Christian Capital: The Intersection of Wealth, Christianity, and Racial and Religious (in)Difference in *The Canterbury Tales*

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Prerequisite for Honors in English under the advisement of Cord Whitaker

May 2023

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to Professor Cord Whitaker, for both inspiring my thesis and supporting me through it. Thank you for always helping me distill my thoughts into a coherent argument. For accepting my initial limited knowledge of Middle English and pushing me to engage with medieval texts within the classroom and as a thesis student. And for ignoring my inconsistent, if not entirely absent, citations for the duration of this thesis.

I’d also like to thank Professor Kathryn Lynch and Professor Yu Jin Ko for being on my committee. Professor Lynch, your expertise on The Canterbury Tales has brought depth to my writing and introduced me to texts and ideas that I would not have considered by myself. Professor Ko, thank you for being both on my committee and my professor during my last semester at Wellesley. Your influence has helped me learn to think, not only critically, but also creatively. I hope to be as passionate about something as you are about Shakespeare.

An additional thanks to Professor Tetel, for being excited to read an English thesis.

Finally, a special thanks to my mom, who also wrote her senior thesis on The Canterbury Tales. Thanks for being my English major role model, always helping me proofread, and preventing me from unironically using ‘whilst’ in my writing.
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Introduction

While Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* are widely analyzed and accepted as a literary representation of English life in the fourteenth century, it better depicts the future implications of shifting English culture. Because Chaucer depicts pilgrims from all social backgrounds and unites them through religion, his work is able to explore the economic, rank, and religious nuances of every day English life. Reflecting the changing status that resulted from the crusading and social movement in the fourteenth century, Chaucer uses racial and religious tolerance in *The Canterbury Tales* to imagine a world that is motivated solely by the worth, power, and status – capital – associated with financial gain in the East. In doing so, Chaucer examines how material wealth can supersede racial and religious difference as a means to creating global, Latin Christian hegemony.

Written during the fourteenth century, Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* reflect the shifting feudal and financial structure that Chaucer observed in England. As Paul Strohm asserts in his book *Social Chaucer*, in which he explores the environment and populations Chaucer likely interacted with during the composition of the tales, there is an expansion of “the middle groups within society” (Strohm, 4) that is “accomplished by two strategies distinctive to the later fourteenth century: a demotion of the knights and a promotion of certain categories of tradesmen” (Ibid). Strohm goes on to assert that this separation, while “continuing to affirm the gentility of the knights, denied their aristocratic status” (Ibid, 5). Previously considered aristocratic, knighthood was often used as a means to climb the social ladder as many knights were “a younger son of a lord [looking] to advance himself” (Freudenrich). However, in the midst of the fourteenth century, this advantage began to shift towards what Strohm recognizes as
the “tradesmen” (Strohm, 4). Rather than using chivalry as a way to advance in society, Chaucer’s audience was now focused on wealth and trade as means to gaining status.

Chaucer himself was affected by changing feudal hierarchy due to his status in Edward III’s court. Strohm highlights that “those fourteenth-century knights and esquires in royal service, whose ranks included Geoffrey Chaucer and his closest associates, enjoyed a social position of marked precariousness” (Ibid, 1). This “precariousness” is what marks The Canterbury Tales as both Chaucer, his associates, and his audience recognize a newfound financial motivation of status, Chaucer himself even becoming one of Strohm’s “tradesmen” (Ibid, 4) through his position as a comptroller for the port of London, as well as his family’s status as successful merchants in the wine industry (Reiman). The Canterbury Tales reflect these cultural shifts as it emphasizes the importance of status and rank in the General Prologue. When Chaucer originally introduces the tales and the pilgrims, he announces that he will describe “whiche they weren, and of what degree,/And eek in what array that they were inne” (Chaucer, 40-41, 24). In describing their “degree” and “array” of dress, Chaucer roots each pilgrim in their ascribed and outward appearing status, as well as their profession and trade. Chaucer’s tales encompass pilgrims from diverse backgrounds across England and, in being vocal about the “degree” of each, Chaucer separates the pilgrims by their status. While this “degree” may be interpreted as the pilgrim’s educational level or familial “degree of kinship” (Middle English Compendium), it can also be interpreted as each pilgrim’s “rank, social condition, position in a hierarchy of persons” (Ibid). Given that Chaucer associates their “degree” with their “array” of dress, Chaucer appears to use “degree” in this context to individually categorize the pilgrims by their extrinsic “social condition” and “rank.” As such, Chaucer’s tales are reflective of not only his precarious experience, but also an overarching shift towards the primacy of financial and social status in the fourteenth century.
Chaucer’s tales not only reflect changing social hierarchies, but are also influenced by the ongoing crusades. Although the crusades began in the eleventh century, they and their values persisted during the composition of the tales. In *The Crusades: A Short History*, Jonathan Riley-Smith highlights the goals of the original crusades as being centered around the “freeing of the eastern Churches, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, from the savagery and tyranny of the Muslims” (Riley-Smith, 6), as well as the “liberation of Jerusalem” (Ibid, 7). Intending to free the Eastern population, as well as the Holy Land, from the “tyranny of the Muslims,” the crusades aimed to establish Christianity abroad. In order to achieve this Latin Christian hegemony, Pope Urban II and other Christian figures advocated for violent crusades, arguing that “the standard Christian criteria for justifiable war had been developed in the fourth century: a right intention on the part of the participants, which should always be expressed through love of God and neighbour; a just cause; and legitimate proclamation by a qualified authority” (Ibid, xxviii). Because the crusades were proclaimed by the Pope and aimed to spread and protect Christianity, their impending violence and duration was not discouraged, but rather endorsed, by many members of the Catholic church and general population. While some orthodox clergy and religious heterodox such as Wycliffites opposed aspects of pilgrimages and the crusades (Harvard), crusading and crusade culture overarchingly prevailed in Chaucer’s England. As these crusades persisted beyond the fourteenth century, Chaucer, his audience, and his tales were influenced by crusade culture and narratives.

Not only did crusade narratives persist during the composition of the tales, but the characters contained within the tales are reflective of fourteenth-century crusading culture. Riley-Smith acknowledges that the Church preached crusades as a form of pilgrimage as “the protection of the church for crusaders and their property, and the public vow, [was] similar to the pilgrimage vow, made by a crusader and signified by his wearing of a cross” (Riley-Smith, 7)
and “it is clear from their charters that the crusaders regarded themselves as pilgrims and while on crusade they engaged in the devotional and liturgical exercises characteristic of pilgrims” (Ibid). By likening the crusading and “pilgrimage vow,” Riley-Smith asserts an overlap between crusaders and pilgrims and mentions how, by the twelfth century, “it seems to have been possible for an individual to take the cross at any time, without any precondition of papal proclamation and specification of privileges. And the cross could sometimes be considered as creating a permanent rather than a temporary commitment” (Ibid, 89). Left indefinitely in a state of pilgrimage as The Canterbury Tales was never quite finished, the characters within resonate strongly of crusaders who too have taken the cross as a “permanent rather than a temporary commitment.” While similar to crusaders, Chaucer’s pilgrims do not take on the warlike, violent attributes crucial to crusade culture. Instead, in overlapping his pilgrims, as well as aspects of their narratives, with crusaders, Chaucer lays the groundwork for viewing the tales through the more idealistic crusading goal of Christian hegemony.

While Chaucer’s pilgrims interact with the East in differing capacities, the storytelling nature of the tales complicates whose perspective is being conveyed. Although Chaucer writes all of The Canterbury Tales, he casts himself into the role of Chaucer the pilgrim in the tales, taking on the first person to say “so hadde I spoken with hem everichon” (Chaucer, 31, 23) and will “telle yow al the condicioun/Of ech of hem, so as it semed me” (Ibid, 38-39, 24). Chaucer casts himself into an observational role as merely a fellow pilgrim conveying these tales and, by communicating that he will describe what “it semed” like to him, blurs whose perspective is being relayed in the tales. As he describes each character, Chaucer the pilgrim inserts his own perspectives and irony into their traits and, in doing so, Chaucer lays the groundwork for the rest of the tales; while he relays the individual perspectives of each character, each story also manifests through a filter of Chaucer’s own beliefs. By creating so many characters of varying
backgrounds, Chaucer the author is able to construct and address multifaceted viewpoints on social issues, while still commenting and inserting his own perspective as an impassive viewer. In complicating his role as an author and a pilgrim, Chaucer is able to explore unbiased differing social perspectives through each separate character, while still inserting his overarching opinions of what each character and their tale “semed” to him.

In addition to having a complex narration style on Chaucer’s part, *The Canterbury Tales* is also arranged in an atypical format as Chaucer subverts the classic author-audience relationship in order to imagine a world different from fourteenth-century reality. Chaucer’s pilgrims assume the role of both the listeners and the storytellers as they advance through the tales telling stories “of aventures that whilom han bifalle” (Ibid, 795, 36). Because of this joint listener-storyteller role, Strohm asserts that Chaucer develops “an internal communication system that permits Chaucer to orient narrative within fully realized conditions of telling and hearing without leaving the boundaries of his work. His masterwork thus teems with fictional pilgrim tellers and hearers, and contains no references at all to a real audience” (Strohm, 64). In containing the tale to the “fictional,” Chaucer allows his pilgrim tellers and hearers to imagine a world that is not necessarily grounded in fourteenth-century reality. Although Chaucer appears to remove his “real audience” through this “internal communication system,” Strohm asserts that this may merely allow Chaucer to create “a vehicle for communicating with a contemporary audience that, while unrepresented, remains important to him” (Ibid, 64). While this contemporary audience did not tangibly exist in Chaucer’s fourteenth-century reality, shifting feudal and social status markers that occurred in Chaucer’s lifetime likely foreshadowed this future audience and their modified priorities. Aware of communicating with this “contemporary audience,” Chaucer seems to use *The Canterbury Tales* as a vehicle for articulating a world for his readers that better reflects the potential future reality of his
contemporary audience; Chaucer uses *The Canterbury Tales* and its novel internal communication system to propose a world that could reflect the future of fourteenth-century reality.

While the tales reflect many facets of fourteenth-century reality, the following chapters will explore how the tales interact with the financial and religious pressures of Chaucer’s pilgrims. As the tales explore methods of achieving global, Latin Christian hegemony, each does so through a different perspective: that of a Man of Law, a Squire, and a Prioress. While each utilizes a different approach to achieving global hegemony, these pilgrims all arrive at the same conclusions regarding the direct relationship between global Christianity and financial gain. In each tale, the pilgrims individually monetize conversion and articulate the potential, unreaped wealth of the East, intrinsically linking financial gain and Christianity, the European economy and global, Latin Christian hegemony. Inextricable from each other, the pilgrims are motivated by a notion that does not merely embody financial gain or Christian hegemony alone – instead, the pilgrims’ motives more closely resemble the notion of Christian capital. This term is multifaceted as capital can represent both monetary wealth, belongings and land (OED) – financial capital – as well as power and influence – social capital (Britannica). The construction of Christian capital in *The Canterbury Tales* employs each definition as together the *Man of Law’s, the Squire’s, and the Prioress’s Tales* individually examine and establish financial and social capital for Christianity abroad. The following chapters will explore each tale through the framework of Christian capital: how each character establishes, interacts with, and promotes the monetization of global, Latin Christian hegemony.

While Chaucer unites these pilgrims and their perspectives through Christian capital, this is only done within the bounds of *The Canterbury Tales* and the imagined fourteenth century it creates. In Helen Cooper’s *Oxford Guide to Chaucer*, she asserts that *The Canterbury Tales* “set
up generically incompatible views of the world and let a pattern of relativity, and therefore of fullness of vision, emerge from the juxtaposition” (Cooper, 132). In creating these juxtapositions between each character’s perspectives, Chaucer is able to explore his imagined world and its potential interactions abroad through Christian capital. As Chaucer explores each individual story and perspective, his use of Christian capital does not create singular or entirely unified vision of Chaucer’s fourteenth-century future. Instead, Chaucer imagines tales – the *Man of Law’s*, *Squire’s*, and the *Priores’s* – that are “generically incompatible” from both his reality and from each other: together they form a “fullness of vision” that all see Christian capital as central to the future. Subsequent analysis will explore different techniques Chaucer employs to create a world whose “fullness of vision” relies on material wealth rather than racial difference in order to establish global, Latin Christian hegemony.
Chapter 1: The Man of Law’s Investment in Christian Capital

The plot of *Man of Law’s Tale* is not unique to Chaucer; instead, Chaucer changes existing dialogues to attribute and explore the overlap between financial motivations and Christian interactions abroad. Because the *Man of Law’s Tale* relies somewhat on existing texts, most notably Trevet’s *Les Cronicles* and Gower’s *Tale of Constance*, the changes Chaucer makes to these original tales are significant for discerning the culture which the revised story reflects. In this tale, Chaucer introduces financial elements and motivations to Constance’s conversion journey: both to her depictions and to the depictions of those with whom she interacts. By centering on material wealth in the Man of Law’s prologue and carrying this imagery throughout Constance’s Christian tale, Chaucer overlaps financial and religious motives as a means to achieving conversion and global, Latin Christian hegemony.

**Finances**

The *Man of Law’s Tale* overlaps Constance’s Christian journey with mercantilism to construct Christian capital. By using his personal perspective as a Man of Law, the Man of Law is able to subtly insert financial imagery and monetize Constance’s story. In linking aspects of Constance’s journey to financial gain, the Man of Law introduces a financial component to Constance’s religious success and thus constructs Christian capital.

The *Man of Law’s Tale* is uniquely situated in the tales; told by a man who is not inherently associated with God, yet recounting a known Christian story, the Man of Law’s status allows him to introduce material motives to both the character and his story. Described as a man known “for his science and for his heigh renoun,/Of fees and robes hadde he many oon” (Chaucer, 316-317, 28), the Man of Law is better characterized for his “renoun” and “fees and robes” than his religious inclinations. Chaucer’s portrayal of this Sergeant of the Law
emphasizes his financial over religious values in accordance with fourteenth-century stereotypes of Men of the Law; as Correale asserts, these men were depicted as “particularly vulnerable to charges of greed and venality because they earned much more than other lawyers… they engaged in land speculation for their personal profit” (Correale and Hamel, 40). In commenting on the “fees and robes had he many oon” (Chaucer, 317, 28) as he was “so greet a purchasour…his purchasyng myght nat been infect” (Ibid, 318-320, 28) of the Man of Law, Chaucer boldly associates this Sergeant with the negative stereotypes perpetuated by other narratives. By calling attention to how the Sergeant’s “purchasyning…myght nat been infect,” Chaucer introduces the idea that the Sergeant’s work could in fact be infected by “greed and venality” (Correale and Hamel, 40) common to his industry. Because the prologue highlights the Man of Law’s financial motives, it suggests that the Man of Law’s subsequent religious tale may too be tainted with financial desires for capital.

In addition to the wealth inherent to the Man of Law’s practice, his tale is primed by material motives through financial imagery in its prologue. Prior to the telling of the Man of Law’s Tale, the Host comments on the length of the other tales, noting

Now for the love of God and of Seint John,
Leseth no tyme, as ferforth as ye may.
And steleth from us, what pryvely slepynge…
Wel kan Senec and many a philosophre
Biwaillen tyme moore than gold in cofre
For ´Los of catel may recovered be,
But los of tyme shendeth us,' quod he. (Chaucer, 18-26, 87)

The Host, assuming a moderator role in the tales, is meant to push the story forward by imploring the pilgrims to “leseth no tyme” as they are able. However, in suggesting that time “steleth from us” when the pilgrims are “pryvely slepynge,” the Host villainizes time; because time steals from the pilgrims at their most “pryvely” and vulnerable state, the Host invokes a desire in the pilgrims to reclaim that which was unjustly taken. The Host draws multiple parallels
between time and material wealth beyond its being “[stolen] from us” as he suggests that many “biwaillen tyme more than gold in cofre” and further asserts that this “gold” cannot be recovered like “‘los of catel” may be. By putting these in contrast, the Host highlights both the tangibility and intangibility of time; able to be lost like “gold” and other material wealth, yet impossible to grasp, the Host introduces time as a financial element that pervades every pilgrim’s story, The Canterbury Tales, and the reader who chooses to consume them. As the tales pass, it is time – as well as the free meal promised by the host – that continues to relate each pilgrim’s tale back to their materialistic motives.

As the prologue moves to describing the context for Constance’s tale, the tale again roots itself in finance as the Man of Law describes its mercantile origins. The Man of Law claims:

Ye seken lond and see for yowre wynnynges:
  as wise folk ye knowen al th’estaat
  of regenes; ye been fadres of tidynges
  And tales, both of pees and of debaat.
  I were right now of tales desolaat,
  Nere that a marchant, goon is many a yeere,
  Me taught a tale, which that ye shal heere. (Chaucer, 127-133, 89)

In using “ye” in this proclamation, the Man of Laws literally addresses rich men – the pilgrims who are “wise” enough to know of the “lond” and “wynnynges” in the East. In addition, he subtly addresses the reader, almost advising the audience that – if they are also “wise” – they will take to the East and win “lond and see.” By focusing on the world abroad as a source of the wise, rich men’s wealth, Chaucer affiliates the Man of Law’s story and the East with fourteenth-century narratives and knowledge of wealth abroad. The Man of Law’s Tale further becomes a tale of wealth, rather than Christian conversion, when the Man of Law reveals who told him the tale: “a marchant…me taught a tale.” Told by a merchant and focused on the wealth of the East, Chaucer casts the Man of Law’s Tale as a monetary narrative, rather than a purely Christian one.
As the tale commences, the Man of Law uses financial stereotypes regarding the East to entice both his audience and his contemporary audience. As the Man of Law sets his tale in Syria, he describes

A compaignye
Of chapmen riche, and thereto sadde and trewe,
That wyde-where senten hir spicerye,
Clothes of gold, and satyns riche of hewe.
Hir chaffare was so thrifty and so newe
That every wight hath deyntee to chaffare. (Chaucer, 134-139, 98)

Describing the “clothes of gold” and “thrifty and so newe” goods that these foreign merchants sell, the Man of Law idealizes the East for its beauty and wealth. This description of the East is not uncommon for fourteenth-century narratives; in her article “Christians, Muslims, and the ‘Liberation’ of the Holy Land,” Penny Cole outlines the motivations of crusade culture as she recounts medieval historians of the era describing the holy city “filled with bodies and blood” (Cole, 4) as “our men rushed round the whole city, seizing gold and silver, horses and mules, and houses full of all sorts of goods” (Ibid). Recognizing that an aspect of crusade interactions with the East were rooted in material conquest – perhaps even more deeply rooted in the colloquial “Gold, God and Glory” crusade motives – Penny Cole, and historians like her, acknowledge that the “gold and silver” and “all sorts of goods” may have been, for crusaders, prioritized over the crusades’ religious roots. In highlighting the wealth of the East, the Man of Law invokes narratives and motivations of financial gain in his tale.

Not only are there financial associations and motivations to crusading in the East, but there is also an inherent materialism associated with the Eastern Orient through Orientalist narratives. In his book Orientalism, Edward Said asserts that “the Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part
culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” (Said, 2). In analyzing different institutional interactions with the East, Said asserts an intersectionality between politics and “material civilization and culture” that constitute the Orientalist narratives of the East. Driven by the East’s role in Europe’s “material civilization and culture,” Said argues that the assertion of Christian power abroad stemmed from the belief that “knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control” (Ibid, 36). In adopting the Orientalist belief that establishing “power” abroad is “profitable,” these narratives promote Christian interference abroad – perhaps through the crusades – as a means to benefit financially from the East. The Man of Law uses the association of movements like the crusades with power and profit to construct Christian capital in his tale. The Man of Law’s Tale reflects the power, profit, and Christian hegemony – together forming Christian capital – that motivates the interactions with the East that he articulates.

Because Western Orientalist narratives highlight the key role the East plays in European material culture, they promote interaction with, and even control of, the East – through means like the crusades – as a way to gain Christian capital as reflected in the subsequent Man of Law’s Tale.

The Man of Law aligns finances and Christian hegemony by beginning his tale with a description of merchants that breaks from his original sources. In his article “The ‘Man of Law's Tale:’ What Chaucer Really Owed to Gower,” Peter Nicholson asserts that Chaucer “chooses to begin his tale, not with Constance and her parents as Trevet and Gower do, but with the merchants, and he inserts a three-stanza passage describing their activity while in Rome... He also chooses not to have them convert to Christianity: he thus reduces Constance's role in the opening” (Nicholson, 154). In choosing to open with merchants, yet omitting their conversion –
in opposition to both Gower and Trevet’s influence – the Man of Law grounds his tale in financial and material motives. Leaning into the discrete overlap between crusaders and Chaucer’s pilgrims, the Man of Law’s Tale’s original focus on stereotypical Eastern wealth suggests a prioritized material motive sheathed in the religiosity of Constance’s conversion tale.

While Constance is a conversion figure in both Trevet’s and Gower’s tales, her material motivations and interactions abroad in Chaucer’s retelling suggests that she takes on more of a merchant role than a religious one. When originally beginning her travels, Constance is sent to Syria to marry the Sultan; in his pursuit of her, the Sultan states that “certein, but he myghte have grace/ To han Custance withinne a litel space,/ He nas but deed” (Chaucer, 207-209, 90) and ultimately comes to the arrangement that

> How that the Sowdan and his baronage
> And alle his liges sholde ychristned be,
> And he shal han Custance in mariage,
> And certein gold. (Ibid, 239-242, 90)

Hoping to have the “grace” to marry Constance, Chaucer invokes a dual meaning to the Sultan’s intent; while this “grace” could be referring to God’s grace, especially since the Sultan is not Christian, this “grace” is better interpreted as fortune; while possibly implying luck, the later clear association with material wealth as Constance’s marriage results in “certain gold” for the Sultan casts this “grace” as material. A symbol of good fortune – or “grace” – for the Sultan, Constance merely represents material wealth gained by a conversion to Christianity. In converting to Christianity for this “certain gold,” the Sultan exemplifies the drive for material wealth overcoming religious difference.

Not only are material wealth motives prevalent in the Sultan, but Constance’s travels to the East are also laced with financial overtones. As Heffernan asserts in The Orient In Chaucer and Medieval Romance, the “Man of Law’s Tale immediately enters the mercantile world of the
Mediterranean where profits depend on travel” (Heffernan, 30) as Constance herself “ends up traveling as much as any merchant who spends years gathering goods in farflung places for trade” (Ibid, 33). Set rudderless on the sea, Constance visits the faraway places of Syria, Northumberland and the Strait of Gibraltar and Morocco in her travels. Reflecting medieval trading patterns as the “main trade routes went from Alexandria to Tunisia to Sicily…through the Straits of Gibraltar to Morocco, Seville and Lisbon” (Ibid, 20), as well as through “sea routes to Syria” (Ibid), Constance’s tale relies on these trade routes and Middle Eastern trade and acknowledges that these foreign relations were “facilitated by abundant gold and silver money” (Ibid). As Constance herself is ‘traded’ to Syria with the promise of “certein gold” (Chaucer, 242, 90), she assumes a mercantile role as she facilitates international trade through her bringing of “abundant gold and silver money” (Heffernan, 20) abroad. Married for her money and cast as a trade figure in the tale, Constance serves as a vessel of material wealth.

Water

The Man of Law not only inserts clear financial motives into Constance’s journey in the form of tangible wealth, but also subtly constructs Christian capital through her tale’s naval setting. The use and emphasis of water in this tale is twofold: while it adheres to the sources of Constance’s tale, the Man of Law manipulates the water in Constance’s tale to convey both financial and religious motives. Because it interacts with both elements, the water in Constance’s tale asserts an intrinsic link between Christianity and finances, one that aligns with Christian capital. As water underlies the entirety of Constance’s journey, its representation of Christian capital suggests that this capital also underlies and drives Constance’s actions.

In addition to Constance’s naval travels suggesting her mercantile role, the overlap between water and fortune further solidifies the presence and influence of wealth in the tale. In
his book *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, V.A. Kolve contextualizes the role of the sea in the Middle Ages; mentioning that other medieval literature, namely the poem “Of po flode of po world” (Kolve, 326) associates the “ebbe & to withdrawe” of the sea with the “richesse and wealth” before falling “fro hegh state to lawe” (Ibid). Corroborated with this other medieval narrative, Kolve asserts that the sea in the *Man of Law’s Tale* similarly reflects “a restless motion – a raising high and casting low – symbolically equivalent to that figured by Fortune’s wheel” (Ibid, 326). Elaborating on Fortune’s wheel as it “turns upon the tree—the tree of worldly life—and Lady Fortune stands beside it (or at its center) in her double aspect, at once beautiful and ugly. Youthful and aged, handsomely gowned and in tattered rags” (Ibid, 327), Kolve recognizes the “worldly,” “handsomely gowned,” and, as the poem “Of po flode of po world” states, the “richesse and wealth” associated with Fortune. Usually situated at the prow of a medieval ship, Lady Fortune deals with the luck and well-being of the pilgrims, as well as the monetary fortune gained – or lost – by travelers. Subject to the weather patterns, environmental conditions and potential piracy of the seas, merchants, like Constance, were at the whim of Lady Fortune; in casting Constance onto the sea, a proxy for Fortune, the Man of Law further associates Constance’s worldly travels with the monetary Fortune represented by the ocean and acquired through naval trading. As such, Lady Fortune is also responsible for the Christian capital that Constance seeks; in navigating Lady Fortune’s sea, Constance hopes to gain the social capital and status gained from being “handsomely gowned” at the top of Fortune’s wheel, as well as the monetary financial capital that comes from interactions abroad – all through a Christian conversion lens.

Not only is water a symbol of fortune and wealth in the fourteenth century, but Constance’s experiences during her sea travels are also aligned with wealth. When Constance is first cast onto the sea, she is left with the exclamation “O my Custance, ful of benignytee,/O
Emperoures yonge doghter deere,/He that is lord of Fortune be thy steere!” (Chaucer, 446-448, 93) as, in a series of rhetorical questions, the Man of Law questions “Where myghte this womman mete and drynke have/Thre yeer and moore? How lasteth hire vitaille?” (Ibid, 497-499, 94). While these utterances seem to speak to God’s power as the Man of Law suggests that the “lord of Fortune,” presumably God, controls Constance’s destiny and provides her with “mete and drynke” (Ibid, 497, 94) for her journey, they also suggest a monetary component to her travels. Chaucer’s own family made their money from providing “mete and drynke” as his father was a successful vintner and wine merchant” (Reiman). Because Chaucer financially relied upon the provision of food, the “mete and drynke” provided for Constance’s naval journey seems to be related to monetary wealth. Although not every instance of food in the tales reflect this financial component, because Constance relies on “mete and drynke” for survival – just as Chaucer relied on it for his financial livelihood – Constance’s “mete and drynke” appears interwoven with Chaucer’s own experiences. Described as the “lord of Fortune,” God in this tale represents the fortune outlined by Kolve – responsible for the wealth and success of men and merchants, Constance’s protection by the “lord of Fortune” ensures both her and her wealth’s safe passage.

Although the water speaks to underlying monetary fortune motives in the tale, the amount of time Constance spends on the sea, in comparison to other versions, also serves to commodify her Christian journey and serve as a component of Christian capital. Hearkening back to the prologue where the Host associates time as more precious than “gold in cofre” (Chaucer, 22, 87), the time spent in Constance’s rudderless boat again focuses the tale on wealth over conversion. In reflecting on how God’s grace provided her meat and drink for “thre yeer and moore,” the Man of Law relies on the Host’s prologue and his valuation of time as more valuable than gold to establish this monetary end. Because Constance spends “thre yeer” using something more
precious than “gold in cofre” (Ibid, 22, 87), the Man of Law implies that this journey is financially valuable. When comparing Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale* to Trevet’s, Nicholson comments on Chaucer’s overall shortening of Trevet across the tale as this “shortening was necessary…to anyone who has read through Trevet’s account: it is verbose, unnecessarily elaborate, and almost entirely without focus” (Nicholson, 155). Because Chaucer typically chose to shorten Trevet’s version due to its verbosity, Chaucer’s willingness to devote physical text and metaphorical time to Constance’s sea voyages, especially in his pre-established context of time as valuable, again implies the monetary valuableness of this journey. In overlapping valuable time with the *Man of Law’s Tale* and Constance’s subsequent journey, Chaucer casts time as a monetary component of Christian capital; willing to invest the time into her tale, just as Constance is willing to invest the time into journeying for Christianity abroad, Chaucer suggests an inherent overlap between religious interactions and lucrative financial gain in the East. By spending the time on Constance’s voyage, time that he shortened across other aspects of the tale, Chaucer subtly monetizes her religious journey in alignment with Christian capital.

While Constance’s lengthy sea voyage is associated with the monetary value of time and fortune, Constance uses this time to peddle not only material wealth, but religious goods. Kolve uses Constance’s relationship to the sea to liken her journey to that of Noah and his ark: “Christ guides the ark of Noah, as in Chaucer He guides the ship of Constance, because in peril of the sea its passengers commit their lives and fortunes entirely to His hands, asking only that His will be done” (Kolve, 330). As Constance is guided by the “lord of Fortune” (Chaucer, 448, 93), Chaucer blurs the line between religion and material wealth enough, as Kolve asserts, for Constance’s cargo to be likened to “His will.” Analogous to the animals that would repopulate the Christian earth, Constance and her role as an agent of conversion in the tale represent the
Lord of Fortune’s Christian cargo. As Constance ventures to Syria to begin her conversion narrative, Kolve remarks that she is promised to bring

‘certein tresor’...with her to Syria from Rome, whose exact nature is never specified, but which accompanies her on all her journeys. It may be a literal treasure, or silver and gold. It may be a crucifix…or it may be a treasure greater still, the Christian faith she carries in her heart. (Kolve, 316)

While monetized to be ‘certain gold’ in the Riverside Chaucer translation, Kolve’s analysis speaks to Chaucer’s continued overlap of financial and divine wealth as Constance carries both literal and figurative gold. Carrying “tresor” with her on her conversion journey, Constance asserts the multifaceted value of Christianity and inextricably links Christian conversion and monetary wealth.

Chaucer continues to overlap the financial and Christian motives of Constance’s journey through the underlying Christian imagery and events surrounding water in the tale. When Constance agrees to marry the Sultan, she does so with the promise of his impending conversion as “the Sowdan and his baronage/And alle his liges sholde ychristned be,/And he shal han Custance in mariage” (Chaucer, 239-241, 90). Promised to be “ychristned” for Constance’s hand, the Sultan agrees to baptism, to which his heathen Sultan mother responds “coold water shal nat greve us but a lite!” (Ibid, 352, 92). Because the Queen disregards the effect of the “coold water” of baptism, Constance’s interactions with the Syrians reflects Kolve’s assertion that “the power of baptism to renew and grant life is illustrated in the histories of Custance…but it is conditional on the right motive” (Kolve, 321-322). Since the Sultan converts because of his desire for “Custance in mariaghe” (Chaucer, 241, 90) rather than an appreciation for or real belief in Christianity, this section of Constance’s tale ends grievously; hacked to pieces, the Sultan reflects Kolve’s improper motives for baptism. While a symbol of fourteenth-century material wealth and fortune, the water in this tale also represents a vessel for Christianity through baptism.
The tale further builds upon the religious implications of water when the thief attempts to rape Constance. In this scene:

A theef, that hadde reneyed oure creance,
Cam into ship allone, and seyde he sholde
Hir lemmem be, wher-so she wolde or nolde…
Hir child cride, and she cride pitously.
But blisful Marie heelp hire right anon;/For with hir struglyng wel and myghtily
The theef fil over bord al sodeynly
And in the see he dreynte for vengeance;
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Custance. (Chaucer, 916-924, 100)

While Christ’s protection of Constance in this segment as the “theef fil over bord” may stem from a desire to keep her a virgin, this virginity does not necessary apply to Constance, but rather to the entire Christian church. A proxy for Christianity in the tale, Constance’s defilement by someone that “hadd reneyed oure creance” suggests a hostility towards Christianity from heathen populations; in keeping Constance “unwemmed” and allowing her to use strength as she struggles “wel and myghtily,” Christ and Chaucer endow Constance with the violent means she needs to preserve her Christianity. As Brendan O’Connell asserts in “‘Struglyng Wel And Myghtily’: Resisting Rape In The Man Of Law’s Tale,” when looking at the sources and analogues of the Man of Law’s Tale, “Gower cuts much material from Trevet, and Chaucer follows him in this. But in fact Chaucer goes further, cutting details kept intact by Gower: specifically, Chaucer does not assert that the villain attempts first to seduce Constance, or that she attempts first to reason with him and then to deceive him” (O’Connell, 31). Because Chaucer ignores this seduction attempt, O’Connell asserts that his omission “invests the scene with a much greater sense of suddenness and urgency” (Ibid). Later grounding Chaucer’s tale in English law surrounding self-defense, O’Connell also acknowledges that “Trevet’s Constance does not pray, but takes matters into her own hands, and there is no direct divine intervention. Gower's Constance prays, but does not commit any act which leads to the death of her assailant”
(Ibid) while Chaucer’s Constance responds with struggling “wel and myghtily” (Chaucer, 921, 100) with help from “blisful Mary” (Ibid, 920, 100). Because Constance fights “wel and myghtily” for Christianity, she takes on a crusader role as she utilizes physical violence to promote her religious ideals in the East. In looking at the discrepancies between Gower, Trevet and Chaucer, in omitting the thief’s seduction attempt, yet maintaining Constance’s religion and autonomy to defend herself, Chaucer relies on aspects of both Gower and Trevet in order to suggest the importance and urgency of religious values and advocating for these values abroad. By inspiring Constance to fight with Christian backing, Chaucer uses this scene to strengthen the overlap between Constance as both a missionary and a crusader and empower her to keep Christianity “unwemmed” abroad through – in select circumstances – the physical violence common to the crusades.

The water in Constance’s tale is multifaceted: while it helps establish Christianity abroad, it also connects Constance to mercantilism. This complexity enmeshes Constance’s status as a merchant, a crusader, and a missionary in a way practical to the modern-day pilgrim. In reflecting Constance’s varying motivations – encompassed in her interactions with the sea – the Man of Law interweaves and links Christianity and materialism to form the notion of Christian capital. Because the water both bears Constance towards financial advantage, as well as provides a mean of Christian conversion, the Man of Law suggests that the two are not mutually exclusive; instead, he overlaps the financial and religious implications of water in Constance’s tale to construct Christian capital. The role of water is this tale serves to not only to bear Constance to her various trade and conversion destinations, but to intrinsically link Constance’s Christian success – Latin Christian hegemony – with her financial success.

Race
While water helps construct Christian capital in the *Man of Law’s Tale*, the Man of Law’s treatment of race helps articulate how to achieve it. By ignoring aspects of racial difference in his tale, the Man of Law allows Constance to interact with, financially benefit from, and ultimately convert people abroad. Because the Man of Law treats race in accordance with medieval race-thinking, he is able to articulate how Christian capital can be realistically realized abroad.

The Man of Law’s Constance diminishes the influence of racial difference abroad in order to more effectively achieve Christian capital. Prior to her travels, Constance articulates the stereotypical hesitancies she has about her impending marriage as she exclaims “Allas, unto the Barbre nacioun/I moste anoon” (Chaucer, 281-282, 91) and invokes violent imagery as the narrator suggests that “At the bigynnyng of this fiers viage,/That cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage” (Ibid, 300-301, 91). By expressing her fears about her dangerous journey – “fiers viage” – to the “Barbre” nation, Constance briefly plays into the Eastern stereotype of violence and barbarism. However, when Constance goes abroad, she never describes the physical racial differences of the Muslims. In omitting descriptions of the skin tone, hair, or other physical attributes of the Muslims, Constance successfully diminishes the apparent racial differences between her and the East in favor of the favorable mercantile opportunities the East presents. While not entirely able to ignore racial difference, Constance is able to diminish it by prioritizing material motives.

By diminishing the physical differences between herself and the Muslims through financial motivation, Constance blurs the lines of racial difference in a way that aligns with medieval race-thinking. In an analogue of Constance’s tale, namely the *King of Tars*, the Sultan “hide that blac and lothely was/Al white bicom thurth Godes gras” (Chandler, 922-923) upon his conversion. By allowing the Sultan to transform from “blac” to “white” upon conversion, this tale implies a religious element within racial difference, as well as innate and attainable
whiteness for those of color. Constance’s tale similarly blurs the lines of what constitutes racial difference as her financial and Christian motives abroad allow her to overlook physical racial difference in favor of financial benefits and apparent Christian conversions – perhaps constituting their innate whiteness – of the Muslims. This comes across in the text as the Sultaness describes the Sultan’s “wyf be cristned never so white” (Chaucer, 355, 92) as she plots to murder the Christian dinner guests. In describing Constance’s whiteness as stemming from her being “cristned,” the Sultaness overlaps physical racial difference with religious difference and implies that, upon her son’s christening, he too will appear “white.” Not only are racial and religious difference intertwined, but because Constance agrees to this foreign marriage partially because of the financial benefits of her naval journey and trade with the East, racial difference is also heavily political; it is this overlap between physical, religious, and political influences that constitutes medieval race-thinking in the tale. It is also this overlap that intrinsically links medieval race-thinking to the Man of Law’s construction of Christian capital, as both blend social, religious, and financial components to bring socially, religiously, and geographically different populations together.

In accordance with medieval race-thinking and the desire to omit physical difference in favor of financial benefit, the Man of Law depicts Constance, not by her physical attributes, but rather her innate characteristics. When describing Constance, the Man of Law depicts her Christian qualities:

In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
   Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folye,
   To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde…
   She is mirour of alle curteisy;
   Hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse. (Chaucer, 162-167, 89)

In focusing on Constance’s “pride” and lack of “grenehede or folye,” the Man of Law depicts Constance as an object of male desire, not because of her physical attributes, but because of her
moral virtue. Teasing the concept of a “mirour,” yet describing her as a “mirour of alle curteisye,” the Man of Law recognizes her physical appearance and overshadows it with her Christian values. Rather than focus on her origins, the Man of Law uses this “mirour” to show how Christian values overshadow potential physical racial differences in accordance with medieval race-theory. By emphasizing Constance’s character over appearance, Chaucer distances her from heathen women as, in his *King of Tars* source, when the Constance figure – the princess – is brought abroad “richeliche sche was cladde/As hethen wiman ware” (Chandler, 380-381). Focused heavily on their appearance as they are described as dressing “richeliche,” these heathen women are more concerned with outward, rather than inward, character. By highlighting Constance’s Christian character and values over her appearance, the Man of Law distances her from heathens and suggests an innate quality to Christianity, Christian conversion, and whiteness – one that doesn’t rely on appearance or race.

The Man of Law further diminishes racial and ethnic backgrounds through his description of Constance’s education. In an analogue to Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale*, Trevet describes Constance by saying that she was “taught the Christian faith and instructed by learning masters in the seven sciences, which are logic, physics, morals, astronomy, geometry, music, and optics, called the secular sciences, and had her taught various languages” (Correale and Hamel, 296). While Trevet focuses on Constance’s “scienc[e]” and “language” learning, Chaucer omits Constance’s education in favor of describing her “heigh beautee, withoute pride” (Chaucer, 162, 89) and other characteristics. In doing so, the *Man of Law’s Tale* focuses on Constance’s qualities rather than experiences – her humble beauty, rather than her learning. Nicholson asserts that this shift allows the Man of Law to focus on Constance’s character, rather than her upbringing, “which Trevet chooses to mention only later” (Nicholson, 156). In ignoring her education in favor of her Christian character, the *Man of Law’s Tale* prioritizes Christian faith over ethnic or
even educational background and thereby allows Constance to overlook these physical differences in favor of Christian – and political – unification. Prioritizing Christian hegemony as a means to achieve wealth abroad, the Man of Law uses the religious and political components of medieval race-thinking to overlook physical and ethnic differences.

While appearing to overlook physical differences in favor of material wealth and religious conversion in Syria, the ultimate conversion of the English, rather than the Syrians, does suggest the existence of an underlying racial component to Christianity present in the fourteenth-century. While some early texts viewed the non-Christian as “animal and human freaks” (Pliny the Elder, 70), English heathens were viewed differently; when monk Gregory saw English boys being sold as slaves in Rome, he queried

> Alas, what a pity that the author of darkness is possessed of men of such fair countenances; and that being remarkable for such graceful outward appearance, their minds should be void of inward grace.’ He therefore again asked what the name of that nation was, and was answered that they were called Angles. ‘Right’ said he, ‘for they in Latin have angelic faces, and it becomes such to be coheirs with the angels in heaven.’

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Described as and likened to “angels” because of their “fair countenances” and “Angles” origins, the English stand in direct contrast to the “freaks” (Pliny the Elder, 70) of the heathen East.

Although the Man of Law previously tries to diminish racial difference in religious conversion by focusing on Constance’s character rather than educational or ethnic backgrounds, in portraying a successful English conversion and a disastrous Syrian one, the Man of Law is not entirely successful in removing racial difference completely from Christian conversion.

**The Construction of Capital**

While elements of the *Man of Law’s Tale* reflect and provide means to achieving Christian capital, it is through Constance’s conversion of the Northumbrians that this capital
comes to fruition. By overlapping this conversion with financial success, the Man of Law inextricably links financial and Christian success abroad. In creating this overlap, the Man of Law constructs Christian capital and reflects fourteenth century practicality as it applies to the East.

Although Constance’s conversion of the English does suggest a residual racial bias within the tale’s imagination of Christian identity, the process of Constance’s conversion highlights how Constance is more explicitly financially motivated than racially. When Constance originally lands in Northumberland, she “kneleth doun and thanketh Goddes sonde;/But what she was she wolde no man seye” (Chaucer, 523-524, 94) upon being found by Lady Hermengild and the constable. Although “in al that lond no Cristen dorste route/ All Cristen folk been fled fro that contree/ Thurgh payens” (Ibid, 540-542, 94), Constance boldly maintains her religious values; a vessel of Christian values – literally such as she arrives by sea – Constance praises and “thanketh Goddes” regardless of the “payens.” While prioritizing her religious convictions, Constance subtly acknowledges her material wealth by refusing to tell anyone “what she was.” An Emperor’s daughter and thereby laden with “certein gold” (Ibid, 242, 90), Constance distances her financial status from the pagans until she faces judgment for the false accusation of her murdering Elda’s wife. While Constance herself never claims privilege based on this wealth, she is throughout the tale utilized as more of a vessel than a self-determining figure. Because the Man of Law ascribes these financial values to Constance, he inherently associates them with her character and privileges, even when Constance does not directly claim them. At her trial, the Man of Law invokes Constance’s status to justify – beyond just her innocence – the wrongfulness of her trial:

O queenes, lyvynge in prosperitee,
Duchesses, and ye ladyes everichone,
Haveth som routhe on hire adversitee!
An Emperoures doghter stant allone;...
O blood roial, that stondenst in this drede,
Fer been thy freendes at thy grete nede! (Ibid, 652-658, 96)

Reminding the audience that an “Emperoures doghter” is on trial and calling upon “queens,” “prosperity,” and “Duchesses” to help the “blood roial” in her time of need, the Man of Law suggests that Constance’s status and material wealth entitles her to the greatest sympathy.

Constance further associates her innocence with nonheathen practice when she cries “Immortal God, that savedest Susanne…/ If I be giltlees of this felonye, My socour be, for ellis shal I dye!” (Ibid, 644, 96). In calling upon “Immortal God” to be her “sucour” – who delivers her with a feat of Christian strength by slaying the knight who swore her guilt – the Man of Law aligns material wealth and status with that of Christian power. As both God and King Alla deliver Constance from a guilty verdict, both religion and status influence her destiny. Wed and made a queen upon King Alla’s conversion, Constance gains material wealth through divine means.

Although ultimately ending in Christian conversion in Northumberland, Constance’s interactions with the pagan world are not entirely devoid of material motives; like the colloquial “Gold, God and Glory” crusaders, Constance uses her crusades to gain Gold and wealth in the name of God.

While motivated by wealth, the conversion of King Alla is intrinsically linked to the potential for future Christian conversion in the East. While Constance’s attempted conversion in Syria left all the Sultan and the Christians “al tohewe and stiked at the bord” (Chaucer, 430, 93) because of the Sultaness’s loyalty to the Koran, in Britain she successfully converts the Northumbrians and, most importantly, King Alla as together they “lyved euere in swich delit o day/That hym ne moeved outher conscience,/ Or ire, or talent, or som kynnes affray/Envye, or pride, or passion, or offence” (Ibid, 1135-1138, 103). While Alla is also represented in Trevet’s analogue to the tale (Correale and Hamel, 314), Chaucer’s choice to utilize the same naming where he has been willing to break from the source before – namely in his omission of the
constable’s name – Olda (Ibid) in Trevet – the respelling of Hermengild – Hermegild in Trivet (Ibid, 308) – and the omission of King Alla’s mother’s name, “Domild” (Ibid, 310) suggests Chaucer’s use of the name Alla is intentional in the tale. The naming of King Alla presents a unique complexity in his tale because of its association with Allah, the God of Islam. As Constance is able to successfully convert King Alla, her tale subtly suggests the potential for her to one day also convert Allah. In describing how they lived together happily with Alla experiencing no “envye” or “pride,” Chaucer invokes the same tactics used when describing Constance; rather than focus on physical appearance, Chaucer emphasizes the inner character and values of Christians, regardless of background. Although unable to convert the Syrians due to diminished, yet still present, racial difference, Constance’s conversion of the Northumbrians suggests a hope for conversion in the East, perhaps through material motives.

As shown in King Alla’s conversion, while material wealth plays a role in Constance’s conversions, the Man of Law’s Tale does not use this wealth to supersede religion, but rather couples the two through Christian capital as a means of achieving Latin Christian hegemony. By intrinsically linking Constance’s journey to wealth, the Man of Law’s Tale constructs the notion of Christian capital; unable to be separated, the Man of Law uses Constance’s financially motivated conversions in the East to suggest that monetary wealth is the key to gaining religious power – together Christian capital – in the East. To achieve this, the Man of Law’s Constance must allow racial, religious, and cultural differences to be treated as inferior to her financial motivations and success abroad. Because the Man of Law carefully overlaps Constance’s financial gain with her religious interactions abroad, in prioritizing her financial capital, Constance is also effectively prioritizing her Christian goals and successes of achieving global, Latin Christian hegemony.
The Man of Law’s construction of Christian capital is reflective of the experiences of crusaders in Chaucer’s reality. Riley-Smith outlines the original motives of the crusades, where because “substantial sums…were required by a knight before he could contemplate going on a crusade” (Riley-Smith, 12), many historians maintain “that the chief motivation was a genuine idealism” (Ibid, 11). Motivated by Pope Urban’s dreams of “freeing the eastern Churches…from the savagery and tyranny of the Muslims” (Ibid, 6) in favor of universal Christianity, the original crusaders chose “idealism” over the stereotypes of wealth, land, and better prospects in the East. Although initially ignoring materialism in favor of Christian “idealism,” the crusades themselves were not altogether successful at accomplishing their initial goal of “freeing” the East through Latin Christian hegemony; instead, Europeans abroad found ways to integrate into Eastern society. As Riley-Smith asserts, “throughout history conquerors have adapted rather than destroyed the institutions in the territories they have conquered” (Ibid, 64) citing how

in the towns too the old taxes and returns continued to be levied, including a tax in Tyre paid by pork butchers, which must have been the survival of a Muslim tax on the purveyors of unclean meat…the procedures were typical of Byzantine and Muslim practice and underline the continuity between the old and new systems. (Ibid, 65)

In adhering to the “Muslim tax[es]” in the East in order to assimilate into Eastern society, the crusaders overlooked religious difference in favor of economic systems. While these established systems benefit Muslims, in paying these taxes, the crusaders acknowledge the practical shortcomings of crusade culture and the realistic need to socially and financially thrive in the East; in doing so, they adhere to the social aspect of Christian capital. Through their financial motives, they are able to diminish religious and racial difference; while they lose physical wealth during taxation, they gain capital – the power to participate and gain wealth and status in Eastern society. In telling a tale of Constance’s financially motivated conversions, the Man of Law’s Tale
reflects this crusading reality and proposes Christian capital as a motive and method to not only gain monetary and social capital abroad, but to achieve the crusading goal of Latin Christian hegemony.

Not only does Chaucer acknowledge the financial realities of the crusades through Constance’s conversions, but he also acknowledges the shifting religious goals of the crusades. As Riley-Smith addresses, by the fourteenth century the Christians had already lost Jerusalem, and instead “there was growing in the East a threat more serious than any faced since the eighth century, a threat to Europe itself from the Ottoman Turks…the piratical activities of the Turkish emirates…meant that crusading moved to the sea and became very largely naval” (Ibid, 224). Unsuccessful in “freeing of the eastern Churches” and taking a more practical turn towards the defense of Europe from Eastern Turks, the fourteenth-century crusades are those which Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale* mirrors. Focusing the tale on Constance’s sea travels, possibly a reflection of the crusading movement’s – and thereby Christian hegemony – having become “very largely naval,” Constance and her financially motivated Christian conversions recognize the shifting values of the crusades from idealist to practical. In grounding Constance’s tale in materialism and naval travel, yet still allowing for Christian conversion, Chaucer reflects this crusading shift from idealism to practical and redefines the means of achieving global, Latin Christian hegemony: in the *Man of Law's Tale*, Chaucer suggests that this hegemony can occur through material wealth and trade through Constance’s interactions abroad.

Rather than use Constance to renew a drive for these traditional crusading practices, the *Man of Law’s Tale* uses the complexity of her character’s motivations to articulate the practicality of crusading that more closely resembles the success of the Holy Roman Empire. Because Constance is a Roman woman, the recent rise and success of the Holy Roman Empire is inherently linked to her character. When the Holy Roman Empire was established upon
Charlemagne’s crowning in 800, it was motivated by Charlemagne, Otto the Great, and his successors feeling “it to be both their right and their duty to extend Christianity and to subdue pagan peoples” (Ladner, 9). Motivated by the concept of extending Christianity, the Holy Roman Empire centered around crusading ideals of global, Latin Christian hegemony. However, it quickly became a dominant presence in Europe, encompassing large expanses of Germany and Italy (Euratlas) and, as such, creating strong ties and a plethora of land and power by Chaucer’s time. While motivated by crusading ideals, the rise of the Holy Roman Empire and its economic success are reflected in Constance’s Roman character. Also motivated by conversion, yet taking on a mercantile role in the tales, Constance is able to succeed in a way similar to her homeland as she is able to both establish financial gain and conversion abroad. In depicting this Roman woman and paralleling her success to that of the Holy Roman Empire, the Man of Law’s Tale suggests amending traditional crusade culture to encompass the practical financial motivations and mercantilism that the Holy Roman Empire models.

Constance’s interactions with the Northumbrians adheres to the mercantilism and success of the Holy Roman Empire. Because Constance and the Sultan are motivated by “certein gold” (Chaucer, 239-242, 90) and stereotypes of wealth in the East in the first conversion, it is not unlikely that Constance’s religious marriage also represents a financial one. As previously asserted, the path Constance takes through the “Straits of Gibraltar to Morocco, Seville and Lisbon” (Heffernan, 20) is reflective of naval trade in the fourteenth century; although unable to make profitable trade ties through marriage and Christian hegemony in Syria, Constance’s marriage to Alla merely secures these ties elsewhere along the trading route. Chaucer’s Man of Law’s Tale differs from his Gower and Trevet sources at the beginning: both Gower’s and Trevet’s version the tales begin by focusing on Constance and her family. Gower begins by describing “Tiberie Constantin/…Whose wif was cleped Ytalie” (Correale and Hamel, 590-591,
330) who together “hadde bot a maide” (Ibid, 593, 330) and Trevet opens with a family tree of “Maurice, according to the aforementioned history of the Saxons, was the sone of Constance, the daughter of Tiberius, by the King of the Saxons – the aforesaid Alla” (Ibid, 296). While both Gower and Trevet begin by articulating the familial structure and ties of Constance’s family, the Man of Law chooses to begin his tale by announcing that “in Surrye whilom dwelte a compaignye of chapmen riche” (Chaucer, 134-135, 89). Initially focusing the tale on these “chapmen” and their financial ties, rather than Constance’s familial ones, the Man of Law suggests an underlying financial component to Constance’s journey in the tale, ultimately culminating in her marriage to Alla. While Gower and Trevet’s version may prioritize the familial aspects of this marriage, the Man of Law’s opening suggests that his tale prioritizes the financial aspects of their union. By articulating this Christian and financial union, the Man of Law’s Tale constructs Christian capital as Constance effectively creates and achieves religious capital through conversion, social capital through the King’s royal status, and financial capital through wealth and trade patterns. Prior to the publication of the tales, Chaucer was appointed comptroller where he controlled “customs and subsidy of wools, skins, and tanned hides for the Port of London” (Lumiansky). Coupling his commercial role with the growing trend by as early as the 1330s for “Italian merchants in England…[to be] deeply involved in the wool trade, dealing in over half of the wool exported and bringing in bullion, Mediterranean goods and exotica” (The National Archives), this marriage is likely reminiscent of the reality of Britain's growing trade relationship with both Italy and the world. In allowing Constance to convert King Alla and Britain in a way reflective of growing trade relations, the Man of Law’s Tale asserts a mercantile motive to this conversion and again suggests the potential for Christian capital and hegemony through interactions with the East.
Not only is King Alla and Constance’s relationship reminiscent of growing trade between Italy and England, but Constance’s implied and realized fertility in the tale further suggest budding financial relations between the two regions. In Geraldine Heng’s *Empire of Magic*, Heng acknowledges that Constance’s story is one of “reproductive sexuality…significantly, the productive labor that hagiographic romance wants from a woman turns out to be reproductive labor” (Heng, 201). By categorizing Constance’s “productive labor” as “reproductive,” Heng associates her commercial success and prosperity with her fertility. Because Alla and Constance have a child, this child not only represents her “reproductive” accomplishments, but also her financially “productive” success. The boy, cast away to Rome by sea, is the catalyst for Alla’s later reunification with Constance as “Now was this child as lyk unto Custance/ As possible is a creature to be./ This Alla hath the face in remembrance” (Chaucer, 1030-1032, 102). As he is finally returned “to Engelond been they come the righte way” (Ibid, 1130, 103), this child is the physical embodiment of this established trading route between the two countries. In describing their chosen path from Rome to England as “the righte way,” the Man of Law attributes an inherently positive, or “righte,” value to their journey, both because it represents the religious reunification of Alla and Constance, but also because it fully establishes a mutually beneficial financial “way” for Italy and England. While relaying the tale of successful Christian conversion and hegemony, the *Man of Law’s Tale* ends with the motives with which it begins: finances.

**Global, Latin Christian Hegemony**

As the tale concludes, the Man of Law has articulated a story that results in a successful, yet still practical, crusade. By the end of the tale, Constance has converted some heathens and instilled hope for expanding these conversions to further Eastern populations. Although Constance’s character is outwardly influenced by wealth and financial gain, these motives do not
work against the goal of the crusades. Instead, she is able to combine crusade idealism with financial motives through Christian capital to achieve larger personal status and more global, Latin Christian hegemony.

Although the Man of Law’s monetization of religion disrupts ideal Christian conversion, it does so in a way that could practically reflect the financial needs of a shifting fourteenth-century middle class. While the financial aspects of crusades are not novel to Chaucer as these journeys had previously been motivated by the colloquial “Gold, God, and Glory,” the needs of Chaucer’s audience were changing as there were two movements “distinctive to the later fourteenth-century: a demotion of the knights and a promotion of certain categories of tradesmen” (Strohm, 4). The demotion of knights in favor of tradesmen is reflected in the motives of Man of Law’s Tale; rather than focus on the chivalric idealism of the crusades that may have previously appealed to these knights, Chaucer focuses on providing a means of gaining or maintaining status through a shifted type of crusades that prioritizes gaining financial and, ultimately, Christian capital. Chaucer uses the Man of Law’s Tale to imagine an approach to crusades that diminishes the effect of racial and religious difference and draws them into a burgeoning system of primarily financial capital. In do so, Chaucer is not only responding to the general fourteenth-century shift towards mercantilism over chivalry, but he also reflects his personal social status as many of his associates

occupied social positions like Chaucer’s own. All are from one echelon or another of the middle strata. All…may be considered Gentle. None…was aristocratic or baronial. In a society of hereditary position, each seems to have prospered mainly as a result of his own exertions. (Strohm, 43)

Part of the “Gentle” class and understanding of the need to prosper “mainly as a result of [his] own exertions,” Chaucer would have been well aware of the benefits, if not necessity, of business and trade in feudal society. By overlapping mercantile and crusade themes in the Man of Law’s
Tale, Chaucer appeals to his audience’s primary goals of status and capital, while fulfilling their secondary duty, as per crusade culture, of advancing Christianity abroad.

Even though Man of Law’s Tale may have been influenced by social change in the fourteenth century, it is the Man of Law’s own character that dictates the financial motives present throughout his tale. Written by the Man of Law who is stereotyped by his greed in the prologue, this tale reflects his own social perspective and motivations towards the non-European other. By taking on this character, Chaucer reflects and embodies a perspective of the East that would have been present in his England, even if it is not entirely his own.

Using his own perspective as a tradesman, the Man of Law overlaps his personal financial motives with religious idealism to construct Christian capital in his tale. By casting Constance into both a conversion and a mercantile role within the tale, the Man of Law overlaps material wealth with Christian hegemony; as the tale concludes in a successful conversion and marriage abroad, the Man of Law intrinsically link the two, as well as their success in achieving global, Latin Christian hegemony. The financial motivations that the Man of Law attributes to Constance’s tale are reflective of the reality in which Chaucer (and the fictional Man of Law) exist; observing the rise of naval trade and shifting middle class structures, the Man of Law does not diminish religious conversion abroad in favor of material gain, but rather the opposite: He embeds the two concepts to construct a monetized form of Christianity – Christian capital – to motivate interactions with the East. Combining the power, status, and influence gained by Christians through monetary success abroad, the Man of Law uses Christian capital to appeal to both European religious idealism and financial practicality. While the Man of Law does not entirely ignore racial difference in the tale as he occasionally employs stereotypes of the East and unsuccessful conversions abroad, he diminishes this difference in favor of Christian capital and, as such, incites his audience to do the same. By lacing this Christian tale with subtle images and
suggestions of material motives, the Man of Law allows his tale to supersede fourteenth-century conceptions of racial difference in the name of Christian capital.

Overall, Chaucer uses the underlying financial imagery and motives in the *Man of Law’s Tale* to propose a financially practical means of creating global Latin Christian hegemony. Chaucer uses the Man of Law’s perspective and tale to imagine a world in which the promise of Christian capital allows for the diminishing of religious and racial difference. Although shifting from the original Christian idealism of the crusades, Chaucer’s mercantile Man of Law’s world accomplishes what the crusades could not: global, Latin Christian hegemony.
Chapter 2: The Squire’s Crusade for Christian Capital

While the *Man of Law’s Tale* uses mercantile travel as a means of interacting with foreign peoples and lands, the *Squire’s Tale* interacts with the East through its “Sarray, in the land of Tartarye” (Chaucer, 9, 169) setting, which is speculated to be in the modern day regions of “Siberia (Russia), Mongolia, Manchuria (China), Turkestan (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, [and] southern Kyrgyzstan” (*World in Maps*). Covering a wide expanse of foreign land, the Squire’s kingdom of Tartary more generally reflects European stereotypes of the East and the Eastern ‘other’ than any geographically specific location. Rather than being told through a European woman – like Constance’s – perspective, the narration of the *Squire’s Tale* is communicated through a perspective that is likely influenced by, if not entirely reflective of, the Squire’s own experiences and opinions of the non-European ‘other’ as a budding chivalric knight. Through his chivalric lens, the Squire constructs his own form of Christian capital and uses it to overlook Eastern differences in favor of financial and Christian benefits for his English audience.

The tale textually interacts with the Squire’s chivalric perspective of the East, but it structurally interacts with other cultures through its genre as a French Romance. The romantic aspect of this tale is blatantly acknowledged as the narrator implores the Squire to “sey somwhat of love” (Chaucer, 2, 169). The Squire proceeds to “sey somewhat of love” as he recounts the beginnings of the princess of Tartary’s romance, interwoven with various other romantic encounters such as that of the foreign falcon. The *Squire’s Tale* is complex; while it says “somwhat of love,” it does so through magic, chivalry, animals, and other disorderly plotlines. As Helen Cooper recognizes in *Oxford Guides to Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales*, the *Squire’s Tale* is told on “a vast scale, far too long for the Canterbury sequence; they suggest that the Tale as we have it is the opening of an interlaced romance of the sort most commonly found in
French… where various plot threads and the adventures of different characters are pursued in turn across a lengthy narrative” (Cooper, 218-219). Utilizing this structure, the *Squire’s Tale* basically produces the beginning of an episodic, epic French romance. In addition to having structural elements “commonly found in French,” the content of the *Squire’s Tale* is reflective of the magical aspects of French stories; while “the term ‘romauns’ did have an early genesis in English… [it] was most often used to refer to texts originally written in French that possessed an element of the fabulous” (Calkin, 32). By depicting elements of the fantastical through “strange knyght(s)” (Chaucer, 89, 170) and magical gifts, the Squire uplifts the “element of the fabulous” that French texts often possessed. Because the *Squire’s Tale* is a lengthy, complex romance containing the fantastical, it reflects Chaucer’s attempt to mimic a French Romance.

While Chaucer clearly lays the groundwork of a French Romance, the disordered tale that ensues implies the immaturity of both the speaker and his story. When the narrator asks the Squire to tell a romance, he claims that the Squire would certainly “konnen theron as muche as any man” (Ibid, 3, 169). The youngest in the party, the Squire would arguably not have known as much about love as “any [other] man” in the party, yet the narrator still implores him to tell his tale – that of a French Romance. The Squire’s youth has left some scholars to assert this his tale “must be an early work of Chaucer’s because its poor quality suggests immaturity” (Cooper, 217) while others regard the tale as showcasing “characteristics [that are] a brilliant imitation of how the Squire himself would compose” (Ibid). While conflicting theories exist on the intent behind the *Squire’s Tale*, both schools of thought agree that the tale represents “immaturity.” In either reflecting the Squire’s naïve nature or being one of Chaucer’s early works – or both – the writing style and plot of the *Squire’s Tale* effectively categorizes it as immature.
The immaturity of this French tale is further reflected in its unfinished nature. While *The Canterbury Tales* themselves remain unfinished, the *Squire’s Tale* is the only written tale that is not finished; instead, the Squire is interrupted by the Franklin who proceeds to tell his own shorter romance. Chaucer categorizes the interrupting *Franklin’s Tale* as a Breton Lay, which is a “short romance, often…based on the earlier French lais of Marie de France. Most often they involve love and the supernatural” (*Harvard’s Geoffrey Chaucer Website*). While the *Squire’s Tale* is complex with multiple interwoven plots and overlapping characters that quickly become “far too long for the Canterbury sequence” (Cooper, 218), the interrupting *Franklin’s Tale* is the opposite; still a romance with elements of the “supernatural” (*Harvard’s Geoffrey Chaucer Website*), the Franklin condenses the Squire’s lengthy plot to a shorter romance reflective of his more mature storytelling. In addition to being a more mature tale, The Franklin’s Breton Lay is also more heavily influenced by English instead of French sources as Emily Yoder suggests that Breton Lays “were considered to be ancient stories of the English people who inhabited the main island of Britain” (Yoder, 77). Because the Squire is unable to finish his French tale due to a lack of listener interest when he is physically interrupted by his audience – the Franklin – Chaucer implies an uninteresting aspect to traditional French romances in comparison to English-influenced tales like the Franklin’s.

In addition to suggesting that French romances are uninteresting, by not allowing the Squire to finish his tale, Chaucer implies that French romances are not financially worth completing. At the beginning of the tales, the Host monetizes time as he asserts that the pilgrims should “biwaillen tyme moore than gold in cofre” (Chaucer, 26, 87). Given that the Host values time as more valuable than “gold,” the Squire’s clearly lengthy tale would have been both financially detrimental to the Host and, in reality, Chaucer. As Schramm asserts in his article
“The Cost of Books in Chaucer’s Time,” “books were relatively much more costly in the fourteenth century than they are in the twentieth” (Schramm, 143) as “in the fourteenth century a book was a treasure” (Ibid). Because the cost to produce a book included the price of paper, binding, and a scribe, in endeavoring to relay a French Romance in the already extensive tales, Chaucer would have had to shoulder a heavy financial burden. Financially motivated by valuable time and printing costs, Chaucer’s choice to leave the Squire’s Tale unfinished implies that this genre is less valuable than the other stories relayed throughout The Canterbury Tales.

Chaucer uses these subtle critiques of French Romances to establish English identity abroad. Although France and England are similarly located geographically, Chaucer’s England was rife with conflict and tension between the French and English. As Calkin outlines, “divisions between the two peoples could not but appear as the rulers of the two countries clashed over acts of homage, lands in France held by the English king, political prestige in Europe, and the place of the Scots in Britain” (Ibid, 28). These divisions were encapsulated in the Hundred Years’ War; spanning over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the War saw conflict between the “richest, largest, and most populous kingdom” (Britannica) of France, and the “best organized and most closely integrated western European state” (Ibid) of England. As the two sporadically fought, both violently and politically, for power, the disparities and tensions between each country influenced the development of a distinct English and French identity. In doing so, they also unconsciously involved the Christian identity abroad as “Muslims not immediately involved in this process were nevertheless implicated in it as forces gathered to attack them were redirected to other ends” (Calkin, 28) for the Anglo-French conflict. An English author and statesman, Chaucer was likely influenced by the tensions between France and Britain. Because his Squire’s Tale is written in a clearly French style and interacts with a Muslim
population, Chaucer’s work overlaps the English, French, and Muslim identities; however, in having English, Arthurian values serve as a plot focal point and key component of Christian capital and achieving global hegemony, Chaucer suggests that the English identity overshadows the French style in which the tale is written and, more generally, the French identity. Because Muslims were “nevertheless implicated” in the division between France and England, Chaucer uses the *Squire’s Tale* to assert not only English identity over French, but also over Saracen identities as well. By mocking the French Romance in the *Squire’s Tale*, Chaucer asserts an overarching authority of the English identity over both France and farther abroad.

Told by a young Squire, the *Squire’s Tale* is heavily influenced by the shifting, more youthful, attitudes towards chivalry that existed for budding knights in the fourteenth century. The Squire is the son of the Knight, a fellow pilgrim who tells a chivalric romance early on in the tales. When described, the Knight is said to love “chivalrie, Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie” (Chaucer, 45-46, 24) specifically because he had crusaded for “cristendom as in hethenesse” (Ibid, 49, 24) abroad. Because he has traveled extensively abroad in the name of “cristendom” and is, as such, referred to as a “verray, parfit gentil knyght” (Ibid, 72, 24), Chaucer implies that this knight is the ideal of fourteenth-century chivalric practice. The Squire, in contrast, seems to live in his father’s shadow as although “he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie” (Ibid, 85, 24) and “wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde” (Ibid, 94, 25), he has many naïve qualities as he is described as “a lovyere and a lusty bachelere” (Ibid, 80, 24) who “syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day” (Ibid, 91, 24) while embroidered “ful of fresshe floures” (Ibid, 90, 24). Because these two characters are related, Chaucer inherently links them, their values and their subsequent tales. By emphasizing the budding knightly qualities of the Squire as he can “sitte on hors and faire ryde” (Ibid, 94 , 25) and contrasting this with his father’s
valuation as the “verray, parfit gentil knyght” (Ibid, 72, 24), Chaucer sets the Squire up to speak to modern-day chivalry and values for young, more naïve, knights. Because he is slated to become a chivalric knight like his father, the Squire and his tale are reflective of the chivalric culture that existed for young, fourteenth-century knights.

Historically the crusades were – unsuccessfully – focused on idealism and conversion. When the crusades began, they were intended to liberate the Holy Land from the “savagery and tyranny of the Muslims” (Smith, 6) and, because they weren’t funded by the Church, crusaders were motivated not by money, but by a “genuine idealism” (Ibid, 11) for spreading Christianity. While Christian crusaders were able to gain the Holy Land during the First Crusades, by 1291 the Holy Land was lost again (Cartwright). As Cartwright recognizes in his overview of the crusades, each crusade was “met with varying successes and failures but, ultimately, the wider objective of keeping Jerusalem and the Holy Land in Christian hands failed. Nevertheless, the appeal of the crusading ideal continued right up to the 16th century” (Ibid). Ultimately, the crusades were met with “failure,” yet the crusading ideal of achieving global, Latin Christian hegemony still persisted into Chaucer’s day and is present in his Squire’s Tale.

The Squire’s Tale utilizes the previous shortcomings of the crusades, coupled with shifting European feudalism, to suggest amendments to crusading interactions with the East through Christian capital. Because shifting feudal structure began to promote trade and wealth as a means to status, rather than knightly titles, the Squire’s Tale reflects more pronounced financial motives for young crusading knights in the form of Christian capital. The promotion of global trade that contributes to the young Squire’s construction of Christian capital explains Kahrl’s assertion in “Chaucer’s ‘Squire's Tale’ and the Decline of Chivalry” that because Chaucer has so carefully associated the Squire with his father, both in the General Prologue and through verbal echoes within his tale, we are permitted, indeed forced to
conclude that if the *Knight’s Tale* is a celebration of classical order in the chivalric world, the *Squire’s Tale* presents the growing impulse toward exoticism and disorder at work in the courts of late medieval Europe. (Kahr‘l, 195)

Because chivalry began to be demoted and global trade promoted during the fourteenth century, the Squire’s interest in “exoticism” reflects the renewed chivalric desire for trade and travel to the East as a means of gaining social status. Combining the knight’s crusading idealism towards achieving global, Latin Christian hegemony and young knights’ financial motives, the Squire intrinsically links the success of both notions to construct Christian capital in his tale. While the Squire’s version of Christian capital similarly serves to intrinsically link financial gain and Christian success abroad like the Man of Law’s, the Christian capital constructed throughout his tale focuses on his experience as a chivalrous knight. The content of the *Squire’s Tale* uses chivalrous gifts to overlap crusading and financial gain, and then articulate the potential for global, Latin Christian hegemony stemming from these financial motivations through Canacee’s interactions with the foreign falcon. By linking shared Arthurian chivalry and financial gain, and going on to link those gains with non-Christian conversions, the Squire articulates a form of Christian capital that arrives at the same end as the Man of Law’s: an inherent overlap between financial and Christian success abroad. While told from a different perspective, that of a young knight, the *Squire’s Tale* and creation of Christian capital promotes overlooking religious and physical difference and focusing on shared values, rather than coerced conversion, as a means of benefitting financially and religiously abroad. In effectively monetizing Christianity, the *Squire’s Tale* imagines a world where crusaders can propagate Christian values, whilst realistically fulfilling their financial and status motivations through Christian capital.

**Chivalry**

The first half of the *Squire’s Tale* constructs the financial components of Christian capital through chivalry. The Man of Law constructs this component in his tale through his perspective
of tradesman; by paralleling Constance’s journey with mercantile routes and invoking financial imagery, the Man of Law casts Constance into both a financial and religious role in the text. The Squire does something similar: using his own perspective as a young Knight, the Squire utilizes chivalry and shared Arthurian values – that overlook racial and religious differences – as a means of achieving financial success abroad. The *Squire’s Tale* suggests that it is chivalry that provides the means to achieving financial gain in the East and, ultimately, Christian capital.

Shared English values are first present in King Cambuskyan’s Arthurian chivalry. As the tale begins, the Squire frequently highlights the chivalric aspects of the King of Tartary’s court as “he kepte his [religion’s] lay, to which that he was sworn” (Chaucer, 18, 169) and “and kept alwey so wel roial estat” (Ibid, 26, 169). In referring to the King’s “rank,” as well as him being “sworn” to law, the Squire associates the King with his chivalric status and subtly reflects the oath to which chivalric crusaders were sworn as they were required to agree to the “protection of the church…and their property” that was “signified by his wearing of a cross” (Smith, 7).

Because both crusaders and King were “sworn” to their religions as the English knight’s would wear a Christian “cross” upon taking their oath, the King seems to subtly embody aspects of English knighthood. In addition to being “sworn” to a similar oath as the European Knight, the King’s attributes embody the chivalric code as he is described as “sooth of his word, benigne, and honourable;/ Of his corage as any centre stable” (Chaucer, 21-22, 169). The Knight, in contrast, embodies “chivalrie,/Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie” (Ibid, 45-46, 24). Because King Cambuskyan subscribes to the same values as the English, chivalric figure in the tales – the Knight – as both value “honour” and courage, King Cambuskyan reflects the presence of fourteenth-century English chivalric values and expectations pervading into the East.
Sworn to chivalry, the King’s religious differences are overcome by his Arthurian values. When describing the King’s religion, the Squire asserts that the King lives “as of the secte of which that he was born” (Ibid, 17, 169). Purposefully unclear about the King’s religion, the Squire uses this vagueness to allow chivalric values to transcend religious and geographical bounds. In doing so, the Squire exemplifies his amendment to modern, fourteenth-century crusading practice; rather than focusing on conversion, the Squire suggests overlooking religious difference as a means to achieving unification abroad. In overlooking initial religious difference, the Squire articulates how the East can adopt – like King Cambuskyan – English, chivalric values. By focusing on shared chivalry over religious difference, the Squire’s Tale utilizes religious tolerance as a means of establishing chivalry abroad.

Not only are English, chivalric values reflected in the Saracen King, but they also pervade into the Knight of Araby and of India. When the Knight first appears, he is immediately associated with an Arthurian knight as the Squire likens him to “Gawayn, with his olde curteisye” (Ibid, 95, 170). Although a “Gawayn” figure, the knight is – like the King – foreign, as he is described as a “strange knyght” (Ibid, 89, 170) who speaks his message in “the forme used in his langage” (Ibid, 100, 170). Because he has adopted Gawain like “curteisye,” but is foreign in both appearance and accent as he speaks in his own language’s “forme,” this foreign knight again represents the pervasive potential of English chivalric values abroad. This knight creates a unique complexity in the tale: while the people of the land of Tartary are represented as foreign to an English audience, the Knight of Araby and of India is foreign to both an English and a Tartary audience. Although all geographically different and with different customs as the people of Tartary eat “strange sewes” (Ibid, 67, 170) and the Knight of Araby speaks in a strange “forme,” these differences are overlooked in favor of the chivalry and values that unite all three
cultures. Because his tale represents three different nationalities that all subscribe to English, chivalric practice and values, the Squire suggests overlooking religious, physical and geographical differences in favor of shared Arthurian values.

The shared Arthurian values contained within King Cambuskyan and the foreign Knight of Araby and of India contribute to the financial component of the Squire’s construction of Christian capital. As the Knight enters the feast, he is described as being “upon a steede of bras,/ And in his hand a brood mirour of glas./ Upon his thombe he hadde of gold a ryng” (Ibid, 81-83, 170). Loaded with treasures of “bras” and rings of “gold,” the foreign knight is a vessel of material wealth. Rather than focus on his physical attributes, the Squire’s Tale overlooks racial and religious difference in order to reap the material goods that the Knight bears. However, this material wealth is only secured from the chivalric unification between the two countries that is gained through tolerance, rather than forced conversion. In articulating this type of unification – one that does not rely on immediate global hegemony – the Squire again offers a critique of previous crusading practice and instead appeals to the financially practical English knight. He suggests that, by practicing initial religious tolerance, crusaders can better accomplish their goals of propagating English values abroad, while financially benefiting from the East. It is only through these shared Arthurian values that the King is able to financially benefit from the foreign Knight; in articulating this union, the Squire implies that it is through chivalry that young English knights may be able to reap needed financial status from the East. By emphasizing the Arthurian chivalry of both foreign figures and focusing his tale on their exchange of gifts, the Squire effectively constructs a means to achieving the financial component of Christian capital as he suggests an intrinsic financial benefit to chivalrous crusading interactions with the East.
Because the foreign knight bears both material wealth and English values, the Squire inherently asserts a monetized motive for Christian crusading to the East in the form of Christian capital.

This association of the non-European other with material wealth is reflective of fourteenth-century crusading expectations of the East. As many of the Squire’s interactions with the East would have been through chivalry and the crusades as, in the prologue, he and his father – the Knight – are introduced as having ridden for “cristendom as in hethenesse” (Ibid, 49, 24), the Squire’s exotic expectations of the East and his subsequent tale are heavily influenced by stereotypes of the crusades. A young knight himself, the Squire would’ve been privy to the material motivations for the crusades: namely Gold, God, and Glory. As established in the Man of Law’s chapter, Penny Cole more clearly outlines these motives as she relays the crusader’s taking of the Holy Land as “our men rushed round the whole city, seizing gold and silver, horses and mules, and houses full of all sorts of goods” (Cole, 4). Because crusaders gained financially valuable goods like “gold and silver” by going abroad, the East and foreign culture became intrinsically associated with financial opportunity for European knights. By depicting this foreign knight as laden with material wealth, the Squire appeals to the crusading fantasy of wealth to incite changes in crusading practice; the Squire uses the incentive of Christian capital to promote overlooking differences abroad. Rather than focus on traditional goals of conversion and hegemony, the Squire suggests greater tolerance as a way for fourteenth-century crusaders to gain the wealth and status they desire, as well as propagate the crusading goal of Latin Christian hegemony through Christian capital as articulated in the second half of his tale.

In addition to embodying this crusading expectation of wealth in the East, the Knight and his gifts also shows Christian capital to be life-giving over and against the death-dealing and fear-inspiring elements of crusading. While the crusades were meant to promote global Latin
Christian hegemony, they often accomplished this by force as Pope Urban II described the crusades as “war of liberation” (Smith, 4) with the goal of “freeing of the eastern churches…and especially the Church of Jerusalem” (Ibid, 6). Because the crusades were a “war” and often contained violence, many crusaders died: the exact numbers for the lives lost during these crusades range from one to nine million (Holt). As death was clearly an aspect of crusade culture, both from the strains of travel and from violent foreign interactions, the concept of a steed that could transport the rider anywhere “withouten harm, til ye be ther yow leste” (Chaucer, 125, 170) addresses and dissuades this fear. The mirror accomplishes a similar goal as it can show the bearer “whan ther shal fallen any adversitee/ Unto youre regne or to youreself also,/ And openly who is youre freend or foo” (Ibid, 134-136, 170). Because European crusaders ventured to the East to interact with unknown places and people, the ability to discern where they might face “adversitee,” as well as know which foreign ‘other’ is “freend or foo” would be crucial to their success and, like the horse, would amend the fatal reality of the crusades for many knights. By having a foreign knight gift these as an act of chivalry and unification between these two foreign countries, The Squire implies that – through tolerance of difference and subsequent unification of East and Europe – European travelers can too gain the practical ability to travel and trade abroad without harm.

As well as dissuading the crusaders’ mortal fear of traveling to and interacting with the East, these foreign gifts also address crusaders’ inability to communicate abroad. As these crusaders traveled from Europe to the East, many were faced with language barriers in the cities that they conquered and in which they settled. This language barrier is what spurred Peter the Venerable to translate the Quran as he had “indignation that European Christians ‘did not know’ Islam and ‘by that ignorance could not be could not be moved to put up any resistance’” and
refute “those elements in Islam which a Christian would consider false” (Kritzeck, 42). While Peter’s work helped Christians understand and provide “resistance” against and more effectively convert Islamic, heathen beliefs towards Christian hegemony, there still existed language barriers between the two regions that would have prevented complete Christian unification abroad. However, the knight’s gift of the ring has the ability to overcome this crusading barrier since, when the ring is worn, whoever wears it will have “no fowel that fleeth under the hevene/That she ne shal wel understonde his stevene” (Chaucer, 149-150, 171) and “every gras that groweth upon roote/She shal eek knowe” (Ibid, 153-154, 171). Because the wearer is able to understand any “fowel” or “roote,” they are able to successfully interact with creatures that speak different languages or transcend species. The “fowel” to which the Knight refers serves as a metaphor for any speaker of another language; while Canacee literally interacts with a bird later in the Squire’s Tale, this bird is more representative of a foreign, yet still human, ‘other,’ rather than an entirely separate species. In the context of the crusades, this ring would give Christian crusaders the ability to interact with and put up “resistance” against those who spoke a language different than their own: Islamic people. By having the foreign knight give the gift of language through the ring, the Squire’s Tale overcomes crusading language barriers and exemplifies how chivalric unification through tolerance could serve as a practical means of successful global unification and dialogues.

While the Squire uses the first section of his tale to address English stereotypes of and affirm the expectation of wealth in the East, the second half of his tale actually demonstrates how Christian capital can be reaped abroad by overlooking differences. As the first section of his tale finishes, The Squire has successfully interacted with the current state of crusading; recognizing that crusaders are afraid of the magical strangeness of the East, the travel and fatal consequences
of crusading, and the language barrier, the Squire articulates – through the Knight’s symbolic gifts – how tolerance of religious and physical differences, rather than the normalized forced conversion of the crusades, can benefit the Arthurian knight. By constructing the King and Knight’s shared chivalry and allowing this connection to reap financial benefits through the Knight’s valuable gifts, the Squire constructs Christian capital through a chivalric lens; in his tale, chivalry serves as a means to finances which, in turn, creates components of Christian capital. While the first half of the *Squire’s Tale* envisions financial success abroad, the second half of his tale inextricably links this success to Christian conversion – fully creating Christian capital in his tale. Having laid the groundwork for suggesting tolerance as a means of amending crusading culture in favor of Christian capital, the Squire uses the second half of his tale to more tangibly articulate the religious implications of his constructed Christian capital.

**Conversion**

The second part of the *Squire’s Tale* articulates just how these symbolic gifts of tolerance can create Christian unification with the ‘other’ as Canacee uses her gifts to assist the foreign falcon. As Canacee ventures outside with the ring and mirror, her gifts allow her to understand the birds as “right anon she wiste what they mente/Right by hir song, and knew al hire entente” (Chaucer, 399-400, 174). Able to “knew al hire entente” – that is, to understand the bird, the princess Canacee proceeds to listen to a distraught falcon’s tale of “los of love.” As she hears the falcon’s tale and ultimately cares for the bird’s wounds, these two foreign species – the princess and the falcon – end the tale unified as the princess “fro day to nyght/She dooth hire bisynesse and al hire might” (Ibid, 641-642, 177) in keeping the foreign falcon. The tale leaves the princess devoting all “hire might” to the falcon and, as the tale remains unfinished, she and this foreign bird are left forever unified in the context of *The Canterbury Tales*. Because of the foreign
knight’s gifts, Canacee is able to overcome language barriers and demonstrate unification with the ‘other.’ Canacee’s interactions with the falcon in the second half of the Squire’s Tale are reflective of the Squire’s Christian capital coming to fruition; because Canacee relies on the Knight’s financial gifts to be able to share Christian values with this ‘other,’ the Squire’s Tale directly links chivalry, financial gain, and religious success abroad through Christian capital. The second half of the Squire’s Tale uses conversion to construct the religious components of the Squire’s Christian capital and articulate its potential for creating global, Latin Christian hegemony.

As Canacee cares for and connects with this falcon through their newly shared language, she does what the Man of Law’s Tale could not: she successfully depicts unification with the East. As Constance travels abroad in the Man of Law’s Tale, she attempts to convert abroad but is unsuccessful until she reaches a destination where “a maner Latyn corrupt was hir speche,/ But algates therby was she understonde” (Chaucer, 519-520, 94). By speaking this “corrupt” form of her own language as this is the only version of Latin which allows her to communicate with the Northumbrians, Constance is able to convert them – where she couldn’t convert the Syrians – because of her ability to communicate with them. As Hamaguchi references, cultural difference can emerge from the foreignness of language, and only in Chaucer does the foreignness of Custance's language appear. In Trevet, because he hears Constance speaking his language so competently, the constable does not regard her as Other, but as the daughter of his fellow Saxons beyond the sea (lines 137–40). Gower does not even refer to the language Constance speaks. (Hamaguchi, 418)

Because Chaucer emphasizes Constance’s language difference in the Man of Law’s Tale moreso than his Trevet and Gower sources did, he recognizes the importance of communication in the East; because Constance is able to speak a “corrupt” (Chaucer, 519, 94) Latin, she is able to convert the Northumbrians where she couldn’t convert the Syrians. While Constance is able to
successfully bring about unification with the Northumbrians, her inability to communicate in the East others her and deters her ability to achieve global, Latin Christian hegemony.

In addition to Canacee and the falcon being able to be united through language, the *Squire’s Tale* overlooks physical difference to unite these women through the shared value of love. When the falcon tells her tale, she conveys a story of love lost as her love “saugh upon a tyme a kyte flee,/And sodeynly he loved this kyte so/That al his love is clene fro me ago” (Chaucer, 624-626, 176). It is because her mate’s love is “clene fro me ago” that the falcon is upset; when Canacee comes upon the falcon’s decrepit state she remarks that “Is this for sorwe of deeth or los of love?/For, as I trowe, thise been causes two/That causen moost a gentil herte wo” (Ibid, 450-452, 174). Because Canacee recognizes that the falcon’s reactions can only stem from the “sorwe of deeth or los of love,” she understands the intensity of the falcon’s brokenheartedness and proceeds to devote herself to caring for the falcon, despite their physical differences. Although separate species connected solely through language, their physical differences are overcome through the shared experience and value of love.

This shared value of love and Canacee’s actions towards the falcon reflect an Eastern adoption of English, Christian values. By caring for the foreign falcon without caring about physical difference, the princess takes on a good Samaritan role. As the parable goes, Jesus tells his disciples to “love…thy neighbor as thyself” (*King James Bible*, Luke 10.27) and tells the story of a Jewish man who “fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead” (Ibid, Luke 10.30) and was helped and nursed not by a priest or Levite, but a Samaritan; although sharing different religious beliefs, the Samaritan overlooks these differences in the service of his fellow man. In helping the falcon – a creature who is an entirely separate species than herself – Canacee exemplifies this Christian value of
loving “thy neighbor” as, although traditionally these two species do not interact, the princess overlooks social norms in the aid of her fellow creature’s physical and psychological wounds. Because Canacee uses the foreign Knight’s gift of the ring to take on this good Samaritan role and spread Christian values, The Squire’s Tale suggests that global unification through English values – rather than initial force hegemony by force – poses an avenue to propagating Christian values abroad. The princess, foreign to an English audience, adopts Christian values and spreads them to the falcon, a species foreign to her through the gifts reaped by shared chivalrous values with another foreign character. By using this gift to share Christian values with the falcon, Canacee intrinsically links financial gain and Christian conversion and articulates the influence of Christian capital in the Squire’s Tale. Because Canacee is able to travel to and communicate with other ‘species’ while promoting and internalizing Christianity through the foreign knight’s gift, she demonstrates how shared values, finances and communication serve as components of Christian capital.

While this tale demonstrates how unification with the East can promote Christian values, Canacee’s interaction with the falcon also articulates the financial benefits of this unification that would be socially advantageous to the status of Arthurian knights and the larger English audience. When Canacee finds the falcon, she uses her ability to understand the falcon’s woe to offer her services as “a kynges doghter trewe” (Chaucer, 432, 174) to “amenden it er that it were nyght” (Ibid, 468, 174) and later provides help to the falcon as Canacee “hom bereth hire in hir lappe” (Ibid, 635, 176) and made “salves newe/Of herbes preciouse and fyne of hewe… And covered it with veluettes blewe.” (Ibid, 639-640, 644, 176-177). By inserting her status as a “kynges doghter trewe,” Canacee implies that the newfound language unification between herself and the falcon unlocks power, status, and financial means for this nonhuman ‘other.’
Because she goes on to give the falcon “herbes precious and fyne” and “veluettes bleue,” the promises of her being a “kynges doghter” come to fruition. Since the herbes are described as “precious and fyne,” the Squire implies an inherent financial value to them as “precious” suggests that they are rare and valuable. The detail of the color of the “veluettes” also corroborates the falcon’s financial gains from the princess as “in early medieval Europe, blue was a royal and aristocratic color, as blue dyes were rare and expensive.” Because the herbs are “precious” and the velvet is “bleue,” the falcon is able to use the foreign princess’s status and wealth to her financial advantage. This royal alignment goes both ways: while the falcon is able to reap the benefits of the princess’s status, the falcon herself is intrinsically linked to status because of her species. Because falcons are near the top of the food chain (Dewey), they are often treated as royalty; in Chaucer’s own *Parliament of Fowls*, he describes the falcon as being “gentyl” and linked “with his feet…[to] the kynges hand” (Chaucer, 390, 337-338). Since this species is associated with gentility and Kings in one of Chaucer’s analogues, the falcon in the *Squire’s Tale* can also be assumed to be royally adjacent. As such, the relationship between Canacee and the falcon provides financial benefits for both parties. What this interaction constructs is an inextricable link between finances and religious success; because Canacee needs the financially valuable gifts of the foreign Knight to communicate abroad, and this communication leads to shared Christian values and further financial success, Canacee ensures that these concepts are effectively combined into the notion of Christian capital. By diminishing the language barrier between Canacee and the falcon and recognizing the ensuing financial benefits, the Squire articulates a financial incentive for global unification to his English audience and more tangibly depicts the monetary implications of Christian capital abroad.
Although the *Squire’s Tale* articulates Christian and financial benefits to overlooking differences abroad, the tale does not entirely ignore the foreignness of the East; instead, it suggests that Christian capital outweighs foreign strangeness. Throughout the entirety of his tale, the Squire is aware of establishing foreignness: the people of Tartarye are described as eating “strange sewes” (Chaucer, 67, 170) the Knight that bears them the magical gifts is a “strange kynght” (Ibid, 89, 170), and the falcon that Canacee encounters is from a “fremde land” (Ibid, 429, 174). By describing these people as “strange” and “fremde,” the Squire clearly implicates and recognizes their foreignness from Europe. These foreign practices are further intertwined into the romance that the Squire proceeds to tell as he suggests “And after wol I speke of Cambalo/That faught in lystes with the bretheren two/ For Canacee er that he myghte hire wynne” (Chaucer, 667-669, 177). Setting up the Cambalo and Canacee love story as Cambalo “myghte hire wynne,” the Squire subtly suggests heathen practices because of the preceding *Man of Law’s Tale* in which the Man of Law states that Chaucer “certeinly no word ne writeth he/Of thilke wikke ensample of Canacee,/That loved hir owene brother synfully – /Of swiche cursed stories I sey fy” (Ibid, 77-80, 88). Because the Man of Law casts this alternative story of Canacee as “snyful” and “cursed” because she “loved ir owene brother,” the Man of Law implies that this type of love is not endorsed by Christianity. As Fyler suggests in “Domesticating the Exotic in the *Squire’s Tale*,” “The Squire’s heroine Canacee is no doubt a different woman, though the coincidence of names evidently influenced the early scribal editions of the Canterbury Tales, the great majority of whom name the Squire as the speaker who is to follow the Man of Law” (Fyler, 14). Because many of these early editions cite the Squire as “follow[ing]” the Man of Law, his use of the name Canacee appears to be a direct response to the incestuous Canacee of which the Man of Law will “sey fy.” While love is a unifying factor that overcomes physical difference in
the tale, the suggested incestuous nature of Canacee’s affection still recognizes her strange, heathen foreignness and her non-English difference. In acknowledging – yet overlooking – the foreignness of the non-European ‘other,’ the Squire promotes tolerance, but in no way humanizes or equates the Eastern ‘other’ as equals. Instead, Chaucer overlooks the ‘other’s’ projected inferiority in favor of the advantageous financial benefits and Christian capital that the East can give to an English audience.

As the Squire begins to relay the rest of his, perhaps incestuous, story, the Franklin interrupts him to help distill the chivalric values detailed in the *Squire’s Tale*. When the Franklin interrupts, he exclaims that “I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,/Though it right now were fallen in myn hond,/He were a man of swich discrecioun/ As that ye been! Fy on possessioun,/But if a man be vertuous withal” (Chaucer, 683-687, 177). By praising the Squire for his virtue and “discrecioun,” the Franklin reaffirms the chivalric values to which the Squire subscribes. As Williamson asserts in his article “Chivalry,” chivalry was a knightly order that bound “warriors of every nation, and enrolled them in a vast fraternity of manners, ideas and aims” (Williamson, 330) as chivalry did not only denote “the military system of feudalism, but also a code of aims embracing the refinement of society” (Ibid). While originally a “military system of feudalism” in England, chivalry bound “warriors of every nation” as reflected in King Cambuskyan and the “strange knyght” (Chaucer, 89, 170) in the *Squire’s Tale*. In emphasizing the Squire’s virtue and discretion – in alignment with the chivalric code to which he and other prominent male figures in the tale subscribe – the Franklin’s interruption serves to help reaffirm the tale’s focus on the crusades, as well as regulate the Squire’s immaturity. The Franklin’s interruption perhaps represents where the Squire’s young chivalry meets older chivalry; by interrupting the Squire before he tells the rest of his graphic romance and saying that he knew
that the Squire would use his “discrecioun” and chivalry to avoid lewd tales, the Franklin accepts
the notions of Christian capital that the Squire’s younger chivalry constructs but rejects any more
insertions of his youthful desires. In interrupting the Squire, the Franklin affirms aspects of the
Squire’s younger chivalry, while also regulating it in accordance with older chivalric
expectations.

In regulating the Squire and his chivalry, the Franklin also helps remind the reader of the
perspective through which the tale is told. A young and naïve knight, the Squire tells a tale that
merges his crusading idealism with his youthful want to establish himself as a Knight like his
father. His tale reflects a combination of his social need to gain wealth and status with his
idealistic desire to fight in the name “cristendom as in hethenesse” (Chaucer, 49, 24) in the East.
Chaucer the pilgrim heavily emphasizes the naivety of the Squire in the prologue as he describes
that the Squire has only been “somtyme in chyvacie” (Ibid, 85, 24) and frequently sings while
covered in “fresshe floures” (Ibid, 90, 24). While Chaucer the pilgrim seems to pass ironic
judgement on the naïve Squire by contrasting his masculine father with the Squire’s “floures”
and songs, by having a young knight tell this tale, Chaucer the author is able to examine the
social pressures and tensions present for younger members of English society. In having the
young and inexperienced Squire tell this tale, Chaucer is able to explore a novel outlook on
knighthood – one that differs from traditional crusading.

Not only does the Franklin’s interruption help recenter the Squire’s Tale on the Squire’s
youthful chivalric perspective, it also helps articulate the differences between the Squire’s
Christian capital and older approaches to chivalry. By saying that he would rather have a
chivalric son than “twenty pound worth lond” (Chaucer, 683, 177) or “possessioun” (Ibid, 686,
177) during his interruption, the Franklin inherently invokes the financial components of
chivalry and knighthood. However, because the Franklin prizes chivalry over money, “land” or “possessioun,” the Franklin asserts a hierarchy of idealism over practicality that is reflective of older chivalry; he values chivalry and idealism over money and financial gain while the Squire’s Tale asserts that the two are not mutually exclusive. The Squire’s Tale instead uses chivalry abroad as a means of achieving Christian capital – a notion that allows crusaders to gain both chivalric Christian success and monetary gain. The Franklin’s interruption thus serves to highlight the discrepancies between these versions of chivalry, reflective of the shifting feudal culture to which the Squire was subject. Because the Squire values both Christian success and wealth, instead of having to value chivalry over wealth like the Franklin, his tale is able to assert and construct a novel crusading motive: Christian capital

As the Squire’s Tale finishes, he has successfully monetized the crusades in a way that creates Christian capital. By articulating tolerance abroad as a means to more effectively interacting with the East, the Squire examines how overlooking initial differences can be both financially and religiously beneficial to a European audience. As he tells Canacee’s story, he more fully articulates the potential for shared values and wealth in the East. In inherently linking the financial and religious elements of crusading abroad, the Squire – like the Man of Law – constructs Christian capital in his tale. The Squire uses his perspective as a young knight to suggest that, in crusading to the East, he can both achieve the idealism of the early crusades to gain religious capital as well as gain financial capital through the wealth of the East. Because of his status as a knight, the Squire’s construction of Christian capital relies on chivalry, rather than the mercantile relations that the Man of Law’s Christian capital was built around. Both influenced by their personal professions, each comes to the same conclusion: monetary and Christian success are, or can be, intrinsically linked abroad by overlooking difference. While the
Squire’s perspective can be critiqued as naïve and idealistic because of his youth, in aligning the Squire’s construction of Christian capital with the Man of Law’s and later, the Prioress’s, Chaucer implies – not that Christian capital is naïve – but rather, that it appeals to a diverse range of people and perspectives. While the Man of Law’s Christian capital may be primarily driven by mercantile relations instead of chivalry, both he and the Squire agree that Christian capital in the East can only be gained through overlooking racial, religious, and cultural differences.

Overall, the Squire uses his perspective as a young, English knight to promote an amended form of European crusading abroad – one that relies on chivalry and overlooking differences as a means of gaining Christian capital. By considering the past unsuccess of the crusades and recognizing the shifting needs of the English knight to establish status and wealth, the *Squire’s Tale* uses stereotypes of Eastern wealth to promote a way for knights to more practically achieve it, while still doing so under the guise of Christianity and the crusades. By more clearly depicting this tolerance through Canacee’s interactions with the falcon, the *Squire’s Tale* literally envisions a world in which financial gain and Christian values are both achieved abroad. While the Squire focuses on the crusades and chivalry as the means to interacting with the non-European world because of his status as a knight, he still arrives at the same conclusion as the *Man of Law’s Tale*: by overlooking physical and racial difference in the East, the European world can deploy and amass Christian capital and eventually establish global, Latin Christian hegemony.
Chapter 3: The Prioress’s Tolerance of Christian Capital

Similar to the *Squire’s Tale*, the Prioress’s is set in a foreign land. However, rather than being told by a knight, this foreign tale is told by a nun and, as such, focuses on religious interactions abroad. Through inconsistencies in the Prioress’s character and her tale’s genre, as well as the treatment of Jews, Chaucer uses the *Prioress’s Tale* to construct another form of Christian capital: one that overlooks religious difference in Britain and abroad in favor of financial benefits for Christianity.

The Prioress originally presents as an ideal English, Christian nun in the tales. When Chaucer introduces the Prioress, he emphasizes her qualities as a nun as “hir smylyng was ful symple and coy” (Chaucer, 119, 25) and she “was so charitable and so pitous” (Ibid, 143, 25). He goes on to assert her desire to be a good nun as it “peyned hire to countrefete cheere/Of court, and to been estatlich of manere./And to ben holden digne of reverence” (Ibid, 139-141, 25). Because the Prioress is modest and “charitable,” as well as takes great measures to be perceived as upholding “reverence,” she presents as the ideal, Christian nun.

However, Chaucer the pilgrim’s description of the Prioress subtly undermines her Christian conviction. By saying that the Prioress aims to “countrefete” her “reverence,” Chaucer the pilgrim inherently implies that her Christian faith is fake and counterfeited. He continues to mock the Prioress’s seemingly Christian values by describing her physical appearance as “ful fetys was hir cloke” (Ibid, 157, 26) and on her arm she wore “a peire of bedes…And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene/On which ther was first write a crowned A./And after *Amor vincit omnia*” (Ibid, 159-161, 26). In highlighting these expensive clothes and jewelry, Chaucer the pilgrim subtly pits the Prioress against her status as a nun who was meant to take vows “of chastity, renounc[ing] worldly goods and devot[ing] themselves to prayer, religious studies and
helping society’s most needy” (Cartwright). Instead, the Prioress prioritizes her worldly, expensive possessions – so much so that they are included in her ‘religious’ pilgrimage. Additionally, the inscription “Amor vincit omnia” (Chaucer, 161, 26) – which translates to love conquers everything (Collins Dictionary) – subtly disregards her oath of “chastity.” While this phrase usually refers to romantic love, because this “Amor vincit omnia” is invoked in a Christian context, it serves as a double entendre; while spiritual love is meant to “conquer everything” for the nun, she instead prioritizes material wealth over her spirituality. In employing this phrase, Chaucer the pilgrim jokes about the Prioress and her façade of Christian devoutness. Although depicted as a Christian nun, the Prioress’s character traits are not consistent with Christian faith.

Not only are her character traits not entirely consistent, but the Prioress’s name – Madame Eglentyne – also erodes her Christian facade. Because she is one of the few characters to receive a name outside of their employment title, the Prioress’s name of Madame Eglentyne is very intentionally indicative of her character traits and inconsistencies. According to de Weever, “Eglentyne is a variant of Aiglentine, a name rich in romantic associations of courtly love as well as those of religious devotion” (de Weever). Because her name is associated with “courtly love,” her character again disregards her nun’s oath of “chastity” (Cartwright). In addition to its romantic connotations, Eglentyne also holds religious implications because of its similarity to the brier plant eglantine. As Davies outlines in “Chaucer’s Madame Eglantine,” in another medieval text, Mandeville’s Travels, eglantine was used in the crowning of Christ as “three different plants with which He was successively crowned are there described, and the last of the three is Eglentier” (Davies, 400). By associating Madame Eglentyne with the brier akin to Christ’s crucifixion, Chaucer implies that, while affiliated with religion, the Prioress, her values, and
perhaps her tale are detrimental to Christianity: she is crucifying Christ. Because the Prioress’s name is associated with romance and religious suffering, this – coupled with her inconsistent religious values – suggest that she is not an ideal Christian figure.

Another glaring inconsistency in the *Prioress’s Tale* is its seeming antisemitism, especially in the tale’s foreign setting. As the Prioress begins her tale, she outlines how “ther was in Asye, in a greet citee, /Amonges Cristene folk a Jewerye/Sustened by a lord of that contree/ For foule usure and lucre of vileynyye” (Chaucer, 488-491, 209). By contrasting “Cristene folk” with Jewish followers – both of which are foreigners to the “Asye” – the Prioress effectively minoritizes both groups. Both subject to the foreign practices and laws of Asia, neither religion has full power or superiority over the other. Additionally, because the Prioress asserts that Jewish people are allowed to live in this city “for foule usure and lucre of vileynyye,” the Prioress recognizes an economic profit for the tolerance of religious difference. Since Jews are only allowed to live in this town because of the Christian’s “foul lucre of [Jewish] usury,” the tale suggests that financial motivations can overcome Christian omnipotence. Cooper asserts in her *Oxford Guides to Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales*

the morality of the tale is not...a simple opposition of Jewish evil to Christian good. The Christian lord of the city is corrupted by the same love of money as motivates the Pardoner or the Friar’s summoner and he protects the Jews ‘for foule usure and lucre of vileynyye’ (491/1681). Chaucer thus gives the tale a grounding in hard economic fact, for the Church’s prohibition of usury necessitated a Jewish presence to maintain financial liquidity. (Cooper, 294)

Because the Jewish presence is necessitated because of “financial liquidity” and “hard economic fact,” Chaucer accords financial value to Jewish people and their practices. While the Prioress introduces the Jewish presence as distasteful by describing their practices as “foule” and “vileynyne,” her actual description of the Jewish presence attributes financial value and worth to
them. By describing the Jewish presence as financially valuable, the Prioress actually asserts a beneficial financial motivation for Christians to overcome antisemitism.

That there was financial motivation for religious tolerance is reflective of Chaucer’s England. In 1290, Edward I expelled all Jews from England in The Edict of Expulsion because they were regarded as “perfidious (faithless) men” (The National Archives). However, prior to this expulsion, the Jewish presence heavily contributed to and supported the British economy. As Byrne asserts in “Why were the Jews Expelled from England in 1290?”, “the Jewish community quickly became an essential part of the English economy: Jews were permitted to loan money at interest, something Christians were forbidden from doing” (Byrne) and, because of their ability to loan money, “they were…exploited by kings, who were often in dire need of money” (Ibid). An “essential part of the English economy” with more financial privileges and necessity than their Christian counterparts, the Jewish presence in England was financially beneficial for both England and for Christians. While many of Chaucer’s audience may not have interacted with Jews because of their expulsion, Delany acknowledges in Chaucer and the Jews that Chaucer himself was a government official, and in this capacity he traveled to many major European cities that had Jewish communities. He is likely to have encountered the Jewish physicians, merchants, booksellers, illuminators, scribes, musicians, actors, moneylenders, or scholars who lived and worked at some of the courts and cities he visited. (Delany, 51)

Because Chaucer had likely interacted with Jews as a “government official” and seen the benefit of their integration into other societies as working professionals, his choice to subtly suggest their financial value in the Prioress’s Tale may be reflective of his experiences abroad. By having the Jewish ghetto present as financially valuable in the Prioress’s Tale, Chaucer suggests that there would be a similar financial benefit to England if its laws reflected religious tolerance.
While this tale is widely categorized as antisemitic because of its interaction with the Jewish presence abroad, this tale speaks more broadly to all non-Christian religious differences. Delany further explores Chaucer’s relationship to non-Christian religions as she asserts that “the linkage of Jews and Muslim…became a common trope” so much so that “by Chaucer’s day it would be difficult to name the one group without conjuring up the other” (Delany, 48). Because Jews and Muslims were commonly linked in English practice, Chaucer’s portrayal of Jews in the *Prioress’s Tale* are likely reflective of Jewish and Muslim non-Christian populations. By linking Jews and Muslims, the *Prioress’s Tale* is able to employ classic, antisemitic sentiments that would be understood by Chaucer’s audience and extend them to the Muslim populations in the East. While the Prioress names Jews as the ‘other’ in her tale, the Jews are more largely representative of certain non-Christian groups and, through financially motivated interactions with these groups, the Prioress uses her tale to posit religious tolerance as a form of Christian capital.

Although the Jews in Chaucer’s tale are reflective of a broader population, this tale is told through the antisemitic Miracle of the Virgin genre; in choosing this genre, Chaucer forces the *Prioress’s Tale* to interact with the non-Christian ‘other’ and, in doing so, articulate a form of interaction that relies, not on traditional features of the genre, but on religious tolerance as potential Christian capital. Described as an “expression of popular piety throughout the Middle Ages” (Cooper, 288), Miracle of the Virgin stories are “short narrative accounts of Mary’s miraculous intercessory powers. These stories tend to fit a basic narrative pattern in which Mary saves a devoted believer from spiritual or physical danger…and many display anti-Semitism to a greater degree or with greater punch than do other medieval genres” (Boyarin). For the *Prioress’s Tale*, this “devoted believer” is epitomized in the widow’s son, the “litel clergeon, seve yer of
age” (Chaucer, 508, 210) who was “yong and tendre” (Ibid, 524, 210). Because the Prioress
describes this boy as “litel,” “yong” and “tendre,” she emphasizes his innocence and
wholesomeness when compared to the savage Jews. The boy’s mother being a widow also serves
this point as it invokes more sympathy for the boy and his mother, as well as emphasizes another
Christian female figure and parallel her suffering with that of the Virgin Mary’s. Because she is,
like the Virgin Mary, a mother who loses her son, this widowed mother establishes her son’s
innocence, but also his devotion to the Virgin in life and death. By calling the Jew who killed the
boy “cursed,” the Prioress continues to create a dichotomy between the “tendre” innocent
Christian martyr and his aggressor. In keeping with the Miracle of the Virgin genre, the
Prioress’s Tale describes both the “devoted believer,” the singing boy, and the antisemitism
common to the genre as this boy is brutally murdered by cursed Jews. The Prioress’s Tale
appears to subscribe to the classic Miracle of the Virgin trope; in employing this stereotypically
antisemitic genre, Chaucer forces his Prioress’s Tale to address, interact with and ultimately
tolerate stereotypes of the Eastern ‘other’ in favor of Christian capital.

While set up as an ideal Miracle of the Virgin story, the Prioress’s Tale diminishes the
violence of this genre to further speak to Chaucer’s interest in tolerance as Christian capital.
When the boy is seized, the Prioress describes how “this cursed Jew hym hente, and heeld hym
faste,/And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste./ I seye that in a wardrobe they hym
threwe/Where as thise Jewes purgen hire entraille” (Chaucer, 570-573, 210-211). In contrast, in
one of Chaucer’s Miracle of the Virgin sources, “Boy Killed for Singing Alma Redemptoris
Mater,” Carleton Brown depicts how the boy

was seized and thus led into an interior chamber, and when the Jews had gathered around
him, they began, with very great cruelty to attack him. Cutting the belly of the innocent
boy in the shape of a cross, they drew out his innards and, together with the body, they
threw them into the privy. (Correale and Hamel, 618)
In both the boy is seized by Jews and thrown into a “privy” or “wardrobe,” however, in Chaucer’s version, the boy’s death is quick as they merely “kitte his throte” (Chaucer, 571, 210). In the source, the boy is instead cut “in the shape of a cross” and has his “innards” removed. When compared to his source, Chaucer’s tale is much less violent, but also much less Christian. By taking away the violence as well as the Christian imagery by removing the “shape of a cross,” Chaucer diminishes the religious difference and heathen motivations for the death. While still a murder, this lack of Christian imagery allows this death to appear as not as violently religiously charged. Because Chaucer takes away the violence and some of the religious motivations for the boy’s murder, he effectively diminishes the boy’s religious martyrdom and the impacts of his death.

In addition to diminishing the boy’s martyrdom by omitting violence, the *Prioress’s Tale* also diminishes the miraculousness of the genre, and thereby God’s power, through the young boy’s death. At the end of the *Prioress’s Tale*, the boy “gave up the ghost very gently” and dies. However, as Cooper recognizes in her analysis of Miracle of the Virgin tropes, the Prioress’s ‘miracle’ is not as miraculous as other Miracle of the Virgin tales: a similar story “is found in numerous versions throughout Western Europe. It takes three main forms, in two of which the Virgin restores the child to life at the end” (Cooper, 289). One of these sources is “Concerning a Monk, Slain by a Jew for Singing *Gaude Maria* but Raised from Death by Christ’s Blessed Mother,” in which the “body of the dead monk” who was slain by Jews is “revived and rising he stood on his own feet and told everyone how the mother of Christ had obtained his life” (Correale and Hamel, 610). Because, in other tales, the “mother of Christ” has the power to “obtain” the martyred life, the permanent death of the boy in the *Prioress’s Tale* suggests a shortcoming to the Virgin’s – and thereby God’s – power. As the boy is not “restore[d]...to life”
(Cooper, 289) in Chaucer’s version, the martyrdom of this innocent is less miraculous than those of other versions and suggests deficiencies in Christianity’s omnipotence.

Christian superiority is again undermined through Chaucer’s humane treatment of the foreign Jews. In the *Prioress’s Tale*, when the Jews who killed the boy are discovered, the magistrate put them to death as “wilde hors he dide hem drawe./And after that he heng hem by the lawe” (Chaucer, 633-634, 211). While the magistrate had the Jews violently “drawe” and “heng,” this treatment is diminished when compared to other Miracle of the Virgin tales. In “The Expulsion of the Jews from England,” Alphonsus a Spina tells a tale similar to that of the Prioress’s, except, when the Jews are discovered the magistrate decrees that all the Jews found in the kingdom would be killed. Those who thought better of it [i.e. converted to Christianity] were [not killed like the others but only] despoiled of all their goods, and baptised and expelled from the entire kingdom of England. From that time no Jew ever lived, nor lives, nor dared to appear there, since he would be killed immediately, if he were recognized. (Correale and Hamel, 636)

While the Prioress’s magistrate takes violent measures towards the boy’s Jewish aggressors, he does not extend this to “all the Jews” as Spina’s does. Because this source was not set in Asia, but rather England, the expulsion of the Jews such that none “dared to appear there” essentially articulates Edward’s I Edict of Expulsion. By not incorporating this expulsion into the Prioress’s tale, Chaucer subtly condemns Edward I’s choice to enact this edict and its impracticality on a global scale. Instead, the *Prioress’s Tale*, while promoting legal justice as the murdering Jews are hung “by the lawe” (Chaucer, 634, 211) refuses to extend this punishment to the entirety of the Jewish population. In changing the punishment received by the Jews, Chaucer’s *Prioress’s Tale* condemns the impractical and economically detrimental expulsion of the Jews and instead favors religious tolerance.
These subtle shifts between the Prioress’s Tale and its sources – namely the lacking violence, miraculousness, and antisemitism – suggest the shortcomings of ideal fourteenth century English Christianity. By removing much of the violence, Chaucer humanizes the Jews and makes their actions less religiously driven, ultimately making the boy’s death, while sad, not as much a target of religious tension. The magistrate’s actions agree with this as he exacts justice against the perpetrators, rather than the Jewish community as a whole. In treating Jews as individuals, this tale humanizes the Jewish presence and articulates a means of religious tolerance. Because the Prioress’s Tale is not as antisemitic as its sources and even articulates Christian weaknesses when the young boy is not restored back to life, the tale is not reflective of ideal Christian omnipotence; rather, the tale seems to recognize the practical shortcomings of Christian hegemony and recognize the advantages of the Jewish presence. While a classic Miracle of the Virgin tale should represent the religious supremacy of Christianity, the inconsistencies between the Prioress’s Tale and other Miracle of the Virgin stories instead seem to promote religious tolerance through its relatively kinder treatment of Jews.

Not only is ideal Christendom not represented in the genre of the tale, but the Prioress’s inability to name the Virgin Mary throughout the tale also undermines her personal Christian convictions. When the Host implores the Prioress to tell her tale, the Prioress responds with a prayer to the Virgin Mary to “help me to telle [her tale] in thy reverence” (Chaucer, 473, 209) and adequately portray “lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,/Thy vertu and thy grete humylitee” (Ibid, 475, 209). While the Prioress seems to want to highlight the Virgin’s Christian values, she never actually names whom she praises – instead, she alludes to the Virgin as “mooder Mayde” (Ibid, 467, 209), “Lady” (Ibid, 475, 209), and “blisful Queene” (Ibid, 481, 209). Because the Prioress is unable to actually name the Virgin Mary, her praise is less sincere as it is targeted
towards a lesser version of the Virgin herself, namely her “mooder Mayde” and other colloquially named counterparts. In his article “Song and the Ineffable in the ‘Prioress's Tale,’” Russell acknowledges that this passage appears “even a bit disturbing” as “the lover of the Virgin Mary can pronounce the names "bountee," "magnificence" and so on, but these are only noises that name: they do not express or qualify what they name” (Russell, 181). By trying to praise this Virgin, but not specifically expressing what these praises “name,” Chaucer suggests shortcoming to the Prioress’s Christian devotion as she seems unable to fully execute proper praise of this holy figure. By being unable to name whom she praises, the Prioress diminishes her Christian devotion and the Christian elements of her tale.

The Christian message of the tale is also undermined by the martyred boy’s song, namely his lack of understanding thereof. As the Prioress describes the boy’s youth and innocence, she notes how the boy “herkned ay the wordes and the noote/ Til he the firste vers koude al by rote” (Chaucer, 521-522, 210) of the Alma redemptoris even though “noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye” (Ibid, 523, 210). While acknowledging how the boy did not understand the “Latyn” of what he was singing may be meant to speak to his youth, it also reflects a social commentary with which Chaucer would have interacted; John Wycliffe believed that everyone should be able to understand [The Bible] directly” (British Library) and, in the fourteenth century, translated it into English against the Church’s wishes. While this boy is devoted to his religion, he shows the potential flaws of medieval Latin Christianity that Wycliffe confronts as the boy, and English followers like him, do not understand the content of Christian texts, songs, or services. While in other sources of the Prioress’s Tale the song is changed – it sometimes appears as the Sancta Maria or the Ave Regina (Correale and Hamel, 623) – it is unique to the Prioress’s Tale that the author acknowledges the lack of Latin understanding of the young martyr. In “The Story of the
Alma Redemptoris Mater,” the boy learns the Alma redemptoris “by heart, and meditated on it…because of the memory and love of the Virgin mother” (Correale and Hamel, 640). Because the boy “mediate[s]” on the song and it invokes his “love” of the Virgin Mary, this source implies that the martyr understands the song. While the Prioress’s boy ultimately learns the meaning of the song from an older classmate, Chaucer uses him to address and explore the social commentary around shifting medieval Latin Christian practices.

The Prioress and her tale do not fail to represent Christianity; her tale instead reflects a more modern and realistic form of Christianity – one that relies on finances. The Prioress’s Tale is set in a place where the Christians tolerate religious difference for “lucre of vileynye” (Chaucer, 491, 209). Because of their willingness to overcome religious differences, the foreign Christians reap the financial benefits and “usury” (Ibid) and “lucre” that the Jews provide. In having the Christians in her tale overlook aspects of religious difference in favor of wealth, the Prioress constructs her own version of Christian capital; one that provides social and financial capital to Christianity through a tolerance reminiscent of the Man of Law’s and Squire’s Tales. The Prioress herself is motivated by this form of Christian capital as she is a religious figure who, as Chaucer the pilgrim notes, values her brooch of gold ful sheene” (Ibid, 159, 26) and other rich apparel. Because the Prioress is meant to appear as a symbol of Christianity and both her and her tale reflect Christianity’s reliance on financial capital, the Prioress suggests that ideal Christendom in the East is unattainable and instead suggests a more practical – financially motivated – version of Christianity through her construction of Christian capital.

Chaucer speaks to this practical Christianity and Christian capital as he uses a religious symbol – the grain – to intrinsically overlap Christian conversion and financial gain. At the end of the tale, the monk takes “awey the greyn” (Chaucer, 671, 212) from the boy’s tongue “and he
yaf up the goost ful softly” (Ibid, 672, 212). This “greyn” determines the mortality of the martyr – an iconic aspect of the Miracle of the Virgin genre – yet is unique to Chaucer’s tale. When compared to Chaucer’s closest sources, Friedman asserts that “the magical object is, in one case, a gem, in the other, a white pebble” (Friedman, 329) that are perhaps representative of the Virgin Mary’s symbolic pearl. While these magical objects are directly associated with the Virgin Mary, Chaucer’s grain simply appears as a mere seed. Because of the tale’s Miracle of the Virgin genre, Friedman looks to find a religious connection to the grain, asserting that the grain "inevitably draws in John 12-24: "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Ibid). He suggests that, in dying, the martyred boy “bringeth forth much fruit” in the form of Christian believers. This relationship between the grain and the Bible serves to, not only remind the reader of the religious perspective through which the Prioress’s Tale is told, but also more overarchingly suggest tolerant interactions with the East as being beneficial to Christianity.

While the grain represents the growth of Christianity abroad, the grain is also associated with finances due to the agricultural recession during the fourteenth century. This famine “resulted from excessively bad weather,” the black death, and the Hundred Years’ War – in England, this was exacerbated by the profits of the wool trade leading to the decrease in arable land as farmers were encouraged to “enclos[e]... formerly open fields for grazing” (Britannica). As Chaucer was the comptroller of “customs and subsidy of wools” (Lumiansky), he was intimately involved in the wool trade and its agricultural effects of England. As less land was available in England and agriculture suffered, Chaucer uses this tale to look to the East as a means of rectifying England’s agricultural issues. Described as being able to bring “forth much fruit” (Friedman, 329), this grain not only interacts with Christian growth abroad, but also
agricultural growth and success that responds to Chaucer’s financial reality. By shifting this martyr’s “magical object” to a grain in this foreign tale of Christian martyrdom, Chaucer overlaps Christian and financial success in the East in keeping with the Prioress’s Christian capital.

As Chaucer appeals to Christianity’s realistic financial motives, he uses his final invocation of Hugh of Lincoln to suggest that this Christian capital can also be achieved in Britain through religious tolerance. At the end of the tale, the Prioress removes her audience from foreign Asia and centers them in England by citing “yonge Hugh of Lyneoln, slayn also/With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,/ For it is but a litel while ago” (Chaucer, 684-686, 212). An English child who had recently been slain, young Hugh of Lyncoln seems to represent a figure similar to the martyred boy in the Prioress’s Tale – one with which Chaucer’s audience would’ve been more tangibly acquainted. However, as Friedman asserts, it was malicious of [the Prioress] to give an inexact date for that Martyr's death and to mention this unhappy incident without looking scrupulously into whether the Jews were actually guilty (Friedman, 121) as the Prioress merely mentions that the death occurred “but a litel while ago” (Chaucer, 686, 212). Because she mentions the young boy’s death, yet is ambiguous about the circumstances and timing as Friedman asserts, the Prioress perpetuates religious racism against the Jews as she chooses to just accept their guilt, rather than exploring the event herself. In doing so, the Prioress highlights the shortcoming of Latin Christianity in England; ambiguous about Hugh of Lincoln’s death, the Prioress subscribes to religious racism in England, while promoting a dialogue of religious tolerance abroad. In invoking Hugh of Lincoln in the final paragraph of her tale, the Prioress removes the moral of her tale from its Eastern setting and suggests that similar Christian capital can be gained in England through amendments to religious racism.
Told by the Prioress, her tale and construction of Christian capital are much more clearly religiously oriented than the *Man of Law’s* or *Squire’s Tales*. While the Prioress is a nun in the tales and initially presents as an ideal religious figure, Chaucer the pilgrim comments on the inconsistencies in her character as she, meant to be a modest nun, ports a “brooch of gold ful sheene” (Chaucer, 159, 26). Clearly motivated by wealth, it is these inconsistencies in the Prioress’s character that allows her to construct and examine Christian capital in the East. The Prioress does not represent an ideal Christian – just as Squire and the Man of Law did not represent ideal conversion figures because of their underlying wealth and status motives. Instead, the Prioress represents a more practical religious figure, if not a more practical representation of Christianity in Chaucer’s Britain. By representing the underlying financial motivations in the Prioress, Chaucer the author is able to examine the practical ulterior motives of European Christianity and articulate the benefits of pursuing Christian capital from a religious perspective. Christian capital in the *Prioress’s Tale* is representative of her character – while her tale appears to advocate for ideal Christianity abroad, her tale is laced with inconsistencies that more closely promote religious tolerance and financial gain abroad than ideal Christian conversion. Like the Prioress herself, her construction of the East appears motivated by global Latin, Christian hegemony yet, in actuality, is inherently linked to her financial inclinations in a way that reflects the deployment and accumulation of Christian capital established in the preceding tales.

Although the *Prioress’s Tale* interacts with the financial motivations for religious tolerance and expansion abroad, it does not articulate global Christian hegemony like the *Man of Law’s* or *Squire’s Tale*. Instead, it sets the groundwork for Christians to begin to implement religious tolerance and look towards financial expansion in the East by outlining how – in overlooking religious differences – Christians can exist, economically thrive and gain the
Prioress’s Christian capital in non-Christian countries. Although the Prioress never explicitly articulates a path towards global Latin Christian hegemony, when coupled with the other *The Canterbury Tales* that interact with the East, the *Prioress’s Tale* helps solidify the need to promote religious tolerance as a means of achieving, accumulating, and deploying Christian capital to achieve the global Latin Christian hegemony that tales like the *Man of Law’s* and *Squire’s* articulate.

As her tale concludes, the Prioress has successfully articulated a form of interaction with the East that proves financially beneficial to a Christian audience. In undermining the savage stereotypes of Jews in this tale, as well as the idealness of her and her tale’s Christianity, the Prioress is able to examine interactions with the East that reflect a more practical, rather than ideal, form of crusading and thus construct her own version of Christian capital. By having her tale set in a predominantly Christian town with a Jewish – or just ‘non-Christian’ – ghetto, the *Prioress’s Tale* recognizes the physical Christian capital abroad as Christianity takes up more space and is a more important presence in the city. However, the Christians in the tale are motivated by other forms of capital as they overlook religious difference in favor of the wealth and usury of the Jewish ghetto. The *Prioress’s Tale* does not articulate Christian capital in the same way as the Squire or the Man of Law as she does not monetize conversion. Instead, the *Prioress’s Tale* reinterprets Christian capital through a Christian lens; rather than gain financial capital and Christian capital, the *Prioress’s Tale* creates financial and physical capital for Christianity. In allowing these non-Christians to exist in a predominantly Christian space, the *Prioress’s Tale* recognizes the physical space and capital maintained by Christianity in the East, as well as uses tolerance to provide these Christians with the wealth and financial capital of a non-Christian ‘other.’ Although the genre of the *Prioress’s Tale* condemns this tolerance, the
Prioress’s consistent undermining of the genre, as well as her own inconsistencies, allows her to establish Christian capital in her tale.

Overall, the *Prioress’s Tale* undermines ideal Christianity in favor of a more practical, financially motivated Christianity. Through inconsistencies in the Prioress’s character, her tale when compared to its sources, and her reduced antisemitism, the Prioress articulates the financial benefits of expanding to the East; in doing so, she motivates her audience through the potential for agricultural gains as well as more abstract profits that would have reflected fourteenth-century stereotypes of Eastern wealth. Although the Prioress suggests that these profits can only be claimed by Christians who practice religious tolerance, she does not advocate for Christians to love and accept other religions, just let them live and practice their trades – something that Edward I made impossible in England. Chaucer does not use this tale to articulate a world where religious difference is unimportant. He instead utilizes stereotypes of non-Christian religions and countries – especially stereotypes of their wealth – to motivate Christians to overlook religious differences for their immediate profit and for the overall financial success of Christianity – the Prioress’s Christian capital. By undermining ideal Christianity in favor of practical Christianity, Chaucer suggests religious tolerance as a means for Christian success – especially financial – in Britain and abroad.
Conclusion

While *The Canterbury Tales* combines a diverse range of English backgrounds, classes, and socioeconomic statuses, very few of the tales interact with the non-European ‘other’; only the *Man of Law’s*, the *Squire’s* and the *Prioress’s Tales* have physical settings abroad. Because each tale is told from a different perspective, together these tales construct a more complete English perception of the East and the non-European ‘other.’ Each tale interacts with different aspects of the East: the *Man of Law’s* focuses on trade, the *Squire’s* on the crusades, the *Prioress’s* on Christianity. However, each perspective and tale communicates the same concept of Christian capital, just through a different motivation. The Man of Law is, by profession, motivated by financial capital. The Squire and the Prioress are, in their professions, motivated by religious capital and, as products of society generally, motivated by financial capital. Combined, these tales use different experiences and perspectives on English life and unify them under the same concept: Christian capital.

As each pilgrim’s tale concludes, the audience is left with the same message: the intrinsic financial benefits of global, Latin Christian hegemony. Each pilgrim uses their own unique perspective and narration to arrive at this conclusion. The Man of Law uses his position as a professional who is stereotypically motivated by “greed and venality” (Correale and Hamel, 40) to tell a tale that reflects his intrinsic positional desire for capital. The young Squire uses his position as a Knight – a status that began to deteriorate in the absence of wealth and land in the fourteenth century – combined with crusading stereotypes of wealth in the East, to tell a tale that enables both his crusading ideals and his practical, feudalist needs. The Prioress uses her position as a nun to tell a Christian tale that subtly feeds into her practical desires of wealth. These desires have been reflected in *The Canterbury Tales* since the prologue; Chaucer the pilgrim notes her
Christian conversion abroad—the Man of Law, finance; the Squire, the East and crusades; the Prioress, Christianity—each uses his or her unique perspective to monetize Christian conversion. As each of their stories come together and interact in the course of *The Canterbury Tales*, what they collectively convey is the same: Christian capital. While these characters individually utilize their own experiences and personal biases to promote financial interactions with the East, by employing the idealism of the crusades—namely global, Latin Christian hegemony—to achieve financial benefits, the pilgrims unite across socioeconomic and social statuses in the joint goal of achieving power for Christianity—capital—individual financial gain—personal capital—and the social capital intrinsic to financial wealth. Taken together as Christian capital, these forms of wealth, power, and influence first facilitate and then advance the goals of the Latin West.

Christian capital in these tales not only unites the socially different Man of Law, Squire, and Prioress, but it unites a physically different world. As each tale interacts with the East, all must overlook physical differences, religious differences, and cultural differences in favor of Christian capital. While these pilgrims overcome western stereotypes of racial differences, they do not do so out of equality or respect. Instead, each tale continues to remind the reader of the ‘other’ and uses this ‘other’ for western purposes, making the ‘other’ pawns of western religious hegemony, western feudalism, and the western economy. As such, *The Canterbury Tales*’ interaction with racial difference is not intrinsically forward thinking; race is not absent and the presumed inferiority of the East is not forgotten. Chaucer and his pilgrims employ stereotypes of the East freely in the tales; ignoring racial difference in the Canterbury Sequence is not meant to humanize the non-Christian, non-European other, but rather to provide a framework through
which to use ‘others’ as means to a western end. Perhaps cynically, perhaps hopefully, Chaucer uses the notion of Christian capital to unite both his pilgrims, the Western, and the Eastern worlds under the same Westernized framework.

As the Canterbury sequence concludes, Chaucer has successfully used his role as a pilgrim and an author, a listener, and a storyteller, to examine how material wealth can supersede racial and religious difference as a means toward the end of creating global Latin Christian hegemony; namely he explores the accumulation and deployment of Christian capital. By creating an internal communication system within the tales where Chaucer acts as both a storyteller and an audience member, he is able to communicate perspectives that are not inherently his own but are reflective of the English society he experiences. As a pilgrim and an author, Chaucer is able to interact with other perspectives as an objective other, while also inserting his own biases and opinions that stem from his personal experiences. As Chaucer constructs the tales, he also constructs versions of English society that do not inherently exist in fourteenth-century reality. Chaucer uses this internal communication system to tweak, change and examine fourteenth-century reality as well as to construct a Christian capital lens in the *Man of Law’s*, *Squire’s*, and *Prioress’s Tales* through which to view the East and West-East relations. It is through this nuanced communication system that Chaucer’s tales are effectively able to explore a fourteenth-century world in which Christian capital supersedes difference; a world in which tolerance of the non-European other promotes and enables global, Latin Christian hegemony.
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