Two rather well known European tales which appear in a wide variety of renditions throughout the medieval and early modern period have earlier analogues in Islamicate literatures. The first is actually an episode within a larger tale, namely the Pear Tree Episode, involving the cuckolding of Nicostratus by Lidia and Pirro in the *Decameron*, and the cuckolding of January by May and Damyan in the *Canterbury Tales*. The second is an example of the Chaste Woman or Persecuted Empress type, famously epitomized by the Constance (Custance) legend in Europe. For the Constance legend, there are at least two analogues—one Persian, and one Arabic—which have not previously been noticed. For the Pear Tree Episode, there are two additional analogues, again, one in Persian, and one in Arabic. Although the Persian analogue of the Pear Tree Episode was identified as such over a century ago, its significance has never been properly acknowledged or explored, while the Arabic analogue for the Pear Tree Episode in Chaucer has not previously been remarked, to my knowledge.

European scholarship on sources and analogues for Chaucer has produced an impressive bibliography, some of which treats the question of “oriental” sources.1 Similarly, motif and folklore indices, as well as other useful resources can help in tracing the occurrence of such tales in Islamicate sources.2 This article aims, then, to contribute to this literature.

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by introducing these four Persian and Arabic tales, establish their analogic relationship to their European counterparts, and to explore the possibility of common sources for, or cross-fertilization of, these two tale types in their various European and Middle Eastern renditions. I approach the topic as a Persianist, and while confessing, along with Chaucer’s Shipman, that “ther is but litel Latyn in my mawe,” I do believe that these Persian and Arabic analogues will prove of particular interest to European medievalists. The material here presented cannot definitively establish the chronological primacy of the Islamicate versions of these tales, though it does provide a richer picture of the background and pre-history of two of Chaucer’s tales, and does, I believe, suggest that during the Crusader era the literary cultural currents in the Mediterranean which carried the flotsam and jetsam of the “sea of story” along with other more tangible commodities, generally circulated from the east to the west.

That Arabic works of science and philosophy were translated to European languages during the medieval period is a well-established fact. The extent to which literary texts and performance practices of the Islamicate world may have influenced troubador poetry, inspired the popularity of the frame-tale structure in Europe, or provided a model for particular tales or tale types in Europe, remains in dispute. In some isolated cases, such as Barlām wa Būdasif or Kalīla wa Dimna (the Fables of Bidpai), the transmission history from one language to the next can be documented and traced (languages implicated in this process may include Sanskrit, Middle Persian, Syriac, Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Georgian, etc.). Indeed, it seems quite reasonable to assume that, along with foodstuffs, textiles, and...