

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR *THE MAN OF LAW'S PROLOGUES, TALE, AND EPILOGUE*

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NOTE

These annotations seek to collate research that would be of interest to readers and scholars who are first-time readers of the above text. Some of these annotations explore aspects of diversity, disability, and ableism that are present in the above text.

Bourara, Hassan "Chaucer's '*Man of Law's Tale*': Reading Other-wise" University Hassan, Casablanca Ain-Chock, Morocco.
[academia.edu/2614620/Chaucer_s_The_Man_of_Laws_Tale_Reading_Other-wise](https://www.academia.edu/2614620/Chaucer_s_The_Man_of_Laws_Tale_Reading_Other-wise).

Summary:

The author of this source writes about how "Chaucer's narrative seems to me to be essentially motivated by religious motives: it is an attempt to narrate a Christian 'nation' whose geographical contours are exclusively European, Islam being established in this view as the Other that threatens but also defines those contours". By this, the author is stating that Chaucer's use of Islam in the *Man of Law's Tale* is to reinforce the beliefs of his Christian audience while at the same time portraying Islam as a strange religion that is not meant to be understood.

Evaluation:

This source is from an essay titled "Chaucer's '*Man of Law's Tale*': Reading Other-wise." It was written by Hassan Bourara, an English professor at the University of Hassan II Casablanca in Casablanca, Morocco. Professor Bourara backs up his essay with numerous credible sources, all of which he includes within his essay. It is evident that he has studied and researched his topic in depth. Although Bourara is an established professor, this article was self-published online. Because of this, it has not been peer-reviewed and is lacking credibility in that sense.

Hamaguchi, Keiko. "The Cultural Otherness of Custance as a Foreign Woman in the *Man of Law's Tale*." *The Chaucer Review* 54, no. 4 (2019): 411-440.

Summary:

This piece is a journal article that argues for the thesis that Constance is an embodiment of otherness used by Chaucer to illustrate the plight of foreign women in England and rebuke people for their prejudice. To argue for this thesis, the author first explains Constance's role as a sympathetic character on trial in a foreign land. The author further argues that it was the Sultaness's and Donegild's xenophobia against Constance for her foreignness and difference in religion that leads to Constance's misfortunes. The article explains Constance as being representative of foreign women in England during Chaucer's life who were met with prejudice similar to what Constance faces in the tale. Based on this, the article concludes that the *Man of Law's Tale* was meant to provide a critique of the way people in England treated foreign women through his sympathetic portrayal of Constance.

Evaluation:

This piece is credible because the author is knowledgeable on the topic and has written a couple of books regarding Chaucer and his portrayal of women. This essay was also published in the reputable journal called *The Chaucer Review*, which is published by Penn State. The essay is further credible because it provides a sound argument by analyzing the way Chaucer portrays Constance in comparison to the way she is portrayed in the original story Chaucer adapted the tale from. The essay also using historical information to put the tale in context and further the argument, adding more credibility. This paper is interesting because it looks at the theme of othering people based on foreignness and religion in a way that is opposing to our close reading of the tale. This source provides a good opposing voice on the topic of religious diversity and otherness.

Johnson, Eleanor. "English Law and the Man of Law's 'Prose' Tale." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 114, no. 4(2015): 504-525.

Summary:

This source is a journal article that analyzes the Man of Law's use of poetry despite his claim that his tale will be in prose. The author does so by examining the way that the Man of Law in the general prologue is set up in a series of contradictions such as: he claims to be wealthy but dresses modestly, he knows all the laws but prefers older laws, and he claims to be a legal purist but also seems willing to bend the rules. The essay goes on to explain that the Man of Law's prologue sets up his tale in a way that puts the Man of Law on trial. When the Host asked the Man of Law to speak next and be at the Host's judgment, this makes the Host the judge of the Man of Law in a way that parallels a legal trial. Because of this trial structure, the author concludes that the Man of Law's claim of prose is meant to help insinuate that he is telling a true tale in which the Christian Law is the hero. This is because prose at the time was associated with historiographies and truth, so labeling the tale as prose would ascribe some truth value to it, which would help the Man of Law in his "trial." The author concludes the article with the idea that Chaucer then makes the *Man of Law's Tale* in verse to undermine the idea that certain kinds of writing such as prose or legal code are always truthful.

Evaluation:

The author of this essay is credible because she has taught at Columbia University and focuses on poetry, prose, and law in the Middle Ages. She has written several books and articles on similar topics, showing her expertise. Additionally, the article was published in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, which is a peer reviewed journal published by the University of Illinois. The author of the article does an in-depth analysis of the Man of Law in the General Prologue, the prologues to his tale, the tale itself, and the epilogue. The author then argues for her interpretation of the Man of Law's use of verse through a historical analysis of the meaning of prose in this time period. This argument is well done and evidence based, giving the source further credibility. This source provides good background information on why the Man of Law speaks in verse instead of the prose he claims he will speak in, which is one of the issues mentioned in our close reading. This article also connects this information to the idea that his use of prose is meant to further the idea that Christian law is the true law, which relates to our theme of religious diversity and our argument that the tale seems to send the message that Christianity is superior to Islam.

Johnson, William C. "Miracles in 'The *Man of Law's Tale*.'" *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* 28, no. 2 (1974): 57-65.

Summary:

This source is a journal article that argues for the thesis that Chaucer's telling of Trivet's tale is aesthetically superior and uses miracles in a different way. To support this thesis, the essay goes over the three miracles present in both versions of the story: Hermengild giving the blind man back his sight, the punishment of the knight who attempted to frame Constance, and Constance overcoming the thief who attempts to rape her. Through examining these miracles, the author explains that Trivet uses them as material evidence for God's existence while Chaucer tells the miracles in a way that emphasizes their emotional reality instead of religious reality. Because of this, the author concludes that Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* emphasizes the difference between what we can feel/experience and what we can know/understand. While these miracles still seem to serve the religious purpose of supporting Christianity, they do so in a less certain way in Chaucer's version.

Evaluation:

The author is reliable because he is a professor emeritus from Northern Illinois University whose focus is on 16th and 17th century English literature. The essay is reliable because it is published in *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*, which is a scholarly journal indexed both on Project Muse and JSTOR. The piece effectively supports its thesis through an in-depth analysis and comparison between the story told by Trivet and the *Man of Law's Tale* told by Chaucer. Through the use of textual evidence and references of outside sources, the piece makes a credible and valid argument that Chaucer's changes to the way the miracles are portrayed make them serve a different purpose than they did in the original story by Trivet. This source provides good background information on how Chaucer changes the tale from his original source, and it also connects to the theme of religious diversity by discussing how the miracles relate to God differently in Chaucer's version than in Trivet's.

Johnson, William C. "The '*Man of Law's Tale*': Aesthetics and Christianity in Chaucer." *The Chaucer Review* 16, no. 3 (1982): 201-21.

Summary:

The author of this source discusses how Chaucer used the *Man of Law's Tale* to test his abilities at writing a Christian work. Chaucer would have been heavily influenced in his writing by various religious tales, such as the ones included in Bible, and sought to try his hand at composing his own religious narrative. The author writes: "The *Man of Law's Tale* provides a test case of Chaucer's use of Christian materials. It is generally held to be an early tale and one that imperfectly adapts its all too evident hagiographic source. The Christian didacticism in Trivet's tale of Constance presented Chaucer with literary problems, but even early in the Canterbury experiment he attempts to direct religious emphasis toward a new human center".

Evaluation:

This source is from a journal article titled "The '*Man of Law's Tale*': Aesthetics and Christianity in

Chaucer” by William C. Johnson Jr., and published by Penn State University Press.

Kaiser, Melanie L. and Dean, James M. “Chaucer and the Early Church” Medieval Forum, San Francisco State University.

Summary:

This source discusses, in part, the importance of God and Christianity within *the Man of Law’s Tale*. The authors write: “In his tale of Custance, the Man of Law asks a rhetorical question about who preserved Custance on the wide, hostile ocean. The answer is God”. It is God who repeatedly saves Constance throughout the tale as an example of his mercy. The authors later discuss the power that Islam has over the Sultanness, and how she is so steeped in her faith that she is even willing to murder her own son.

Evaluation:

This piece was written by Melanie L. Kaiser and James M. Dean from San Francisco State University. It is a part of a forum titled “Medieval Forum” hosted by the English Department at San Francisco State University and includes a long list of reliable sources.

Lewis, Celia M. "History, Mission, and Crusade in the Canterbury Tales." *The Chaucer Review* 42, no. 4 (2008): 353-382.

Summary:

This source discusses Islam in the *Man of Law’s Tale* and the influence of the crusades on Chaucer’s works. The author writes: “References to the Alexandria crusade emerge twice in the Canterbury Tales: first in the external frame of the General Prologue, where Alexandria is at the top of the Knight’s list of campaigns; and, second, when the Monk includes “worthy Peter” in his catalogue of fallen heroes”. Though the crusades took place before Chaucer’s time, he was still heavily influenced by them as a writer, and the crusades would still have been in the minds of the average citizens. The author also mentions how “...Christians in the Sultan’s dominions were imprisoned and beaten...” Muslims at the time would have been seen by most as cruel and barbarous, regardless of whether or not their actions were justified.

Evaluation:

This article is titled “History, Mission, and Crusade in the Canterbury Tales”, and was written by Celia M. Lewis from Louisiana Tech University in Louisiana. It was included as a part of Project Muse. The mission statement for Project Muse reads: “Scholarly projects demand reliable content. Project MUSE is your trusted source for the highest quality books and journals in the humanities and social sciences from over 200 of the world’s most distinguished university presses and scholarly societies”.

McCarthy, Conor. "Injustice and Chaucer's Man of Law." *Parergon* 20, no. 1 (2003): 1-18.

Summary:

This source is a journal article that argues for the thesis that the Man of Law could potentially be an unjust man. This thesis is first supported by discussing the Man of Law's description in the general prologue and the fact that he is said to speak in "terms," which the author argues is used elsewhere by Chaucer to indicate the use of deceptive language. This combined with the way the Man of Law is described as having skills in justice but not as being just leaves room for the possibility that the Man of Law might be the archetypally corrupt lawyer. The essay then uses the *Man of Law's Tale* to further prove this idea by referencing Constance's trial for Hermengild's murder. The author claims this trial in the story shows that God is the ultimate good judge of justice, while humans can have more questionable judgment. This is because the people all mistakenly thought Constance had killed Hermengild, and it took divine intervention on God's part to maintain justice. The essay explains that the showcasing of the faults in human judgement could further reflect back on the Man of Law and increase the potential that he himself is an immoral man with faulty human judgement.

Evaluation:

The author is credible and has written several books on marriage and sex, so he is clearly familiar with the time period. The essay is also published in *Parergon*, which is a journal published by Australian and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies. The piece effectively supports its thesis through in-depth references to the *Canterbury Tales*. This piece does not necessarily connect to the theme of diversity and disability from our class, but it is important for analyzing the Man of Law as a narrator for the tale and provides important background information that could be important to readers.

Norako, Leila K. "The Canterbury Tales: The Man of Law's Tale." The Canterbury Tales: The Man of Law's Tale. Robbins Library Digital Projects.

Summary:

This source discusses religion within the *Man of Law's Tale*, and society's view on religion overall at the time. The article explains how the crusades would have heavily influenced not only what Chaucer wrote, but also how the public would have reacted to his writings at the time. The *Man of Law's Tale* includes the only reference by Chaucer to the prophet Muhammed, and paints Christianity in a positive light while portraying the Islamic faith as being more violent and barbaric. The author also states that Chaucer wrote this tale in part to unify his Christian audience. The author also claims that the crusaders, just like Constance, were travelers from their homelands who endured through much trauma and distress in service to God.

Evaluation:

This is a credible academic source that is part of "The Crusades Project" from Robbins Digital Library from the University of Rochester. The objective of the Crusades Project, according to its mission statement, is to "...provide annotations of narratives that take their influence and inspiration from the historical crusades". The author, Leila K. Norako, has also written several other analytical pieces on various other medieval texts. Some of her other works include "Morgan le Fay", "Siege of Jerusalem", "The Sultan of Babylon", and "The Travels of Sir John Mandeville" to name a few.

Pannu, Simrat "Women of the Devil and God: The Representation of Women as Emblems for Religion in the 'Man of Law's Tale'." University of Toronto.

Summary:

This essay discusses the interfaith conflict between Islam and Christianity in the *Man of Law's Tale*. The author writes: "Constance becomes a vehicle for judging the "Other," and it is in this judgement that Islam is represented as an illegitimate faith. Christianity reigns supreme, as seen in the texts emphasis on conversion, and the depiction of Constance as the virtuous woman". This goes to show how Constance is meant to be the epitome of Christianity and all that is good, while Islam is portrayed in a bad light.

Evaluation:

This source is from an essay titled: "Women of the Devil and God: the Representation of Women as Emblems for Religion in the *Man of Law's Tale*, written by Simrat Pannu. She is a graduate student at the University of Toronto. Her essay includes a list of reliable sources.

Wood, Marjorie Elizabeth. "The Sultanness, Donegild, and Fourteenth-Century Female Merchants: Intersecting Discourses of Gender, Economy, and Orientalism in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*." *Comitatus* 37 (2006): 65-85.

Summary:

This source is a journal article that focuses on explaining the interconnections between gender, orientalism, and economics in the *Man of Law's Tale*, mostly through discussing the mother-in-laws in the tale. The author argues that the Man of Law as a narrator creates a picture of "the other" by contrasting East and West, Christianity and Islam, and men and women. This othering creates a picture of the mother-in-laws, Donegild and the Sultanness, as embodiments of the fear of female merchants and the fear of people from the east that were present at this time period (and to this day). To support this claim, the essay explains that the portrayal of the sultanness shows the stereotypes of Muslims as violent, irrational, and murderous. It goes further to explain that both the sultanness and Donegild can be compared to female merchants at the time because they both participate in business exchanges. This can be seen when the Sultanness discusses her plan to prevent conversion to Christianity with her all-male council, and it can be seen again when Donegild intercepts and falsifies letters. The dangers of these women as participants in business and exchange, according to this essay, is meant to further paint women and easterners as the dangerous and evil other. The essay concludes with the idea that the Man of Law as a western man involved in business is the antithesis of the villains in his tale, which further entrenches the idea that eastern and female merchants are the dangerous other.

Evaluation:

I could not find any information on the author. However, the source is credible because it is published in *Comitatus*, a journal focused on Medieval and Renaissance studies published by UCLA. The piece is very thorough and provides a strong analysis of several characters and motifs, as well as how they intertwine to create a strong theme of otherness. The article utilizing many examples from

the tale as well as historical research to put the examples in context and make an argument. This article relates to our theme of diversity and disability because it explores the themes of women and Islam, which are two major facets of diversity.

Yunck, John A. "Religious Elements in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*." *ELH* 27, no. 4 (1960): 249-61.

Summary:

This source is a journal article that supports the thesis that Chaucer's revisions to Nicholas Trivet's story worked to increase the overall religious intensity of the *Man of Law's Tale*. The author focuses on analyzing two of the bigger revisions Chaucer used to create this religious intensity. The first is that Chaucer leaves out much of Constance's preaching that exists in the original source in a way that humanizes her as a character more and also makes her more passive. The essay argues that this passivity is important because it allows Constance to be a perfect vessel to display God's providence and spread the message of Christianity. The author further explains that Constance's passivity allows the story to center around religion rather than her character. Next, it discusses the second revisions where Chaucer added and based some of Constance's prayers on famous church prayers that further elucidate the religious theme of the tale. Based on these two examples of Chaucer's revisions, the author concludes that Chaucer increased the religious intensity to the point that God is the protagonist of this tale.

Evaluation:

Unfortunately, I could not find much information on the author of this essay. However, the essay is credible because it was published in *ELH*, a peer-reviewed journal published by John Hopkins University. The essay supports its thesis well by discussing specific revisions made by Chaucer and using the text to support the claims made. The essay also uses information from other texts at the time such as Trivet's original telling of the tale and old church prayers to make the argument that Chaucer revised the tale in a way that increased its religious intensity. This skillful use of sources and argumentation make the source credible. This article focuses on the way Chaucer's revisions strengthen the religious themes in this text, which makes it a good source to relate to our theme of religious diversity.