A PICTORIAL UTOPIA: THE KELMSCOTT *CHAUCER*[1]

RESİMLİ BİR ÜTOPYA: KELMSCOTT CHAUCER

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Abstract

William Morris (1834-1896) was not only a prolific writer and artist of the Victorian Age, but also the embodiment of Neo-medievalism, which dominated the age, with his interest in medieval manuscripts, sagas, romances and the gothic tradition as reflected in his professional life. Trying to avoid the influences of the Industrial Revolution on individuals, Morris turned to medieval ideals and materialised them in his paintings and drawings as a Victorian medievalist. Yet, it was the foundation of the Kelmscott Press that endowed Morris with the best means to display his interest in medieval arts and literature. The Kelmscott Chaucer (1896) can be regarded as the product both of Morris's idealisation of Chaucer as a medieval poet, and of what Karen Barad defines as the "intra-action" of matter and discourse. Accordingly, through an analysis of the illustrated pages of The Canterbury Tales section of the Kelmscott Chaucer, the aim of this article is to analyse this book as a pictorial utopia and argue that Morris displays the intra-action of matter and discourse through his search for medieval printing techniques.

Öz

Willliam Morris (1834-1896) sadece Viktorya Dönemi'nin üretken bir yazarı ve sanatçısı değil, aynı zamanda profesyonel hayatına yansımış olduğu üzere, Ortaçağ elyazmalarına, İskandinav hikâyelerine, romanslara ve gotik geleneğe olan ilgisiyle, döneme damgasını vurmuş olan Yeni-ortaçağcılık'ın vücut bulmuş halidir. Morris, Endüstri Devrimi'nin bireyler üzerindeki etkisinden kaçınmaya çalışarak, Ortaçağ ideallerine dönmüş ve bir Viktorya Dönemi ortaçağcısı olarak bunları resimlerinde ve çizimlerinde somutlaştırmıştır. Ancak, Morris'in Ortaçağ sanatlarına ve edebiyatına olan ilgisini göstermesini sağlayan en iyi olanak, Kelmscott Yayınevi'nin kuruluşudur. Kelmscott Chaucer (1896) hem Morris'in bir Ortaçağ şairi olarak Chaucer'ı idealleştirmesinin, hem de Karen Barad'ın deyimiyle madde ve söylemin "içten-etkime"sinin bir ürünüdür. Bu bağlamda, bu makalenin amacı, Kelmscott Chaucer'ın Canterbury Hikâyeleri bölümündeki resimli sayfaları inceleyerek, bu kitabı resimli bir ütopya olarak ele almak ve Ortaçağ baskı teknikleri arayışıyla Morris'in madde ve söylemin içten-etkimesini yansıttığını tartışmaktır.

William Morris (1834-1896), a poet, a writer, a painter, and a designer of wallpapers, printed textiles, carpets, embroidery (tapestry), woven wool and wall-hangings, lived in the company of Yeats, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the other Pre-Raphaelites, including John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt. He believed that the Industrial Revolution mechanised not only production but also people. Railways and factories meant dirt, mechanisation, smoke and ugliness for him, who was a lover of nature. Trapped by his culture/time, Morris used his creativity as a means to escape from the socio-economic realities of his age. Interested in the works of Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Wordsworth, Ruskin, Scot and

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Carlyle, Morris tried his hands at writing poetry[1] and prose ranging from poems and romances inspired by his interest in medieval culture and literature. He was also a rhetorician giving lectures on his aesthetic and literary ideals.[2] Beyond all these activities, it was the foundation of the Kelmscott Press in 1891 and the publication of the illustrated editions of a number of influential works, among which are the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, that endowed Morris with worldwide name and fame.

Morris was an admirer of the Gothic architecture of cathedrals[3] and of illuminated medieval manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, which he had the chance to see as an undergraduate at Oxford University together with his lifelong friend and collaborator Edward Burne-Jones. He spent a number of summer vacations to appease his hunger for the past, visiting cities of medieval origin like Amiens, Rouen and Chartres again together with Edward Burne-Jones (Faulkner 8). Although Morris and Burne-Jones shared the same interest in the medieval past, unlike his friend Burne-Jones, Morris had the material means to enjoy his interest in medieval literature and art owing to his bourgeois background. He could buy medieval manuscripts, which became the source of his literary and artistic productions. Believing that "*Victorian capitalism was humanly and aesthetically disastrous*" (Faulkner ix), Morris turned his attention to the medieval past. Although he knew that the medieval period was not a period of peace and order, Morris appreciated the pure and aesthetic nature of medieval arts and crafts, and admired medieval craftsmen for hand-made productions.[4] As an artist haunted by the "present", he tried to follow the footsteps of his medieval predecessors in printing, which ended up with a number of heavily ornamented books among which is the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to evaluate the Kelmscott *Chaucer* through a

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[1] His early poems were published in a collection, entitled *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, in 1858 and included poems reflecting Morris's interest in chivalric culture and heroes such as "King Arthur's Tomb", "A Good Knight in Prison", "Golden Wings" and "The Sailing of the Sword." These poems were followed by *The Life and Death of Jason* in 1867 and *The Earthly Paradise* in 1868-70. *Poems by the Way* was his last volume of poetry published in 1891.

[2] Morris reflected his ideals through his lectures such as "The Decorative Arts" (1877), "The Art of the People" (1879), "The Beauty of Life" (1880), "Making the Best of It" (1880), "The Prospects of Architecture in Civilisation" (1881), "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing" (1881) and "The Aims of Art" (1887).

[3] Morris was also involved in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which was founded on his "*initiative*" (Faulkner 91). Because of his fondness of Gothic architecture, Morris's friend Philip Webb designed a gothic house for him (Faulkner 28-29).

[4] For Morris's admiration for medieval craftsmen, see his 1883 lecture entitled "Art under a Plutocrasy".

discussion of the illustrated pages of the *Canterbury Tales* section as a pictorial utopia which presents not only illustrations, text and decorated borders but also ornamented initials as parts of this pictorial utopia. It will be suggested that Morris presents Chaucer's works not only discursively but also materially as a utopia contrary to mass-produced Victorian books.

Being active in the Arts and Crafts Movement and believing in the social responsibility of art,[5] Morris supported the transformation of art from an abstraction to a concrete (material) form. The discourse conveyed through medieval arts and literature could only be displayed to the Victorians in its material form, which seemed a utopian combination in terms of time and place, drawing attention to the "intra-action" of matter and discourse. Karen Barad states that "*[t]he neologism "intra-action" signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction," which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action*" (33). That is, meaning is conveyed through the "intra-action" of matter and discourse. In accordance with Karen Barad's arguments in relation to the intra-action of matter and discourse, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* stands out as the embodiment of this intra-action. Reprinting the works of a poet that he admired, Morris believed that the matter of the book that he would reprint should follow medieval printing tradition. As an extension of his socialist belief, Morris believed in the idea 'art for people's sake', and criticised those who supported the idea that art was reserved only for the elite. As Faulkner states, "*Morris's ideal of 'an art which is to be made by the people and for the people, is a happiness to the maker and the user' remains ironically remote from the condition of modern society*" (104) as it is left in the medieval past. Therefore, Morris also needed the material means to display his aesthetic ideals shaped by his interest in medieval literature and culture, which came to life among a number of trials from stained glass, furniture, wall-hangings, wallpapers and carpets to lastly, and in the best form, in books. Books were functional not only in conveying the ideals he admired, but also in presenting them in material form. Thus, the Kelmscott Press endowed Morris with the means to materialise his ideals as exemplified by the Kelmscott *Chaucer*.

The Kelmscott Press was influential in the fine press movement, which was dominant in Western Europe, England and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Horowitz 60). Among the people who supported Morris's

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[5] See his 1879 lecture entitled "The Art of People".

interest in printing were Emery Walker, a neighbour whose 1888 lecture on printing in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society inspired Morris, and the illustrators of the Press, ranging from Edward Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, C. M. Gere and Arthur Gaskin (Faulkner 157; Oliveri 43). Morris agreed with Walker on the deteriorating condition of mass-produced Victorian books that had "*badly proportioned margins, too much space between words and lines, and low-quality ink and paper*" (Oliveri 43). Such low-quality meant material deterioration, which resulted in aesthetic deterioration as well. Although it was closed in 1898, only two years after the death of William Morris, the Kelmscott Press is considered to be a milestone in the history of printing. In *A Note by William Morris On his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press*, Morris asserts that his main aim was to produce beautiful books, books that "*would have a definite claim to beauty,*" unlike those of the mass-produced books of his age (Morris, A *Note by William Morris...* 1). According to Morris, books were "*aesthetic objects as well as words*" (Horowitz 60). They were important both discursively and materially. Actually, designing a book for publication has been regarded as an important process contributing to the materialisation of an author's ideas in an aesthetic way. For instance, McLean states that "*[d]esigning for print is a continuation of the work of writing*" (1). McLean further argues that

> [t]he art of the book designer, it has often been said, is a self-effacing art. Nothing, we agree, must come between author and reader. Good printing is not, however, characterless, or colourless, like glass. The book designer's job is, in some ways, analogous to the actor's: both have to serve the author – and please the audience. In the theatre, we can enjoy Shakespeare *and* Olivier; while reading a book, we can enjoy Coleridge and – although we probably will not know the typographer's name – Bruce Rogers. Typography is an entirely ancillary art; but a handmaiden may be graceful (2).

Similarly, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* would bring Morris and Chaucer closer. These ideas on the importance of typography are also very much in accordance with the bibliophilic attitude towards the physical appearance and smell of books as well as their content. Hence, "*[g]ood book design is personal. But all its personality must be directed to the end of serving author and reader*" (McLean 2-3). Morris believed that the Victorian mass-produced books did not achieve this personality unlike medieval manuscripts. As a matter of fact, until the early nineteenth century, or in other words, until the advent of industrialised printing of mass-produced books, the same printing techniques used in the fifteenth century were employed. Yet, with the Industrial

Revolution, book designs also became mechanical rather than hand-made (McLean 4-6). Thus, Morris aimed at reviving hand-made book designs and printing techniques. In accordance with his "*moral preoccupation with external beauty*" (*Life* 134), Morris developed a number of typefaces[6] as well as borders and ornaments in order to reach the beautiful style of medieval manuscripts. Accordingly, the Kelmscott Press can be regarded as "*the climax of his life's work*" (McLean 7) helping Morris create his pictorial utopias by materialising his literary and aesthetic ideals.

The Kelmscott *Chaucer*, which was completed in 1896, has been defined as the "*greatest achievement*" of the press (Horowitz 60, Sparling 59) as well as its "*magnum opus*" (Olivieri 43). It received immediate attention and praise from Morris's contemporaries after its publication too. For instance, A. L. Cotton defined it in the *Contemporary Review* as "*the noblest book as yet achieved by any English printer,*" the *Academy* as "*a great landmark in the history of printing*" and the *Nineteenth Century* as "*the greatest achievement of English typography*" (qtd. in Sparling 88). While such praises primarily drew attention to the material beauty of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* was also special for Morris for the literary value of Chaucer.

Morris referred to Chaucer as "*my Master*" in his *The Life and Death of Jason* (XVII, 11, 17),[7] and his admiration for Chaucer is revealed in the "Prologue" of his *The Earthly Paradise* as follows:

> Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
> Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
> Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
> Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
> And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
> The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;
> Think, that below bridge the green lapping waves
> Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves,
> Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,

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[6] The Golden type, the Troy type and the Chaucer type were the types Morris modelled for the Kelmscott Press. The Golden type was inspired by the type of a fifteenth-century Italian printer, Nicholas Jensen, while the Troy type was inspired by the German semi-blackletter type and the Chaucer was just the smaller version of the Troy type (Faulkner 157). Accordingly, Horowitz emphasises the "*interdisciplinary nature of Kelmscott Press research*" noting that it requires "*Victorian studies, literature, poetry, art, printing, publishing, and illustration, among others*" (60).

[7] The reference is to the book and line numbers.

> And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
>
> And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
>
> Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
>
> And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne;
>
> While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen
>
> Moves over bills of lading—mid such times
>
> Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes. (1-16).

Morris's admiration for Chaucer was so great that he rejected writing an introduction for an edition of Chaucer particularly because he did not find himself equipped enough (Peterson 232). Hence, the printing of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* provided Morris with both the means to reprint Chaucer and the means to take him back to the medieval tradition. It meant getting closer to the text by imagining the design of each and every page and reprinting it. The Kelmscott *Chaucer*, the full title of which is *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer Now Newly Imprinted*, is in black-letter Chaucer type printed in black and red ink. It includes all the works by Chaucer and starts with the *Canterbury Tales.*

All the initials and borders of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* were designed by Morris and cut on wood by W. H. Hooper while the illustrations were designed by Burne-Jones. Morris believed that "*ideals books*" could only be produced by "*ideal men*" (Life 135). This was a reference to the matter of books as well as their content. His aim was, therefore, to bring together the medieval Chaucer with the Victorians not only through the text but also through the matter. Morris aimed at creating the ideal book creating the harmony of the text, design and image on the page, which was fully achieved in the Kelmscott *Chaucer* turning it into the materialisation of Morris's ideal book.

In order to achieve the harmony of the text, design and illustration on the page, Morris believed that he should avoid mass-production techniques. While preparing the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Morris's involvement had two important aspects: the first is to reject the Victorian materialism and materials, and the second is to reject the Victorian norms discursively by turning to medieval literature. Accordingly, Morris first needed the proper material means and turned to the fifteenth century paper and ink production. He wanted handmade paper made from pure linen[8] and ink "*made from linseed oil and lampblack*" (Oliveri 44). Morris was lucky enough to find Joseph

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[8] Yet, some copies of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* were also printed on vellum (Oliveri 44).

Batchelor who could supply the required paper. As for ink, the German ink was closer to what Morris required, but it was too stiff and made printing difficult. Thus, the pressmen at the Kelmscott Press used the English ink until there arose some problems. Beside the length of production, the main problem that they encountered during the printing process was the yellow stains appearing on some of the printed sheets. Those stains could only be removed by bleaching, and then, the bleached sheets were left in the sunlight to dry. Meanwhile, they had to observe the rain to save the sheets, as a result of which Morris had to rent a greenhouse (Peterson 242; Oliveri 43-44). As for binding, Morris intended to design four bindings modelled on medieval manuscripts, but he could finish only one, and that was used for forty-eight copies of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* that were bound in pigskin (Oliveri 44).[9]

As for the illustrations, which contributed to the materialisation of Morris's pictorial utopia, there are eighty-seven illustrations, which is more than originally announced by the Kelmscott Press, that is, sixty (Peterson 244). The illustrations were designed by Edward Burne-Jones, and drawn on wood by R. Catterson-Smith to be engraved by W. H. Hooper (Life 138). While designing his illustrations, Burne-Jones was influenced not only by the medieval manuscripts at the Bodleian Library and the British Museum, which he frequently visited with Morris, but also by his own earlier work such as a wardrobe that he illustrated on the occasion of Morris's marriage (Peterson 248-249).

Burne-Jones negotiated the number of the illustrations with Morris and it would not be wrong to say that the more the numbers increased, the happier Morris got, since the illustrations contributed both to the pictorial and the aesthetic quality of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. In addition to materialising Morris's vision of an ideal book through the harmony of text and image on the page, Burne-Jones's illustrations are also significant, because "*Morris also finds narrative qualities in these woodcuts that he urges modern illustrators to emulate*" (Life 138). He wanted each and every component of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* to contribute to his pictorial utopia as well as to the intra-action of the matter and discourse. Accordingly, the *Canterbury Tales*

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[9] Peterson notes that "*[m]ost of the copies of the* Chaucer *were issued in the standard Kelmscott quarter-linen binding with blue paper-covered boards, but for forty-eight of the books Morris designed a pigskin binding – patterned after a binding by Ulrich Schreier of Salzburg (1478) that he owned – which was executed at the Doves Bindery*" (244). There were four types of covers for the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, announced by the Kelmscott Press in February 1896: "*(1) a full pigskin from the Doves Bindery, (2) a half pigskin from the Doves Bindery, (3) a full pigskin from J. and J. Leighton, and (4) a half pigskin from Leighton*" (Peterson 244).

section includes one illustrated page as frontispiece, one illustrated page for "The General Prologue," six illustrated pages for "The Knight's Tale," one illustrated page for "The Man of Law's Tale," two illustrated pages for "The Prioress's Tale," three illustrated pages for "The Wife of Bath's Tale," six illustrated pages for "The Clerk's Tale," two illustrated pages for "The Squire's Tale," six illustrated pages for "The Franklin's Tale," and lastly one illustrated page for the envoy. Although the Kelmscott *Chaucer* is black and white (and red at only some parts) contrary to highly colourful medieval manuscripts, it is unavoidable to imagine it as colourful, especially the greenness in each page, because of floral borders. To exemplify the glory of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* as the harmony of text, design and image on the page, the illustrations from the *Canterbury Tales* section of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* should be analysed in detail.

The illustrated first page of "The General Prologue" is preceded by one illustrated page as frontispiece, which reveals Chaucer as a nature poet with a heavily decorated floral depiction, and is also in full harmony with the typeset reflecting the title of the work. Then comes the illustrated first page of "The General Prologue" (1)[10] with an illustration that presents Chaucer reading, or maybe writing, a book since he is depicted with his quill in his right hand. Depicting Chaucer alone in front of a well, surrounded by mountains, in a floral garden together with a tree and birds on it is in accordance with the famous opening lines of "The General Prologue" describing the coming of April. Chaucer's costume (that is, his long tunic, cloth covering his head and a small bag on his right-hand side) seems to follow the illumination of Chaucer in the Ellesmere Manuscript. Yet, there is a big difference between these two illustrations: Chaucer of the Kelmscott has typical long neck of the Pre-Raphaelite tradition and he is tall unlike the Chaucer of the Ellesmere Manuscript. The illustration has Morris's borders, which frames the illustration and unites it with the text and the ornamented initials to create a full picture.[11]

Following "The General Prologue" comes "The Knight's Tale," which has six illustrated pages. In the first illustration (9), the imprisoned knights Palamon and Arcite see Emelye first in the garden. She is depicted holding a book and looking

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[10] The references to the illustrations of the *Canterbury Tales* in the Kelmscott *Chaucer* will be to the page numbers.

[11] The next pages of "The General Prologue" have no illustrations. They are just decorated by initials to ornament the text in two columns, and hence, again contribute to the pictorial quality of the Kelmscott Chaucer. The introduction of each pilgrim is signalled by the ornamented initials as well as their names printed in red-letters.

upwards, and so, she does not recognize them. The second illustration (15) shows Arcite roaming in the garden thinking of Emelye, and Palamon watching him behind the bush. The third and the fourth illustrations are on facing pages (22-23): in one Emelye is praying first to Venus who is accompanied by Cupid, and in the other to Diana to protect her virginity. The fifth one exhibits Arcite praying in front of the statue of Mars in order to win the love of Emelye (24). The last one shows Arcite lying dead while Palamon holds the hand of Emelye (30). In each illustrated page, the illustrations are in direct accordance with the text and have narrative quality depicting important scenes from the tale.

Next illustrated tale is "The Man of Law's Tale" which has just one illustrated page (43). The illustration is about beautiful and humble Custance's exile in the sea. She is married to the Sultan of Syria and sent to exile by her mother-in-law, because she is Christian and, hence, the mother-in-law tries to separate Custance from the Sultan. She is depicted all alone sailing in a small boat except for the birds around. Her face is not clear, but her long neck is. Apparently, while the illustration is in harmony with the text, it reflects the Pre-Raphaelite features such as long necks as in the case of the illustrated pages of "The General Prologue" and "The Knight's Tale."

"The Prioress's Tale" is the next illustrated tale and has two illustrated pages. The first illustration (58) depicts, on the left-hand side, the seven-year-old little Hugh praying, most probably singing Ave Maria as his custom was according to the tale, in front of the Virgin and the Child statue while the other children are leaving. On the right-hand side, there are two men, most probably two Jews, one depicted with some money and leaning outwards from his shop. He is pointing little Hugh while the other is whispering into his ear. The first illustration, thus, is accordance with the antisemitism of "The Prioress's Tale". The second illustration (60) shows how the beautiful and young Virgin, accompanied by an angel, lays a grain on the tongue of little Hugh, who now seems to be a young man rather than a child, as a result of which although he is supposed to be murdered by the Jews, he still sings Ave Maria until the abbot pulls out the grain from his tongue.

Although the opening page of "The Wife of Bath's Tale" has no borders but just an ornamented initial, the tale has three illustrated pages. The first illustration (112) presents the old hag in rags confronting the knight who is in search of an answer to the question what women want most. The mounted knight has the same disgusting look at the old hag as does his horse. The second and the third illustrations (114-115) are on facing pages illustrating the transformation of the old hag into a young

and beautiful lady. In the second illustration, the knight and the old hag are alone in a room. The knight is standing worried about his marriage to the old hag while the old hag is depicted sitting worried on a bed since the knight does not love her. The last illustration shows the transformed beautiful young lady, who stands naked displaying her beauty, and the hesitant but somehow relieved look of the knight. Evidently, Burne-Jones chose to illustrate the most important scenes of "The Wife of Bath's Tale".

"The Clerk's Tale" is the next illustrated tale that has six illustrated pages as well as some other pages with decorated borders and ornamented initials. The first illustration (127) depicts the opening section of the tale presenting poor Griselda working in her garden and Walter watching her on horseback. The second (129) depicts the wedding preparations of the bare-footed Griselda surrounded by young women in a garden. The third (132) presents Griselda and Walter in front of the stairs inside their palace. Griselda is holding her baby-daughter in her arms in a sorrowful manner while Walter is waiting for her to leave the baby to be murdered in order to prove her love for him. The next one (134) presents Griselda, Walter and their son in a room. Walter is taking their baby-son away as another test for Griselda who is depicted on her knees in a praying position. The following one (136) depicts Griselda alone, again bare-footed, going back to the house of her father, since Walter seems to have decided to marry a noble lady. Walter's palace is depicted behind Griselda in the illustration. The last one (139) shows how the bare-footed Griselda, who is asked to help Walter's wedding preparations, meets her husband and her children without knowing their true identities. Evidently, each illustrated page of "The Clerk's Tale" reveals one of the key moments of the tale.

The next illustrated tale is "The Squire's Tale" which has two illustrated pages. The first illustration (153) depicts the entrance of the unknown knight into the court of King Cambyskan on a brass horse holding a mirror. The members of the court are standing in awe, and looking at the knight and his wondrous brass horse. The second one (156) displays Canacee in a garden talking to a bird. Although "The Squire's Tale" is incomplete in its original, the illustrations of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* still exhibits the important scenes of the tale.

The last illustrated tale is "The Franklin's Tale" which has six illustrated pages. In the first illustration (161), the sorrowful Dorigen is watching the rocks which, she believes, prevent the safe return of her husband Arveragus. The second (163) shows Aurelius revealing his love to Dorigen who is in the company of women in a garden.

The third one (165) depicts how an Oxford clerk magically shows Aurelius scenes in which he is together with Dorigen. The fourth (167) displays Aurelius's return to Dorigen to say that he has achieved removing the rocks off the shore and asks for his reward, that is, her love. There is a statue of Venus in the same room holding a mirror in her right hand and something like an apple in her left hand, which signifies Aurelius's demand for love. In the fifth (169) Dorigen is depicted on her knees on the shore, revealing her husband Arveragus her promise to Aurelius. The last one (170) displays Aurelius making his payment to the Oxford clerk for his magical intervention. Evidently, the more the number of the illustrated pages increase, the better the illustrations reveal the general outline of the tale.

The last illustrated page of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* is the "Envoy" (222), which depicts Chaucer the poet in the company of Lady Poesis in a garden surrounded by trees. Chaucer is holding a book, which might be the *Canterbury Tales*, and Lady Poesis is holding a heart with flames in her left hand, which might be interpreted as a reflection of the praise Chaucer would receive from Lady Poesis in return for his poetry. This last illustrated page of the *Canterbury Tales* section of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* can be regarded as a reflection of Morris's admiration for Chaucer's poetry.

These illustrated tales draw attention to the selection process of Burne-Jones while designing his illustrations, which stands out as an important aspect of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s pictorial quality. "The Miller's Tale," "The Reeve's Tale," "The Cook's Tale," "The Shipman's Tale," "The Tale of Sir Thopas," "The Tale of Melibee," "The Monk's Tale," "The Nun's Priest's Tale," "The Physician's Tale," "The Pardoner's Tale," "The Friar's Tale," "The Summoner's Tale," "The Merchant's Tale," "The Second Nun's Tale," "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale," "The Manciple's Tale" and "The Parson's Tale" have no illustrations but just ornamented initials. Yet, in addition to ornamented initials, the first page of each of these tales, except for "The Cook's Tale" and "The Tale of Sir Thopas," has also a decorated border. Although Morris wanted him to illustrate other tales as well, such as "The Miller's Tale," Burne-Jones found this disgracing, as the illustrations of Chaucer's bawdy tales "*would have spoiled the book*" (qtd. in Peterson 247). Apparently, the Chaucer of Morris and the Chaucer of Burne-Jones were different from each other. Burne-Jones was still guided by the Victorian norms on decency. Therefore, as Peterson notes, "*it would be fair to say his wood-engravings, by ignoring Chaucer's humour and irony, convey a very incomplete interpretation of the poetry*" (248). However, the combination of Burne-Jones's illustrations with Morris's elaborately ornamented borders and initials reveals a

utopian textual space. Burne-Jones said, "*I love to be snugly cased in the borders and buttressed up by the vast initials- and once or twice when I have no big letter under me, I feel tottery and weak*" (qtd. in Life 138). Completing his last illustrations in late 1895, Burne-Jones wrote in one of his letters that the Kelmscott *Chaucer* "*will be all the age does not want*" (qtd. in Peterson 252), which can be interpreted as a reflection of the idea that it was closer to medieval manuscripts as Morris desired. Burne-Jones believed that when finished, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* "*will be a little like a pocket cathedral- so full of design*" (qtd. in Life 138). Burne-Jones reflected his enthusiasm before the end of his work on *Chaucer* in a letter as follows:

> I have worked at it with love, and was almost as sorry as glad when the work was done; but, as you say, what praise shall be given to Morris; and who else could have carried it through, and who else have designed it as he has? A few more weeks now and it will be out, and I almost believe – so childishly hopeful am I – that as many as seven people will be delighted with it. I put it at a high number, but then I feel exhilarated (qtd. in Faulkner 158).

Apparently, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* was beyond the expectations of the Victorian print tradition with its material features. In addition to this material side of Morris's pictorial utopia, the selection process of the text was also important as it would influence the discourse of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. While planning the printing of the book, William Morris had a number of sources ranging from medieval manuscripts such as the Ellesmere Manuscript, which has the illuminations of only the individual pilgrims on horseback, and the manuscript of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* that has a Chaucer portrait. He also benefited much from the image of Chaucer reading at court, which was drawn by Pre-Raphaelite Ford Madox Brown, as well as the earlier printed versions, such as the illustrated second edition of Caxton in 1484, John Bell's edition of 1782 and John Urry's edition of 1721 (Peterson 232-235). As Peterson notes, "*Morris believed that only by peeling off the Renaissance and neo-classical layers of cultural interpretation could he recover something like the Chaucer of the Middle Ages, and this involved both a careful restoration of Chaucer's text (including his spelling) and a return to a more medieval style of typography and ornamentation*" (235). Accordingly, the text of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* is in Middle English, not modernised like the illustrations. Meanwhile, the Chaucer Society was founded by F. J. Furnivall, one of Morris's friends, in 1868. Furnivall edited six manuscripts of Chaucer's works as parallel-text in order to present Chaucer's own words rather than editors' glosses or notes, which appealed much to Morris. Walter

W. Skeat also prepared an edition of Chaucer's works in six-volumes for Oxford Clarendon Press in 1894. Yet, according to Furnivall and Morris, Skeat's main problem was that he added a number of notes, which distracted readers' attention from Chaucer and destroyed his humour (Peterson 236-237).[12] Still, because of its superiority over all previous editions, Skeat's edition, excluding the notes, was used by Ellis and Morris for the Kelmscott *Chaucer* except for the *Canterbury Tales* section (Peterson 237-239). Ellis used the Ellesmere Manuscript for the text of the *Canterbury Tales* (Peterson 238). Morris, Ellis and Burne-Jones directed their attention to Chaucer's text and wanted to avoid all distractions such as notes, glosses, prefaces and introductions. Illustrations were not regarded as a form of distraction because of their narrative qualities. The Kelmscott *Chaucer* was designed to be closer to the medieval version as much as possible. In this respect, the illustrations can be regarded as the equivalents of illuminations in medieval manuscripts.

Until his death on 3 October 1896, Morris worked with great pleasure and enthusiasm on the Kelmscott *Chaucer* despite his failing health. As Faulkner states, even "*[i]n his weakness, he [Morris] was given great pleasure by being shown mediaeval manuscripts*" (177). Although McLean claims that "*he was a rich man, making books for rich men*" contrary to his socialist ideals (10), what Morris aimed at was the utopian pictorial harmony of text, borders, initials and illustrations. Although most of the Kelmscott editions can be regarded as "*expensive limited editions*" and the Kelmscott *Chaucer* "*cannot be seen as a convenient reading copy*" (Faulkner 158), since "*a vellum copy in the pigskin binding weighs more than thirteen pounds*" (Peterson 229), Morris proved how beautiful and aesthetic a printed book might be, presenting also the harmony of paper, ink and binding with the text despite its cost. Finished in four years, there were 425 printed copies of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, contrary to the originally planned 325. Total cost was £7,217 11*s*. Thirteen vellum copies were sold at cash only (Peterson 253).[13] As Sparling notes, the glory of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* lies in the fact that, because of lacking means and methods, it can only be imitated, not reproduced, just as Morris could only imitate, not

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[12] Similarly, Ellis stated that "*[e]very student of Chaucer must be grateful for the labour and learning bestowed on his works by Professor Skeat, but to be a parson without any sense of humour is not an advantage for an editor of Chaucer*" (qtd. in Peterson 237).

[13] As Peterson indicates, "*[t]he 425 copies of the* Chaucer *sold for £20 each, though that price was rising among the dealers before it was published; the thirteen vellum copies went for 120 guineas each. The pigskin binding cost an additional £13. Despite the fact that the entire edition had been sold before the date of publication, the Kelmscott Press ledger reveals that the book made not profit for Morris*" (253).

reproduce, medieval manuscripts (71). Hence, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* can be defined as an original Victorian version of medieval Chaucer.

Consequently, in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Morris creates an imagined textual space in which paper, ink, binding, illustrations, borders, initials and text as a whole create a pictorial utopia. Although his medievalism was escapist, Morris can be regarded as both a reproducer and a consumer of medieval culture as exemplified by the discussions of the illustrated pages from the *Canterbury Tales* section of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. He conveys the idea that the Kelmscott *Chaucer* with its decorated pages, lavishly ornamented by decorations and illustrations, is not only discursively but also materially a utopia, which reveals the idea that utopia, as exemplified by Morris's pictorial utopia the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, is material-discursive both as an end product and as a process and source. Accordingly, medieval manuscripts stand out as a utopian textual space materially and discursively for Morris, which led him to the search of new methods for printing in the Victorian Age.

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