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Sierra Cortner April 2, 2017

The Power of Design: Indoctrination of Class and Domestic Ideals in William Morris's Kelmscott *Chaucer*

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Abstract

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This thesis considers the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, or William Morris and Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones's presentation of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, as a physical object. For this project, I acknowledge Burne-Jones's statement in a letter to author Charles Eliot Norton where he describes the book as a "pocket cathedral." Hence, I analyze the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s architectural functions like use (*utilitas*), layout / materials (*firmitas*), and artistry (*venustas*) to understand the book's physicality. This physical presentation of Chaucer's text exists as a luxury product (utilitas) only afforded by the burgeoning middle-class since the materials sourced for its production (firmitas) increased costs. Addressing this simile helps us understand the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s role as a cultural product of the Victorian Industrial Revolution and the significance of its individual contributors. Furthermore, I claim that, like a cathedral, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* indoctrinates its viewers.

In Annie Davis's dissertation for Baylor University "The Kelmscott Chaucer: William Morris's Quest for the Medieval Reader," she argues that "Morris's work anticipates the detachment of the work of art, and the viewer, from its authentic presence, or 'aura'" (Davis 1). However, in my assertion of the architecture claim, this product cannot be disjointed from the work of art (venustas), or Morris's ornamentations and Burne-Jones's illustrations. Thus, after stressing the significance of the *venustas*, I argue that the book indoctrinates ideas of class and domestic stability. With these architectural elements in mind, I stress that the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, with its woodcut interpretations of Chaucer's text, creates comforting imagery for the

burgeoning middle-class affected by the social complexities that their nouveau niche perpetuated. In total, these illustrations utilize Chaucer's text to glorify knighthood and home in on the traditional roles of women within the private sphere. I arrive at this conclusion in three chapters, the first which offers insight into the consumption of this product while the latter two analyze the illustrations of "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale." Altogether, they show how the Kelmscott Press morphed Chaucer's text from estate satire into a physical entity that inculcated the ideas of class distinction and separate spheres.

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Great thanks I also give to the Department of English for granting me the Johnston Fellowship last year to begin research on Morris's work. During this time, I met Mr. Harold Koda (the former curator-in-charge of the MET's Costume Institute) who would be of special assistance in viewing Morris's textiles in New York's Antonio Ratti Textile Center and Reference Library. To meet my academic idol and witness the breadth of Morris's work in person was an indescribable experience to say the least.

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*Unless otherwise indicated, pages from the Kelmscott *Chaucer* were photographed by Sierra Cortner, with the kind permission of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.

When William Morris, the esteemed architectural and nature conservationist, textile crafter, and book designer, matriculated at Oxford University's Exeter College in 1853, the city of dreaming spires introduced him to an environment removed from the hustle and bustle of his former residence in London. The next three years in this university town continued to nurture his deep love for Gothic architecture that his father originally fostered during childhood trips to Canterbury and the Church of Minster-in-Thanet in the Kent countryside.[1] Apart from receiving a top-tier education in Classics at Oxford, Morris's undergraduate career provided him with an escape from England's heavy industrialization.[2] Mechanization of English production methods altered the atmosphere of Victorian London with the introduction of factories and mills that marked the country's embrace of mass production.

Exposure to Gothic architecture while in Oxford – a town seemingly untouched by time – encouraged Morris in his last two years of residence to seek the tutelage of George Edmund Street, a leading English Gothicist and Diocesan architect for the city, and in 1877 found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). These pursuits reveal his dedication to the preservation of Gothic architecture both during and after university, and illustrate his developing relationship with Victorian medievalism. [3] Morris's physical removal from the

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[1] Harvey, Charles and Jon Press. *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. Print.
Harvey and Press write that, "William Morris's youthful fascination with the medieval world made him [Morris] critical of contemporary urban society" (8). Oxford remained unblemished by nineteenth-century suburban growth, which provided both a physical and mental escape from the Victorian Industrial Revolution.

[2] "Industrial Revolution." *Victoria and Albert Museum,* Digital Media Webmaster. Victoria and Albert Museum, n.d. Web. 13 Feb. 2017. http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/i/industrial-revolution/ (accessed on February 28, 2017)
1831-1901. The Victoria and Albert Museum indicates that "rapid increase in international trade and a growing middle-class demand for consumer goods" marked this period.

[3] Morris's adoration for Gothic architecture will bleed into his production methods of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* and helps us think about this cultural item as an architectural construct rather than a book purchased for reading purposes.

Victorian Industrial Revolution allowed him to indulge in collegiate trips to the Bodleian Library and the medieval literature it housed. During this period, Oxford acted as an incubator for Victorian medievalism. Contemporary writing on the themes of chivalry and knighthood and rewritings of the King Arthur tales, a prime example of the fiction that espoused such themes, spanned the shelves. This rediscovery allowed Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, Morris's friend at Exeter whose artistry I will analyze in Chapters Two and Three, to indulge in Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere," "Morte d'Arthur," and "Sir Galahad." His relationship with both Victorian medievalism and Gothic architecture and their influence on the aesthetic of his future work will be of importance as Morris's homage to the Middle Ages attracted Victorian middle-class consumers who longed to spend their newfound wealth.

As Fiona MacCarthy writes in *William Morris: A Life of Our Times*, "Arthurianism, as Burne-Jones and Morris saw it, was not merely an intellectual exercise. They fell upon it as an extension of religion, adopting the chivalric as a rule of life" (MacCarthy 58). Regarding Morris's exploration of medieval texts, 1855 marks the year Morris read Geoffrey Chaucer for the first time.[4] This remains a pivotal moment to address as it coalesces in his investment in the four-year production of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. This book, or Morris and Burne-Jones's presentation of Geoffrey Chaucer's works that range from *The Canterbury Tales* to *Troilus and Criseyde*, is truly a pinnacle of Victorian medievalism and an homage to Gothic architecture.

Before the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s production, Victorians invoked the Middle Ages to criticize their own time. They utilized a symbolic language in a larger quest for cultural orientation to respond to the socio-political and economic strains perpetuated by industrialism.[5]

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[4] Titlebaum, Richard. "The Creation of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*." *Harvard Library Bulletin*. 27.4 (1979): 473.

[5] Dellheim, Charles. "Interpreting Victorian Medievalism." *History and Community*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1992. Print. 48.

Add onto this strain the religious uncertainty caused by the mass production of scientific works such as Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, and the Victorians found themselves in a precarious position. Medievalism, or "the appeal to, and the appeal of, the styles, symbols, and survivals of the Middle Ages" (Dellheim 39) in art and thought, assuaged Victorians in their transition into a changing environment. The Victorians clung onto their medieval English heritage via Gothic courts, churches, and town halls that stressed the rule of law, presence of religion, and – as the case in Morris's situation – medieval artistry.[6]

In his essay "Interpreting Victorian Medievalism," Charles Dellheim acknowledges Victorian medievalism did not appeal solely to one social class. In fact, all three classes in Victorian society – or the aristocracy and gentry, working-class, and middle-class – utilized the medieval world to frame their dissatisfaction with the Victorian Industrial Revolution. Dellheim explains how the aristocracy feared the political and economic displacement by the influx of industrial workers into the cities and the emergent middle-class who made their fortunes in business. Thus, the aristocracy longed to reassert the feudal ideals of social hierarchy and communal responsibility. The working-class representatives partook in medievalism as they viewed medieval England as more prosperous and protective of the working-class while the middle-class social critics, the group which originally purchased the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, pursued the aestheticism of the era and decried Morris's "Age of Makeshift." This was a phrase Morris used to describe Victorian England with its architectural confusion and shoddy workmanship in

[6] William Morris's architectural preservation aimed to protect such Gothic buildings, and reiterates the significance of architecture (i.e. cathedrals and town halls) in appropriating the values of their medieval ancestors (e.g. religion and justice), all the while defining one's social place in Victorian England.

comparison to the medieval era that he deemed the age of chivalry.[7] This latter group would also look to Victorian medievalism to come to terms with their role in a changing society.

In *William Morris Textiles*, Linda Parry mentions that Morris's adoration of the medieval era, as a middle-class social critic himself, went beyond his respect for the period's literature and Gothic architecture. The devotion to one's craftsmanship, as played out in the medieval guilds, also piqued the designer's interest as he viewed the artistry of Chaucer's period as the product of ordinary men working in cooperation with each other to create quality work. Morris aspired to pursue this work environment in his own enterprises as he harbored disgust for the division of labor championed by the capitalist system, which further alienated the artists from their designs. Parry explains that during this period medieval workmen were deemed as masters of their work and not slaves to machines or each other, the latter of which explains Morris's discontent with the Victorian era's industrialization.

During his halcyon years at Oxford, Morris obtained the three ingredients for his pursuit in his private printing firm, the Kelmscott Press, in 1891. A combination of his desire to break away from Victorian division of labor and mass production, a design model in the Bodleian's illuminated manuscripts, and the literature with which he would escape would coalesce in the Press. Relocating to London with Diocesan architect George Street's business allowed the burgeoning designer a hands-on experience as he experimented with illuminated manuscripts and became acquainted first-hand with the tenet that artists should see themselves in their work. A combination of his time with Street and his healthy inheritance in 1855 from the copper mine Devon Great Consoles would lead to the decorative arts firm Morris & Co., which was originally

[7] Baker, Derek W. *The Flowers of William Morris*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1996. Print. 12. Baker writes that, "Like many of his friends, and other Victorians, Morris harkened back to medieval times, which were seen as a time of style, real craftsmanship and proper social behavior."

Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. before Morris stepped up as sole proprietor.[8] It was this transfer of immense responsibility and, thus, hands-on entrepreneurial experience that assisted with the founding of the Kelmscott Press and its production of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, which showcased the woodcuts of Burne-Jones. Over the course of Morris's career, these enterprises allowed him and his team to produce tapestries, furniture, and books that drew upon the work ethic of medieval guilds with their focus on handcrafted production as opposed to the heavily mechanized designs of the time. Although his time with Street was short-lived, it supplied him with adequate knowledge of Gothic architecture and piqued his interest in medieval bookmaking that would later materialize in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

Burne-Jones's illustrations for the Kelmscott *Chaucer* create an escape from the livelihood Friedrich Engels paints of the alienated laborer in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. In Engels's book, he conjures a dreadful image of "wage slavery," or the condition where workers fulfill the roles of slaves in the workplace, all the while making ends meet by boosting their employers' profits. He further illuminated the dehumanizing environment that laborers had to navigate in the following passage:

> The more Londoners are packed into a tiny space, the more repulsive and disgraceful becomes the brutal indifference with which they ignore their neighbours and selfishly concentrate upon their private affairs (qtd in Boos 14).

The industrial landscape introduced an air of misery to the workplace that Morris planned to counteract in his enterprises. During the period that the Press produced the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, steam power and machine tools had pushed Britain ahead industrially.

[8] Harvey and Press, 23-25. Over the course of 1855 to 1877, Morris received £9,768 in shares from Devon Great Consoles that helped fund his artistic endeavors. Such a financial move foreshadows the immense expenses that lay ahead for the Press's upkeep and productions.

Regarding the printing sector, the invention of steam-driven cylinder presses allowed for mass production of books after their initial use in 1814 by Friedrich Koenig and Andreas Bauer to print *The Times* in London. Morris, however, remained devoted to the pre-capitalist achievement in the visual and architectural arts. This devotion would result in less numerous copies made by the Press due to his insistence on the guild approach to production and its costs. Although Morris pocketed a laughable sum, or £379, for the Kelmscott *Chaucer*,[9] this does not mean that the prices booksellers, like Bernard Quaritch, charged for the book were miniscule. After investing £7,217 in his magnum opus, prices for this book ranged from £20 for paper copies and 126 guineas for vellum copies that drew in a "sum equal to a fifth of the combined sales value of all the volumes printed at the Kelmscott Press" (Harvey 205).[10] Such prices greatly surpassed those for the Press's other volumes that started at £1.50.[11] This created a paradox and an affordability gap between the Press's products as the upper middle class, who held the positions of power in the labor system Engels describes, remained the ones with access to the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

Costs of production especially rose due to the Press's investment in the especially medieval vellum volume of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* and the time Burne-Jones and Morris placed in the copy's artistry. The book, thus, became the preserve of wealthy collectors and the center of controversy due to Morris's socialist sentiments and concerns over the misery of the proletariat. Around the time of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s production, Morris expanded the Kelmscott Press to

[9] Harvey and Press, 211.

[10] The practice of using vellum pages, or calfskin, in book production dates to the medieval era as monks scribed Biblical text and the era's literature onto the material.

[11] Harvey and Press, 205.

two more locations in the Hammersmith district of London, which further strengthened his entrepreneurial legacy. The price of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* and expansion of the Press have led to questions of the sincerity of his political position. Henry Halliday Sparling, Morris's contemporary and biographer, sums up such questioning in the following statement when he accused Morris of "preaching socialism and going away to prepare books which none but the rich could buy" (Sparling 68). While Morris composed speeches with the working-class man in mind, he produced textile and book designs that the proletariats of Victorian England could never afford, which further lengthened the consumption gap between the middle-class man and the factory worker.

I analyze the medieval guild experience that Morris recreated in the Kelmscott Press and, furthermore, the idea of the craftsman seeing himself in his design. In addressing the guild structure, I will organize my analysis around investigations of three distinct elements of the contributions to and consumption of the book, which centers around the clients, Morris, and Burne-Jones. My inquiry provokes us to think critically of the physical presentations of text. In doing so, I analyze Annie Davis's "The Kelmscott *Chaucer*: William Morris's Quest for the Medieval Reader" that focuses on the physical performance of this cultural product. Davis argues that, "Morris's work anticipates the detachment of the work of art [Burne-Jones's illustrations], and the viewer, from its [the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s] authentic presence, or 'aura,' best described by Walter Benjamin in his seminal work 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'" (Davis 1). Davis's "aura" is a reference to Walter Benjamin's ideological concept for the veneration we, as viewers, attach to works that occupy a particular time and space. In claiming that Morris anticipates the detachment, Davis believes that the Kelmscott *Chaucer* demystifies the viewer to the quality of their surrounding industrialized products by

showing them this high-quality collaboration of pre-industrial means of production. However, I stress that Burne-Jones's illustrations cannot be detached from this cultural product's aura and, instead, we must observe the book in its entirety. If we consider Davis's comparison of the book to a Gothic cathedral, we realize that we may observe the Kelmscott *Chaucer* as architecture. In making this comparison, it becomes evident that Burne-Jones's illustrations serve an important purpose.

Davis addresses the relationship between book design and architecture as she likens the Kelmscott *Chaucer* to a Gothic cathedral. She writes that, "Churches like books are social spaces, places of instruction and inspiration" (Davis 82) and expands upon this sentiment when she says, "*Chaucer's Works* [the Kelmscott *Chaucer*] is anything but merely a book. Its physical presentation insists it is something more; it is constructed like a cathedral, painted like a book of hours, and doted upon as an object of devotion" (Davis 85). This claim references Burne-Jones's letter to author and social critic Charles Eliot Norton in 1894 when Burne-Jones wrote, "When the book [Kelmscott *Chaucer*] is done, if we live to finish it, it will be a little like a pocket cathedral. My share in it is that of the carver of images at Amiens and Morris's that of the Architect and Magister Lapicida" (qtd in Davis 50).[12] In pursuing this cathedral simile, I focus on the significance of the individual contributors perpetuated by the guild system of production.

In doing so, I compare the contributions of the clients, Morris, and Burne-Jones to pieces of a cathedral's construction as consumers requested book covers and wooden boxes, or roofs to protect the cathedral's interior, while Morris contributed individual page layout and framing, or a blueprint for the cathedral. Together they create this construct that preserves Burne-Jones's

[12] Here Burne-Jones refers to the Amiens Cathedral in France. Burne-Jones constructs the visual elements of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* while Morris, the "Magister Lapicida," which translates from Latin to "master stone-cutter," builds up the book's infrastructure.

artistry just as a congregation would assist with the preservation of their church and the religious artifacts within; hence, the significance of analyzing Burne-Jones's illustrations for the book and not simply dismissing them as "l'art por l'art" (Davis), or art for art's sake. One can liken these very illustrations to the stained-glass windows of a cathedral, or visual interpretations of the text for the book's consumers who, in maintaining the cathedral simile, serve the dual function as a congregation.[13]

Morris's botanical borders encapsulate these illustrations that glorify knighthood and stress the idea of separate male and female spheres while the stylistic demands of the burgeoning middle-class consumer enshrine these illustrations and further add to the class distinction that luxury products uphold.[14] The Kelmscott *Chaucer* perpetuates these ideas of class and domestic stability via Burne-Jones's illustrations that inhibit the book's graphic design from being "every bit as revelatory as the text it encases" (Davis 2). Despite Davis's argument that "the Kelmscott *Chaucer* continues Morris's re-visionary aims and does visually and physically what his lectures on art and society do verbally," (Davis 4) this thesis's focus on the illustrations reveals that Chaucer's critiques of class, with the artist's portrayal of *The Canterbury Tales*'s more romantic stories and conventions, are brushed under the altar. The Kelmscott *Chaucer* does not ask for a reformation of industrialized society. Instead, it aims to assuage the group that rose in class rank due to industrialization.

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[13] Morris believed the function of stained-glass was to "tell stories in a simple direct manner," (qtd in Baker) and, thus, Burne-Jones's illustrations will be analyzed with this sentiment in mind. Both a Gothic cathedral and Morris and Burne-Jones's pocket cathedral provide visual representations of a master text. While the stained-glass windows of cathedrals depict Biblical scenes, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* depicts scenes from *The Canterbury Tales*.

[14] Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930. Print.

I arrive at this conclusion after analyzing the purpose of illustrated books in the Victorian era, the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s clientele demographics, and Morris's ornamentations in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, I conduct a close reading of "The General Prologue" and "The Knight's Tale" to compare to Burne-Jones's portrayal of knighthood while in Chapter Two I analyze "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" to compare to Burne-Jones's portrayal of women. In making this argument, I plan to contribute a text-image analysis of *The Canterbury Tales* to the scholarship of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

Thus, I assign the clients' preferences, Morris's ornamentations, and Burne-Jones's illustrations, more attention than Davis provides them in her dissertation. I entertain Davis's notion of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* as a pocket cathedral and its ability to indoctrinate its consumers; however, I argue that it perpetuates ideas of class and domestic stability instead of indoctrinating social change within industrial England. Analysis of the designers' contributions also acknowledges that the time and efforts devoted to the design for this book made the Kelmscott *Chaucer* inaccessible to the very population that would want to enact change, or the alienated laborers, which hinders the book from being as socially revelatory as the text it encases.[15]

Despite the large size of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Burne-Jones's reference to the book as a "pocket cathedral" makes more sense after consulting the manner that one should analyze architecture. Spiro Kostof, a leading architectural historian and professor at the University of California, Berkeley, dissects the four principal approaches to architecture that he divides into a

[15] Davis, Annie. "The Kelmscott Chaucer: William Morris's Quest for the Medieval Reader." *Baylor University* n. pag. Print. 2. Davis writes that, "Morris's aims with his press had everything to do with his ideas of social reform and education, and the *Chaucer* represents a physical argument of these ideas, teaching its readers not only how to read but also how to live."

structure's oneness, setting, community, and meaning. It is the community of architecture in which he asserts that structures transcend the practicality of function (*utilitas*) and structure (*firmitas*).[16] *Venustas*, or what the Roman architect Vitruvius referred to as beauty, is what makes architecture a high art, which can also be said of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* that transcends the readability and practical construction of other copies of *The Canterbury Tales*. Kostof continues with the subject of *venustas* when he writes that,

> Such delight [*venustas*], in this scheme of things, is a luxury, and since it assumes the sophistication to feel the need for it and wealth to afford it, architects have traditionally served the highest strata of society, the state, the religious establishment, the upper classes (Kostof 13).

In analyzing this book's physicality with Kostof's analysis of architecture in mind, one sees the significance attached to the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s *venustas*, or the book's ornamentations and illustrations.

Utilitas, Firmitas, and Venustas

1.1 Utilitas

The *utilitas* and *firmitas* of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* help us understand the significance of Burne-Jones's illustrations. This book claims the coveted place as the final and most anticipated of the 66 titles produced in the Press's lifespan.[17] It also represents the costliest and longest production of the Press – four years to be exact – as it embodies Davis's words that the Press built rather than printed this book.[18] At the end of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s expanse of pages,

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[16] Kostof, Spiro. "What We Built." *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print. 13.

[17] Harvey and Press, 211.

[18] Harvey and Press, 211.
Overall, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* costed Morris £7,217; however, it would only bring the Press £7,596 in profit.

Morris pays homage to the Press's use of the Walter W. Skeat edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, published by Clarendon Press, as the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s base text:

> The hearty thanks of the Editor and Printer are due to the Reverend Professor Skeat for kindly allowing the use of his emendations to the Ellesmere MS. of the Canterbury Tales, and also of his emended texts of Chaucer's other writings. The like thanks also the Editor and Printer give to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press for allowing them to avail themselves of Professor Skeat's permission (The Kelmscott *Chaucer*).

However, the edition's "pedantic notes" (Peterson 238), that irritated both Burne-Jones and Press editor F.S. Ellis, were left out. Sans the Skeat notations, the book design espouses medieval artistry with bits of Victorian flare. The contributions of Burne-Jones and the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s clients result in a remarkable product with its ornamental bindings, foliated borders, and woodcut illustrations that make it a prime example of 19th century decorative art.[19] The contemporary artistry of the book, contributions made by Victorian clients, and the omission of Skeat's scholarship begin to obscure the book's purpose.

Just a year before his death in 1896, Morris wrote in *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Press* that:

> I began by printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters (Morris 1).

In this statement, Morris reveals appreciation for the physical display of the text, which he later expounds upon in his layout of each page. Page layout, which section *1.2 Firmitas* will explain in greater detail, relies heavily on letter type, spacing of these letters, and position of the printed matter on each page.[20] Notice how Morris does not mention the use of the margins, which,

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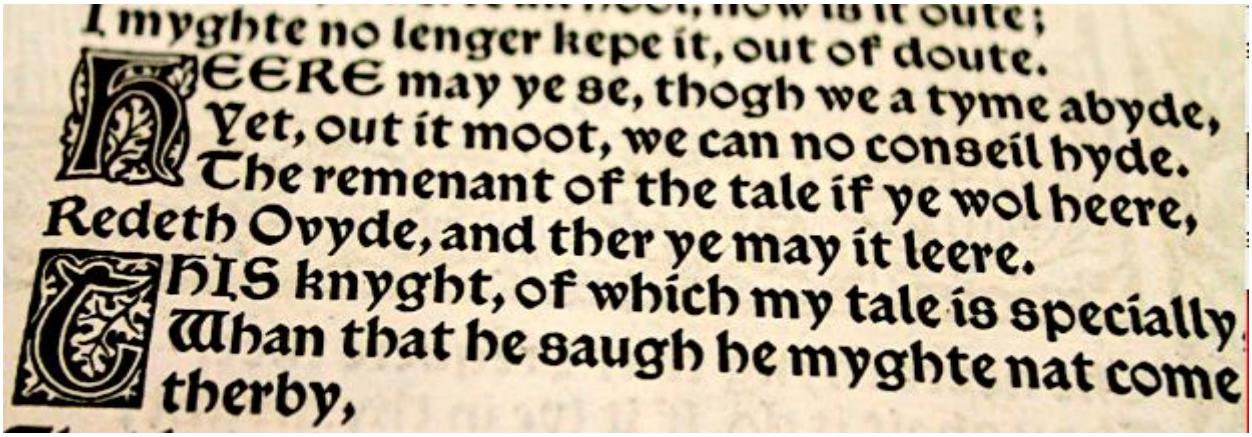
[19] Robinson, Duncan. *William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and The Kelmscott Chaucer*. London and Bedford: The Gordon Fraser Gallery, Ltd., 1982. Print. 13.

[20] Morris, William, and Sydney Carlyle Cockerell. *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the …*

throughout the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, will contain only rubricated references to the individual tales that line the pages. Although scribes behind the completion of the Ellesmere Manuscript – a fifteenth-century illuminated production of *The Canterbury Tales* – added glosses in the margins, the Skeat edition does not reproduce these, therefore, nor does the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.[21] However, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* also does not reproduce Skeat's information on how to read the text, which shows a linear progression away from the very sources that could help the consumer understand the 14th century poetry.



Above: **Figure 1.1** "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" block letter designed by William Morris (1834-1896), printed by the Kelmscott Press, 1896. "Chaucer" type on paper. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

Regarding the readability of the text, Figure 1.1 depicts one of various instances where Chaucer's couplets throughout the Kelmscott *Chaucer* bleed into the next line as the following stanzas from "The Wife of Bath's Prologue":

> This knyght, of which my tale is specially,
> Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come therby, (Chaucer 989-990)

takes the following format:

...Kelmscott Press Together with a Short Description of the Press by S.C. Cockerell, & an Annotated List of the Books Printed Thereat. London: Kelmscott Press, 1898. Print. 6.

[21] "Gloss." *Dictionary.com*. Dictionary.com, n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2017.
Gloss, n. An explanation or translation, by means of a marginal or interlinear note, of a technical or unusual expression in a manuscript text.

> This knyght, of which my tale is specially,
> Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come
> therby, (Kelmscott *Chaucer*).

This reveals how production has placed preference on the maintenance of the right-hand margin when Morris includes his hand-crafted block letters like the grandiose *T* depicted above. Playing with the lines in this manner toys with Chaucer's genius since the ending of stanzas convey to the reader the rhyme scheme of the poem. Rather than complete Chaucer's stanzas and preserve the rhyme schemes' potency, the pages show preference to the artistry involved in the production and, furthermore, the uniformity of the pages. Here the physical presentation of the text reveals its first physical disjunction between Chaucer's words and the book's aesthetic quality that further marks the book as a luxury product.

Not only was the Kelmscott *Chaucer* the most expensive of the books published at the Press – part and parcel due to the reconstruction of the text and sourcing of specialty made paper and vellum – but it also exceeded the quarto publications in size. A copy of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* requires the patron to stand up to remove the monolith of a book from its protective box before the careful turn of each page. These are not books to accompany the Victorian consumer for light reading during a commute, or readings at all for that matter. The attention Morris and his production team paid to the artistry of the book in its lack of notations, attention to single letters over stanzas, strategic sourcing of materials, and sheer size reveal the book as a work of art rather than a work of scholarship. Comparatively speaking, the Kelmscott *Chaucer*s are the Victorian equivalent of today's coffee table books.

Paul Thompson asserts this idea in his "Book Design" chapter of *The Work of William Morris* when he highlights that "in spite of Morris's belief in legibility," as illustrated by his

adoption of the "Chaucer" type, "there is no denying that the Kelmscott volumes were books to be collected, not to be read." He continues to write:

> Certainly the best of his books look splendid on a table; above all the great volume of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* [the Kelmscott *Chaucer*], with its splendid rhythm of groups of plain pages of black-letter text and rich pages with black borders of acanthus and vine, initial words wrapped in woody bend-end foliage, and Dantesque scenes by Burne-Jones (Thompson 162).

The placement of these books on the drawing room table, or the center of domestic life, will resurface in Chapter One. Chapter One will also conceptualize Morris's "black borders of acanthus and vine" in the context of nostalgia's appeal to middle-class consumers in this age of transition. In the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, aesthetics triumph over Chaucer's text. This precedent is crucial to acknowledge before analyzing disjunction between Chaucer's tales and their respective illustrations as such a practice emphasizes the significance of the book's visuals.

1.2 Firmitas

Regarding the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s structure, one must consider Morris's attention to page layout. The master-craftsman focused more on the aesthetic of each individual letter and how these letters would complement the folio-sized pages they graced. To illustrate the great care he employed, Morris reconstructed the Press's "Troy" type as he opted for the smaller, 12-point "Chaucer" crafted specifically for this production. This aesthetic decision creates juxtaposition between the margins set on this book's large pages as Morris further specified that for the Press's books the spacing between letters is equal and provides only enough room to distinguish between words. The position of the text then leaves the inner margin narrowest and the top margin wide and the fore-edge even wider, a strategy he borrowed from illuminated manuscripts from the British Library.[22] Without the scribes' original glosses or Skeat's notations,

[22] The Pall Mall Gazette (London, England), Thursday, April 14, 1898; Issue 10311. British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900.

the move to a smaller font results in dead space around the non-illustrated text save for the rubricated reminders and, thus, allows the consumer to take note of the quality of paper Morris sourced from rural Kent produced by Joseph Batchelor.

The handmade paper Batchelor created for the Kelmscott *Chaucer* is made from linen, and the wire molds used during its production were hand-woven to produce an irregular texture.[23] Morris had disdain for the papers used in the Press's industrial counterparts as they tended to turn yellow over the years. Instead, he sought to recreate the quality of fifteenth-century north Italian papers. Morris recognized the beauty of the paper and its potency to take the consumer back to a perceived simpler time by both sight and touch; thus, he chose not to overburden the pages with text. However, this is not the only material the Press utilized for the pages. For fifteen copies of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Morris sourced vellum, or an alternative that pre-dates the use of paper in book production. For instance, vellum comprises the Ellesmere Manuscript. The time and money invested in reconstructing the type and the use of vellum makes these copies the exclusive of the already exclusive Kelmscott *Chaucer*s. The copies also preserve traces of the living, much like a saint's relic, as vellum derives from calfskin. More so than the paper copies, these structural decisions provide a more authentic and expensive product as well as one that adds to the pocket cathedral's sacred atmosphere with the use of calfskin.

Clients could then choose their bindings. Requesting specific bindings was especially popular for clients who purchased the vellum copies and, thus, gave them a greater stake in their books' productions. For example, Doves, quarter-linen, Cockerell, chintz over quarter-linen,

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According to the "News" section of the gazette, "There is about a fifth difference between each [letter]. This arrangement brings the two opposing pages of type well together, and links them as a composite and compact unit, while their position high up on the page is pleasing to the eye and gives a stable appearance."

[23] Thompson, Paul. "Book Design." *The Work of William Morris*. London: Heinemann, 1967. Print. 161

Londenberg, Rivière, Brockman, and Petitpoint comprised the vellum copies that Chapter One will analyze. As Davis observed from her research of the vellum copies, "Each copy had a slightly different presence due to material differences. The modifications in binding and in texture influenced my experience of these books" (Davis 148-49). For instance, some consumers requested pigskin binding, from the above listed binders, to protect their vellum copies. Davis continues that "the pigskin binding not only holds up better than the blue boards, [of Burne-Jones's vellum copy] it inspires awe in the craftsmanship and suits the elaborate ornamentation on the interior pages" (Davis 149). Such bindings protected and complemented the *venustas* of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Overall, the book's structure reveals the investment and devotion to the ornamentations and illustrations of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. In partnership with the book's *utilitas*, the *firmitas* emphasizes that the pocket cathedral was not only a luxury product but an object of veneration that allows for it to indoctrinate its viewers. Such facets of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* maintain the importance of the *venustas* and, thus, our need to analyze the book's illustrations when studying Morris's magnum opus.

1.3 Venustas

Concerning the ornamentations, the top borders begin approximately .75 inches from the top edge of the page and encase Burne-Jones's illustrations in acanthus and vine. Throughout *The Canterbury Tales* section, the first and most illustrated work the consumer will encounter in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the pages with text do not contain borders unless they lie on the verso or recto beside an illustrated page, thus attracting the consumer to the pages with woodcuts. In these instances, the page layout places the illustrations above the text. Such a placement treats Burne-Jones's work as interpretations of Chaucer's tales, which is a sentiment Chapters Two and Three will further explore as they consider the interaction between each illustration and the Skeat text.

Figure 1.2 below depicts the amount of illustrations that Burne-Jones allotted to each tale and, thus, the select genres that he interpreted. His approach to the genres presented in *The Canterbury Tales* shows how Burne-Jones provides the consumer with a narrow lens with which to view Chaucer's work.

Contents*	Dedicated Illustrations	Genre	Fragment
The General Prologue	None	N/A	I
The Knight's Tale	6	Chivalric Romance	I
The Miller's Tale	None	Fabliau	I
The Reeve's Tale	None	Fabliau	I
The Cook's Tale	None	Fabliau	I
The Man of Law's Tale	1	Romance / Saint's Life	II
The Shipman's Tale	None	Fabliau	VII
The Prioress's Tale	2	Miracle of the Virgin	VII
Chaucer's Tale of Thopas / Melibee	None	Romance	VII
The Monk's Tale	None	Tragedy	VII
The Nun's Priests's Tale	None	Beast Fable	VII
The Physician's Tale	None	Exemplum	VI
The Pardoner's Tale	None	Sermon	VI
The Wife of Bath's Tale	3	Romance	III
The Friar's Tale	None	Fabliau	III
The Summoner's Tale	None	Fabliau	III
The Clerk's Tale	6	Folktale	IV
The Merchant's Tale	None	Fabliau	IV
The Squire's Tale	2	Romance	V
The Franklin's Tale	6	Breton Lai	V
The Second Nun's Tale	None	Saint's Life	VIII
The Yeoman's Tale	None	N/A	VIII
The Manciple's Tale	None	Beast Fable	IX
The Parson's Tale	None	Treatise on Pentinence	X

Above: **Figure 1.2** Edward Burne-Jones's Woodcuts for *The Canterbury Tales*
*Tales follow the order of Professor Skeat's Clarendon Press edition of *The Canterbury Tales.*

Before delving into a textual analysis of Chaucer's work, it should be acknowledged that these illustrations accompany tales that center around protagonists involved in the court life of the old feudal system with an exception of the characters in "The Prioress's Tale" (Fragment VII) who receive two of the 26 *Canterbury Tales* illustrations. With an exception to the Wife of Bath, the romance raconteurs tell tales that make statements about their genteel and court statuses, and, as in the case of the Wife, she tells a romance for the purpose of maintaining her social superiority.[24] As Duncan Robinson revealed in *William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and the Kelmscott Chaucer* – which the text-image analyses in Chapters Two and Three will reference – the illustrator showed "clear preference for the more chivalric and courtly elements in Chaucer's work evidenced in the changes he made from his preliminary sketches now housed at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. His early sketches contain marginal notes such as 'no picture to Miller/no picture to Reeve/no picture to Cook's Tale.' These particular tales, with their bawdy, native humour characteristic of at least half of *The Canterbury Tales*, proved too strong for the delicate feelings of the artist" (Robinson 24). This chart depicts Burne-Jones's clear preference for Chaucer's romances and dislike of the fabliaux, which sets a tone for the type of imagery that will line the pages and, thus, the stories that will fill the stained-glass displays of the Press's pocket cathedral. These images would attract a middle-class consumer trying to assert his or her role in a changing socio-economic London as the illustrations for "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" glorify the old institution of knighthood and the idea of separate spheres. However, further knowledge of the cultural implications of the Victorian illustrated book must first come to light.

[24] Cooper, Helen. *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print. 156.

Chapter One: Consumption of Victorian Illustrated Books

In arguing that the Kelmscott *Chaucer* indoctrinates ideas of class and domestic stability, knowledge of the cultural product itself serves as only one aspect of this argument. Apart from providing a means to conceptualize the structure of this four-year production by likening it to a Gothic cathedral, insight into the consumption of Victorian illustrated books must work in tandem with the analysis of the *venustas,* or ornamentations and illustrations, of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones's magnum opus. Therefore, this chapter studies book buying habits of the Victorian rising middle-class.[25] Furthermore, the role of the artist in Victorian illustrated books, the consumers of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, and Morris's contributions of bucolic ornamentations are crucial to discuss before delving into the text-image analyses of "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" in Chapters Two and Three, respectively. These respective elements reveal that the Kelmscott Press geared the Kelmscott *Chaucer* toward a middle-class consumer with special emphasis on Burne-Jones's contributions, which provides this thesis with a base for analyzing the artist's interpretations of Chaucer's text.

During the Victorian Industrial Revolution, London's landscape shifted from Gothic spires to factory smokestacks. However, the city also faced a social shift as the gap between the landed aristocracy and the working class was filled by this growing middle-class due to the influx of jobs in the burgeoning business sector. As Dellheim points out in his essay "Interpreting Victorian Medievalism," Victorian medievalism piqued the interest of all social

[25] Murdoch, Lydia. *Daily Life of Victorian Women*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2014. Print. xxi. Murdoch defines the burgeoning middle class as "those associated with forms of wealth developed or greatly expanded by Britain's industrial revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries: bankers, merchants, brokers, factory owners, and manufacturers. Although their wealth came from the industry rather than from land, the wealthiest of the upper middle classes could rival – or, through marriage, supplement – the incomes of the aristocracy."

classes: the landed aristocracy, the working class, and the middle-class. The upper echelons of the latter group we see as the golden consumer of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

Dellheim stresses the middle-class's distaste for this "Age of Makeshift" and, thus, their pursuit of textile, furniture, and other home goods that Morris's team produced in a conscientious manner. Morris & Co., for instance, offered textiles and furniture to the middle-class as they sought to spend their wealth on pieces, such as interior furnishings, to assert their social statuses. This middle-class's taste, however, exceeds their preference for the firm's methods of production and bleeds into the products' medieval imagery due to this group's infatuation with a supposed simpler time. As the forefront of British home goods,[26] Morris's predecessor to the Kelmscott Press produced designs that illustrate this merging of a simple past with a means to assert social status. Consumers of Morris & Co. sought designs like "Dove and Rose" (1879), "Brother Rabbit" (1880), "Strawberry Thief" (1883), and "Wandle" (1884) that drew inspiration from rural elements like the thrushes that would steal fruit from Morris's countryside abode – Kelmscott Manor – and Merton Abbey's Wandle stream.[27] Altogether, these designs provide a visual retreat from industrial society and its issues.

[26] Baker, Derek W. *The Flowers of William Morris*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1996. Print. 12.
To quote Derek Baker, Morris & Co. was the "most fashionable supplier of the time and was responsible for the interior decorations of St. James's Palace in 1881-82."

[27] Robinson, Michael. *William Morris: Masterpieces of Art*. London: Flame Tree Publishing, 2014. Print. 90.

Above: **Figure 2.1** *Landscape with Shepherd* tapestry, designed by Francois Boucher (1780–1810). ArtStor.

Such designs were sought after to the point that by 1888 Morris acquired a cult following evidenced by his invitation to lecture on tapestry at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. The November 2, 1888 issues of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, a publication read by English businessmen, [28] highlights a lecture Morris delivered on tapestry design. The journalist wrote that,

> The keynote of tapestry, the secret of its loveliness, was, he [Morris] told the audience, the complete filling up of every corner and square inch of surface with lovely and fanciful and suggestive design. Hence the wonder of those great Gothic tapestries where the forest trees rise in different places, one above the other, each leaf perfect in its shape

[28] Horn, Pamela. *Pleasures and Pastimes in Victorian England*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Lmtd., 1999. Print. 211. Horn writes that, "The paper came out at tea-time and was widely read in the London's gentlemen's clubs, where it could expect to provide a focus for discussions."

> and colour and decorative value, while in simple raiment of beautiful design knights and ladies wandered in rich flower-gardens, and rode with hawk on wrist through long green arcades ("Mr. Morris on Tapestry").

Morris then showed his distaste for the tapestries of the eighteenth-century French decorative artist, François Boucher, with their "expanses of waste sky" (Fig. 2.1) and "posing nymphs," and, thus, stressed the significance of realism and comfort offered by Morris & Co.'s designs that adorned the walls of middle-class interiors. This escapist sentiment is important as middle-class businessmen remained intrigued by the rich history and stability they associated with the Middle Ages. After the Exhibition, Morris would pursue the Press.

Above: **Figure 2.2** *Pink and Rose* textile, designed by William Morris (1834–1896), published by Morris & Co., printed by Jeffrey & Co., London, 1879. Color-block print on paper. ArtStor.

Above: **Figure 2.3** *Brother Rabbit* textile, designed by William Morris (1834–1896), published by Morris & Co., printed by Jeffrey & Co., London, 1880. Color-block print on paper. ArtStor.

Below: **Figure 2.4** *Strawberry Thief* textile, designed by William Morris (1834–1896), published by Morris & Co., printed by Jeffrey & Co., London, 1883. Color-block print on paper. ArtStor.

The Kelmscott *Chaucer*, with its guild system of production and bucolic ornamentations that mimic Morris's tapestry designs in their lack of blank space and focus on realistic imagery, transports the consumer from their reality wrought by social change and into a world filled with imagined social stability and the old values. These tapestries surrounded his middle-class consumers with a sense "of unity, of harmony, almost of mystery, the colours being so perfectly harmonized together, and the little bright notes of color being so cunningly placed either for tone or for brilliancy" ("Mr. Morris on Tapestry"). As the chart in the next section reveals, the book – like the tapestries – became the fascination of middle-class consumers who paid high prices for such a production that countered the mechanized techniques of the Victorian era and provided comforting imagery of social harmony and stable public and private spheres. In the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the illustrated pages carry out Morris's belief for tapestry design, sans the color, and, thus, introduce the consumer to a harmonious environment.

Artist vs. Author: Tango of the Nineteenth-Century

Before discussing consumer demographics of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Victorian consumption as it pertains to illustrated books must undergo analysis. This idea of utilizing books to assert one's social status does not remain unique to Morris's magnum opus as print culture in the mid-1800s, with the introduction of the illustration, offered consumers a further escape from the realities imposed by industrialization. In fact, the 1860s welcomed the rise in the production of the Victorian "gift book," which corresponds with the broadening middle-class who sought increased cultural and political status.[29] In her book *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing: The Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture*, Lorraine Janzen Kooistra

[29] Kooistra, Lorraine Janzen. *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing: The Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture*. Ohio: Ohio State University, 1953. Print.

discusses the role of the gift book, or a book presented to the women of upper middle-class households during Christmases between the years of 1855 and 1875.

Kooistra claims that these books functioned as luxury products that helped the Victorian middle-class develop a connoisseurship of art and poetry. Such household acquisitions helped assert social status and, thus, they set the stage for the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s niche as a cultural product. In these gift books that typically portrayed the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson,[30] Kooistra makes the point that the illustrated publications detached the author from the work while also solidifying the place of British poetry as the middle class's source for cultural affirmation. A large role of these gift books lies in the artists who lent a hand in interpreting the poetry on the page, and, thus, added to the prestige of the book in its state between British literature and British art.

The emergence of the wood-engraving industry in the 1830s escalated in text-image hybridity as woodcuts allowed pictures by well-known artists, mainly Pre-Raphaelites, to align their illustrations with the type during printing. Before the production of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the prestige of book artists increased as they "were not only paid royally for their designs but were also given the social standing of painters, with entrée into the best circles and even the recognition of knighthoods (graphic artists John Gilbert and John Tenniel, for example, were each knighted)" (Kooistra 21). These artists, Kooistra explains, created further disjunction between the author and the artist as Victorian consumers flocked to booksellers for these books that credited famous artists, engravers, and suppliers of the text, signaling a power struggle between the book's contributors and the poet. Here we see in the means of production of the 1860s gift book challenge "the ideology of individual genius and the myth of sole authorship by

[30] Tennyson served as the Poet Laureate, or a role that further reiterates the nationalistic quality of his poetry.

acknowledging many of the hands involved in making the work" (Kooistra 20). As mentioned in the Introduction, the Kelmscott Press also acknowledged the hands in the production of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* since Morris prided the Press on the craftsmen seeing themselves in their work, which would ultimately be good for the illustrator and bad for author. In fact, as the February 6, 1894 issue of the *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* indicates, Edward Burne-Jones's receipt of the baronetcy[31] would not only increase his prestige in social circles but it would bolster his popularity as an artist leading up to advertisements for the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

The combination of British poetry, British artistry, and British traditions (e.g. Christian holidays and knighthood) coalesce in the Christmas gift books as they served as "a ritual object" with "material features that expressed a conservative desire for preserving and celebrating Victorian domestic and national values and traditions" (Kooistra 24). The gift books served as exhibition pieces as they sat on their owners' drawing-room tables and represented the merchants', bankers', industrialists', and clerks' aspirations to acquire cultural currency by buying up their nation's poetry and art all the while attesting to their personal tastes, cultivation, and disposable incomes.[32] These national and domestic values will later coalesce upon the pages of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale." Before delving into the consumption of Morris's magnum opus, however, it must be understood that in the

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[31] "Sir Edward Burne-Jones." *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin, Ireland), Tuesday, February 6, 1894; Issue N/A. *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900.*
In 1894, two years before the publication of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Edward Burne-Jones was received as a baronet, which is important as the *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* states that the British lived in "a world that is curiously interested in, not to say influenced by, titles." Such interest in titles will only increase the desirability of his artistry as "now for many years public favour has set a high value on his [Burne-Jones's] paintings." This prestige follows him into his work for the Kelmscott Press as advertisers would highlight his artistic contributions as a selling point for the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

[32] Kooistra, Lorraine Janzen, 25.

production of these folios, to quote Stephen Bayley in *Taste: The Secret Meaning of Things*, they were "not intended for an urban population hungry for education and delight, these were de luxe volumes for smug collectors, happy like Morris to be immersed in a selfish dream world," (Bayley 132-133). Such a sentiment further asserts how consumers preferred the artistic interpretations of the text over the estate criticisms espoused by the poet himself.

This immersion into a "selfish dream world" manifests in the disjunction between the Kelmscott Press's take on Chaucer's works and that of the Clarendon Press when the latter firm published Walter William Skeat's student edition of the texts. Prior to publication, British newspapers focused on the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s price and aesthetic quality whereas like publications focused on Skeat's approach to the text itself and its scholarly use. Newspapers like *The Leeds Mercury* stressed that "the largest price ever asked for a new book is the 120 guineas demanded for a vellum copy of the Chaucer folio, now being printed at the Kelmscott Press, with woodcuts designed by Sir E. Burne-Jones, and large ornamental borders by Mr. William Morris" ("Literary and Art Gossip"). This focus on woodcuts and borders indicates that the book's selling point lies in its artistry rather than Chaucer's text. Meanwhile, advertisers of *The Student's Chaucer* focused on Skeat's scholarship.

In approaching the Skeat production, the *Morning Post* – in the same month as the Kelmscott *Chaucer* advertisements – commented that "Professor Skeat's admirable edition of Chaucer was one of the very best publications of the year. The research and special attainments necessary to the completion of such an undertaking can be fully understood only by those who have themselves grappled with early MSS. and corrupted texts." Furthermore, "the entire volume now issued is taken up with exhaustive notes on the immortal 'tales,' and hints to the reader regarding pronunciation, &c. It is, of course, a work for scholars and students, and to them it

must be simply valuable" ("The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer"). This difference between a book to be seen with its elaborate illustrations and a book to be read manifests in these two physical presentations of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

In Duncan Robinson's *William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and The Kelmscott 'Chaucer*,' he focuses on Burne-Jones's role in the production of the book. He mentions that in the copy Burne-Jones gifted to Margaret, his daughter, he inscribed the following:

> I want particularly to draw your attention to the fact that there is no preface to Chaucer, and no introduction, and no essay on his position as a poet, and no notes, and no glossary; so that all is prepared for you to enjoy him thoroughly (Robinson 35).

Without providing a preface, introduction, essay, notes, and glossary to supplement the text, Burne-Jones asserts the work's independence from the Skeat edition in all but the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s base text and grouping of the tales. The Clarendon Press features notations that include an introduction that highlights the life, character, and writings of Chaucer in addition to grammar, metre, versification, and pronunciation subsections and an appendix and glossarial index that complete the publication.[33] Skeat's notations aim to prepare the Clarendon Press copy's consumer for a thorough reading of Chaucer's work. This is evidenced by the pronunciation subsection in the introduction that assists with an oral reading of the text as well as the index that provides Modern English translations to certain words. In bookending the text with this introduction succeeded by the appendix and index, the Clarendon Press copy curates the materials useful for readers to interpret the revelatory text of *The Canterbury Tales*.

As a critical consumer of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, however, one must acknowledge that despite Burne-Jones's distaste for Skeat's "pedantic notes," his illustrations in each of the tales act as a form of interpretation of Chaucer's text. Thus, he removes the responsibility from the

[33] Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Student's Chaucer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894. Print. Introduction, Appendix, and Glossarial Index.

consumer's shoulders as the book functions as a piece to be observed for its design and not textually analyzed as the illustrations crown the text and typically precede the stanzas they portray. In removing this responsibility, Burne-Jones has full rein to portray the characters in "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" in the manner he deems fit.

The Chaucer's Clientele

Who were the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s consumers exactly? The Kelmscott Press produced both vellum and paper copies of this book, but Morris's vellum copies are particularly important due to the history behind vellum use in book production, its influence over price point, and my ability to provide readers of this thesis with a more concise list of the provenances of these copies.[34] Furthermore, the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s bookseller, Bernard Quaritch, would price the vellum copies in "guineas," which attests to the demographic such pricing would attract. There are 20 shillings in a pound and 21 shillings in a guinea. To place the Chaucer's price at 120 guineas sets the book at a 120-shilling increase if the bookseller had priced it at 120 pounds, which reveals the class of consumer Quaritch targeted.

Historically, English publishers would produce large-paper copies listed as "L.P." in booksellers' catalogs aimed toward wealthy collectors. Morris, in his obsession over aesthetics, chose to produce vellum copies in lieu of L.P. copies of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* as he did not want to ruin the proportions of the margins.[35] The vellum copies, therefore, were the pricier alternative to the Press's paper copies and a means to venerate Burne-Jones's illustrations. Pricing of the vellum copies did not deter buyers. The *Glasgow Herald* reported that, "The forthcoming Kelmscott Press Chaucer has been entirely subscribed for, including the eight

[34] The practice of using vellum pages, or calfskin, in book production dates to the medieval era. Use of vellum for codices and books declined when paper became available, since the production prices significantly decreased.
[35] Peterson, William S., and Sylvia H. Peterson. *The Kelmscott Chaucer: A Census*. Delaware: Oak Knolls Press, 2011. Print. 3.

copies printed on vellum at the price of 120 guineas each" ("Literary Notes and Gossip"). In fact, the Press originally planned on these eight copies; however, after seeing the success with the subscriptions, they would produce another five vellum copies. In the subscribers' list supplied by Quaritch, it reveals the subscription of 425 paper copies and the additional vellum copies closed even before printing began on August 1894 as consumers anticipated the product ahead. [36] As Fiona MacCarthy writes in her biography on Morris, "he [Morris] knew exactly what the bourgeois motivation was, since he was 'one of us'. He understood the workings of commerce; he belonged to it" (MacCarthy xv). In fact, Morris's role as a businessman is one prime facet that comprises his long career.

Among these facets are Morris's role as a decorative artist, master-craftsman, scholar, and man of business.[37] Scholars who try to make sense of the pursuit of the Kelmscott Press find it difficult to differentiate between the firm's profit motive and its quest for aesthetic achievement. Business professors at Newcastle University and Falmouth University, Charles Harvey and Jon Press, make the following assertion that "its [the Press's] commercial success accordingly is seen as an incidental consequence of artistic genius rather than something which Morris may have striven for as a matter of course" (Harvey 206). Rather, in the production of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the quality of the Press's copies and illustrations produced by Burne-Jones – both of which dominated newspaper advertisements for the book – struck a chord with its clients. Morris, to stay in business, "had to trade at a profit. To trade at a profit he had to keep costs down, stimulate demand, and fix his prices at a remunerative level" (Harvey 208). Together, the

[36] Harvey and Press, 204. This assertion of "13 vellum copies" excludes the two copies referenced later in Fig. 2.2 owned by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones.

[37] Harvey and Press, 70-127.

imagery evoked by the Kelmscott Press and these remunerative levels attracted the following consumers I discuss below.

Below I reproduce a chart that details the provenances for the prized vellum copies.[38] In Figure 2.5, I show the profession and nationalities of these consumers, which are important factors to consider after emphasizing book buying practices of the elite Victorian middle-class for the sake of preserving and celebrating British domestic ideals and national values and traditions. A combination of Morris's role in maintaining the longevity of the Press and the culture of illustrated books in Victorian England influence the theme of the illustrations presented in "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale."

[38] Peterson, William S., and Sylvia H. Peterson. *The Kelmscott Chaucer: A Census*. Delaware: Oak Knolls Press, 2011. Print. 3-21.

Copy	Provenance	Profession	Nationality	Binding
1.1	Emery Walker	Co-founder of Doves Press	British	Doves binding
1.2	Laurence W. Hodson	Director of the Springfield Brewery Company	British	Doves binding
1.3	Henry Arthur Jones	English dramatist, lecturer at Harvard	British	Doves binding
1.4	Cortlandt F. Bishop	Owner of two leading book auction houses	American	Quarter-linen binding
1.5	Antony Gibbs	**Businessman**	British	Cockerell binding
1.6	Enriqueta Rylands	Wife to John Rylands, Manchester textile manufacturer	British	Doves binding
1.7	F.S. Ellis	Leading London bookseller	British	Cockerell binding
1.8	Unlocated	N/A	N/A	Quarter-linen binding
1.9	Unlocated	N/A	N/A	Chintz over quarter-linen binding
1.10	Unlocated	N/A	N/A	Londenberg binding
1.11	Unlocated	N/A	N/A	Rivière binding
1.12	Sir Edward Burne-Jones	Illustrator	British	Brockman binding
1.13	Charles Fairfax Murray	Art dealer	British	Petitpoint binding
1.14	James Mann	Son of the founder of Mann, Byars, and Co. (Glasgow wholesale and retail firm)	British	Doves binding
1.15	William Morris	Book designer	British	Doves binding

Above: **Figure 2.5** Provenances of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* Vellum Copies
Based on information provided by Peterson and Peterson[39]

With an exception of Cortlandt F. Bishop (Fig. 2.5, 1.4), all the initial consumers of the traceable vellum copies were British. [40] In purchasing the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, they purchased a

[39] Peterson and Peterson, 3-21.

[40] Peterson and Peterson, 23.

book that attests to the great poetry of England. Furthermore, with the exception of Henry Arthur Jones (Fig. 2.5, 1.3) and Enriqueta Rylands (Fig. 2.5, 1.6), all clients of the located copies were involved in the burgeoning business sector perpetuated by mechanization (i.e. binding, printing, commerce) and are men, which – when considering the book's indoctrination of the separate spheres – is an important aspect to acknowledge. Of these consumers, Laurence W. Hodson (Fig. 2.5, 1.2) owned a full set of the Kelmscott Press's publications[41] and Henry Arthur Jones (Fig. 2.5, 1.3) commissioned Morris & Co. to design the furniture for his play *The Crusaders* in 1891, thus attesting to their wealth. The separate bindings (i.e. Doves, chintz over quarter-linen binding) reveal the clients' preoccupation with the presentation of their purchases and, thus, concern over the books as objects to be seen.

Despite the lower price of the paper copies of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the demographic of the consumers of these copies mirrors that of the vellum clients. In *The Kelmscott "Chaucer": A Census,* William and Sylvia Peterson assert that the typical owner of this book, regardless of the copy, would have been a successful British businessman or industrialist. For instance, Henry John Ball – managing director at Garrards, a jeweler – acquired 50 paper copies complete with Doves binding. These he would dust every Sunday morning, attesting to their role as products of veneration rather than books for reading.[42] William Noble, Treasurer of the Merrey Docks and Harbour Board in Liverpool, also purchased a paper copy from Quaritch and, like Laurence W. Hodson (Fig. 2.5, 1.2), owned a full set of Kelmscott Press titles.

"The vellum copies of the Kelmscott Chaucer have always possessed a special glamour, but because of their high price – even at the time of publication – they have not changed hands frequently, and the only safe generalization about their owners is that they were all very rich indeed."

[41] Peterson and Peterson, 6.

[42] Peterson and Peterson, 52.

Framing the Artist's Work

As I begin to analyze Burne-Jones's illustrations in the next two chapters, I must introduce the first facet of the book's *venustas*, or Morris's part in the production of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. These contributions include the woodcut title, 14 large borders, 18 frames around Burne-Jones's illustrations, and 26 woodcut letters. As mentioned in the Introduction, Morris's contributions overwhelm the text to the point that they reveal preference toward the woodcuts over the maintenance of Chaucer's lines. This preference revealed in the overall page design makes it essential to discuss Morris's botanical borders before delving into the illustrations they frame as their presence not only dominates the page but, as seen in the *Leeds Mercury* article, they were a selling point of the copies. Here I present two roles of Morris's borders. They serve as both a commercial asset and a means to transport the reader to a supposed simpler time.

Above: **Figure 2.6** Ornamented page from the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, The Kelmscott Press, 1896. ArtStor.

A testament to their aesthetic quality, there exists a commercial history behind the use of botanical drawings. For instance, in 1842 the Government School of Design, now the Royal College of Art, emphasized botanical drawing in its teachings because of competition with French ornamented manufactured goods. When Morris introduced work for Morris & Co. and later the Kelmscott Press, he re-introduced the botanical backdrops and gained commercial success as seen in "Pink and Rose," "Strawberry Thief," and the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Thus, Burne-Jones's illustrations are encased by reminders of the commercial climate of design in the country. Not only do Morris's borders reaffirm the commercial endeavor of the Press, but they also add a sense of escape from the heavily industrialized surroundings in Victorian London.

In Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City*, Williams makes the distinction between the periphery and center with his statement that "on the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light" (Williams 1). He asserts a "call for Eden," or a retreat into a simpler time, as the city grows more industrialized and its citizens require an outlet from their new surroundings. This desire for retreat we see in Victorian pastoral poetry, like that written by Tennyson and Thomas Hardy, where Williams says we find an "idealisation of feudal and immediately post-feudal values: of an order based on settled and reciprocal social and economic relations of an avowedly total kind. It is then important that the poems coincide, in time, with a period in which another order – that of capitalist agriculture – was being successfully pioneered" (Williams 33). In this poetry, the poet detaches from the mercantilism of the city and industrial production with his emphasis on rural crop growing.

Williams continues to write that "most obviously since the Industrial Revolution, but in my view also since the beginning of the capitalist agrarian mode of production, our powerful

images of country and city have been ways of responding to a whole social development" (Williams 297). We see this retreat to nature and response to social development in Morris's retreat to Red House outside of London and in the block letters and borders of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* as they encapsulate Burne-Jones's illustrations in "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" with acanthus and vine. Acanthus, a popular ornament in Gothic architecture, brings viewers back to nature and the Middle Ages.[43] As the English architect Augustus Pugin stressed in his *Floriated Ornamentation* about Gothic buildings,

> The former [ancient artist] disposed the leaves and flowers of which their design was composed into geometrical forms and figures, carefully arranging the stems and component parts so as to fill up the space they were intended to enrich; and they were represented in such a manner as not to destroy the consistency of the peculiar feature or object they were employed to decorate, but merely imitative rotundity or shadow (qtd in Baker 70).

In the context of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the borders participate in consumer culture and take the viewers back to an imagined simplicity associated with nature as they surround the book's illustrations with motifs associated with enriching Gothic structures. Such subliminal messaging draws the viewer to the innermost imagery, or the teachings of the pocket cathedral. Thus, we must analyze the nine out of 26 illustrations for *The Canterbury Tales*, which the artist dedicates to "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale."

[43] Baker, Derek W. *The Flowers of William Morris*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1996. Print. 71.
Baker writes that, "The acanthus is the most widely used motif in classical ornamentation, originating from the Mediterranean plant Acanthus spinose. The leaf was so popular in architectural ornamentation…"

Chapter Two: Analysis of "General Prologue" and "The Knight's Tale"

In the "General Prologue" of Geoffrey Chaucer's magnum opus, he provides his characters with individualized introductions as they embark from their lodging at the Tabard to Saint Thomas Becket's shrine at Canterbury Cathedral. With an exception allotted to the Prioress's entourage, the Guildsmen, and Chaucer the pilgrim – all who lack introductions in the prologue – each of these poetic homages provide the reader with insight to each pilgrim's character and profession. The Knight leads the journey succeeded by his aristocratic son – the Squire – and members of the clergy, the Prioress and Friar. This procession trickles down to the lowest of the low, or the Summoner and the Pardoner. The latter of the two sells faux religious relics to unassuming consumers and makes his primary profit off pardons. Chaucer signifies the pilgrims by their respective professions, which reveals the duality behind each introduction because, in turn, these signifiers allow Chaucer to comment on his characters' estates. Thus, in the "General Prologue" the work's role as an estate satire, or the poem's overarching subgenre that "sets forth the functions and duties of each estate and castigates the failure of the estates in the present world to live up to their divinely assigned social roles" ("The Norton Anthology of English Literature"), comes to fruition.

Medievalist Helen Cooper, in *The Canterbury Tales (Oxford Companion),* elaborates on the social stratifications Chaucer creates within the "General Prologue" and the work's overall genre divisions. Cooper highlights how the "General Prologue" develops a frame narrative with multiple raconteurs who present different outlooks of social class.[44] She describes the "General Prologue" as a "social hotchpot" where Chaucer "avoids any need to fit the Tales to a specific

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[44] Cooper, Helen. *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.
In focusing on professions, Chaucer exposes the three estates, or those who fight, those who pray, and those who labor, which are roles that the Knight, Parson, and Plowman respectively uphold.

audience" (Cooper 22). The Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s lack of illustrations for the "General Prologue," or the portion of the poem where the pilgrims' physical descriptions and material descriptions manifest truths behind their respective estates, alienates the viewer from Cooper's idea of the social hotchpot. Furthermore, without illustrations of the pilgrims themselves, Burne-Jones further disjoints the text from its social critique. His illustrations focus on the mystical qualities – like the intersection of Greek deities with English culture, transformation scenes, and Arthurian legend – of Chaucer's romances and, thus, the artist removes the tales from their set of socially diverse narrators. Cooper further divvies up the remainder of *The Canterbury Tales* into "churls tales" told by the peasantry, whose accounts take the form of fabliaux, and romances and pious tales (i.e. saints' lives, miracles of the Virgin, beast fables, exemplum, and treatise on penance) told by the genteels. Regarding the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Burne-Jones presents the fabliaux of the Miller, Reeve, Shipman, Merchant, and Cook in text, but the artist made the executive decision not to illustrate the bawdy content that represents the churlish characters.

Understandably, Burne-Jones could not assign illustrations to every tale. However, his inclination to illustrate the romances draws the viewer's attention to these works, especially with Morris's elaborate ornamentations that encase their illustrations and text. The churls tales lack ornamentation since they are not illustrated. Instead, the tales associated with the lower classes float atop an expanse of vellum. Thus, only the voice of the aristocracy – regarding the heads of the three estates – receives a visual representation in the pocket cathedral for the congregation to see. This sentiment is of special importance as it stresses the legitimacy that the design of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* provides the romances and their genteel subjects.

The Knight, whose story Burne-Jones depicts in six woodcuts, performs two tasks. In one instance, he transposes Boccaccio's epic *Teseida delle Nozze d'Emilia,* or "The Theseid,

Concerning the Nuptials of Emily," into a chivalric romance with its "Romance-derived words, often polysyllabic, which may be required for the greater philosophic reach of many of these tales" (Cooper 23). This romance homes in on the very institution that middle-class consumers of Victorian medievalism utilized as a symbol in their quest for cultural affirmation. The tale also involves the domesticity of women, or the second social matter this chapter will analyze. The Knight upholds the position as the highest-ranking member of the aristocratic pilgrims, or the embodiment of the chivalric values that influenced William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones in their artistic endeavors.[45] However, people like Morris and Burne-Jones ignored the realities behind knighthood that Chaucer realized, which may be seen when the poet exposes the Knight's role as a fighter in the "General Prologue." The disjunction between the realities of knighthood, Chaucer's assertion of these realities, and Burne-Jones's portrayal of the knights in the tale reveals the glorification of this institution in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

Knighthood: A Sociohistorical Analysis

To see the glorification of knighthood in "The Knight's Tale" of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, one must understand the sociohistorical context of the institution. This social construct derives from the Germanic "comitatus," or a band of fighters sworn to protect a chieftain to the death. Despite the celebratory air surrounding knighthood, it is a more gruesome career than Victorian escapists would like to imagine. This chieftain would then compensate his warriors with wealth and weapons, lending a hand to the feudalistic arrangements that hierarchically influenced Chaucer's Britain. Although knights remained free, their promise to a noble was binding in

[45] MacCarthy, Fiona. *William Morris: A Life of Our Time*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994. Print. 58. MacCarthy writes of the Arthurian cult of the 1800s. She states that, "Morris and Burne-Jones laid their own claims on the Arthurian myth. Morris's interpretation was primarily a verbal one, although in early days he produced Arthurian paintings; Burne-Jones, all his life, dwelt on themes of the Sanct Grael in his paintings and his tapestries and he was still painting in the irises on his giant canvas 'Avalon' in the weeks before he died."

nature and, therefore, the looming consequence of imprisonment and eviction followed them throughout their service. They also stood in a state of limbo as they belonged to the aristocracy, but not every knight possessed the noble birth of those they protected.

Toward the end of the fourteenth-century and Chaucer's life, the feudal hierarchy in England faced unstable conditions. Approximately a year after Chaucer began writing the *Tales*, the Peasants Revolt of 1381 erupted when peasants – who tended to the land acquired by the Kent nobility – demanded more rights under the leadership of Wat Tyler. Leading up to the Revolt, the political and economic climate in English society suffered the consequences from the Black Death of 1349. With half the population deceased and a royal minority at the helm once Richard II succeeded Edward III in 1377 at the age of ten, the country found itself in turmoil. The country underwent the governance of "a council of nobles and bishops, along with the Crown's chief ministers, the chancellor and treasurer, supervised by the young king's uncles, of whom John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, was the most prominent" (Wright, "A Dream of John Ball: Historical Introduction"). Unsuccessful military expeditions in the latter phase of the Hundred Years' War resulted in the imposition of a poll tax to fund military expenditure during Britain's feud with France, which later led to the revolts by the peasantry.[46]

The peasants requested the following:

> universal release of the unfree from serfdom, the abolition of all lordship save that of the king himself, and the letting of all previously unfree holdings at a fixed rent of 4d. per acre, besides freedom of contract for wage-earners, and the virtual disendowment of the church (probably inspired by John Ball, who had been preaching such a programme for many years) (qtd in Wright).

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[46] Rossignol, Rosalyn. *Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007. Print. 527.
Parliament imposed the poll tax between 1377 and 1381 to shift part of the taxation burden onto the peasantry as they sought to fund the war; however, at a shilling per person – regardless of their estate – this affected England's poor who struggled to put food on the table.

With men-at-arms at a low, the government could not resist the rebels by force, hence shaking the political and social structure in Chaucer's England as the government gave into these demands. During this period, knighthood had grown even more unpopular among the lesser gentry, involving as it did the additional expenses and uncertainties of service abroad.[47] To ensure the longevity of the institution and their protection, the nobility elevated the social status of the position via rituals and coats-of-arm. Ritualistic imagery that manifests in fictional accounts, like the King Arthur tales, sustains contemporary interest. However, such pomp delivered by the nobility did not entail an alteration to the knight's duty as a fighter and servant to a lord.

Rosalyn Rossignol writes in *Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* that the 14th century served as the Golden Age of chivalry because fictional accounts of knighthood peaked, only to spark interest of people like Morris, Burne-Jones, and their clients five centuries later. Rossignol continues, "These fictional accounts are the wellspring of most popular conceptions of knighthood – the armor-plated warrior mounted on horseback, who lived in a castle, and fought for honor, love, and his liege lord. In 14th century England, a knight was, first and foremost, a soldier, a military man who maintained his position in the economic and political hierarchy by fighting" (Rossignol 58). With the sociohistorical nature of the institution in mind, we can begin to see the juxtaposition between the fictional accounts of chivalry that Burne-Jones chose to illustrate along with the reality behind the institution that Rossignol describes and Chaucer witnessed in court.[48] Reality comes to light in the "General Prologue" as Chaucer delves

[47] Jones, Terry. *Chaucer's Knight: The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary*. Eyre Metheun, Ltd. Print. 6.

[48] Chaucer served as an esquire for King Edward III in 1368.

straight into the Knight's military campaign during the Crusades after asserting the character's chivalric values.

The Duality of Knighthood: A Literary Analysis of the "General Prologue" and "The Knight's Tale"

Duality exists within "The Knight's Tale," which allows Chaucer to show two elements of knighthood as he fuses the fictional account with the historical. This aspect of the literature is important to understand when analyzing Burne-Jones's illustrations of the institution, part and parcel due to the artist's lack of attention toward the "General Prologue" and his decision to depict Chaucer's more glorious characterizations presented in the tale itself. Burne-Jones illustrates knights as hyper-masculine characters independent of their lord and devoted to a woman and, thus, remains faithful to the fictional, romanticized accounts of the institution. However, in the "General Prologue," readers receive an image of the true calling of the Knight who fought for his lord during the Crusades. Here Chaucer writes that, "At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene, / And foughten for oure faith at Tramyssene / In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo" (Chaucer 61-63) in Tlemcen near Morocco before concluding that "He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght" (Chaucer 72). In these lines, Chaucer reveals the reality behind the institution, or the Knight's role as a fighter and subservience to the nobility who have sent him on this tumultuous mission.

The Knight possesses high acclaim as a warrior evidenced in his lengthy tour of the East, yet in the prologue readers also see him as a mere man who dispatches from the court and ditches his battle attire to devote time to this religious pilgrimage. This description of the Knight becomes especially apparent in the Ellesmere Manuscript's depiction of the Knight whose "hors were goode, but he was not gay" (Chaucer 74) – gay in this context meaning richly attired. The

Knight sports "a gypon / Al bismotered with his habergeon, / For he was late ycome from his viage, / And wente for to doon his pilgrymage" (Chaucer 75-78). The Knight's tunic (gypon) consists of coarse cloth and his coat-of-mail (habergeon) is stained by rust (bismotered), revealing signs of wear from the battles. This depiction of knighthood is not the image viewers of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* will receive of the institution.

While Chaucer begins with the Knight's deployment to the East, he cuts to this description of the Knight's material possessions. This description provides sharp contrast to the attire Burne-Jones will provide his illustrations of Palamon and Arcite. "The General Prologue" upholds major significance for the Knight because it not only asserts his estate in the grand scheme of the pilgrims, but it provides Chaucer a place to subtly remove the façade of knighthood and dare his readers to step closer to this character and realize the truth behind the noble appointment. The knight is a fighter and a man. Such a truth physically manifests in the form of the coarse textile and rusted metal mentioned above; however, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* does not feature images of the harsh realities of the institution (i.e. battles and their wear on the fighter), and, rather, focuses on the mysticism surrounding chivalric romances and Palamon and Arcite's adoration for Emily.

In the tale, we again see this duality at work as the poet dabbles between the fictional and the realistic. Chaucer partakes in the romantic tradition by dwelling on heroic types rather than lifelike characters along with his adherence to a chivalric romance's concern over arms and love. This practice creates idealistic images of aristocratic behavior that manifest via the speech, actions, and mannerisms of Palamon in "The Knight's Tale" and later, as Chapter Three will highlight, the knight from King Arthur's court in "The Wife of Bath's Tale." It also allows Chaucer to distance himself from the story. This literary decision results in lines that range from

great stateliness – such as the ones dedicated to the temples of Venus, Diana, and Mars – where he indulges in their interior designs and thus pays homage to the deities, to those lines dismissive of the events they depict, like Arcite's tragic death. In Arcite's death scene, Chaucer writes, "He pighte hym on the pommel of his heed, / That in the place he lay as he were deed, / His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe. / As blak he lay as any cole or crowe, / So was the blood yronnen in his face" (Chaucer 2689-2693). Chaucer indulges in stately language followed by more blunt passages like lines 2689-2693 at times when the characters seem to deserve that grandiose language the most.[49] The blunt passages allow the poet to capture the essence of battle, or the fact that life is fleeting and a chivalrous reputation does not equate to invincibility.

The Knight's Tale: A Text-Image Analysis

Chaucer's more stately lines capture Burne-Jones's artistic attention evidenced in the illustrations analyzed in this section. In Charles Dellheim's essay, "Interpreting Victorian Medievalism," he writes that during Morris and Burne-Jones's era "appropriation [of the Middle Ages] lightened the burden of the past by reinterpreting historic myths and symbols or inventing alternatives. 'The fundamental character of the mythical concept,' Roland Barthes contends, 'is to be appropriated.' Myth is a 'language-robbery' equally useful for justifying old values or legitimizing new values'" (Dellheim 48). This Victorian search for usable symbols was part of a larger quest for cultural orientation, especially for the burgeoning middle-class that sought a place in society's altered framework.[50] The importance of these medieval symbols to the

[49] Rossignol, Rosalyn, 139.

[50] Dellheim, Charles. "Interpreting Victorian Medievalism." *History and Community*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1992. Print. 46. The medievalist social critics rooted in the middle-class found their "discourse was based on a common set of myths and symbols – the manor, the monastery, the knight, the craftsman, and the Gothic style" (46). Chapters Two and Three of this thesis focus on the knight as a symbol in the middle-class's quest for cultural assertion. Gothic style manifests in the Kelmscott *Chaucer* as a whole due to its role as a pocket cathedral.

middle-class is critical to assert before interpreting the illustrations presented within "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale," which both feature knights.

Before analyzing the illustrations and the use of the knight as a symbol, one aspect to keep in mind is that the artist consistently encloses Chaucer's characters. In *William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and the Kelmscott "Chaucer,"* Duncan Robinson reveals that "Burne-Jones seems to have devised, consciously or unconsciously, a series of formulae for the Chaucer illustrations. We have already seen the similarities that exist between the treatment of each of the temples in 'The Knyghtes Tale', with their relatively shallow, centralized perspective reminiscent of that used by the fifteenth-century Tuscan painters." He concludes with, "Each [interior] emphasizes the flat back wall of the room, often recessed, with a gently curved vault and pierced further with either a window or a door" (Robinson 28). Thus, the characters either remain imprisoned in chambers, enclosed in gardens, or encased within temples in "The Knight's Tale," which lends their actions, surroundings, and attire more weight as the artist pushes the characters to the forefront. Such an artistic decision also allows the viewer to easily distinguish between imagery associated with romances like roses and doves, revealing the value that the artist placed on their visibility. Such images romanticize the tale's events and will add to the pictorial glorification of knighthood and domestication of women.

Above: **Fig. 3.1** Canterbury Tales: ms. EL 26 C9, fol. 10r: Knight: det., vellum, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. ArtStor.

While Burne-Jones capitalizes on romantic imagery, he chose not to illustrate "The Knight's Prologue," which serves as a prime point to depict the Knight's normality as the scribes of the Ellesmere did in the fifteenth-century (Fig. 3.1). In this illustration, he dons civilian garb and appears worn after years of fighting for his lord. An element that lends a hand in the glorification of knighthood lies in Burne-Jones's presentation of courtship in "The Knight's Tale," which allows the artist to assert traditional roles of men and women. While the traditional roles of Victorian men existed in business, commerce, politics, empire, and warfare, the feminine sphere encapsulated domesticity, family, morality, and spiritual guidance.[51] We see Burne-Jones's emphasis on warfare and morality and spiritual guidance manifest in his illustrations. On page nine of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Burne-Jones introduces his first illustration of *The Canterbury Tales*.

[51] Murdoch, Lydia, xxiv. Murdoch writes that the ideals of the separate, gender-based spheres "gained greater prominence among the English middle classes during the late 18th and early 19th centuries."

Above: **Figure 3.2** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "The Knyghtes Tale," p. 9, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

The tale illuminates the trials faced by Palamon and Arcite, two "Theban knights," who find themselves at the mercy of Duke Theseus after their city loses the war to the Athenians. Throughout this tale, Chaucer attributes British feudalism to the ancient Greeks, and Burne-Jones executes such ethos as he includes the knights in five of the six illustrations. Prior to their capture, Theseus conquered the Amazonians before taking one of them, Hippolyta, as his wife and allowing her sister, Emily, to live with them at their castle. The tale begins with this idea of "winning" over a woman when Theseus with "his wisdom and his chivalrie, / He conquered al the regne of Femenye, / That whilom was ycleped Scithia, / And weddede the queene Ypolita, / And broghte hire hoom with hym in his contree" (Chaucer 866-869). This theme of conquest will advance the plot line as there must exist a woman for the aristocrats to devote their love in a chivalric romance.


Fig. 3.2.1

Figure 3.2 depicts Palamon and Arcite imprisoned in the Athenian tower as Emily stands in the garden. In analyzing this figure, I assert that the knight on the left of Figure 3.2.1 is Palamon and the knight on his right is Arcite to understand how Burne-Jones individually presents Chaucer's two knights. When Palamon first lays eyes on Emily, he reacts emotionally in the following scene:

> 'A!' / As thought he stongen were unto the herte … This prison caused me nat for to crye, / But I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye / Into myn herte, that wol my bane be. / The fairnesse of that lady that I see / Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro / Is cause of al my crying and my wo (Chaucer 1078-1100).

Arcite then reacts in the following manner:

> That, if that Palamon was wounded sore, / Arcite is hurt as muche as he, or moore. And with a sigh he seyde pitously, / 'The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly / Of hire that romeths in the yonder place; / And but I have hir mercy and hir grace, / That I may seen hire ate leeste weye, / I nam but deed; ther nis namoore to seye (Chaucer 1115-1122).

Although both knights' love affects them physically, it results in Palamon's sickness as seen in his pallor when Arcite inquires, '"Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee, / That art so pale and deedly on to see?"' (Chaucer 1081-1082). However, Chaucer's word choice of "hurt," sleeth," and "deed" to describe Arcite's physical removal from Emily's mercy and grace likens the effects of distance to the pains suffered by a battle-fatigued militant. Thus, it would make sense for Burne-

Jones to depict Arcite in full-armor to distinguish between this character that Chaucer refers to with a militant lexicon and the sickly Palamon to his left in Figure 3.2.1. Their reactions address the theme of courtship that will manifest in the tale, and Burne-Jones made this scene in which these feelings arise the leading illustration of "The Knight's Tale." Here he highlights the theme to the viewer.

True to Chaucer's work, the keep stands adjacent to the garden where Emily leisurely stands in the right frame of Figure 3.2. Chaucer mentions that when Palamon lays eyes on her for the first time it is from the top of this structure after the jailer grants him leave to "risen and romed in a chambre an heigh, / In which he al the noble cite seigh / And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene" (Chaucer 1065-1067). Figure 3.2.1, however, shows Palamon (left) and Arcite (right) at the ground level, both close to an unsuspecting Emily. This disjunction between the text and the illustration allows the viewer to take note of the knights' reactions to Emily.


Fig. 3.2.2

Regarding the interior and exterior of the castle, two crucial elements come into play here. Burne-Jones's focus on the lower portion of the keep makes the interaction between the three individuals apparent to the viewer. This view also reasserts the image of separate spheres as it creates a juxtaposition between the castle as a military structure[52] that imprisons Palamon and

[52] Liddiard, Robert. *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066-1500*. London: WINDgather Press, 2005. Print.

Arcite with, as Chaucer writes, its "grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong, / Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun" (Chaucer 1056-1057) and its role as a residence (Fig. 3.2.2). Burne-Jones recreated the castle's militant structure that entraps the knights while indulging in this domestic space for Emily in the neighboring garden. Burne-Jones will also depict none of the battle scenes in his set of illustrations for "The Knight's Tale." Although the Knights are imprisoned because the Athenians captured them on the battle field "with many a grevous blody wounde, / Two yonge knyghtes liggynge by and by" (Chaucer 1010-1011) and the knights will later partake in a duel over Emily, Burne-Jones's homes in on the romantic qualities of the story. He indulges in the scenes that capture the knights' infatuation with Emily.


Fig. 3.2.3

Regarding the garden, Figure 3.2.2 pays homage to the "hortus conclusus," which translates to enclosed garden from Latin. A prevalent symbol in medieval art, such a motif would enclose the Virgin Mary as a more intimate and welcoming means to portray the Mother of God. Catherine Howett Smith, Associate Director of the Carlos Museum, provided a brief background of Marian images in her *Sacred Transformations of the Secular: Gaudí's Güell Park as "Hortus Conclusus."* She wrote that certain images from "Litanies Addressed to the Virgin"[53] became

Liddiard asserts that castles possess both military and residential functions.

[53] Smith, Catherine Howett. *Sacred Transformations of the Secular: Gaudí's Güell Park as "Hortus Conclusus."* Atlanta: Emory University, 1999. Print. 6. Responsorial prayers said during the Catholic mass on certain feast days

associated with the Virgin like "the rose, the lily, and the enclosed garden, all of which refer to her [Mary's] virginity and absolute purity" (Smith 6). This artistic decision to utilize Theseus's garden as a hortus conclusus allows Burne-Jones to place Emily on a pedestal as he portrays her in a Marian manner. The garden's blooming flowers further associate her with the springtime and pureness, which stress the role of women as the pinnacle of spiritual guidance. She reads from a small book and prays up to the heavens to imply her reading from a prayer book (Fig. 3.2.3). In the subsequent illustration, Burne-Jones takes the knights outside of Thebes and further away from their love interest, which he emphasizes with the lack of blooming flowers in the forest. He foreshadows the viewer's departure into the next scene with the opened garden door in Figure 3.2.2 by which the dove in the right-hand corner escapes. Such an artistic decision reveals how Burne-Jones puts his illustrations in conversation with each other.

Above: **Figure 3.3** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "The Knyghtes Tale," p. 15, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

Six pages succeeding the illustration of the knights' encounter with Emily, Burne-Jones provides a recto illustration above stanzas 1509-1563 that depicts the scene in which Palamon finds Arcite after escaping Theseus's tower (Fig. 3.3). The illustrations now begin to align with the text, revealing how Figure 3.2 served to acknowledge the main conflict at hand as it headlines the entirety of this story. Both knights remain outside the court in Figure 3.3 and their clothing reveals such as Burne-Jones outfits them in under-armor, showing that they both are ill-prepared to fight. However, their attire lacks the reality of that embedded in the description of the gypon and rusted habergeon in the "General Prologue" as the knights maintain their composures unlike their hunched raconteur, the Knight (Fig. 3.1). Arcite (right) takes this time to pray for Emily which "May" represents in the following passage that lies beneath Figure 3.3: "'May, with alle thy floures and thy grene, / Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May, / In hope that I som grene gete may'" (Chaucer 1510-1512). Burne-Jones makes sure to depict Arcite's pleas, but in a revised manner from the way Chaucer writes in "The Knight's Tale."

3.3.1

In Figure 3.3.1, Burne-Jones captures Arcite looking downward in mid-prayer, which Chaucer does not mention in his text. Here he physically addresses Arcite's devotion to Emily, an appropriate move since Burne-Jones likened her to the Virgin in Figure 3.2. This illustration

of Arcite corresponds to the illustration of Emily who looks up in prayer, further signifying the difference in the sexes. Palamon, in the far-left frame, observes Arcite from behind. In this illustration, Burne-Jones has captured the moment at which Palamon hears Arcite's pleas, which prompts the conflict in the next sequence of illustrations as the characters prepare for the duel between the two knights. However, before analyzing the characters' interactions with the gods, one difference between the illustrations and the text must be acknowledged. The text reads that Palamon was "in the crope, now doun in the breres" (Chaucer 1532), or a place to hide from Arcite as he voices his longing. Instead, Burne-Jones depicts him in a forest filled with arboreal imagery rather than the low bush with which Palamon uses to hide in the text. This foreboding forest signals the uncertain times ahead especially when coupled with the overcast sky that emphasizes the gravity of the knights' situation. The path that Arcite stands upon leads the viewer to the far-right and, thus, toward the majestic temples that house the Greek deities four pages later.

Above: **Figure 3.4** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "The Knyghtes Tale," p. 22, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

Below: **Figure 3.5** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "The Knyghtes Tale," p. 23, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

After Palamon's confrontation with Arcite, Burne-Jones depicts the three major characters as they visit the temples of Venus (Fig. 3.4), Diana (Fig. 3.5), and Mars (Fig. 3.7). The illustration order adheres to the order of prayers as they appear in the text: Palamon, Emily, Arcite. However, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* couples the images together in a specific manner. Figures 3.4 (verso) and 3.5 (recto) lie side-by-side as they reveal the tensions faced by Palamon and Emily. Their page proximity foreshadows their fate – or their marriage later in the tale – and allows Arcite a space of his own on the verso page succeeding Figure 3.5. These scenes depict the Greek goddesses and god to whom the trio pray before Palamon and Arcite duel the next morning. They derive from some of Chaucer's most stately lines that allow the artist to engage with the poet's constructed fantasy realms. For instance, he depicts Chaucer's description of Venus's statue in Figure 3.4:

> glorious for to se, / Was naked, fletynge in the large see, / And fro the navele doun al covered was / With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas. / A citole in hir right hand hadde she, / And on hir heed, ful semely for to se, / A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge; /

> Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge. / Biforn hire stood hir sone Cupido; / Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two, / And blynd he was, as it is often seene (Chaucer 1955-1965).

Such stately and descriptive language allows Burne-Jones to indulge in the female form as well as symbols of love, in the shape of roses, Cupid, and reoccurrence of doves. The roses lay scattered across the temple tiles, and "blind" Cupid in the far-left allows Burne-Jones to bring the consumer's attention back to the conflict at hand – or winning over Emily – as the blindfold does not fully cover his eyes. Instead, Burne-Jones depicts Venus's son looking downward toward the haphazardly strewn roses. Furthermore, Figure 3.4 features the doves that surround Emily in Figure 3.2. The fleeing dove from Figure 3.2 aligns with the dove entering Figure 3.4, which illustrates another instance that the artist places his illustrations in conversation with each other. In Figure 3.4, Burne-Jones stays true to the text and the "dowves flikerynge" in Venus's temple as if to assert Palamon's claim to the Amazon, Emily.

Above: **Fig. 3.6** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), Preliminary sketch of the Temple of Diana in "The Knight's Tale," pen and ink and Chinese white over a photographic reproduction of the pencil drawing, 165 x 226 mm. Robinson, Duncan. *William Morris, Edward Burn-Jones and The Kelmscott Chaucer*. 27.

As for Emily, Figure 3.5 depicts her pleas to Diana. In the preliminary sketch (Fig. 3.6) for this figure, Burne-Jones depicted Diana after Emily kindled the sacrificial flames: "And

therwithal Dyane gan appeere, / With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse" (Chaucer 2346-2347).[54] Instead, Burne-Jones chose to weave the Greek myth of Actaeon into the illustration as he depicts "This godesse on an hert ful hye seet, / With smale houndes al about hir feet" (Chaucer 2075-76) that attack Actaeon after he watched the goddess bathe. Such an artistic decision stresses the morality – another role of woman – that this myth reveals of Diana. In this figure, she is not merely a huntress with her bow but a symbol of chastity as she sits atop Actaeon in his stag form as if to show triumph over his lust. In this scene, Diana tells the begging Emily that she cannot maintain her maidenhead when the responds, "Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho / That han for thee so muchel care and wo" (Chaucer 2353-54) and, furthermore, stresses the significance of the men having the upper-hand. Alas, she must marry either Arcite or Palamon, and thus succumb to her domestic function. As Emily begs for Diana to support her decision to remain single, it is to be noted that Emily and Palamon dress in a similar fashion for the temple scenes. Both espouse an air of femininity that deeply contrasts with that espoused by Arcite when he confronts Mars in the sleek coat-of-arms that even the raconteur Knight lacked in the Ellesmere illustration in the "General Prologue."

[54] Robinson, Duncan. *William Morris, Edward Burn-Jones and The Kelmscott Chaucer*. London and Bedford: The Gordon Fraser Gallery, Ltd., 1982. Print. 27.

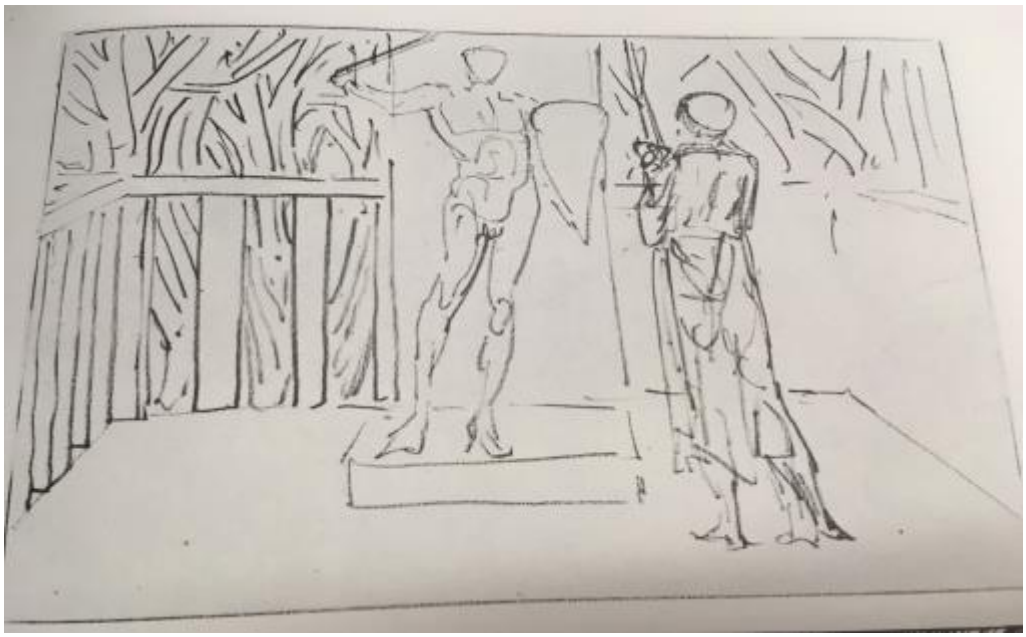
Above: **Figure 3.7** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "The Knyghtes Tale," p. 24, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

When Arcite confronts the statue of Mars, he stands as the only character out of these three who does not beg. His posture remains straight and his cape billows in the wind for full effect as Burne-Jones asserts the prestige and sureness he associates with knighthood. Morris's design places him on the verso page after the page that displays Diana's temple, thus providing this illustration with an entire space of its own. This prevents the other illustrations from distracting the viewer's gaze from the upholder of the chivalric code that stands before them. In medieval romances:

> lengthy costume descriptions for the aristocratic protagonists were conventional, but such description of protagonists is non-existent in Chaucer's romances. In the Knight's Tale, he bestows the two conventionally detailed depictions of appearance and dress upon Lygurge and Emetreus, characters who play no major part in the plot beyond leading the respective forces of Palamon and Arcite (Coatsworth 118).

Instead, Burne-Jones devotes those rich garb descriptions Chaucer devoted to these tertiary characters to Mars and Arcite. For instance, Chaucer describes "The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde, / Upon a steede bay trapped in steel, / Covered in clooth of gold, dyapred weel, / Cam

ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars. / His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars / Couched with perles white and rounde and grete" (Chaucer 2156-61). Burne-Jones lends Arcite the attire instead.



Above: **Fig. 3.8** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), Preliminary sketch of the Temple of Mars in "The Knight's Tale," pencil sketch. Robinson, Duncan. *William Morris, Edward Burn-Jones and The Kelmscott Chaucer*.

Originally, Mars stood as a male nude in Burne-Jones's preliminary sketch (Fig. 3.8) of Figure 3.7 and Arcite had his back to the viewer.[55] However, in the final illustration, the artist has chosen to depict the character as Chaucer described him in the text with "A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet / With eyen rede, and of a man he eet" (Chaucer 2047-48) along with a full suit of armor that also aligns this god with the tale's chivalric agenda. He also dresses Arcite in armor, which his revised position in the final copy allows the viewer to see more clearly. True to earlier artistic portrayals, Burne-Jones depicts Mars in his "young and vigorous manhood" (Hall

[55] Robinson, Duncan. *William Morris, Edward Burn-Jones and The Kelmscott Chaucer*. London and Bedford: The Gordon Fraser Gallery, Ltd., 1982. Print. 28.

207) and in his helmet and shield, which further asserts his role as the god of war as the wolf at his feet symbolizes his aggressive nature.

Above: **Figure 3.9** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "The Knyghtes Tale," p. 9, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

In his final illustration (Fig. 3.9) Burne-Jones has avoided the duel that escalated the characters to this final point. Instead, he offers Arcite the rightful funeral that Chaucer allotted him in the end of the poem. However, Arcite lacks the laurel crown and white gloves Chaucer mentioned he wore upon the bier and, instead, wears the armament that Burne-Jones placed him in for Figure 3.7. The story ends with this scene of emergence as Palamon and Emily exit the grove, leaving behind the uncertainty once portrayed in Figure 3.3. Palamon finally sports similar armament to Arcite's and takes Emily by the hand as if to signify their upcoming union. Here both forms of glorification speak through the illustration: the pinnacle of knighthood and women's role in the domestic realm. These themes of chivalry and marriage will resurface in "The Wife of Bath's Tale."

Chapter Three: Analysis of "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale"

Just as William Morris's father helped instill a love for Gothic architecture that would follow his son into his entrepreneurial career, Geoffrey Chaucer's father introduced him to global commerce. This commerce background stemmed from Chaucer's early years assisting his father, a vintner in Ipswich.[56] In 1374 this experience helped him obtain the position of Controller of the King's Custom and Subsidy of Wool, Hides, and Wool Fells in the port of London. As referenced in the *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles*, Chaucer's exposure to wool, hides, and wool fells makes the costume-rhetoric of the "General Prologue" much more rich and crucial to our understanding of his characters. Chaucer deploys "fabric terms in his literary texts, in such a way that fabric portrays, decorates, and reveals the wearer" (Coatsworth 120). Hands-on experience with textiles transfers to his description of the Wife's attire in her prologue, which asserts her role in the global economy and, thus, reveals this character's sovereignty. Her sovereignty also develops in the Ellesmere's glossing of her prologue.

"The Wife of Bath's Prologue" contains the heaviest glossing in the Ellesmere Manuscript. As Helen Cooper mentions in her guide to Chaucer's estate satire, glosses in this section of the Ellesmere Manuscript include Jerome and his own citations from Scripture, Ptolemy's *Almansoris propositiones* from the *Astrologia aphoristica Ptolomoei,* and the scribes' reactions to the text they copied. One such example of the latter gloss comes to the defense of the Wife's many husbands when the scribe writes, "'Bihoold how this goode wyf served hir iij first housbondes whiche were good olde men'" (qtd in Cooper 150). Cooper explains that these glosses "reinforce the double sense of the Prologue both as literary text with authoritative

[56] "Vintner." *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2017.
Vintner, n. A wine merchant

sources and as an outrageous instance of female domination" (Cooper 140). Thus, they reiterate the role of the text in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" in asserting her sovereignty.

The Wife's role in her prologue parallels the role the "loathly lady" in "The Wife of Bath's Tale" plays.[57] In the prologue, the Wife's last husband – who is significantly younger than she – allows her sovereignty after he abuses her and she pretends to be dead. He responds with, "'Myn owene trewe wyf, / Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf; / Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat'" (Chaucer 819-821). The knight in "The Wife of Bath's Tale" allows his wife, the loathly lady, sovereignty when he gives her the option to choose between staying old and faithful or transforming into a potentially adulterous maiden. However, the knight's transfer of decision making power to the loathly lady is not to dismiss the last few stanzas of "The Wife of Bath's Tale" where she becomes submissive to her new husband. This tale has two prime analogues: *The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* and *Confessio Amantis*. Chaucer's rewrite of these texts borders between romance and folktale and, thus, differs from the strong and independent character that the poet depicted in the "General Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue." While the "General Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" espouse the Wife's economic take on marriage, the end of her tale exposes her for what she truly is: a romantic. The tale "concludes not with the woman's being boss, but with the romance achievement of 'blisse' and, most surprisingly, with obedience" (Cooper 163) as the loathly lady "obeyed hym [the knight] in every thyng / That myghte doon hym pleasance or likyng" (Chaucer 1255-1256). Such a resolution will translate into Edward Burne-Jones's illustrations.

[57] Cooper, Helen, 164.
Cooper writes that "the Wife's loathly lady, in a projection of her own desires, can turn young: she is the Wife's alter ego."

Despite Burne-Jones's distaste for Chaucer's bawdy humor and his preference for the romances, he would allude to the Cnidian Venus – or the first monumental female nude in classical sculpture[58] – as seen in his depiction of the transformed loathly lady in "The Wife of Bath's Tale" set of illustrations. Such inspiration helps viewers better understand Burne-Jones's depiction of the Wife's projection of herself. The full-frontal nude in Figure 4.5 in the next section evokes the Cnidian Venus with her posture and grasp of the cloth in her right hand that glorifies the female form despite Burne-Jones's refusal to illustrate the fabliaux which include nudity.

The Greek statue known as the Cnidian Venus is meant to be viewed from every angle, which plays upon the subject's immense beauty. Thus, Figure 4.5, in paying homage to this statue, further expands upon the artist's focus on the lady's aesthetic qualities as opposed to the entrepreneurial role she possesses in Delaney's "Sexual Economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath, and The Book of Margery Kempe" that this chapter will later discuss. As in his illustrations for "The Knight's Tale," Burne-Jones focuses on the romantic qualities of "The Wife of Bath's Tale." He focuses on the relations between men and women, and, in the process, introduces the viewer to the more mystical elements of *The Canterbury Tales*. A close reading of the text of the "General Prologue," "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" in comparison to Burne-Jones's presentation of the Wife's projection of herself in "The Wife of Bath's Tale" illuminates Burne-Jones's portrayal of a more docile female character. However, first an understanding of the roles of Victorian middle-class men and women must come to light.

[58] "Aphrodite of Cnidus." *Aphrodite of Cnidus*. University of Chicago, n.d. Web. 12 Mar. 2017. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/greece/hetairai/aphrodite.html

Separate Spheres: Role of the Victorian Woman

In nineteenth-century England, one's respectability implied good social standing within social circles. Discipline, thrift, individualism, honesty, sexual morality, and industry as well as the cultivation of domesticity played crucial roles in dictating social standing for the burgeoning Victorian middle-class. Along with this cultivation of domesticity manifested the idea of separate spheres, or the male-dominated public sphere in coordination with the female-dominated private sphere known as the domestic realm.[59] As Lydia Murdoch observes in *Daily Life of Victorian Women*, "consigning women to the home became a sign of middle-class status" (Murdoch xxiv). While the women ran the household, their husbands worked in the public sphere's business sector.

John Ruskin, Morris and Burne-Jones's contemporary and champion of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, lectured on the spheres in his "Lecture II – Lilies of Queens' Gardens." In this lecture, he said:

> The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle, – and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision (Ruskin 77).

He then delves into the woman's role to maintain the peace of the home and its shelter-like qualities for the man who returns from a long-day of work in the public sphere. Ruskin's lecture reinforces images of the "angel-wife" in Coventry Patmore's poem "Angel in the House," or imagery of the "passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all – pure" (Melani, "The Angel in the House") woman. Such a description

[59] Murdoch, Lydia. xxiii.

counters that of the promiscuous Wife of Bath with her entrepreneurial nature described in the "General Prologue." However, these spheres were not as stable as today's readers may believe.

Lydia Murdoch – in *Daily Life of Victorian Women* – stresses the roles of single women, especially in the 1850s and 1860s, who contributed to rhetoric in debate societies, pamphlets, and journals and, thus, paved a path for the "New Woman" of the 1890s during the time of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s production. The New Woman pursued careers, traveled the world, drank and smoked with men, sought a life beyond marriage and motherhood, supported free love, and advocated woman's suffrage to increase presence in local as well as national and imperial politics.[60] Thus, the New Woman threatened the stability of the spheres by claiming space in the public arena.

Above: **Fig. 4.1** "Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle." J.L. Williams, *Illustrated London News* (1848). Murdoch, Lydia. *Daily Life of Victorian Women*.

[60] Murdoch, Lydia. xxvii.

Victorian artists commonly stressed the spheres in their illustrations. Accordingly, newspapers reinforced the idea of the spheres with images their middle-class readers would instantly recognize and admire, such as Queen Victoria with her family. Fashioned like an ordinary wife, the queen appears in illustrations like "Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle" in the *Illustrated London News* (1848) during holiday, stressing both national traditions and the woman's role in the private sphere (Fig. 4.1). In this illustration, Victoria stands with Prince Albert and the children around the Christmas tree. She gazes at her family and not the London public that would view this illustration, which further reiterates the woman's separation from the public.[61]

In addition to the media's perpetuation of the spheres in the age of illustration, middle-class homes reflected this ideal. For instance, walls, gardens, and lawns became more prevalent because they added an air of privacy to the home. Within the home, "household purchases became signs of individual expression, moral character, and status, rather than dangerous examples of sinful materialism, underscoring the public as well as the private meanings of domestic consumption" (Murdoch 95). Such changes to the exterior and purchases for the interior signify the importance of the private sphere upheld by the woman and her role of maintaining it. Also, this sacredness of the household and its décor helps us further understand commercial consumption of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* and the significance of its place in the living room. However, what of the stories told by the bold Wife that this book harbored? Such imagery would further disrupt the idea of the spheres as the Wife possesses real estate in both.

In "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," the witty protagonist outlines her role in her many marriages. As Cooper recognizes, "The Wife of Bath is every antifeminist's nightmare come

[61] Murdoch, Lydia. *Daily Life of Victorian Women*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2014. Print. 73.

true; Chaucer's triumph is to make her irresistibly attractive. She may devour men whole, but she has captivated every reader of the *Canterbury Tales* since Chaucer's own lifetime" (Cooper 149). In fact, she dominates the pilgrimage and the page as she perpetuates ideas of female dominance seen in her influence on the Clerk and Merchants' tales; however, Burne-Jones excludes this aspect of the Wife. Instead, he focuses on her tale with its emphasis on two unnamed characters who, ultimately, embody the male and female principle.

The Wife of Bath: Prologue to Prologue

Chaucer introduces the Wife of Bath between the Doctor and the Parson. These two men are successful in their professions, especially in comparison to the Pardoner whose shady business deals make a mockery of the clergy and result in his low ranking within the procession. Chaucer places the Wife in the same playing field as the Doctor who "knew the cause of everich maladye, / Were it of hoot or coold, or moyste, or drye, / And where they engendred, and of what humour. / He was a verray, parfit praktisour" (Chaucer 419-422); and, whose success lies not only in his ability to cure ailments but to use this medical prowess for financial gain.

Above: **Fig. 4.2** Canterbury Tales: ms. EL 26 C9, fol. 72r: Wife of Bath: det. Ellesmere Chaucer, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. Ink on vellum. ArtStor.

The Parson's success lies in his ability to follow out the holy word and practice what he preaches to his congregation: "But riche he was of hooly thought and werk. / He was also a lerned man, a clerk, / That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche; / His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche. / Benygne he was, and wonder diligent, / And in adversitee ful pacient, / And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes" (Chaucer 479-485). Between these characterizations, Chaucer affirms the Wife's economic endeavors in the textile industry where, like the Doctor, she makes a handsome profit and, like the Parson, she showcases her skills to the masses:

> Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich and haunt,
> She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt (Chaucer 447-448).

The Wife carves out her role as a global force. In fact, her profession harbors such significance that one of the monks involved in the production of the fifteenth-century Ellesmere Manuscript drew a weaving device in her right hand (Fig. 4.2), which adds a visual affirmation of her profession not present in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Here Chaucer establishes the Wife's role in the public sphere by placing her among the ranks of two successful men and allowing her to embody the roles of three of the Guildsmen whose professions as a weaver, dyer, and haberdasher do not extend past the few lines in which they operate as a unit in the "General Prologue."

Regarding this initial description of the Wife in the "General Prologue," Chaucer focuses on her material possessions as he does with the Guildsmen, whose appearances he describes as "Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was; / Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras / But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel / Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel" (Chaucer 365-368), instead of her physical appearance. For the Prioress, however, the only other female pilgrim described in the "General Prologue," Chaucer provides an *effictio* – a head-to-toe description – of her physical appearance. The poet writes that "Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas, / Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed. / But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed; / It

was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe; / For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe" (Chaucer 152-156). In contrast, Chaucer describes the Wife in a manner that illuminates her agency as he places this character in the same realm as the men in both her ability to maintain a profession in the public sphere and, owing to her success in this profession, afford clothing that establishes her place in it.

Chaucer departs from traditional representations of women in his description of the Wife by not only allowing her to travel to Canterbury without an entourage, but he focuses on only one element of the Wife's physical appearance, or the only feature her clothing exposes: her countenance. The remainder of her description itemizes what she wears as the material manifestations of her economic endeavors in the textile market come to light like the Guildsmen's:

> Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
> I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
> That on a Sonday were upon hir heed.
> Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
> Ful streite yteyd, and shoos ful moyste and newe.
> … And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe (Chaucer 453-473).

Here Chaucer adds to the Wife's anonymity in refusing to provide her with an *effictio* while the last item of this description, "spores sharpe," hints at the Wife's ability to take charge. Her place in the textile industry during her widowed years led to the Wife's involvement in the global marketplace as she traveled to Western Europe and the Levant on business.[62] Not only does Chaucer affirm the Wife's role in the textile trade, but he reveals her success in it – success that highlights this character's mobility in the public sphere and her sovereignty.

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[62] Chaucer, Geoffrey. "General Prologue." *The Riverside Chaucer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. Print. 463-466.
"And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem; / She hadde passed may a straunge strem; / At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne, / In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne."

This theme of sovereignty will resurface in her tale; however, Chaucer's loyalty to the romance genre will not allow her the leeway that the poet provides her in the "General Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue." Overall, the Wife's profession places her in the economic sector as a merchant – one of her two major roles she fills that manifests throughout the poem. The emphasis on the Wife's success in the "General Prologue" works in tandem with her role in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," where Chaucer adds another layer to her character. In "Sexual Economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath, and the Book of Margery Kempe," Sheila Delaney identifies the Wife as both merchant and commodity when she writes:

> Thus the Wife of Bath has thoroughly internalized the economic function of the bourgeoisie in reducing quintessentially human activity – love and the marriage relation – to commercial enterprise. She understands that as a woman she is both merchant and commodity: her youth and beauty the initial capital investment, and her age – the depreciation of the commodity – a condition against which she must accumulate profit as rapidly and therefore as exploitatively as possible (Delaney 105).

The Wife's first marriage at 12 years old functions as the "initial capital investment," after which her value begins to depreciate. The subject of age surfaces in the tale and Burne-Jones's illustrations, which highlight her role as a commodity.

Recognizing these two functions of the Wife advances the analysis of Burne-Jones's three illustrations of "The Wife of Bath' Tale," as they emphasize what the consumer does and does not receive from the overlapping theme of female sovereignty in the prologue and tale. In recognizing these roles, I agree with Cooper's claim that the loathly lady in the tale is an extension of the Wife just as the other pilgrims extend themselves into their tales. The manner that Burne-Jones depicts the loathly lady will serve as the reference point for how he approaches the two roles the Wife plays. Just as Delaney points out in her article, the Wife's age marks her depreciated value when she seeks new marriages just as the loathly lady's aged figure evokes

repulsion in the knight after he marries her against his will. [63] "The Wife of Bath's Tale" further emphasizes the Wife's role as a commodity and, despite its mention of sovereignty when the loathly lady transforms, ends with the loathly lady pleasing her husband. It is a tale concerned with the woman's virtue, and, thus, ends in her promise of fidelity. Burne-Jones opts to celebrate the female form rather than the entrepreneurial aspect of the Wife and, thus, the artist remains consistent with the ideology of the separate spheres that was challenged during the period of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s production.

Text-Image Analyses: "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale"

In 1893, *The Glasgow Herald* emphasized the market value and aesthetics of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Like *The Leeds Mercury* article mentioned in Chapter One, the *Herald* homed in on the book's price point and its illustrations, expressing the opinion that Burne-Jones was "not perhaps the most appropriate artist to represent the broad mirth and buoyant vitality of the 'Canterbury Tales.' One cannot quite imagine the Wife of Bath, for example, getting very sympathetic treatment at his hands" ("News," *Glasgow Herald*). Figure 1.2, or "Edward Burne-Jones's Woodcuts for *The Canterbury Tales*," in the Introduction testifies to Burne-Jones's lack of attention to the mirth unveiled in the fabliaux. Furthermore, his lack of prologue illustrations reveals that Burne-Jones could not bring himself to portray the witty and mouthy Wife in her role as entrepreneur and, overall, a participant in the public sphere. Instead, his illustrations portray the relationship between Chaucer's unnamed knight of King Arthur's court and the "loathly lady" he must marry.

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[63] Chaucer, Geoffrey. 474-475.
"But age, allas, that al wole as in my envenyme, / Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith."

Above: **Figure 4.3** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "Tale of the Wife of Bath," p. 112, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

Fig. 4.3.1

Fig. 4.3.2

Figure 4.3, the lead illustration of "The Wife of Bath's Tale," rests above the stanzas in which the conflict arises, or when the knight in King Arthur's court rapes a young woman. However, this illustration (Fig. 4.3) depicts the scene after Queen Guinevere confronts the knight in court for this heinous crime. In the textual scene that the illustrated scene succeeds, the queen threatens to sentence him to death if he cannot answer her question, or "'What thyng is it that women moost desiren" (Chaucer 905) in "a twelf-month and a day" (Chaucer 909). The confrontation serves as the first instance of female dominance in the tale, since the knight's life is in the hands of Guinevere. This change in power mirrors that of the Wife's entrepreneurial role as the character possesses the prestige of the men surrounding her. Burne-Jones depicts neither of these scenes and, instead, he depicts the moment right before the knight receives the answer to Queen Guinevere's question from a loathly lady in the forest.

In Figure 4.3.1, this loathly lady – an extension of the Wife – extends her right hand to the knight. Unbeknownst to this man, taking her hand before receiving the answer to Guinevere's question results in his agreement to marry the loathly lady who, when they return to court, declares:

> 'The firste thyng that I wolde hym requere / He wolde it do, if it lay in his myghte. / Bifore the court thane preye I thee, sir / knight,' / Quod she, 'that thou me take unto thy wyf, / For wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf (Chaucer 1052-1056).

In illustrating the scene in which the loathly lady tricks the knight into marriage, Burne-Jones has prefaced the tale with the concept of matrimony that the Wife harps on in her prologue and, thus, opens the door to her role as a commodity per Delaney's argument. Like the illustrations of Arcite in Chapter Two, the knight dons full armor. The knight's attire contrasts with the clothing the loathly lady wears, or her tattered dress that shows signs of wear. Her extended arm (Fig. 4.3.1) appears feeble and the cut of the dress's neckline reveals aged skin. Burne-Jones's

illustration of this scene includes a path in the forest clearing (Fig. 4.3.2) that divides the knight on the left who sits high atop a stallion from the loathly lady who stands near the forest. While the knight takes the prim path past the forest, the illustration plays upon the woman's unkempt nature by associating her with the unruly arboreal imagery to the right of the path. In this first illustration, the artist further exaggerates the loathly lady's appearance, which will make the transformation scene later in the Kelmscott *Chaucer* more apparent.

Above: **Figure 4.4** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "Tale of the Wife of Bath," p. 114, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

Below: **Figure 4.5** Edward Burne-Jones (1834–1896), "Tale of the Wife of Bath," p. 115, wood engraving from the Kelmscott Chaucer, 1896. Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; gift of Mr. Frank C. Rand.

Fig. 4.4.1

Fig. 4.5.1

For the remaining two illustrations, Burne-Jones jumps to the end of the tale. In Figure 4.4, he depicts the loathly lady as she makes an offer to the knight after noticing his displeasure in their marriage: "To han me foul and old til that I deye, / And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf, / And nevere yow displease in al my lyf" (Chaucer 1220-1222). While her old age allows her to remain faithful to the knight, her youth – if he prefers for her to transform into a maiden – may result in her infidelity. By devoting two illustrations to her transformation, Burne-Jones perpetuates the Wife's commodity role by revealing the significance he attributes to her physical form. As the Wife stressed in her prologue, a body that shows signs of age has depreciated in value (Figures 4.3, 4.4). The loathly lady will attract fewer men than her youthful state in Figure 4.5, which has the potential to attract more suitors as evidenced by the loathly lady's infidelity threat and the knight's gaze at her transformed state (Fig. 4.5.1).

Fig. 4.4.2

The Wife's clothing in the "General Prologue," a product of her trade and business acumen in the public sphere, greatly contrasts with the dress that the loathly lady wears (Fig. 4.4.1). Chaucer does not describe the lady's clothing, so Burne-Jones's decision to depict her in a dress with a more revealing cut shows how the artist projects his subject's desire to be young. Furthermore, Burne-Jones's choice in this revealing attire creates further disjunction between the Wife of Bath's role as an entrepreneur in the "General Prologue" who only revealed her face with the amount of clothing that flaunted her wealth and career, and reaffirms her role as a commodity in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. The artist reveals the loathly lady in a saddened state – dejected by the relationship she cannot provide her new husband as he stands closer to the right-hand border of the illustration than their bed. Such a change emphasizes the loathly lady's discontent with her image and desire to please her husband. Roses (Fig. 4.4.2) – not presented in the text as they were presented in the description of Venus's temple scene in "The Knight's Tale" – lie scattered on the floor, as if to reiterate the tale's genre and the lady's withering state. Altogether, Burne-Jones's illustrations perpetuate the idea of separate spheres, the desire to be youthful, and the loathly lady's steadfast devotion to her husband, especially after he gives her the option to choose between states (Fig. 4.5).

The "Wife of Bath's Tale" illustrations begin and end with affirmation of women's commodity role as Burne-Jones depicts the ultimatum scene between the knight and the loathly lady in Figures 4.4 and 4.5. Figure 4.4 sits on the verso and Figure 4.5 adorns the recto. Such placement allows the artist to intensify her transformation to the viewer via a side-by-side comparison of the lady's body. In depicting this scene, one must acknowledge that Chaucer writes that the transformation occurred after the two shared a night in bed together: "When he was wil his wyf abedde ybroght; / He walweth and he turneth to and fro" (Chaucer 1084-1085).

However, Burne-Jones depicts a fully made bed and fully clothed characters in Figure 4.4. Ultimately, Burne-Jones maximizes the space between the two characters in all three illustrations. Such an interpretation of the text plays upon Delaney's claim of depreciation and the Victorian gendered idea of separateness. While Chaucer focused on the Wife's materiality, the artist emphasizes the physical differences between the sexes.

Conclusion

In conducting research for this thesis, the striking similarities between Geoffrey Chaucer and William Morris greeted me at every turn. Both men were beyond their time. While Chaucer expressed a masterful grasp of the English language as he introduced the rhyme royal to poetry,[64] Morris constructed furniture, like the early reclining chair known as the "Morris chair," that would inspire England's future artisans. These two Englishmen occupied London in distinct time periods – the medieval era and the Victorian period – and approached the class structures of their respective times via poetry and artistry. However, the most striking similarity shared by the two men lies in the text of *The Canterbury Tales*. While Chaucer is the mastermind behind this prolific poetry, Morris's Kelmscott Press would physically present Chaucer's text five centuries later.

The overlying theme of this thesis, or the physical presentation of text, helps us take a step away from the Kelmscott *Chaucer* the book to understand it as the Kelmscott *Chaucer* the cultural product. In approaching the book from an architectural standpoint – true to Edward Burne-Jones's description – I discovered that the book accomplishes more than displaying Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. In taking the architectural approach to researching the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, I paid special attention to the book's *venustas*, which includes the interior ornamentations and illustrations. The attention devoted to these elements led to research on the introduction of the illustrated book in the Victorian era. Introduction of illustrated books into Victorian homes welcomed the viewer to a more visual experience of the text. Such an experience, in the case of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, provides viewers a distinct lens to observe the estate criticisms of *The Canterbury Tales.*

[64] Rhyme royal consists of seven lines of iambic pentameter in the rhyme scheme a-b-a-b-b-c-c.

While Chaucer reveled in critiquing his era's feudal system, Morris's magnum opus – thanks to the 26 *Canterbury Tales* illustrations completed by Edward Burne-Jones – takes Chaucer's text and makes it relevant to the Victorian consumer. Burne-Jones's focus on the romances, as opposed to the "General Prologue" and fabliaux, of *The Canterbury Tales* allows the artist to focus on specific imagery tailored to the Victorian, elite middle-class consumer. Such idealistic imagery includes the institution of knighthood and the perpetuation of the male and female spheres, which would appeal to this burgeoning class in their pursuit of cultural affirmation.

In this thesis's analysis on the physical presentation of text, I bring to light the influence of time period and consumerism on the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. While Chapter One focused on the consumption of illustrated books in the Victorian era, Chapters Two and Three focused on the illustrations that the viewer will encounter in two of Chaucer's most popular tales: "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale." However, while Chaucer's text critiqued his period's social class system, Morris's physical presentation of the text indoctrinates social elements – like class and domestic stability – to his Victorian clients. Burne-Jones places knighthood on a pedestal and his portrayal of the male and female characters mimic the ideology of the separate spheres. Despite our distance from both Chaucer and Morris's eras, I stress the relevancy of their works' intersection. In adding a physical and consumerist element to text, the author's intent may be lost in the final display. Thus, I ask us to think more critically about a text's physical presentation and whom the presentation serves.

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