

The Canterbury tales: a western canvas in an eastern frame

Abstract

Throughout the tales of Chaucer the reader shall notice that almost every poem mentions the east thought its lines, the thing which, for sure, strengthens its subjects and the narrative power of Chaucer. The writer shall take a cadastral study of the mentality of almost all the tales characters of the twenty three tales of the book *The Canterbury Tales*. The research examines thoroughly each tales of these to take the core out of it which is the east. No doubt that every poem proves to be a canvas of an eastern frame by itself and that these poems reflect the narrative power and the magic style of introducing each poem which has its own effect on the readers of literature. We come to know that each poem has become a complete authentic narration about the news of the previous nations who once fought and once reconciled. The east stands there in most of the tales where each tale, as we shall see, is considered as a historical pamphlet about the mentioned countries of the book. The maturity of Chaucer reflects itself through the news of those who were before us in a rhymed style which provides more beauty and music to the ear of the readers.

Volume 6 Issue 3 - 2018

Jamil Al-Asmar

University of Palestine, Palestine

Correspondence: Jamil Al-Asmar, University of Palestine, Al-Zahra City Gaza- Palestine, Palestine, Tel 00970599903112, Email jamilpoetry@hotmail.com

Received: February 20, 2018 | **Published:** May 23, 2018

Introduction

As the author I would like to inaugurate this paper with my own feeling towards this prominent English poet and philosopher, who enriched English literature with valuable and precious material, the material which made English literature stand among the world-literature, unshaken by the wind of nations, or at least stand among others' literature. Here I am going to attune the readers' ears with this short quatrain that had been publish in my book of poetry (2017):

To G. Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer! You have stood for the west
As a tiger who guards his Youngs from being lost
Your *Tales* have gained all a literary dignity, best
You are, to the rest of the world, a generous host.¹

The East, thus, has, along ages, been the warm lap for the West, the former has practiced the role of the pitiful mum to the latter, but this relation does not, from time to time, void of cool disobedience where the son rebels against his own mum. Such is the relation between the east, and in particular the near east or the so-called Middle-East, and the West: never cuts, never washes up, never ends, for both cannot enjoy their being without needing each other. The relation, I am going to focus on is the literary relation; holding the roots of this deep relation by repainting a canvas of this relation with new color, breath and high morale trying to authenticate this relation through the lines of poetry of the father of English literature (poetry) as he was known or perhaps until this moment. It is the *Canterbury Tales* (1387) of Geoffrey Chaucer (1330-1400) which is, as my title suggests: a western canvas in an eastern frame.

Chaucer's tales will remain as a vivid insightful look throughout the ages of English literature particularly poetry. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are the window that overlooks the east, the east which nourishes his subjects, they are the decorated colors which dye his production. His tales proved to be that the east has ever been the song of the west,

its beauty and an old speakable gorgeous scene for humanity. The east is registered as the adjacent land to Europe with which an old speakable relation used to tie this exotic east to the old continent. A relation that has many branches of life. Not only the east is seen, to the Europeans, from an esthetic point of view plays the first priority but also economically, socially, politically and religiously, the east is considered the cradle for Christianity as well.

The east of Jesus Christ (pbuh), the east of many other prophets and messengers of Allah to humanity, where the Sepulcher Church is, where the Church of Nativity is, where the Dome of the Rock is, where the Al-Aqsa Mosque is, where The Jordan is, and where many other places of importance for the western world as well as the eastern world are. All can be found untouched as it was and will continue holding the same holiness and importance to the people of the universe. The east that had been the place of cure and antidotes of all the diseases of man, where the Victorian took once the east as a hospital for curing their diseases and a house of hospitality as guests. Therefore, Chaucer was never far from the scene and that the modern Europeans will continue pronouncing their need to the east although newly the compass pendulums deviated from their original tracks where the new Europeans show their teeth towards the Arab nation and in particular after giving Palestine as a gift to the scattered Jews all over the world after kicking the Palestinians form their homeland for the sake of settling the Jews instead.

The Chaucerian east is the same east of William Shakespeare's and Christopher Marlow's and many other writers of the modern age of English literature. The importance of the east can be detected in Professor Jamil Al-Asmar's book: *The East, The Face of Time and The School of Man*² published in UK. However his short poem goes as follows:

It is said

It has been said that the East is the face of the time,
And the east, through its depth, is the school of man

This you are going to see when you entrust my rhyme
You will hanker for my speech, my speech that can.²

The reader may find his quest through this new quatrain in which Al-Asmar predicts that the east forms the face of time as well, for in this short poem the author shows the east as a halo of light and a place of wisdom, and finally the east as a witness to the start of humanity on earth, however his second poem goes as the following:

Face of time¹

The east witnesses the human developing action
Here is the halo of light, to wisdom no sanction
The east witnessed man's bones as they initiated
Attended them as they were courageously baited.³

Not only the east in Al-Asmar's view is the face of time but also the school of man where man in this school is educated in life, it is the school of man along the ages of humanity since Abel and Cain, it is the first school erected for man.

School of man

The school of man is ever erected in the east
Under the dome of the sky that shades minds
Ever an open divan for the knowledge of man
A person finds nothing anywhere, here he finds.³

However Al-Asmar shows not only that the east is the place where the west nourishes but also he invites all to settle in the east for more beauty in life and forgiveness, for more smoothness in life and or acceptance here and the hereafter. However the few verses of Al-Asmar go as:

The face of time²

If man has a face, a face of which he is proud
Its roots are ever to be, in the east, but found
Man leaves time, and time leaves man's will:
Wherever you are, here come, dwell and still.³

An eastern canvas

From the very second page of the *Canterbury Tales*, we sense the importance of the east to the west along the ages of man. For Egypt and Alexandria are always there in English literature; that never a written literature was done without Egypt, Syria or the so called now the Middle East. But in this first scene of the east we are told that Chaucer's knight, the brave fighter who shared restoring the city of Alexandria to the domain of the eager west. The knight fought there in Granada, then he was in Africa to raid Benamarin and in Anatolia where he fought Ayas and Attalia. Not only was the knight in North Africa but along the Mediterranean coast. There he fought at least "fifteen battles". The knight in this context forms a canvas of the east where we find him fighting in the east to dominate the Turks too.

In his poetry: *The Canterbury Tales* and in group A where the first poem is *The Prologue*, Chaucer likes to introduce his knight from the very second page as a generous, valiant, courageous and all daring

man. This knight according to Chaucer had done much and "nobly" for his country. He never hesitates to fight for Christianity in general, particularly his battles with the Turks who had the long hand then in the whole area. The area which is so-called now the Middle East. His knight fought where Christians used to be over the "heathen places"⁴ that is to say that the Christians who used to live among the Moslem Arabs in the Arab Countries and Turkey nowadays, were protected by the sword of this knight.

Chaucer in his Prologue feels proud taking Alexandria once from the hands of the Arabs. The knight of Chaucer is an honorable person who was above all nations where he was able to fight for Christianity even in Europe, in "Prussia" and in "Lithuania", in Granada the knight witnessed the fall of Algeciras, the knight reached North Africa, and in Anatolia he fought. Chaucer's knight never hesitate to assault the Mediterranean coasts from the eastern side. There he fought for the sake of Christianity at Tramisene, and there this distinguished knight fought several battles against the "heathen Turk"

When we took Alexandria, he was there
He often sat at table in the chair ...
No Christian man so often, of his rank
When, in Granada, Algeciras rank sank
Under assault, he had been there,
And in North Africa, raiding Benamarin;
In Anatolia he had been as well
And fought
For all along the Mediterranean coast
He had embarked with many a noble host
In fifteen mortal battles he had been...

For him against another heathen Turk⁴ From these details we come to know that Chaucer stands as if a defender of the Christian world, we never feel but as Chaucer a clergy man or a higher in rank even. From the very second page of this prologue Chaucer puts us close to the east, the east that had once, stood against the Europe in the dawn of Islam. So the reader imagines himself on the shore of Alexandria and Turkey. The east in this first extract is put before us as anxious readers, it is put before us easily with no need to travel to the east to see the places of the knight's battles, or to be aware of the outcome of those battles; for Chaucer shortened the way before us to live the events of the old time without dropping any tiny details from the eastern scenes. Chaucer in his prologue put his doctor as the most learned among all 'no one alive could talk as well as he did'.⁴ Concerning the field of specialization, Chaucer puts him equal to Hippocrates, the well-known physician of the Greeks. The poet could not move with his doctor without mentioning the east, the cradle of wisdom as the west understood it. Chaucer attunes his readers' ears that his physician stood equal to his counterparts in the east such as Averroes and Avicenna. Those Arab physicians of the old time who filled the world with their successful efforts in the field of medicine ever found for man before these Arabs intelligence.

A Doctor too emerged as we proceed;
No one alive could talk as well as he did

.....
And what Hippocrates and Rufus knew

And Dioscorides, now dead and gone,

Galen and Rhazes, Hali, Serapion

Avverroes, Avicenna, Constatantine..... (Chaucer, 14)

In this way we feel that Chaucer testified the importance of the east to the west throughout this canvas, that puts the east very near to the western readers with no exaggeration or any touch of impossibility at all. The east is given to the west as it is: its beauty; its weather; its antidotes and its innocent people among whom Chaucer's heroes moved and settled and sometimes hospitalized. However, one of the tales was the tale of the woman of Bath city who was a worthy one. This woman completed the eastern scene by visiting Jerusalem:

And she had thrice been to Jerusalem

Seen many strange rivers and passed over them.
(Chaucer, 15)

Chaucer pictures the east in general by testifying that the orient is ever bright with the first ray of the day, as if Chaucer wants to say that the east first receives the light of the day before Europe, he wants to say that the east is ever bright, and that visiting Jerusalem is a must for every Christian, as if Chaucer urges the readers, the western readers, to launch a visit there in the near east to ladle from the holy land, the cradle of the west:

Sets all the orient laughing with the light. (Chaucer, 43)

Chaucer's prince Accite, in the knight tale, was so strong that he bore a heavy spear with which he used to wield his enemies wherever they were particularly:

His Turkish bow and quiver of burnished gold, (Chaucer, 80)

Then *The Miller's Tale*, too, is never without an eastern flavors, for in the miller's coarse and ribald story we sense deception and prediction of a second flood that is going to be worse than Noah's. So the east is present in all Chaucer's moving people pilgrims to Kent:

I have found out by my astrology,

And looking at the moon when it was bright,

That Monday is to fall in torrent, such a scud

When the carpenter knew that his wife was going to be drawn, his neighbor advised him to go to Solomon's advice saying:

In wise old Solomon you'll find the verse

Who takes advice shall never fare the worse

.....

Have not you heard how Noah was saved too. (Chaucer, 97)

He is Noah the prophet who had to guide and preach to the religion of Allah, the One Diet to be worshipped there over the east. The story that is mentioned in the Bible as well as in the Koran:

.....when Noah tried to whip

His wife (who would not come) on board the ship. (Chaucer, 98)

Noah urging his wife saying that the thing

.....can not post pone

The thing; it is coming soon, as I was saying:

It calls for haste, not preaching or delaying. (Chaucer, 98)

Noah witnessed the scene when the flood is finished and those who died who and those who remained to continue their lives as usual, those kind people who were with Noah as obedient to God's command. It is a pure eastern scene. Noah was also destined to live as:

The waters will abate and flow away

Round nine o'clock upon the following day. (Chaucer, 98)

Chaucer, in this tale, challenges anyone who can find any person graceful as Noah:

.....unless you're mad

To find as great as a grace as Noah had. (Chaucer, 98)

However the saved people on board shouted the next day when the sun rises producing a new morning, they shout:

Good morning! I can see you well. It's day!

We shall be lords for all the rest of life

Of all the world, like Noah and his wife. (Chaucer, 99)

However it is considered an eastern story, mentioned in the Koran too and in the Old Testament, although the Koran narrates the story differently. However the reader has to realize that the whole scene of Noah's flood and ark is a pure eastern view; its weather; its people of the brown complexions; its sun which is ever bright; it is an eastern atmosphere which looks exotic to the western readers who are much familiar with snow falling and cloudy weather and windy. Thus, we find ourselves in the east among its living people who usually export tranquility to the west, who always lacks the peaceful life of the eastern people.

Not only Egypt which is ever present in Chaucer's writing but Syria too. The country has its share among Chaucer's lines of the *Canterbury Tales*, for we find the first word in The Man of Laws tale in Syria:

In Syria once there dwelt a company

Of wealthy merchants, serious, straight and wise,

That had a far-flung trade in spicery

And cloth-of-gold and satins of rich dyes

All serviceable stuff that could surprise

With novelty; and business was a pleasure

Dealing with them and bartering for their treasure.
(Chaucer, 126)

Again the east is pronouncing itself in Chaucer's tales where we come to know more about the relation of the east with west along the ages of man on earth, we come to know the value the east offers to the west through the material the west is in need for, such as spice, and even the 'cloth-of-gold'. Chaucer tells us that business is pleasure particularly when we deal with such quality of merchants who are 'serious' 'straight and wise' It is a canvas which represents the west. However the reader can meet the wealthy Syrian merchants who

sailed to Rome where they met Constance, the daughter of the Roman Empire:

These Syrian merchants started off anew
For Syria, Having seen this blissful maiden
Happy in this as in the goods they trade in
Pursued their business as they did before
And lived contented; I can say no more. (Chaucer, 127)

When these merchants returned home they met the young Syrian Sultan who listened well to the reports of his merchants about that daughter of Rome who in his turn, shows his admiration:

It happened that these merchants stood in grace
With the young Sultan. Their return
.....
They had to tell of wonders seen and heard. (Chaucer, 127)

The lady of the west entraps the eastern Sultan, who summoned his council for meeting to decide the future of Constance. The Sultan decided that:

There was no knowing how to save his life
Except by taking Constance for his wife (Chaucer, 128)

Chaucer would criticize the nation of Islam for allowing such a Sultan to marry what he likes to marry pretending that his religion allows such a union with more than one wife.

To ask a Christian prince to entertain
Thoughts of alliance under the dispensation
Mahomet blessedly had given their nation. (Chaucer, 129)
Then after a long debate the Sultan was decided to marry her:
The Sultan with his peers in their pride
And all his lieges were to undergo
Their christening.....(Chaucer, 129)

Then we came to know that Constance fled away from the Sultan's oppression, wearing the cross that gives her protection, she could:

For many a year and day this creature fled
Upon the Grecian sea, and reached the strait
Beyond Morocco, so her fortunes led. (Chaucer, 136)

Chaucer implied the way she could reach the western shores where the miracle of Johana is similar to hers when he was thrown alive from the fish's maw at the shores of Nineveh in Iraq today.

And if not murdered at the feast, what law
Kept Constance then from drowning in the sea
And who kept Jonah in the fish's maw
Till he was spouted up at Nineveh? (Chaucer, 136)

Here the reader finds himself as if reading the *Arabian Nights* while moving from one eastern story to another. This is true of Chaucer who

enriches the readers with many eastern stories, all of which have taken place in the east. It is the same hand that rescued the Israelis escaping the oppression of pharaoh of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea safely:

Who kept the Hebrew folk from being drawn,
Crossing the sea dry-footed, safe and sound (Chaucer, 136)

From this tale we came to know and understand that the east forms the whole setting of the *Man of Law's Tale* where the east is present almost in every stanza of the tale.

Chaucer goes deeper and deeper into the east, the vast theater of the western thoughts. Hence, he mentions in many places, in his *The Canterbury Tales*, and many prophets and messengers of the three main religions on earth. Therefore, Mohammad (already mentioned above) and Moses have also a place in his divan particularly his *Prioress's Tale*, where the first word in the tale, too, is Asia and the east the birth place of Jesus the Christ who was encountered by the following Jews to kill him:

Where there were Jews, supported by the crown
For the foul lucre of their usury
Hateful to Christ and all his company. (Chaucer, 171)

Chaucer here wants to show us that those Jews were busy in making profit even if it was on the account of Jesus Christ's life. This comes clear in the above lines where the issue of usury and hateful to the person of Christ pronounces itself to the reader, and somewhere in the same poem, Chaucer introduced the Jews, in the east, as:

O cursed folk of Herod come again.
Of what avail your villainous intent?
Murder will out, and nothing can prevent
God's honour spreading, even from such seed;
The blood cries out upon your cursed deed. (Chaucer, 173)

However, what is mentioned above is still an eastern scene where the Jews tricks and cheatings are clear. The eastern Jews are according to Chaucer: 'villainous' and 'murderers' where Chaucer shows that their (Jews) 'seed' is so bad and that tier intention to kill the Christ was so 'cursed deed'. Yes, all of the up mentioned news of the east tightens the relation of the west to the east. This, too, reflects a factual relation that connect the east to the west.

Chaucer brings us a new phase of the eastern ties to the west where, this time, in *The Monk's Tale* where he again alludes to Syria and Damascus in particular:

He then in Eden was allowed to linger
Now called Damascus- and had power at need
Over all paradise, saved the decreed
And single tree prohibited.... (Chaucer, 190)

The reader finds himself face to face with the legendary story that had been prevailing throughout Europe in the middle ages, the legend is that of Samson when he is a prisoner of the Philistines and their lords. Samson in the prison in Gaza decided to pull down the pillars that were supporting the roof of the temple where he was prisoned where he and his enemies were killed.

And then at Gaza on a certain night
 By force rent apart the city gate
 Bore off the pieces on his back, in spite
 Of what the Philistines in fierce debate
 Could do, and then he set them up in state,
 High on hill. O Samson, dear thy worth! (Chaucer, 191)

This scene, however, adds much to the image of the east in the readers' minds. It fairly put the western readers closer to the east throughout these legendary relations at the dawn of history, which means that such a relation is deep rooted between east and west through literature.

However the eastern scenes are following each other in *The Canterbury Tales*, the thing which enhances writing this paper, for the writer sees that it is a fact that the divan is full of eastern implications. This time we may divert to mention an old leader fighter of the ancient world of a Mesopotamian ruler Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia (605-562) B.C., who built the walls of Babylon. He captured Jerusalem and carried the Jews into his country as captivity. However, Chaucer delighted the readers' ears showing them a living canvas of the east while staying at his own place in the west. He says through *The Monk's Tale*:

The mighty throne, the precious stores of treasure,
 The glorious scepter and diadem
 The once belonged to king Nebuchadnezzar.....
Twice he took Jerusalem
 And from the Temple, bore the vessels plighted
 To God, and to his realm he carried them
 In Babylon, where he gloried and delighted. (Chaucer, 194)

Chaucer delights the readers with more news about the east, which really exposes it as a canvas with eastern frame. This time he supplies his readers with the news of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylonia who was killed in the sack of Babylon (538 B.C.).

He had a son, Belshazzar was his name,
 Who held the throne after his father's day

 His kingdom taken from him and divided
 My father took in his prosperity
 Out of the Temple of Jerusalem Chaucer, 195)

So as we see from the above mentioned lines that Jerusalem, Gaza, and Babylon are there present in Chaucerian tales. The three ancient cities of the east reflect the real and living scene of these eastern cities of antiquity.

In the east or in the ancient east we read that two great hard tough women appeared, it is the fact that the first one appeared in Egypt where the west made of her his own song to be sung until this day. The Egyptian queen is called Cleopatra, whose name has become the titles of many production in English literature; this name was the crown that Shakespeare had worn and many others followed him. In Arabic

literature too, her name was the light which enlightened the many titles in Arabic particularly Ahmad Shawqi (1868-1932) the Egyptian poet.

The second woman appeared, after the former, in Syria whose name was *Zenobia*, also the west made of her his preferable song which is being sung until today. *Zenobia*, the queen of *Palmyra* lived in the third century A.D. She ruled the Eastern Roman Empire, and her aggressive foreign policy made the Roman general Aurelian wage war on her. He achieved victory over her, and put an end to her power, though he spared her life. Anyhow to go back to Chaucer who sang of the latter woman *Zenobia* throughout his famous *The Canterbury Tales*. This shows that it is a fact that *The Canterbury Tales* were a western production with an eastern frame, the thing which increased its beauty in the eyes of the western readers and the eastern too. However, we read in *The Monk's Tale* that *Zenobia* ruled over *Palmyra* as they called it in the Persian, while in Arabic language it is called *Tadmour* in Syria today:

Palmyra (say the Persians) had a queen,
Zenobia; one counted to possess
 A noble nature, and in arms so keen
 And hard, none could match her, they profess.
 Her lineage and her breeding were no less
 Than of a Persian royally descended;
 I will not call her first in loveliness
 But say her beauty could not be amended. (Chaucer, 197)

Zenobia, in addition to her beauty, she was intelligent and of an affluent tongue that she could talk in Roman language; Greek, Arabic and Egyptian. She fought for her dignity, she showed her patriotism of the highest level a woman never knew before:

When Odenathus died, she mightily
 Held all those kingdoms in her sovereign hand,
 And was so cruel to her enemy.....

She was so solid in war that no king could drag her to any losing battle, she stood against all those who were mentioned in Chaucer's tale, in which she appeared so strong a lady:

And neither Claudius the Emperor
 Nor his successor Gallienus ran
 The danger of provoking her to war
 No, nor Armenian or Egyptian,
 Nor Syrian either or Arabian
 Dared take the field against her in fight. (Chaucer, 200-201)

This Roman general Aurelian (mentioned above) wage war against her, conquered her and ended her power. However she is a lady who represents the east well. The Chaucerian readers moved now from Egypt and Palestine to *Palmyra* in Syria today. His readers live the actual scene in the Syrian Desert where this great lady ruler once dominated all kingdoms and empires around her. However her story is continued in Chaucer's tale, the tragic end of such an eastern power, an eastern character who stood along with great world leaders such

as the Roman emperors and Mesopotamian leaders mentioned above. Anyhow her story goes as the following:

For when Aurelian came up on the scene
With Rome beneath his government and sway,
He planned a mighty vengeance on the queen,
And, gathering his legions, took his way
Against Zenobia; to be brief, I say
He routed her, enslaved and brought her home
In fetters with her children, there they lay! (Chaucer, 200)

Alexandria again appears in The Canterbury Tales where we meet Peter King of Cyprus who occupied the city:

O Peter King of Cyprus, fine and true
That conqueredst Alexandria by the right
Of arms, and didest woe on heathens too, (Chaucer, 201)

Here the reader comes to know about the east more and more, and how it was the battle field of the western people against the east. The reader comes to know that the west never stand still with no wars with the eastern people. We come to realize that all the above mentioned places or cities or the landscapes all together form this western canvas of an eastern frame. However we come back to Syria to meet another king there. Chaucer, through *The Monk's Tale*, wants to tell his readers about the Syrian king Antiochus who ruled Syria before Christ (175-164 B.C). The tales describes him:

What need to tell of King Antiochus?
Or to describe his royal panoply,
His overweening pride, his venomous
Ill-doing? There was never such as he. (Chaucer, 207)

Again the readers come to know more about Jerusalem which was to be deleted from being as proved on the tongue of Nicanor and Timothy, that is because of the hatred to the Jews. However Chaucer tells us that these leaders were prevented from achieving that:

He made his chariot ready and when seated
He vowed and swore that they should all be treated
To something of his spite, that they should rue it;
Jerusalem he said should be deleted. (Chaucer, 207)

Jerusalem again which is never absent from the scene, the scene that is loved by the western readers who nourish reading about the holy city and the mother city of their religion. However, the readers are diverted to read about the great Greek leader Alexander the Great who was famous in the west as well as in the east:

The story of Alexander is so famous
He conquered the wide world from west to east
By force of arms, and as his fame increased
Men gladly sued to have him for their friend
He brought to naught the pride of man and beast

Wherever he came, as far as the world's end. (Chaucer, 208-209)

The east is never absent from Chaucer's tales that he, almost in every poem, mentions the east, for the east, as I said before, was the pilgrimage place of the westers along the ages of man on earth. King Darius, this time, the great king of Persia (521-485 B.C) has a portion in *The Monk's Tale*, the king extended his empire. He, too, began a war between the Persians and the Greeks. This king was defeated by the Greeks where the battle fields of those compacts were in the sunny east:

What praise were it to him though I should tell
Of great Darius and a thousand more
Kings, princes, generals, dukes and earls as well
Conquered by him and brought to grief in war? (Chaucer, 209)

The readers will have no single page of *The Canterbury Tales* without refereeing to the east or of a new hint to the east. However, the scene is still in Persia where a new reference to a new King Cyrus:

Whom even Persian Cyrus held in dread
Was yet cut short in all his pride and show (Chaucer 2110)

Then a new hint is given to the east through the Nun's Priest's Tale when Chaucer refers to The Egyptian king Pharaoh:

Look at lord Pharaoh, king of Egypt! Look
At what befell his butler and his cook.
.....
But those who study history of course
Met many dreams that set them wondering
What about Croesus too, the Lydian king. (Chaucer, 222)

Then again the readers find a new reference to the east through the description of the host in the tale of the host in the *Nun's priest's Tale*:

He needs no dyes imported from the east
Or Portugal. God luck to you, Sir Priest. (Chaucer, 231)

The Arabs scholars also are never absent from Chaucer's tales, for I believe, this the third time, or more than that that Chaucer refers to one of the Arabs' scholars Avicenna who lived between (A.D.980-1037) who is famous for his contribution to the knowledge of medicine as well as poisons. However Chaucer's speech goes as follow:

There is, in Avicenna's long relation
Concerning poison and its operation. (Chaucer, 256)

Among the most important places that Chaucer concentrated throughout his Tales is Palestine, for Palestine is the holy place where many prophets and messengers of God were born lived and died, and many lived for a considerable time on the Palestinian land, particularly Jesus Christ (pbuh). This time the canvas is to include the northern Palestine, where Jesus visited the Village of Cana in the Galilee:

That as Christ only went on one occasion
To grace a wedding- in Cana of Galilee-

He taught me by example there to see
That is wrong to marry more than once.

Consider, too, how sharply, for nonce

He spoke, rebuking the Samaritan. (Chaucer, 258-259)

Chaucer in his *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* wants to tell us that Claudius Ptolemy who lived in Alexandria in the second century A.D., was an astronomer of the second century whose work was corrupted of an Arabic origin called *Almagest*, in Arabic the measurement, that shows rules and laws of an astronomer should be in or work accordingly. Thus the origin is pure Arabic:

By other men shall suffer their correction

So Ptolemy has said, in this connection. (Chaucer, 263)

Again in the same tale Chaucer won't be far with his readers from an eastern reference. Not far from Palestine, but on its eastern border of the River Jordan and the Persian King Darius. However the Jordan is considered holy for Jesus had taken a bath in that water, it is up to this moment the Christians keep some water from that River at home for religious purpose. Anyhow Chaucer's lines go as the following:

He died when I came back from Jordan Stream

And he lies buried under the rood-beam,

Albeit that his tomb can scare supply us

With such a show as that of King Darius. (Chaucer, 271)

The western world knows that Abraham was the father of humanity after Adam and Noah. In *The Friar's Tale* Chaucer would remind his readers of the great prophet who witnessed many miracles in his time, the thing which strengthen his belief in the Almighty God the Omnipotent:

And God, who in the image of Himself

Created man, guide us to Abraham's lap

And make this Summoner here a decent chap. (Chaucer, 302)

However, the story of Abraham and his miracles show the power of God, all that were done and shown in the East, even Abraham himself was an eastern prophet and a messenger. Not only the story of the Israelis is mentioned in the Bible but also in the holy Koran, here we find Chaucer giving a share of the same story crowning his tale with the story of Moses and his bother Aaron and the rest of the Israelis in Sinai desert after being dismissed by the Egyptian King Pharaoh, for forty years as astray and fugitives in this desert, the desert which is considered holy by the Israelis and the Arab Moslems, the desert which is situated in the middle of the near east:

Moses had fasted forty days and nights

Before Almighty God, upon the heights

Of Sinai, came down to speak with him,

And with the an empty stomach, frail of limb

Moses received the law Jehovah drew

With his own finger; and Elijah too

When in Mount Horeb, ere he could have speech. (Chaucer, 309)

Then in the same tale *The Summoner's Tale*, Chaucer again alludes to Cyrus king of Persia and Iraq and the war affairs in the region. A reader, before these lines, imagines himself standing of the edge of those battle-fields that were fought among great nations of the ancient time to the extent that the reader does not need to be there to see, for Chaucer drew and colored well the eastern wars scenes perfectly, here we are:

Cyrus the Persian was an evil-liver

And given to anger; he destroyed the river

Gyson in which his horse was drowned, upon

His expedition to take Babylon,

That river in his rage was so diminished

Women could wade it by the time he'd finished. (Chaucer, 314)

Even when Chaucer alludes to Adam and Eve in the *Merchant's Tale*, he refers obviously to the east where as it is said that Adam and Eve met first in the east after descending from Heaven, where obviously the waves of human race spread from there and not from Alaska for sure, therefore the reader is exactly reading while imagining himself among the sunny fields of the east.

When God created Adam, flesh and bone,

And saw him belly-naked and alone,

He of His endless thus began:

'Let us now make a help-meet for this man

Like to himself.' And He created Eve. (Chaucer, 359)

Even Elisha and Elijah mentioned in the same tale were also eastern king and queen (P.315). Then again Chaucer refers to Solomon the eastern prophet born, lived and died in the east, this prophet took a good portion in *The Canterbury Tales* which means that as Solomon is mentioned the east is mentioned automatically:

To set aside the word of Solomon

For this is what he said for everyone:

'Do all things by advice' his saying went'

'And then you'll have no reason to repent' (Chaucer, 363)

Chaucer, nearly, left no place in the east whether in the near east of the far east without coming across, for example in *The Squair's Tale* the land of Tartary is present too:

At Tzarev in the land of Tartary

There dwelt a king at war with Muscovy

Which brought the death of many a doughty man

This noble king was known as Cambuskan, (Chaucer, 389)

The name as it seems shows the other name for the Tartary leader, fighter and king Genghis Khan, although the account of the poem incident shows his grandson *Kubla Khan*. Chaucer later on in the same tale calls him:

The King of India and Araby, (Chaucer, 392)

Then Chaucer happily would refer again to the Arabian and the eastern scientists as Alhazen the Arabian astronomer who died A.D.1039, however Chaucer listed Aristotle with the Arabian astronomer where both have the same level of importance towards giving universal information that belong necessarily to human being on earth:

By Aristotle and by Alhazen

And Witelo and other learned men, (Chaucer, 395)

Then again a new reference to Solomon and Moses and Canace the daughter of Cambuskan the Tartar king. In this way the reader does not leave the eastern battle-fields more than few pages to meet the wisest prophet of the world: king and Prophet Solomon. Solomon here is kept as a reference when wisdom is needed by the hero or the heroin who were to move in the eastern atmosphere:

And then they spoke about the magic ring

Given to Canace, a marvelous thing

Concluding thus, 'None such, as one supposes

Was ever known; but Solomon and Moses. (Chaucer, 395)

Again Chaucer alludes, in part (1) of *The Squire's Tale* to the same eastern prominent king of the Tartar. Here in this way the reader does not either need any history book, for the author presents himself as a historian too:

It was the hour of the ascending sign

Of Royal Leo with his Aldiran

And this great Tartar king, this Cambuskan, (Chaucer, 396)

In part II of *The Canon's Tale* the east appears again, this time in Iraq where the old city Nineveh is mentioned as an antique city of the history. Not only Chaucer appears as a poet, philosopher and a writer but also as archeological whom I describe as an eastern moving museum.

There is a canon going up and down

Amongst us, one who could infect a town?

As large as Nineveh and Rome spread flat (Chaucer, 461)

And finally in *The Parson's Tale* Chaucer ended his delightful masterpiece crowning Jerusalem the capital of the east, the capital of all religions on earth, the capital of humanity and the capital of the whole earth: 'that perfect, glorious pilgrimage' that is called the celestial, to the Heavenly Jerusalem' (Chaucer, 487)

However, whenever Jesus Christ is mentioned, it means that the East is there present in full weight, for it is the east, the Christ home and dwelling, particularly Palestine which is his cradle. So, we can infer that Palestine is just like a jewelry in the middle of the necklace, even in all European literature where Jesus is mentioned Palestine is there as the birth place of the Christ peace be upon him (pbuh).

Conclusion

True it is then that *The Canterbury Tales* were really crowned with an eastern frame, the inherited frame from Chaucer and his

western ancestors who made of the east their superior ideal field of life, its philosophy and its logic and its real life that had been the source of gratification to their arid hearts; the thirsty hearts for knowledge and science and life projects of both sides: the spiritual as well as the physical channels of it throughout the ages of man on earth. As we have seen throughout the tales of Chaucer almost every poem mentions the east thought its lines, the thing which, I believe, strengthens its subjects and the narrative power of Chaucer, yes the narrative power and the magic style of introducing each poem which has its own effect on the readers of literature, for the readers never fed up reading the news of the previous nations who once fought and once reconciled, who once occupied others' land and once restored the land to its original owners, the news of those who were before us in a rhymed style which provides more beauty and music to the ear of the readers.

As we have noticed, reading these tales, that the east is ever present in the west for the latter finds its quest in the former, the philosophical quest of man on earth, the quest of religious entity and its importance to the Christian world, where Jesus Christ was born and lived and crucified or raised to the sky. The east is the theater of all these news and hypothesis. Therefore, these tales have become the enjoying history of nations on earth on the tongue of a poet not historian which adds beauty to its original literal beauty, which means that the readers' rhymed historical quests can be found among the lines of these tales. Anyhow, the reader of this book *The Canterbury Tales* never felt the taste of rest, for he or she spent his or her time moving, watching, listening, arguing, debating, giving and taking advice, the reader never have a time to wipe out the sweat from his brow running and panting to reach the delightful places of the east, of which not only Chaucer sang of but the rest of the western writers followed the same ideology of praising the east for its richness of culture, religions as the cradle, not only of the Arabs, but also the cradle of all humanity on earth.

Anyhow, I may end up with a short poem by Al-Asmar in which the poet describes the feeling of the western traveler:

A traveler finds his warm quest in the East;

It is our clinic and our spiritual love at least,

Beauty overflows upon us, and upon all beast;

Quicken thy steps towards the world's feast.^{1,4}

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflict of interest

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

References

1. Jamil YA. The East- The Cultural Pilgrimage of Man. United Publisher. 2017. p. 28.
2. Jamil YA. The East, the Face of Time and the School of Man. ASRPC Publishing Company; 2017. p.4.
3. Chaucer G. The Canterbury Tales, (1387). *Penguin Classics*. 1977. p. 4
4. Jamil YA. The East, the Cradle of Wisdom. Nova Explore Publication; 2017. p.43