is nowhere to be found, on the contrary, magic and knowledge are found. Furthermore, the most important theme is morality: to keep a promise no matter the circumstances. The whole tale focuses only on fulfilling promises. Throughout the promises the writer shows four main values like adventure, love, chivalry, and honour and all these values have been shown very clear in The Knight character.

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of the mud. Finally, they arrive at the widow's house and the summoner forces her to pay. She gets really upset and curses him; she asks the devil to take him to hell. The devil grants her wish and takes him to the darkest hell of all. At the same time, in *Canterbury Tales*, the format is exactly the same as any other tale in this book, organized and entirely in poetry. The tale depends on theology and is considered to be one of the poems which contain a massive religious content. Moreover, the vocabulary used in this tale is slightly different than the one used for the other tales; the language is a little bit easier.

Conclusion

The cream of the cream, in my opinion, I believe Hawies did a great job in adapting *Canterbury Tales* into a greater book. Years ago, while studying in university, I had to read *Canterbury Tales* multiple times and I did not like it. But when I read *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key*, I loved the book and I found it interesting although it has almost the same content. Hawies' additions and changes recreated the book in an amusing way while keeping the same ideas. By inserting pictures, the author made sure that children's attention will be captured. Moreover, changing some parts into a more suitable parts, made the book stand out among the other books because it is suitable for children and adults at the same time. One of the reasons I disliked *Canterbury Tales* is because the book is entirely on poetry, but in Hawies adaption of the book, she mixed poetry with prose to avoid any boring feeling the reader might feel, and she succeeded with that. In addition to that, even the addition of the translations gave the book a deeper meaning, while I read it, I feel like learning and enjoying all in one. At last, surely the religious content faced many changes according to the fact that *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key* is published in the Victorian era when the religion was not as strong as it was back in medieval ages, the time when the original book, *Canterbury Tales*, was published.

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