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The obscure lessons of Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower : an in-depth literary and linguistic study

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

The Obscure Lessons of Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower; an In-depth
Literary and Linguistic Study

A Thesis Submitted to the

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

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With Upper Division Honors

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English Studies

By

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Capstone Approval Page

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ABSTRACT (100-200 WORDS): In order to establish the arguments found within this paper, I rigorously researched primary and secondary texts of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. My argument mostly consists of my own observations, as I analyzed the primary sources from both literary and linguistic perspectives, such as the authors' use of Biblical allusions, poetic diction, pronouns, sentence structure argumentative style, and word choice. I also researched several scholarly articles on *The Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis* to grasp a broader understanding of the texts and look at them from new perspectives. Additionally, I researched the political, social, and economic circumstances of the fourteenth-century. After taking all this into consideration, I wrote my paper with a better understanding of what life was like for fourteenth-century women.

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Significance & Procedure

For years scholars have debated upon the moral standing of fourteenth-century authors like Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower. Both were writers of substantial influence and both were actively involved in political matters. Therefore, evaluation their works is important in understanding what fourteenth-century life was like. Their literature reflects the social, political, and economic circumstances of historical Europe.

Women's social standing during the fourteenth-century is not clearly understood. While many medieval authors preach clear misogynist messages throughout their works, there are also substantial authors like Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower who reveal mixed feelings on feminism. After studying their works, many scholars are left with the impression that the fourteenth-century clergy was extremely hierarchical, but that that most individual people were more pro-feminist. However, there are also many scholars that believe that Chaucer and Gower, like a majority of medieval authors, fed into anti-feminist perceptions and encouraged a social hierarchy. *The Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis* are substantial literary works of the fourteenth-century, and therefore their messages regarding feminism are important in understanding medieval society's perception of women.

My research was designed as follows:

1) I read Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* and *The Manciple's Tale* and then John Gower's *The Tale of Florent* and *The Tale of Phebus*. I critiqued these works keeping in mind rhetorical devices such as Biblical illusions, poetic diction, pronoun usage, argumentative style, and word choice.

2) I researched secondary sources, which are included in the annotated bibliography, to get a better understanding of how other scholars see the works of Chaucer and Gower. They helped me to take in the works from a broader perspective and therefore provided me with new means of critiquing them.

3) I researched social and political events of the fourteenth-century in order to better understand the world in which Chaucer and Gower lived. Knowing their historical background gave me insight into where the moral lessons in their literature were coming from.

4) I analyzed the works from two moral standpoints I found to be apparent in the tales; first that women should honor themselves by honoring their husbands, and secondly that women needed to consider and evaluate the power of their speech.

5) I wrote a rough draft of the paper that included historical background, my own analysis of primary sources, and other scholars' ideas on *The Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis*.

6) I wrote a final draft that included all of the above but also consisted of a more in-depth analysis of the primary texts. I carefully considered many different literary and linguistic clues that drew me to the conclusions of my paper; that Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower used their literature to indirectly encourage women to rebel against their submissive societal standing.

Important literary works created in the fourteenth century were often used as a means of laying the laws of society's accepted moral framework. More specifically, short stories, or literary bodies consisting of a series of tales, were a popular way to spread moral lessons, as they are more easily spread verbally than long, single-bodied texts. Books were quite expensive in the fourteenth century and this, along with high illiteracy rates, made the short story genre popular.

Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower were both fourteenth century authors of substantial influence. They were known friends, which indicates they shared at least ballpark morality, and that they likely shared mutual feelings towards political and social issues of the fourteenth century. Both authors clearly critique the morality of the society in which they lived, which becomes evident shortly after carefully reading their texts. A comparison between the authors' intended moral lessons is of particular interest when considering the following tales because Gower primarily uses a male narrator whereas Chaucer uses a mixture of both male and female, sometimes allowing one to speak for the other.

While Gower's male narrator's morals seem blatantly clear, I will prove that he indirectly preaches to a less distinctive female audience. His arguments in *Confessio Amantis* may be clearly spelled out, but there are also hidden messages that he delivers in subtle ways. In addition, Geoffrey Chaucer's moral standpoint throughout *The Canterbury Tales* is highly conflicted, as the messages behind his complicated and intricate manipulation of rhetorical style, audience, and characters' use of speech, among other elements, do not add up to a steady, generally accepted interpretation. I will analyze Gower's *The Tale of Florent* and *The Tale of Phebus* and Chaucer's *Wife of Bath Prologue*, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *The Manciple's Tale*, while keeping in mind the differences between inscribed and intended audiences of the text, according to two apparent moral lessons directed towards women: First, that they should honor

themselves by honoring their husbands, and Secondly that they need to realize the power of their speech and therefore use it appropriately.

The female characters presented in these tales both conform to and resist the traditional role of the fourteenth century woman. The social and political structure of medieval society often molded them into subservient roles (Wynne-Davies 12). Women of this time had “no rights in government and little education, and they were suppressed by the law, the Church and, more immediately, by their fathers and husbands” (Wynne-Davies 12). It was commonly accepted that a women’s main purpose in life was to become a respectable wife who maintained a functional household while her husband took care of the financial and social dynamics of the family. All of Chaucer and Gower's female characters orbit around the ideals or distresses of marriage. The Wife of Bath attempts to break away from these suffocating ideals and become a free, independent woman. The old-hag-turned-beautiful-young-maiden transforms into a respectable wife for her new husband. Cornide does not stay true to her husband Phebus and suffers accordingly. Chaucer and Gower both saw women as an essential means of maintaining the vital social and economic contract of marriage, and therefore portray their female characters’ dignity according to how well they fulfill their end of the bargain.

The Wife of Bath is a problematic character, as Chaucer grants her the gift of intelligence only to have her use it to selfishly control her husbands. Chaucer realizes that her prologue and tale are likely to either trigger feelings of disgust or be taken into little consideration by both the inscribed and intended male audiences.

“An housbonde I wol have-I wol nat lette-

Which shal be bothe my detour and my thral,

And have his tribulacion withal. Upon his flesh, whil that I am his wyf.

I have the power durynge al my lyf
Upon his proper body, and noght he (III.154-159).

Her cunning attitude would strike fear into the heart of almost any male listener, as she proudly admits to deceiving her first three husbands into a life of slavery. She boldly displays her deceitful nature by manipulating a series of ancient biblical texts into supporting her own argument, even though the clerical audience she is preaching to would know the written word well and realize that it supports morality directly opposite to the wife's. Chaucer uses The Wife as an extreme example to his male audience of the potential harm created from poorly constructed marriages.

After The Wife uses a mixture of both clever rhetoric and tangents in support of her seemingly disagreeable argument, her prologue ends with her narrating some of her personal marital experiences. "Experience, though noon auctoritee/ Were in this world, is right ynogh for me/ To speke of wo that is in marriage;" (III.1-3). Since the first lines of her prologue boldly state that experience is the best way to understand the trials and tribulations of marriage, she accordingly concludes it by retelling the events that have structured her arguments. She drastically tells the story of the chaotic and deep love shared between her and her fifth husband. After listening to him preach scriptures regarding the evils of womanhood night after night, The Wife finally stands up for herself and attacks him. In an act of what is portrayed by the wife to be self-defense, Jankyn hits her so hard "That in the floor I lay as I were deed" (III.797). However, he immediately sees the damage he has done and drastically proclaims "Myn owene trewe wyf,/ Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf; / Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat" (III.819-21). The clerk who has treated his wife as a judge would treat a criminal sees how he has hurt her, and yet she stands by him. He offers her to keep her honor because she has earned it by

remaining loyal despite his demeaning, andocentric behavior. Chaucer uses this drastic ending to please his obvious male audience, as it grants honor to submissive wives who remain loyal to their husbands. However, it also encourages a hidden female audience to rebel against the stereotypes placed upon them. Chaucer knows that medieval wives are rarely thought to be respectable members of society, and therefore encourage women to demand respect and make their voices heard in whatever way they can.

Both Chaucer and Gower tell *The Tale of Florent*, yet their portrayal of the male protagonist, the knight, is at first drastically different from one another. Medievalist scholar R. F. Yeager points out several of these differences. Gower's noble knight is immediately described as "Of armes he was desirous,/ Chicalerous and amorous," (I.1413-14), whereas Chaucer's is described as a "lusty bachelor" (III.83). Chaucer and Gower preach to two different kinds of male audiences; Chaucer aims his message towards unruly young boys who think little of women, whereas Gower speaks to respectable men who have felt trapped by unfortunate life events. The crimes for which both characters are punished vary tremendously. Chaucer's knight rapes a young maiden immediately within the tale, whereas Gower's acts in self-defense, as he is taken prisoner in a foreign land and ends up winning a life-or-death battle with the son of the local captain. Close consideration of the meaning behind the knights' behavior is vital to understanding the overall message of the tales.

However, while the male character of the tale differs tremendously in terms of morality, both stories include dignified female characters that show mercy towards the desperate knights. Both characters encounter an old forest hag as they desperately search for the answer to the life-or-death riddle of "What thyng is it that women moost desiren" (III.905). Chaucer's lusty

bachelor is immediately drawn to the old woman, not because he considers her age may have granted her wisdom but because she sneakily disguises herself as twenty four dancing ladies.

“Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go
Of ladys foure and twenty, and yet mo;
Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne
In hope that som wisdom sholde he lerne (III.991-94).

Gower’s forest hag must also go out of her way to get the knight’s attention.

“He syh wher sat a creature,
A lothly wommannysch figure,
That forto speke of fleisch and bon/ So foul yit syh he never non.
This knyht behield hir redely,
And as he wolde have passed by,
Sche cleped him and bad abide’ (I.1529-35).

Chaucer grabs his male audiences’ attention, as he does the knight’s, by having over twenty beautiful women dancing, whereas Gower has his kind forest hag noticed because she throws herself in front of the knight. Both authors have the old woman recognize the despair of the young knight and immediately offer their help.

Chaucer and Gower both put great detail into these dynamic characters and dramatic events to show that women can gain honor and happiness if they display tenderness towards and conform to their husband’s desires. Gower’s arrogant young bachelor is ultimately transformed into a respectable young man by the persistence and obedience of his new wife.

“My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
I put me in youre wise governance;
Cheseth yourself which may be moost pleasance

And moost honour to yow and me also.” (III.1230-1233)

Here Chaucer has his male character end the tale by granting his wife honor, much like The Wife of Bath's fifth husband did at the end of her prologue. The knight is in return rewarded by her loving faithfulness. “And she obeyed hym in every thing/That myghte doon hym plesance or liking” (III.1255-56). Chaucer has both the female and male characters receive *plesance* to demonstrate the happiness that can come from women's persistent dedication to their husbands. Gower ends his tale in a similar way, as his noble knight winds up in marital bliss with a beautiful young maiden. Gower's lesson of obedient love is directed towards an intended male audience.

“To teche how that obedience

Mau wel fortune a man to love

And sette him in his lust above,

As it befell unto this knight” (I.1858-62).

However, the young maiden is only allowed to reward her knight with sexual bliss after he proclaims “Thus grante I yow myn hole vois” (I.1828). The knight allows his wife to speak for him, and she obediently does so. Gower gives the knight's new wife a honorary position in the tale by having her comply with the desires of her noble husband, and by doing so encourages all female readers to honor and respect their partners.

Contradictorily to the romantic and appealing storyline of *The Tale of Florent and The Wife of Bath's Tale*, *The Tale of Phebus* and *The Manciple's Tale* both demonstrate the great harm that can come from disobedient wives. While the tales share a common morality, they arrive at their conclusions by very different means. In Chaucer's version of the tale, Phebus is

immediately showered with praise for his virtuous manhood. The Manciple, who is rather critical of uncivil behavior, begins his tale by portraying Phebus as a god.

“Ther to he was the semelieste man
That is, or was, sith that the world bigan
What nedeth it his discryve?
For in this world was noon so fair on lyve?
He was ther with fulfid of gentillesse,
Of honour, and of partif worthynesse” (V.119-124).

Chaucer repeatedly uses words that he only uses when speaking of characters with the highest regard such as gentillesse, honour, and worthyness. Any actions taken by such a man would clearly be justifiable in the eyes of The Manciple. Phebus has a wife, whose name is never mentioned, whom he loves “moore than his lyf” (V.140). Phebus also has a crow that he obviously holds in high regard. “Whit was this crowe as is snow whit swan/ And contrefete the speche of every man” (V.133-34). Phebus loves and cares for the crow just as any worthy man would care for a beloved wife. He is also the one who taught the bird how to speak, much like The Wife of Bath was taught the sacred text from her husband. Shortly after the characters are introduced, Chaucer has the The Manciple take time to make a point of several natural and unworthy characteristics of some common animals.

“For evere this byrd wol doon his bisynesse/
To eschape out of his cage if he may” (V.172-173).

“Lat take a cat, a foster hym wel with milk...
And every deyntee that is in that hous,
Swich appetit hath he to ete a mous” (V.175-180).

“A she wolf hath also a vileyns kynde” (V.184).

Gower's version of the tale seems to preach more directly to a male audience, but leaves room to assume that he is also aware of a female presence. He keeps his version short and does not use elaborate rhetoric and biblical allusions as Chaucer does. Gower makes no mention of either the character of Phebus or his wife. However, he does mention that the wife's name is Cornide, and he also does not blatantly state her guilt as Chaucer does. "So it befell upon a chaunce/A yong kniht tok hire aqueintance/And hadde of hire al that he wolde" (III.789-91). Gower's use of abstract words like chaunce and aqueintance gives his tale a more lenient tone, as the reader does not know if it is really by chance that Cornide and this knight met or whether or not they are more than mere "acquaintances". This makes Gower's crowd more credible for his own demise, as he never has solid proof of Cornide's guilt but immediately blabs to Phebus anyway. "And many a man yit him beschreweth/ And clepen him into this day" (III.810-811). Gower's conclusion is much more general and can be applied to both men and women. Considering the stereotypical tendency of women to gossip more than men, readers may assume that Gower is warning women to not talk behind other's backs, but there is no clear distinction of gendered fault in his version as there is in Chaucer's.

The meaning behind the female characters of these tales is clearly linked to their performance as a marital partner. While *The Wife of Bath* may at first come off as a manipulative wench, Chaucer actually credits her for standing up for herself while remaining a loyal wife. The shape-shifting women of *The Tale of Florent* are held in high regard due to their relentless drive to morally guide their husbands. Finally, Cornide's betrayal of her husband shows how women's failure to maintain a marriage can lead to catastrophic consequences. While medieval women's societal roles may have been submissive, both Chaucer and Gower agreed that they still had the power to prove their worth, even if it was through their husbands, and

therefore used their texts to encourage them to become respectable members of society by being respectable wives.

While the submissive role of women is often reflected in both Chaucer and Gower's texts, they still are able to use the power of persuasive speech to get their voices heard. Female characters that come off as manipulative to a male audience actually encourage a hidden female audience to be assertive and use what little resources they do have to obtain respect, happiness, and dependence. The female characters represented in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's prologue*, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *Manciple's Tale* may not be the most credible characters of *The Canterbury Tales*, but their speech is powerful nonetheless. Gower's male narrator encourages the responsible use of speech to both a male and female audience. When analyzing these female characters, it is useful to be aware of present day linguistic stereotypes of women's speech, as scholars have found that "Literature has been shown to reflect these patterns for centuries." Robin Lakeoff's rigorous study of women's speech done in the 1970's can support this claim, as many of her findings correspond to the female characters found throughout *The Canterbury Tales*. She found that women often use tags, questions, and hedges in their speech more than men. While Chaucer and Gower's female characters may embrace these stereotypes, they often use them as rhetorical devices to enhance their arguments.

The Wife of Bath's shrill tongue and insistent attitude serves multiple conflicting purposes that apply to intended female and male audiences. The Wife is set up as a joke to the inscribed, hierarchal pilgrims due to her manipulation of biblical texts, overuse of language tags and personal pronouns, and uncontrollable tangents. Chaucer seemingly discredits the wife by having her embody stereotypical womanly behavior throughout her entire prologue.

“Wher can ye seye, in any manere age
That hye God defended marriage
By expres word? I pray yow, telleth me.
Or where comanded he virginittee?” (III.59-62)

This passage mirrors the speech patterns found throughout the whole argumentative section of The Wife's prologue. In four short lines she uses the language tags *Where can ye seye* and *I pray yow telleth me* in order to demand a response from an audience that cares little for what she has to say.

When The Wife is not using rhetorical tag questions to manipulate ancient texts, she is protruding tangents about her personal life experiences. She suddenly begins random side stories several times throughout her prologue.

“God have hir soule! Hir name was Alisoun.
She knew myn herte, and eek my privetee
Bet than oure parisshe preest, so moot I thee!
To hire biwreyes I my conseil al,” (III.530-33).

In merely four lines of the text, she uses “my” three times, “I” twice, and “our” once. Anybody listening would have right to think her egomaniacal. Also, the sudden inclusion of her friend into her argument serves no evident purpose, and therefore her awkward appearance helps in making her look like a fool.

However, the true power of The Wife lies in her ability to indirectly speak to and encourage an audience that is not evidently immediately present. While she may seem to discredit herself by straying from the main points of her argument through a series of tangents, Chaucer actually uses them as a means of addressing a female audience that is not evidently present. The Wife is intelligent enough to know that her arguments are falling on deaf,

hierarchical ears, and therefore begins addressing listeners who would appreciate what she has to say.

“Ye wise wyves, that kan understande” (III.225)

“Thow seyst we wyves woloure vices hide” (III.283)

“We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye” (III.515)

The wife addresses an intended female audience several times by using phrases like *Ye wise wyves*, *We wyves*, and *We womenn* since there is no inscribed audience of wives and few women pilgrims. Chaucer cleverly has the wife embody female speech patterns to distract the male audience while she encourages women listeners to stand up to suppressive men.

While the maidens in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* and Gower's *Tale of Florent* center around the needs of their husbands, their powerful speech is ultimately what propels the key events of the story. Both knights remain stubborn and cold towards their new wives on their wedding night despite the fact that they saved their lives through their wise advice only a few days prior. However, both maidens ultimately gain their husbands' love and respect and are given an authorial voice that leads to the happy conclusions of the stories. Chaucer's maiden's speech is so insightful, well-constructed, and powerful that it melts the icy heart of the arrogant bachelor knight. She, like The Wife who created her existence, is confident in her ability to speak persuasively. “Now, sire,” quod she, “I koude amende al this, / If that me liste, er it were dayes thre, / So wel ye myghte bere yow unto me” (III.1106-08). The old hag then delivers her speech on the importance of gentility, humbleness, and virtuousness. She does not embody stereotypical female speech patterns as The Wife does, as she speaks straight-forwardly while using a well-established vocabulary that emphasizes her ability to speak persuasively. The hag directly calls out her male listener for his shortcomings.

“A lordes sone do shame and vileynye;
And he that wole han pris of his genterye
For he was boren of a gentil hous
And hadde his elders noble and virtuous,
And nel hymselfen do no gentil dedis” (III.1151-55).

Her harmonic speech deliverance proves capable of enlightening even one of the most arrogant male characters of *The Canterbury Tales*, the rapist knight. She cleverly uses advanced vocabulary words like *vileynye* and *genterye* and rhymes them together to emphasize her point; that nobility comes from noble deeds and not from birth. While the rapist knight, along with several other inscribed male listeners, would have dismissed anything the old hag had to say in the beginning of the tale, he cannot deny that the virtuous old woman makes a valid point. The Wife of Bath, whose prologue is seemingly discredited by overuse of rhetorical questions, personal pronouns, and tangents, creates a celebratory character who is capable of creating positive change through an incredibly persuasive argument, and by doing so grants herself more credibility. By having a male character dramatically change for the better because of a woman's voice, Chaucer proves to an intended female audience that their speech is a powerful tool.

Gower's maiden's voice brings forth a less drastic change in her knight because it is instead used as a means of rewarding him for his virtuous behavior. Gower's noble knight has stuck with his ugly hag of a wife because he knows and respects the “strengthe of matrimoine” (1778). She sees his turmoil over the poorly matched marriage and offers him a choice.

“Besoghte him that he wolde leve,
And seith that forto wynne or lese
He mot on of tuo things chese
Wher he wol have hire such on nyght,

Or ells upon daies lyht" (I.1808-12).

While Gower's male narrator creates the knight to be the hero of the story, the maiden's proposal is the key component of the happy conclusion. Her speech may not be as intricate and detailed as the hag in *The Wife's* version, but it is powerful nonetheless. The knight has remained a noble character throughout all his trials and tribulations and therefore is a representation to Gower's intended male audience of the rewards of acting according to appropriate courtly and chivalric behavior. Additionally, Gower's happy ending tells an intended female audience that their soft speech can bring forth positive change.

The power of speech is a major theme of both Chaucer's *The Manciple's Tale* and Gower's *The Tale of Phebus*. Both tales clearly warn their audience of the harms that can come from misused speech, as both crows suffer tremendously when they immediately tell Phebus of his wife's betrayal. The Manciple directly blames the crow for his own demise when he states "Ne nevere in al thy lyf ne shaltow speke/ Thus shal men on a traytour ben awreke" (III.287-88). Chaucer uses the double negative *ne nevere* to emphasize the severity of the punishment, as the crow will never be able to speak again due to his irresponsibility. The Manciple apparently believes his tale to lack efficient evidentiary support, and since he is "nat textual" (V.316) he suddenly brings forth the authorial voice of his mother, who has much to say on the subject.

"My sone, ful ofte for to muche speche
Hath many a man ben spilt, as clerkes teche;
But for litel speche avselly
Is no man shent, to speke generally" (V.325-28).

While Chaucer's consistent use of *my sone* throughout the Manciple's mother's speech implies that he is preaching to his inscribed and intended male audience, he has the advice come from a

female voice for a reason. Her sudden inclusion into the tale is necessary in reaching the intended female audience. Her willful opinion is ultimately what molded the story in the first place, as *The Manciple* has clearly taken her lessons into enough consideration to create his tale about it. Chaucer uses both the crow's downfall and the Manciple's mother's powerful voice to emphasize his point that speech is powerful, whether it comes from a male or female, and should therefore be used with caution.

Gower's version mirrors Chaucer's, as the last line of the tale implies that he is preaching to a male audience. "Be ware therefore and sei the beste,/If thou wolt be thiself in reste,/Mi goode sone, as I thee rede" (III.815-17). Gower, as always, ends his tale by directly addressing a male listener, the son. However, Phebus's justification in slaying his wife and disfiguring the crow indirectly speaks to a much larger audience. "Wherof in tokne and remembrance/Of hem whiche usen wicke speche, /Upon this bridd he tok this wreche" (III.804-06). Gower's use of a single pronoun, *hem*, addresses both a male and female audience, as the word has no gender distinction. While Cornide is not punished for her misuse of speech like the crow, she is punished for immoral behavior nonetheless, and this, along with the use of an abstract pronoun like *hem*, indicates that Gower was aware of and preaching to a female audience.

In medieval society, women were often excluded from important social and political matters, and this is often reflected in fourteenth century literature. However, Both Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower understood that women played a significant role in the well being of society as a whole, and therefore speak to them through their literature, whether directly or indirectly. Both create the actions of their female characters to be of substantial significance in the events and overall morality of the tales. Chaucer has one of his most dynamic pilgrims, *The Wife of Bath*, establish a strong feminine voice even though she is facing an extremely

andocentric audience. The old hags of Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and Gower's *The Tale of Florent* persistently lead their misguided husbands to happy, virtuous lives. Additionally, Phebus's wife, Cornide, rebels against marital norms and causes great suffering to all the characters around her. Since the hierarchal fourteenth-century political figures, who were Chaucer and Gower's prime audience, would be quick to dismiss literature that focused on women, both authors use subtle literary and linguistic clues to preach to and encourage a more shadowed female audience.

Fourteenth-century Europeans thought highly of virtuous behavior and many aimed to abide by societal guidelines. Authors like Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower helped people to understand exactly what sort of behavior was expected from them. Since Literature was considered an efficient way to establish society's moral guidelines, studying works by popular fourteenth-century authors is vital in understanding what fourteenth-century life was like. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* give scholars a glimpse of what life and literature was like in the past, and by studying their powerful masterpieces they are able to better define how far and in what direction writers have advanced since the fourteenth-century.

Bibliography

1. Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales Complete*. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000. Print.

The most useful part of this book is that it has all the tales in Chaucer's original language without overwhelming notes from the editor. This makes it easier for the reader to interpret Chaucer's text on his or her own. Also, the medieval English dictionary found in the back is helpful in looking up unfamiliar words.

2. Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Manciple's Tale*. Donald C. Baker. Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984. Print.

The editor, Donald C. Baker isolates *The Manciple's Tale* from the rest of the Canterbury Tales and critiques on its' relation to the other tales, the relation between the prologue and the tale. In addition, Baker writes a survey of criticism that is useful guide for approaching *The Manciple's Tales* from different literary perspectives.

3. Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Tales Of The Clerk and The Wife of Bath*. Marion Wynne-Davies. London: Routledge inc, 1992. Print.

This book is useful to my research because it has a detailed description of the social and political turmoil that was occurring while Chaucer was writing *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. While I did not find his notes on the tale itself to be useful, understanding the historical context will give my research a more solid foundation.

4. 4. Cooper, Helen. *Oxford Guides to Chaucer The Canterbury Tales*. 1989. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

This book is useful because the author evaluates *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and *The Manciple's Tale* from a wide range of perspectives, such as : theme, style, rhetoric, special use of language, and placement in relation to other tales.

5. Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. Print.

I will not be using any of the claims made in this book within my research, as they contradict what I believe are the true meanings behind the tales I chose to study.

However, reading the surveys in this book was useful in acknowledging the possible counterarguments of my paper.

6. Fienstein, Sandy. *Longevity and the Loathly Ladies in Three Medieval Romances*. New York: New Chaucer Society, 2006. Web.

This article will be incorporated into my paper in terms of historical background. Critiquing Gower and Chaucer's character from the perspective of the social theory on age in medieval times is useful, as it gives insight and background to my research.

7. . Gower, John. "Confessio Amantis." *Medieval Institute Publications*. 1. (2000): n. page. Web. 1 Dec. 2011.

This is the primary source I used for Gower's *Tale of Phebus*. I found this online text very useful, as it is a duplicate of the original Middle English text. This copy was useful in establishing my own ideas without scholarly articles interfering.

8. Gower, John. *Confessio Amantis*. E. V. Rieu. Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc, 1963. Print.

I thought that this book might be helpful because it provides a modern-day translation of most of the works within Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. However, I did not find the translations to be useful because they are not an accurate enough representation of the Gower's original text.

9. Gower, John. *Selections From John Gower*. J. A. W. Bennett. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1968. Print.

I will be using this book only because it provides *The Tale of Florent* in Gower's original text with no editorial notes. I found the editor's notes in the beginning of the book disorganized and unhelpful.

10. Yeager, R.F. *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*. B.C. Canada: University of Victoria Press, 1991. Print.

This book is very useful for my research because it provides different contexts in which Gower and Chaucer can be compared. Yeager makes arguments on both sides of every claim she makes about the criticism of Gower and Chaucer's works and leaves the reader to decide which is more plausible.