



Playing the Canterbury Tales: The Continuations and Additions

Andrew Higl

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Playing the Canterbury Tales addresses the additions, continuations, and reordering of the Canterbury Tales found in the manuscripts and early printed editions of the Tales. Many modern editions present a specific set of tales in a specific order, and often leave out an entire corpus of continuations and additions. Andrew Higl makes a case for understanding the additions and changes to Chaucer's original open and fragmented work by thinking of them as distinct interactive moves in a game similar to the storytelling game the pilgrims play. Using examples and theories from new media studies, Higl demonstrates that the Tales are best viewed as an "interactive fiction," reshaped by active readers. Readers participated in the ongoing creation and production of the tales by adding new text and rearranging existing text, and through this textual transmission, they introduced new social and literary meaning to the work. This theoretical model and the boundaries between the canonical and apocryphal texts are explored in six case studies: the spurious prologues of the Wife of Bath's Tale, John Lydgate's influence on the Tales, the Northumberland manuscript, the ploughman character, and the Cook's Tale. The Canterbury Tales are a more dynamic and unstable literary work than usually encountered in a modern critical edition.

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