A Popular Change from an Old Man to a Young Girl:  
The BBC’s *Pardoner’s Tale* (2003) 

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Adaptation, as Julie Sanders defines it, is an attempt to invite new audiences and readers by re-presenting the source text in a simpler, more easily comprehensible manner. Among film adaptations of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, BBC’s 2003 reimagining provides unsurpassed sensitivity to modern issues, and a new relevance. Tony Ground narrates a modern tale intertwined with gothic elements and sex abuse scandals. Compared to the original text, BBC’s *The Pardoner’s Tale* leaves its reader not with the simple conclusion that avarice can be ultimately conquered, but with the complexities motivating a heinous crime. With the emphasis on the transformation of a character from a pallid old man to a florid young girl, this essay aims to discuss how the reframing of a medieval tale through popular culture sheds light on Chaucer’s reception and adaptation in the twenty-first century.

Pasolini argued that it was impossible to make films about the past, idealized or otherwise, because the past had been irreparably corrupted by the present.¹

—Kevin J. Harty

Everyone thinks they know the *Canterbury Tales*. Yet my experience of working on the Tales told me that no one can really remember much about them.²

—Jonathan Myerson

Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* have been adapted into numerous films, musicals, operas, and telefilms, including the BBC’s latest reproduction in 2003. Reinterpretation or re-production can either afford an alternative point of view from the

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original text, or invite new audiences and readers to approach the work through a simple and comprehensible medium. Since the fifteenth century, when the Canterbury Tales were in print and widely read, the focus of Chaucer scholarship has shifted from studies of the text to include the representation of the original story in the age of globalization. The BBC’s Canterbury Tales (2003), a postmodern retelling of Chaucer’s stories, aims to reflect ‘life in the new age’, and explores multifarious issues in twenty-first century Britain, ranging from eagerness for entertainment circles in the Miller’s tale, a successful actress’ search for a soul mate in the Wife of Bath’s tale, to the problems of immigrants in the Man of Law’s tale. Eliminating The General Prologue, each of six episodes of the BBC’s Canterbury Tales begins with a voice-over which provides a sketch of the whole episode. Among the six one-off episodes, The Pardoner’s Tale retains its motif of humanity’s greed for human treasure, and is also adapted into ‘a ghost story exploring the causes, effects, and civil responses to sociopathic behavior’. In Chaucer’s story, three drunken, ignorant revelers are informed by a pallid Old Man of where they can find Death. Tony Grounds, the writer of the BBC’s The Pardoner’s Tale, repeats the pattern of three rioters who slaughter one another. Death is not specifically portrayed in Chaucer’s tale, nor in Tony Grounds’ film. The old man and the young girl, respectively, play a crucial role in the representation of Death.

5 Myerson.
6 The six episodes include: The Miller’s Tale; The Wife of Bath; The Knight’s Tale; The Sea Captain’s Tale; The Pardoner’s Tale and The Man of Law’s Tale. Without explaining why these particular six stories were chosen, producer Kate Bartlett, along with a series of screenwriters, hoped to appeal to audiences unfamiliar with Chaucer or the Canterbury Tales. The duration of the series’ broadcast was from the 11th September to 16th October, 2003. The Broadcasts’ Audience Research Board’s (BARB) survey surmised an audience of over 4 million per episode; Julie Walters won Best Actress at the British Academy Television Awards in 2004, for her portrayal of the Wife of Bath. For more details, please see the introduction to the Canterbury Tales (TV series) on Wikipedia.
8 Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale is controversial and debatable not only because of the narrator himself but because of the portrait of a mysterious Old Man in the story. Apart from the issue of the Pardoner’s ambiguous gender identity, the relationship between the Old Man and Death has long been a popular topic of scholarly discussion. A group of scholars, including G.L. Kittredge (Chaucer and His Poetry, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1946.), read the Pardoner as Death’s messenger, or as Death himself; another group have attempted to find an association between the Pardoner and the Old Man - for example, Gudrun Richardson’s article, ‘The Old Man in Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale: An Interpretative Study of His Identity and Meaning’. Yet another interpretation is put forward by W. J. B. Owen (‘The Old Man in Pardoner’s Tale’, The Review of English Studies, vol. 2, no. 5, 1951, pp. 49-55), who proposes that the Old Man is merely an ordinary man wandering along a medieval street. This paper
With this emphasis, this paper aims to represent the manner in which Tony Grounds reshapes Chaucer’s text into a drama with a twenty-first century setting. Whereas Chaucer’s story focuses on the misfortune brought by greed, Grounds adapts it into a story of sexual scandals. The switch from religion to gender sheds new light on Chaucer’s reception and his modernity in our postmodern time. The modernized version of the medieval tale embraces and reflects serious social problems of modern Britain. In addition to gender and social problems, broken familial relations, particularly the parent-adolescent conflict, is stressed in the film. The BBC’s Pardoner’s Tale leaves its audience not with a simple conclusion that avarice will ultimately be punished, but with a complicated psychological and familial framework behind a heinous crime. Chaucer’s story centers on three rioters setting out to kill Death who has murdered a thousand people. The BBC’s version retains the focus on revenge, but personifies the character of Death as a young girl.

In contemporary popular culture, familiarity with a literary concept does not always come from literary texts that one has read. Media in the twenty-first century has become more popular and more accessible to the public: for example, modern audiences will not necessarily read the original text of Chaucer before watching its remake. Film directors retell and re-contextualize the story to keep abreast with the current state of society. Hans Robert Jauss refers to the reception of a literary work from its readers as a process in which readers are directed to ‘a specific emotional attitude’ and expectations might be ‘maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically’. The adaptation of a literary work does not always create ‘something absolutely new in an informational vacuum’, but demonstrates something familiar to a new audience. Due to having access to documents and manuscripts of the Middle Ages, imagination is often added to the performance of that period. Often the reproduction reveals the convergence of medieval and modern cultures.

Inevitably, a chasm exists between academic research and popular visualizations of the Middle Ages. Stephanie Trigg has pointed out that the problem of anachronism that occurs when audiences watch movies based on medieval themes and imagine what a true Middle Ages looked like. Screenwriters and directors have to take into consideration the current concern of the multitude, instead of simply visualizing the original written texts. For instance, the two medieval knights’ quest for a noble lady’s love in The Knight’s Tale is transformed into two rehabilitated prisoners’ love for their schoolteacher. As Pier Paolo Pasolini has argued, the inability to reproduce an authentic past is because ‘the past had been irreparably corrupted by the present’. A successful new edition of a literary text, according to Jauss, is one that meets the audience’s

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10 Jauss, p. 23.

expectation that the ‘familiar from earlier texts, which [is] then varied, corrected, altered, or even just reproduced’. The BBC’s Canterbury Tales are praised for a depiction of modern British cultural and social concerns that does not eliminate all of the original medieval elements. While the importance of honor and morality were constantly emphasized in medieval stories, these elements in modern times are not as prevalent. The director, when reproducing movies of medieval stories, has to bear in mind what modern audiences familiarize most in their lives. As Jonathan Myerson asks, ‘how do you make dying for honour a realistic idea? How do you make keeping your promises a matter of suicidal shame?’ Accordingly, Tony Grounds, the director of the BBC’s Canterbury Tales, had to create something more related to contemporary life. What the BBC seeks is common experiences of the ordinary in modern society but not what medieval people actually experienced. With the popularity of the mass media and the development of the global village, people worldwide are bombarded with headlines worldwide every day, including murder, rape, sexual harassment, etc. Christians have made up the vast majority of Europeans but, as powerful as religion is nowadays, it is not as hegemonic as it was six hundred years ago. Social crimes and related problems are what modern people are familiar with and care about.

Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale is about the death of three young men of ‘drunkenness, gluttony, avarice, gambling, and lechery’, while the BBC’s retelling of the tale is concerned with kidnapping, rape, and murder. From religious homiletics to sexual assaults, the BBC’s reproduction adapts the plot to address major current issues relevant modern Britons. When Kate Bartlett, the producer, mentions the purpose of the BBC’s Canterbury Tales, she says that, ‘Chaucer held up a mirror to the 14th century and we intend to do the same for the 21st, exploring themes such as the cult of celebrity, bigotry, and the obsession with youth’. Rather than reconstructing a medieval scene, the series produce stories set in contemporary society. The BBC Canterbury Tales stresses ‘the experiences of the ordinary people, realistic characterization, and a reliance on familiar

12 Jauss, p. 23.
13 Generally speaking, the six episodes do not alter much about Chaucer’s organization in terms of characters and plots: the quest of love in The Knight’s Tale, the love triangle in The Miller’s Tale and the element of human greed in The Pardoner’s Tale. More modern elements, however, are added to the adaptations: for instance, to re-present Constance’s suffering and faith in The Man of Law’s Tale, Olivia Hetreed, as an adapter of Chaucer’s story, describes the issues of immigration and xenophobia, two particularly. Peter Bowker’s The Miller’s Tale, for instance, uses the cult of celebrity instead of astrology to arouse the miller’s wife’s interest. This is, perhaps, one reason for the show’s success: it establishes and maintains an realistic relationship with its audience, which, incidentally, was very likely also the reason why Chaucer was so successful in his own time.
14 Myerson.
15 Harty, p. 21.
interior settings of human domestic scale’. Modern society believes that the exercise of violence has something to do with one’s mental state. The BBC remake reflects this in that it shows ordinary people psychologically at odds with society and the subsequent consequences, instead of ascribing the fall of human beings to original sin, as was the case in the medieval period. Kevin Harty thinks that the characters in the BBC’s version usually express the positive sides of humanity. However, for Andy De Emmony, the director of The Pardoner’s Tale, the story is one with sugar coating ‘but as we peel away the layers it becomes a very dark tale’. The six writers were supposed to modernize the six-hundred-year-old text without twisting Chaucer’s original observation of humanity and moral lessons conveyed through his tales. Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale is a homiletic story fully illustrating the theme, ‘radix malorum est cupiditas’. The tale is about the adventures of three ruffians directed by a mysterious old man and finding hidden treasures, ‘floryns fine of gold ycoyned rounde / Wel ny an eighte busshels’ [lines 770-1]. None of them is willing to divide the gold into three parts. As the youngest leaves for town, the other two scheme to stab him with a dagger. When going to town, he buys rat poisons from the apothecary and mixes them with meals. As a result, slaughter takes places after he returns. The two slayers kill the youngest man, drink the poisoned wine and die at last. Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale delineates the concepts of immorality and sin, including ‘glotonye’ [line 482], ‘hasardrye’ [line 590], and ‘forswerynges’ [line 592]. Just like the Pardoner himself in the General Prologue, the Old Man is often regarded as a controversial character because of his ambiguous identity and obscure discourse with the three rascals. The identity of the Old Man has long been keenly debated by critics, but what is convincing would be the relationship between him and death. Over fifty

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17 Forni, p. 174.  
18 Harty, p. 25.  
20 Greed is the root of all evils.  
22 The portrait of the Pardoner’s physical characteristics in The General Prologue has inspired keen discussion over their gender identity. They are seen as a force that transgresses socially constructed gender definitions. For instance, Monica McAlpine reads Chaucer’s portrait of the Pardoner as ‘a pastiche of allusions to three distinct sexual phenomena with which homosexuality was confused—effeminacy, hermaphroditism, and eunuchry—and thus very probably to homosexuality itself’ (Monica McAlpine, ‘The Pardoner’s Homosexuality and How it Matters’, PMLA, vol. 95, 1980, pp. 8-22). Similarly, Carolyn Dinshaw, applying the method of hermeneutics, argues that Chaucer’s Pardoner is a not-man and a not-woman. For a detailed discussion of the issue of the Pardoner’s gender, see Carolyn Dinshaw. ‘Eunuch Hermeneutics’, Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, pp. 156-86; Robert Sturges, Chaucer’s Pardoner and Gender Theory: Bodies of Discourse, Hampshire, Macmillan Press, 2000.
years ago, W. J. B. Owen argued that the Old Man was not the embodiment of Death but merely an ordinary elder. Medieval theological perspectives were later adopted to read the figure, and it is suggested that his appearance in the tale signified the concept of ‘the secunda mors’.\(^{23}\) Recently, Gudrun Richardson concluded that ‘none [of the theories are] completely satisfactory in explaining the role of the Old Man as Chaucer portrays him’.\(^{24}\) Whichever argument of the Old Man is, criticism is never far away from perspectives of Christianity. Regardless of which argument of the Old Man’s role is given credence, criticism is never far away from a Christian perspective: whether the Old Man is the personification of Death or not, and whatever conclusion this leads to, the Pardoner manipulates his audience’s emotions—especially fear—by retelling the story about ‘mortal sin’s dire consequence’.\(^{25}\)

In addition to the polemical relationship between the Old Man and Death, critics also associate the Old Man with the Pardoner himself,\(^{26}\) as it is agreed that the Old Man can be read as a medium representing the revelation of the Pardoner’s inner self. The Old Man attempts to die but Mother Earth will not allow him to do so: he is not only a wanderer of the world but ‘the soul of the Pardoner [is] condemned to suffer a living hell for having turned away from God’.\(^{27}\) Nevertheless, being accused of the death’s spy, the Old Man disappears as soon as the three rioters leave for finding Death. It is speculated that his disappearance for the rest of the tale has something to do with the tragic ending of the three young men. Therefore, the *Pardoner’s Tale* can be treated as the Pardoner’s preaching to his audiences both of high and low social status.\(^{28}\) With little background information of the three ruffians in Chaucer’s tale, all readers know about them is their greed and recklessness, with their personalities leading them to the tragedy at the end of the tale. Thus, in the modern remake of the medieval story, it is the exploration of one’s inner feelings that becomes the focal point.

Realizing the difference between the fourteenth-century printed text and the twenty-first century television production, Tony Grounds finds it impossible to have his protagonists killed on television in the same manner as Chaucer’s lead characters in the text. He says that, ‘our [modern] threshold is a lot higher. I needed to make the central

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\(^{23}\) The phrase means ‘the second death’.


\(^{26}\) As to the nature of relationship between the Pardoner and the Old Man, please see Richardson’s essay, esp. pp. 330-2.

\(^{27}\) Richardson, p. 333.

\(^{28}\) Analyzing the Pardoner’s rhetorical skills throughout his prologue, tale, and epilogue, L. O. Purdon argues that he combines two different styles of sermon: one with ‘a series of moral anecdotes’, to appeal to the aristocracy, and the other with an invented tale that appealed to the commoners ‘through the inclusion of biblical and classical allusion’. Please see Purdon’s essay, ‘The Pardoner’s Old Man and the Second Death’, esp. p. 341.
characters very nasty pieces of work’. He needs to relocate the medieval story in the context of a twenty-first-century society. Mid-thirteenth-century Europe underwent drastic weather changes, resulting in famines and plagues, and because people believed that the calamity resulted from humans’ original sin, and they started to seek relief and redemption in the afterlife. For example, the Pardoner absolved people from punishment of sin by trading his relics. Yet, rarely are modern audiences familiar with pardoners, the selling of relics, or the corruption of the Church. Thus Grounds faces the problem of how to retain an emphasis on the ‘basic, eternal human emotions: trust (lack of) and greed (too much)’, how he replaces those ‘alien codes’, while replacing those ‘alien codes’ with modern people’s common and familiar experiences of daily life’. Tony Grounds investigates how the ordinary, and even the marginalized in society, deal with conflicts, and how emotions influence their behaviors.

As the voice-over speaks before the story begins:

there they found gold florins,  
newly minted, fine and round, . . .,  
therefore it was no longer death they sought,  
each of them was so happy at the sight.

Retaining the motif of hidden treasures, Tony Grounds adapts Chaucer’s story into a kidnapping and murder case. In Rochester, England, a 16-year-old girl named Amy Healey is found missing. Not only her parents but those whose daughter was raped and murdered are grieved and disappointed in society. Meanwhile, three slackers, Arty, Baz, and Colin, swindle money from the tourists and loiter around the town. As soon as they are aware that the police are searching for the girl, Arty swindles people out of their money by asking for donations to scour the nation for the missing girl. They later meet a strange girl, Kitty Norman, who informs Arty of where the murderer lives. Instead of the killer, though, these three revelers find twenty-eight gold bars in the house. In a frenzy of delight, Arty leaves for dinner, while the other two intend to slay him in order to be richer. But Arty laces curry food with rat poison. In the end, Arty is brutally slain, while Baz and Colin are poisoned to death. The news report at the end of the film indicates that the suspect murdered Amy Healey and Kitty Norman. Kitty returns as a specter as well as the embodiment of Death and executes the three criminals.

Compared to the fourteenth-century text, the BBC’s Pardoner’s Tale is a product of postmodern popular culture. Due to political disturbances, climate change and fatal epidemics in the fourteenth century, modern people generally consider Chaucer’s world a bleak one in which deceit, cunning and greed ruled everything. The twenty-first century society created by Tony Grounds is darker and more ambivalent than Chaucer’s version of the Middle Ages. Neither the sale of relics nor the expectation

30 Myerson, ‘Tales of the Unexpected’.
of redemption draws a modern audience’s attention: instead, they are more interested in how a person deals with the struggle and survival of living in such a hopeless society. So, instead of producing a replica of Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale, Grounds portrays modern conflicts: the struggles between individuals and society and the struggle of self-definition. He also renders the sociopathic personality with Arty, who is portrayed as a villain with personality issues: a well-educated, sophisticated man, who craves power, admiration and respect from others, but who is still constantly traumatised by his childhood experiences.\footnote{Compared to his two companions, who have only a smattering of literary knowledge, Arty is philosophic and learned, often quoting lines from literary works unfamiliar to his friends. Apart from Shakespeare, Arty also quotes lines from Charles Dickens’ 
*Dombey and Son* and the classical myth of Icarus. When they are standing outside the house of the assumed murderer, Arty quotes Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, but Colin misunderstands him and assumes he is again quoting from Charles Dickens.} Also, he is craving for power, admiration, and respect from people, so in the film he enjoys being admired and respected by the public. As the film begins, Arty stands in front of Rochester Cathedral reciting, as if he were a preacher, John of Gaunt’s oft-quoted lines from Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, as if he were a preacher:

\begin{quote}
This royal throne of kings, this scepter’d isle,
This earth of Majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise…
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Fear’d by their breed, and famous by their birth.
\end{quote}

As Arty is conversing with his friends, he is constantly plagued by childhood memories, which break in and interrupt the conversation. These memories - singing in the choir, stealing his brother’s Christmas present - keep irritating Arty as he attempts, in vain, to recapture the sense of holiness that he felt in his childhood. Therefore, he is often ‘haunted by nostalgia, alienation, and an innate sense of depravity’.\footnote{Forni, p. 180.} As adult as Arty is, he remains immersed in childhood memories of love and respect - throughout the film he keeps reiterating that he will one day achieve a noble goal. Admiration from other people, particularly his parents, has long been his most desperate desire. He hides his broken relationship with his parents on purpose: he consciously ennobles himself by fabricating his family story, which, in turn, makes him nasty. In his retelling his father’s success story, Arty desires to be as successful as his father, who was held in great reverence. However, his wish for glory and nobility is incongruous with his nasty behavior.\footnote{Johnny Lee Miller, playing Arty in *The Pardoner’s Tale*, confesses in an interview that he had to read the script over and over again so as to understand ‘what a nasty piece of work Arty was’. What disturbed Miller most was that, as the drama unfolded, he was unable to pin down who Arty, the character, was: he became a stranger.}

By replacing the Old Man with a young girl, and including an incessant search for one missing girl, the BBC’s version of the *Pardoner’s Tale* is a commentary on the
unbalanced gender relations in modern Britain, where popular media portrayals often depict women as weak. As official British crime statistics show, women and young girls, are more often victimized and violated than men. Based on the 2003 Home Office Statistical Bulletin of the United Kingdom, the problem of sexual offences is underrated by the authorities.\(^{34}\) The bulletin shows that over 90 percent of victims of recorded rape are females, and compared to the statistics over the past few years, the number of recorded sexual offences has risen about 7 percent between 2003 and 2004.\(^{35}\) The examination of the statistics of offences between 1997 and 2007 finds that the number of rape of female increases annually before 2005/06. Within the 2003/04 the recorded 62,542 sexual offences was the second highest rank. The year 2003 is crucial in our examination of these figures because it was in 2003 that the Sexual Offences Act was enacted, taking effect May 1st, 2004. The definition of rape was reworded more specifically:

‘Person A commits an offence if –

(a) he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of Person B with his penis;
(b) B does not consent to the penetration and;
(c) A does not explicitly believe that B consents’.\(^{36}\)

The newly enacted laws are considered the strictest and most aggressive in the past hundred years. The stricter the laws are, the more serious social problems are. Nowadays, with the rapid circulation of news, more and more people are aware of, and even frightened by, evil and crime. This social context needs to be kept in mind when examining the BBC’s story: Amy Healey meets Arty, Baz and Colin at a playground, from where she is forced into the woods and gang-raped. The result of this brutality is that Arty kills Amy by himself.

Sexual assault or rape is a serious social problem in modern society, and the manner in which the BBC’s Pardoner’s Tale deals with it emphasizes its seriousness. Tony Grounds creates an illusion of a wonderful world by adding the soundtrack of an


\(^{35}\) The official number of recorded rapes in 2003 and 2004 was 13,247, and the total number of recorded sexual offences was 52,070.

old man singing Louis Armstrong’s ‘What a Wonderful World’. Yet the world that Grounds portrays is not wonderful at all: conflicts and contradictions exist everywhere. For example, Arty and Kitty Norma have opposite personalities: Kitty is taciturn, oftentimes wandering around and observing other people; it is difficult to read her expression. She knows the murderers and understands how nasty they are. While talking to Arty about the news of the missing girl, Kitty changes her attitude abruptly, asking, ‘Why do there need to be horrible people?’ This seemingly naive question strikes a heavy blow at Arty, who starts to recite William Blake’s well-known poem The Lamb. The poem, one of The Songs of Innocence, is composed in the form of question-and-answer, as spoken by a child. Challenged by Kitty, Arty answers as if he were the innocent child, both in Blake’s poem and in his childhood memory. Unlike the Old Man in Chaucer’s tale who complains about his own misery, Kitty shows her concern for society, reversing the stereotypical image of women as the weak aspect of society: she does not act like a victim, but as an avenger. Knowing Arty’s desire to do the world a service, Kitty promises to lead him to where the murderer lives. Arty is delighted to take on this responsibility, believing in the theory of predestination he has held since childhood: that he was born to be a hero. While the Old Man in Chaucer’s text disappears after the three drunkards leave to find Death, Kitty accompanies the three rioters to her own house and witnesses their slaughter. The film reveals its moral lesson in that the minds of Arty, Baz and Colin were blinded by a fortunate windfall which none of them could have: greed is the root of evil. While the Old Man once again sings ‘What a Wonderful World’, Amy and Kitty, hand in hand, walk up the stairs, which seem to take them to a bright paradise.

Geoffrey Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale is a moral exemplum, while the BBC’s production concerns itself with the social, psychological and familial problems of modern society. The modernized version complicates the original tale by changing the character of the Old Man to that of a young girl – a change that is not only sexual but also social. The BBC’s reproduction keeps the spirit of Chaucer’s story, but, at the same time, makes use of common, modern issues, such as sexual abuse, violent crime, psychopathology, etc. To adapt Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales is not an easy task, for it involves a huge and complicated story-telling frame. Kate Bartlett, the producer of the BBC’s Canterbury Tales, attempts to locate Chaucer and his work in the context of modernization, but at the same time Chaucer’s exploration of human nature is supposed to preserve. In this context, Tony Grounds, the scriptwriter of the BBC’s The Pardoner’s Tale, makes use of popular social issues in his adaption - such as sexual molestation, theft and crime. The original story is allegedly related by a religious man and reads like a sermon illustrating the sins of gluttony, greed and bad language. Three young rascals flaunt their physical superiority after listening to an Old Man talking about Death. However, the ending is tragic because greed has them slaughter one another. The modern version of the Pardoner’s Tale retains the theme of human greed but shifts focus

That the film begins and ends with this particular song is ironic, especially in the death scene where Arty, Baz and Colin lie on the blood-covered floor.
from the sale of relics to that of murder and sexual scandal. However, this is more than a change of plot, as the role of the Old Man is replaced by that of a young girl, who is eventually revealed to be a ghost. As Stephanie Trigg concludes in her essay, the ‘general reader’ may exert great influence on the production or adaptation of literary works.\textsuperscript{38} Tony Grounds’ \textit{The Pardoner’s Tale}, or even the BBC’s other tales, aim to reflect the problems of modern England - problems such as immigration, socioeconomic and gender inequality, the pursuit of fame. The changes made in the modern translations of Chaucer may, as Harty notes, capture the imagination of global, popular culture.\textsuperscript{39}

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\textsuperscript{38} Trigg, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{39} Harty, p. 13.