

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR *THE MILLER'S PROLOGUE AND TALE*

Annotation by Maggie Flowers

The Miller's Tale is a fabliau written by Chaucer. For this annotated bibliography, I focused on the characters Nicholas and John and how Nicholas takes advantage of John's implied intellectual disabilities. Each of the sources can be related to how easily John was manipulated and support our class's argument that John has an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Aloni, Gila. "Extimacy in the "Miller's Tale"." *The Chaucer Review* 41, no. 2 (2006): 163-84.

Summary:

This article focuses on privacy in *The Miller's Tale*, mainly the lack thereof which Aloni describes as "extimacy." She discusses the concept of privacy shared between John and Allison as a husband and wife. John sees Allison as a private possession, as many men saw their wives in the middle ages. This privacy was exposed when Allison had an affair with Nicholas in her husband's house. Nicholas's privacy is invaded by John as well when the carpenter enters Nicholas's room to check that he is okay. This invasion of privacy led John into a trick that humiliated him publicly. He believed that by entering Nicholas's space that he had gained insightful knowledge straight from God when actually, "what he has is mere illusion" (137). Aloni believes that attempts at privacy will always fail.

Evaluation:

Gila Aloni is an author and journalist who studies Middle English Literature. She attended NYU and Harvard University. Based on her experience, this article is very reliable and raises some interesting points about *The Miller's Tale*. Some topics in this article can relate to the possibility of John having an Autism Spectrum Disorder. John believed that he had successfully entered Nicholas's private space physically and psychologically. Nicholas took advantage of this and was able to make a fool out of John. Though not directly discussed in this article, John's willingness to believe Nicholas, whom he thought was mad, supports our theory about John having an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Biggs, Frederick M., and Laura L. Howes. "Theophany in The Miller's Tale." *Medium Ævum* 65, no. 2 (1996): 269-79.

Summary:

The writers of this article believe that there is an epistemological theme established in *The Miller's Tale*. They write, "Chaucer develops this epistemological theme in the Tale by contrasting John's simple faith with Nicholas's claims of superior knowledge" (271). John has such a small comprehension of his faith that he references elves in plead to God. Nicholas sees John's confusion and uses it to his advantage as he tells John that he has seen a divine vision. John sees Nicholas's authority as legitimate although everyone else knows it is fabricated and obviously seen through his actions. The writer's say that Nicholas releasing a fart out the window "may serve as a mocking reminder of his pretended higher knowledge" (274). They feel is fitting that it is Nicholas's butt is what ends up being harmed in the end.

Evaluation:

Frederick Biggs is a professor at the University of Connecticut in the Medieval Studies program. In 2017, he published the book *Chaucer's Decameron and the Origin of the Canterbury Tales*. Laura Howes is a professor at the University of Tennessee who studies Middle English Literature. She also wrote a book about Chaucer called *Chaucer's Gardens and the Language of Convention*. Their combined experience gives them a lengthy background with Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales. Their work together published in *Medium Ævum* raises good points about the comparison between Nicholas and John in *The Miller's Tale*. Their thoughts about Nicholas's Godly claims and John's gullibility align with our classes views about his disability.

Fletcher, Alan J. "The Faith of a Simple Man: Carpenter John's Creed in the Miller's Tale." *Medium Ævum* 61, no. 1 (1992): 96-105.

Summary:

Fletcher argues that during Chaucer's time, the Church had mixed views about lay people becoming educated. The working class were taught only the most basic principles of their faith and in general had a very limited understanding of their religion. John in *The Miller's Tale* is a perfect example of this. Fletcher comments on the numerous times that he is referred to as a

“simple man” and said that Fletcher says that “John is turning into a walking advertisement for the Church’s idealized notions about the piety of labouring men” (101). John believes without asking questions, especially in relation to God, which is why he was manipulated so easily by Nicholas. He believes that John’s blind faith was intended to mock how little lay people knew about their religion.

Evaluation:

Alan J. Fletcher is a member of the Royal Irish Academy and taught at the University of Leeds and Oxford. His research interests include theatre and performance history; and he can also be classified as a medievalist. He has published multiple books regarding medieval theatre and medieval Europe. This particular article was published by the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature. Fletcher’s interpretation of John’s understanding of his faith and readiness to believe without convincing aligns with our discussions on John’s intellectual disability in class. In *The Miller’s Tale*, John was taking advantage of for having such strong faith in people. In the end, John’s faith ended up causing his physical harm and public humiliation.

Holland, Anthony J. “Criminal Behaviour and Developmental Disability: An Epidemiological Perspective.” *Offenders with Developmental Disabilities*, Wiley (2004): 23–34.

Summary:

Chapter 2 of *Offenders with Developmental Disabilities* is written by Anthony Holland and discusses the criminal responsibility that mentally ill people should carry for their actions. Mental disorder has a broad definition which allows for a large amount of interpretation when it comes to establishing laws for those with handicaps. Holland says that, “As early as the 1300s people who were *idiots* were considered ‘not to blame’” (23). During Chaucer’s time, intellectual disabilities were not recognized as such, and those suffering with them were disregarded as silly, foolish, or simply unintelligent. This distanced those individuals from their actions, and continues to today. This contributes to the discussion of whether or not individuals with a mental illness should be fully prosecuted for their crimes.

Evaluation:

Anthony Holland is a professor at the University of Cambridge who focuses on disability research. He provides reliable information about disabilities and our societal interactions with them. In terms of relating this back to medieval times, he does not give any information on the views towards disabilities during Chaucer's time. Based on our interpretation of John, we can conclude that John should not be held responsible for what happened to him at the end of the tale. Nicholas knew that John would not be able to fully comprehend his instructions and make the correct decision about what to do. Instead of being cautious of that characteristic of John, Nicholas exploited it, making him the bad guy in modern readers eyes.

Pearman, Tory Vandeventer. *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Summary:

Women and Disability in Medieval Literature analyzes how disability and gender shaped middle English literature. Many of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, in addition to other works, are studied in this book. One section titled Disability and Text: Narrative Prosthesis and the Problem of the Norm talks about how people with intellectual disabilities are considered different than normal people. This makes others interact with them differently, which disabled people and their allies are trying to minimize. Using characters with shortcomings and disabilities helps familiarize society with people like those characters. Though their disabilities were not identified in middle English literature by the writers, these characters exist prominently.

Evaluation:

Tory Pearman is a professor at Miami University Hamilton who has published three books about the interpretation of disability in medieval literature. Her experience and expertise gives her thoughts on the topics we discuss in class a lot of credibility. In the section mentioned above, she said that people with intellectual disabilities are seen as outcasts from the rest of society. In *The Miller's Tale*, John is made into a laughing stock in front of the whole town after falling for Nicholas's devious scheme. John's character was made the butt of the joke because he lacked advanced intellectual skills. This pushes him further outside social norms and supports Pearman's theory about the perception of the disabled.

Thro, A. Booker. "Chaucer's Greative Comedy: A Study of the "Miller's Tale" and the "Shipman's Tale"." *The Chaucer Review* 5, no. 2 (1970): 97-111.

Summary:

In this article, Thro discusses Chaucer's comedy in both *The Miller's Tale* and *The Shipman's Tale*. "Chaucer's men of wit concoct schemes or build illusions which are both brilliantly artful and astonishingly elaborate" (97). The jokes played on characters in the Canterbury Tales, especially the joke Nicholas played on John, were very detailed and strategically thought out. In all of this planning, their main goal is the humiliation of another. Thro says John is a "physical creature and confronts problems in a straightforward, inflexible, and heavy-handed manner" (101). This makes it easy for him to be manipulated by a jokester like Nicholas. Thro relates the powers Nicholas has over John to those of a divine being.

Evaluation:

A. Booker Thro's thoughts and comments on Middle English literature have been published in many reputable sources such as the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley. Thro's interpretation of John and the manner in which he deals with his problems aligns with our class's beliefs about John's character. I disagree, however, with Thro's perception of Nicholas and the amount of power he is given. Thro believes that Chaucer uses comedy to glorify characters and put them closer to God. I believe that Nicholas's use of comedy diminishes his authority and reputation in the tale. Cruel actions against someone as impressionable as John should not relate Nicholas to God.

ANNOTATION BY ARIEL MEECE

The following sources are useful in the research of diversity and ableism in relation with *The Miller's Tale* in *The Canterbury Tales*. When looking into the tale's characters, it is possible the carpenter Jon could have a form of autism while in a time when the illness wasn't known. Perhaps Chaucer was representing a form of madness or mental illness in the middle ages. Looking into these sources leads to evidence used in the close reading found on next page,

backing up the idea that Jon could have had a form of autism and was taken advantage of by his wife and her lover.

Gilman, Sander L. "Depicting Disease: A Theory of Representing Illness." *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*, 6-12. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Summary:

This is a book depicting visual stereotyping of multiple mental illnesses. The book covers multiple forms of representation that have been used over the years to describe mental illnesses such as literature from authors like Charles Dickens to paintings from Vincent Van Gogh. As Gilman goes through the ways these different forms of art portray illness from AIDS to Autism, he discusses that many of them use stereotyping and are not accurate. This is a good source to take heed from when looking at older ways people with autism were visualized by confused onlookers during a time when mental illness wasn't understood.

Evaluation:

Sander L. Gilman is a distinguished professor of the Liberal Arts and Sciences as well as Professor of Psychiatry at Emory University, where he is the Director of the Program in Psychoanalysis and the Health Sciences Humanities Initiative. He could be considered a credible source for representing multiple illnesses to a certain extent. This source is a little older, so some of the ideas are outdated, but some of the information is still the same today. Gilman is the author of the basic study of the visual stereotyping of the mentally ill. He has also written multiple books on madness. With this focus on madness, this source could be useful to tie madness to autism.

Green, Leanne, Deborah Fein, Stephen Joy, and Lynn Waterhouse. "Cognitive Functioning in Autism." In *Learning and Cognition in Autism*, 13–26. New York, N.Y.: Plenum Press, 1995.

Summary:

The chapter sourced from *Learning and Cognition in Autism* is about cognition in a syndrome that was known to mainly affect behavior but became world-renowned for varying cognitive deficits. Autism is written about with lack-of-knowledge in this older resource with references from the 1970-1980s. Due to many new studies, this book would be considered not as useful nor credible, but with the ability to glance back on knowledge as it was becoming known, this source helps readers understand some of the ideas that were had about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This chapter does go into the study of what is known about autism and the functions usually capable by those with the disorder. The problem is, everyone with an ASD is very different in their capabilities as well as their mildness of symptoms. This source was a form of introduction to autism as a disorder before including how exactly Jon fits within the category.

Evaluation:

Dr. LeeAnne Green Snyder advises the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative (SFARI) on its research cohorts of individuals with autism. At Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, Michigan she led the multi-disciplinary autism clinic and autism training rotation and collaborated in research at the Children's Hospital of Michigan. Deborah Fein has current research interests in Autism spectrum disorders and their outcomes, neuropsychological assessment of adults and children, as well as parent training for families living with autism for the first time or struggling. Stephen Joy has collaborated on multiple books about autism and Neuropsychology. He currently teaches psychology at Albertus Magnus College. Lynn Waterhouse has done a lot of research and writing on Autism Spectrum Disorder. She teaches at the College of New Jersey currently. Within each of their specialties, they are credible sources to discuss functions of people with ASD in their day to day lives.

Lever, Anne G. and Hilde M. Geurts. "Psychiatric Co-Occurring Symptoms and Disorders in Young, Middle-Aged, and Older Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder." *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 46, no. 6 (2016): 1916-1930.

Summary:

This source is an article from the Journal of Autism and Development Disorders. It was written as a summary of research found towards their theory. The article is about psychiatric problems in correlation to age for people with and without Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Presenting their thesis, Lever and Hilde cover the changes in social skills, as well as a few other characteristics usually adjusted by ASD, over different age groups: young, middle-aged, and older adults. Their thesis claimed that psychiatric problems such as social anxiety and phobia tended to decrease as people got older, in both the cases with ASD as well as the cases without. By the end of the article, evidence collected supported their thesis in that older adults, with and without ASD had less anxiety problems as they aged. Ideas were passed around about why this would happen, but more research will have to be done for that correlation.

Evaluation:

Anne Lever defended her PhD thesis in May 2016 at the University of Amsterdam. In her PhD project, she investigated aging in autism spectrum disorders. More specifically, she studied symptomatology, co-occurring psychopathology, and cognitive functioning across the adult lifespan with her promotor Hilde Geurts and copromotor Richard Ridderinkhof. Her research includes psychopathology, emotion recognition, cognitive functioning, aging, individual differences. Hilde M Geurts is a neuropsychologist and has studied autism and ADHD since 1998. She is a professor at University of Amsterdam as well as a part of a tertiary mental health clinic especially for autistic people across the lifespan called the Dr. Leo Kannerhuis. These two collaborated on this journal article about autism in different age groups which is similar to their other work. This makes this a credible source for ASD and the ways older people with autism respond to the world around them. This helps us look into Jon having any symptoms relating to ASD.

Parsons, Owen E, Bayliss, Andrew P, and Remington, Anna. "A Few of My Favorite Things: Circumscribed Interests in Autism Are Not Accompanied by Increased Attentional Salience on a Personalized Selective Attention Task." *Molecular autism*. 8 (2017).

Summary:

From the journal *Molecular Autism*, this article covers attentional priority in individuals with Autism compared to individuals without. It covers the study that was done to theorize that people living with the disorder would be more likely to have their attention drawn away from tasks by interest related stimuli such as cars. This thesis was actually disproven in the study, whereas the autistic individuals were not drawn away from their tasks by interest related stimuli until task demands were low. The results suggested that even though autistic individuals hold intense interests in particular classes of stimuli, depending on the person, there may be a reduced impact of the prior experience and expertise on attentional processing towards a designated task. Within *The Miller's Tale*, Jon is known to have good carpentry skills as well as a strong interest in his wife. These can be typical for any human-being, but this article helps look into the idea of hyper fixation and circumscribed interests.

Evaluation:

Owen Parsons has written a number of journals about genetic diseases such as Autism Spectrum Disorder. He is testing cognitive processes in adults with ASD or Asperger Syndrome, including systemising, memory, and implicit learning. He has also worked at the Centre for Autism in Education (CRAE), at University College London, with Professor Liz Pellicano and, fellow author of this article, Dr. Anna Remington, investigating perception in autism. Andrew Bayliss does a lot of studies on attention and focus. He is primarily concerned with aspects of social-cognitive processing, interactions between attention, emotion and action in social contexts. Current research topics include: Face perception, eye gaze processing, personal property in social interactions, and individual differences in attention. Anna Remington writes about Autism Spectrum Disorder a lot. She currently teaches on the Special and Inclusive Education MA and on modules which are taken by those on the Educational Neuroscience MA/MSc and Psychology of Education MSc. Each of their specialties makes them credible sources on the topic of Autism and the different symptoms that occur and respond differently within each person with the disorder.

Roestorf, A., D. M. Bowler, M. K. Deserno, P. Howlin, L. Klinger, H. McConachie, J. R. Parr, P. Powell, Van Heijst, B F C, and H. M. Geurts. ""Older Adults with ASD: The Consequences of Aging." Insights from a Series of Special Interest Group Meetings Held at the International Society for Autism Research 2016-2017." *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* 63 (2019): 3.

Summary:

Within the journal *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, this source was written to discuss how people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) age. This article talks not only the physical aspects of aging for someone with this disorder but also the cognitive changes that occur with age. As a discussion article, the point of this source was to inform readers about what is known about aging within this disorder although there is still much to learn. Conclusions are drawn about the possible future studies that could be done to further this conversation for individuals within this field as well as any readers who want to further investigate the ways aging affects those with ASD. As Jon, the carpenter we are focusing on, is an older man, this source is useful in discussing how he may be a little different than the typical symptoms that are known with Autism.

Evaluation:

Dr. Roestorf's particular area of research is focused on age-related changes in general psychological functioning and physical well-being across the adult lifespan of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and the impact of these changes on quality of life. Professor Bowler's research interests focus on memory in people from the high functioning end of the autism spectrum. Patricia Howlin is Emeritus Professor of Clinical Child Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London and Professor of Developmental Disability at the University of Sydney. Her principal research interests focus on the long-term prognosis for individuals with autism spectrum and other developmental disorders and on developing intervention programs that may help to improve outcomes. Dr. Klinger studies childhood predictors of long-term outcomes in adults with autism spectrum disorder and the development

of community-based intervention programs that promote successful adult outcomes. Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Klinger has a longstanding interest in identifying learning differences such as attention, executive function, and implicit learning in ASD and how these learning differences predict outcomes across the lifespan of people with the disorder. Professor Helen McConachie trained as a clinical psychologist at the Institute of Psychiatry in London. Helen's research to date has focused mainly on children with disabilities and their families. More recently she has been co-leading projects that involve adults within the autism spectrum, including adaptation of a quality of life outcome measure. Hilde M Geurts is a neuropsychologist that also co-authored another source on autism and has studied autism and ADHD for over 20 years. She currently works as a professor at University of Amsterdam as well as at a tertiary mental health clinic especially for autistic people across the lifespan called the Dr. Leo Kannerhuis. Each of these people are known as credible sources in the ASD community due to their extensive research.

Shattuck, Paul T., Marsha Mailick Seltzer, Jan S. Greenberg, Gael I. Orsmond, Daniel Bolt, Sheilah Kring, Julie Lounds, and Catherine Lord. "Change in Autism Symptoms and Maladaptive Behaviors in Adolescents and Adults with an Autism Spectrum Disorder." *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 37 no. 9 (2007): 1735-1747.

Summary:

This source is a study on how age changes the symptoms of autism and maladaptive behaviors such as disruptive behavior, unusual or repetitive habits, and uncooperative behavior. This went on for a four-and-a-half-year period, keeping contact and studying over 200 participants with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The thesis of the study was that older members of the study would be more likely to improve between the 4 time frames studied. The results of the study concluded that compared to adolescents, older members had experienced fewer maladaptive behaviors, whereas autism symptoms appear to improve at a steady rate across different age cohorts. Similar to a past source, this article kept a focus on individuals that are growing older with ASD. This relates to the age of Jon the carpenter and helps look into him possibly having this disorder.

Evaluation:

Dr. Paul Shattuck is involved in innovative research aimed at improving services and related outcomes among socioeconomically disadvantaged youth and adults on the autism spectrum. Shattuck routinely presents to members of the U.S. Congress and staffers, using his research to raise awareness about the needs of people on the autism spectrum and to inform national and state legislation. The focus of Dr. Marsha Mailick's research is on the life course trajectory of developmental disabilities. She is interested in how the behavioral aspects of specific developmental disabilities, including autism, fragile X syndrome, and Down syndrome, change with age. In addition, she studies how the family environment affects the development of individuals with disabilities during these stages of life, and reciprocally how parents and siblings of individuals with disabilities are affected. Over the past decade, Dr. Jan Greenberg has been investigating the challenges faced by families of persons with severe and persistent mental illness as well. Findings from her studies point to the importance of maintaining optimistic attitudes while coping with the challenges of schizophrenia, autism, and down syndrome. Dr. Gael I. Orsmond is a developmental and clinical psychologist conducting research to understand how the family, social, community, and school contexts are crucial to the development and well-being of adolescents and adults on the autism spectrum. Her main areas of research are social and community participation of individuals on the autism spectrum, promoting positive transition to adulthood for individuals on the autism spectrum, and sibling and family relationships in the context of developmental disabilities. The goal of Dr. Julie Lounds Taylor's research is to understand how to promote positive outcomes in adulthood for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families. Much of her current work focuses on the transition to adulthood for youth on the autism spectrum. Dr. Catherine Lord is a licensed clinical psychologist with specialties in diagnosis, social and communication development and intervention in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). She is well-known for her studies of social and communicative development in ASD. She has also been involved in the development of standardized diagnostic instruments for ASD with colleagues from the United Kingdom and the United States (the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule), an observational scale, and the Autism Diagnostic Interview, a parent interview, now considered the gold standard

for research diagnoses all over the world. She has won multiple awards for her work within the Autism field as well as teaching at UCLA about her specialties. Many of the authors of this source are well known in the Autism world for either their addition to current studies or for their capabilities to create change within the world for people within the spectrum. This makes them credible sources in relation to autism.