



1991

## Rewriting the East in Old and Middle English Texts: A Study in the Problem of Alterity and the Representation of the Third World Feminine

Glory E. Dharmaraj  
*Loyola University Chicago*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss)



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Dharmaraj, Glory E., "Rewriting the East in Old and Middle English Texts: A Study in the Problem of Alterity and the Representation of the Third World Feminine" (1991). *Dissertations*. 2934.

[https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/2934](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2934)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).  
Copyright © 1991 Glory E. Dharmaraj

REWRITING THE EAST IN OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXTS:  
A STUDY IN THE PROBLEM OF ALTERITY AND THE REPRESENTATION  
OF THE THIRD WORLD FEMININE

BY

GLORY E. DHARMARAJ

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

June

1991

Copyright, 1991, Glory E. Dharmaraj  
All rights reserved.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are foremost due to Professor Allen J. Frantzen, who created in me an interest in Anglo-Saxon and medieval texts through his dedicated teaching and tireless scholarship. He encouraged me to see medieval texts from Eastern and theoretical perspectives. He directed this work from its conception, offering his professional advice, valuable suggestions, and painstaking editing.

I am also thankful to Professor Karma D. Lochrie for her feminist readings, extensive comments, and constant support. Thanks are due to Professor Pamela L. Caughie for her theoretical insights, narrative methods, and continued encouragement.

I am indebted to Loyola University for awarding me a dissertation fellowship.

To Thomas R. Logsdon, thank you for your kind technical assistance. To Raja, thank you for your intellectual companionship and emotional support. This project could not have been possible without you.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. IMAGE OF THE EAST IN ANGLO-SAXON LITERARY TEXTS . . . . .	32
III. THE ORIENTALIZED EASTERN PRINCESS . . . . .	79
IV. THE EAST IN CHAUCER'S "MAN OF LAW'S TALE": A DOMESTICATED IMAGE . . . . .	124
V. THE EASTERN FEMALE AS A PALIMPSEST IN CHAUCER'S "SQUIRE'S TALE" . . . . .	168
VI. SEXUAL DISCOURSE TO COLONIAL DISCOURSE . . . . .	207
VII. FROM DISCURSIVE SILENCE TO DISRUPTIVE SPEECH . . . . .	249
VIII. READING THE EASTERN FEMININE: A STUDY IN THE PROBLEMATICS OF REPRESENTATION . . . . .	285
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	327

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

I am a woman. I am from the East. I write; millions of my sisters do not. I write my story as someone born in British colonial India and exposed to the master/slave and colonizer/colonized relationship. I also lived through the decolonizing phases of India and Sri Lanka. Living on two tracts is an experience of cultural doubleness. This is the perspective I bring to the study of English literature.

I write. The reason why I write is suggested by this anecdote from African folklore:

The story, taken from African folklore, goes like this: There was a little boy in an African village who customarily came home from the mission school with excitement about his learnings of the day. On one particular day, he came home ...with a look of puzzlement on his face. And when he came into his house his father inquired about this. I go to school every day and the teacher often tells us the story about this lion who they say is the king of the jungle. But this ferocious and strong beast always seems to get killed by the hunter in the story. I don't understand it. If the lion is so strong why does the hunter always kill the lion? The father responded, "Well son, until lions learn how to write books, that is the way the story will always end."

This is an attempt to locate the lion's story, the counter-

---

<sup>1</sup>Taken from Grant's, "Prophetic Theology," Kairos Covenant (131). I thank Jacob S. Dharmaraj for referring me to this.

story of the Eastern woman, which lies buried in the hunter's book in each of the texts under study.

My position as a writer of this project is to show the story of the hunted as a retreated text which exists in the dominant text of the hunter: the story of the Eastern female lying buried in the "history" of English literature. I learned the history of English literature from the hunter's point of view in my undergraduate and first part of my graduate training in India. Western teachers and Eastern teachers who had been trained directly by the former taught English literary texts from the point of view of the hunter. Being a "hunted" myself in the Eastern patriarchy, I resorted to education--as did my foremothers--in order to circumvent patriarchy. Patriarchy cannot be abolished easily. But it can be circumvented. This is a Third World woman's only chance of creating a First World within herself.<sup>2</sup>

As a Third World woman doing a Ph.D. program in a department of English in a First World university, I have to reassess my point of departure in literary studies. I am an alien to working through the materiality of the writing medium of English. English is part of my colonial vestige inserted into the East Indian curriculum by Lord Macaulay

---

<sup>2</sup>I am using the expression "Third World" for want of a better word in usage. Recent texts on international economics and missiology, however, use the North-South paradigm to refer to First and Third Worlds.

in 1835. I stand in a colonized relation to the English language. My positionality is complexly derived. Historically and culturally, I belong to the oppressed. Paradoxically, through an education in English, I am intellectually liberated. This oxymoronic attempt at appropriating intellectual freedom is a cultural anguish to me. Education, then, for me, is the strength of an exile. The more informed and the more privileged the exile, that person can convert the very condition of being an exile into writing.<sup>3</sup>

This is what I have done in the classrooms of Loyola University of Chicago. I see literature from the vantage point of an exile. I write this project as a result of this seeing. I feel the Eastern culture running through my veins and my Western-trained intellect confronting it. It is as if the Third World is standing before the First World in an act of being interrogated. I embody this cultural strain. The other is not outside. It is within oneself. It is part of your being.

My silences are being interrogated by the education I have received. I speak. I write. In this process, I look at the Eastern woman closely in the texts under study. I make my writing site relevant here. It is a place of triple

---

<sup>3</sup>Kristeva writes about the condition of being an exile from one's family, country, and language. She argues that "writing is impossible without some kind of exile" (Moi, Kristeva Reader 298-299)

colonization for me as an Easterner, woman, and a non-native speaker specializing in English literature. Utilizing precisely these margins where two cultures meet in each of my colonized existences as a vital area where I stand and speak, I set out to examine similar zones in texts.

A story of the hunted does not replace the hunter's. It exists as a counterstory alongside the former in the archive. The story of the hunted frees itself by having an equal footing with that of the hunter. That is what I have done. To locate the silences of the Eastern female, and to place the stories of the hunted and the hunter as two voices in the same text are my endeavors in this project. The act of locating the Eastern female's story has not been solely a detached intellectual experience for me. Going through the earlier classical and Anglo-Saxon narrations for the first time, I find that the Eastern female from India is represented as a sensuous, violent, or even a half-human figure. I feel, as a woman from India, I too must have been subject to this imperialistic and masculinist vision at one literary point in the imaginative history of the West. From being a mere object of such a gaze, I set out to shift my positionality to speak, to write.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Alloula, an Algerian sociologist, rewrites the image of the native woman on colonialist postcards in The Colonial Harem. In re-seeing the stereotypically eroticized body of the usually veiled Algerian woman, Alloula too feels that as an Algerian woman, she could not feel "indifferent" to what these

In this writing, I trace the Eastern female's story, which exists in a cultural, historical, and ideological network, through what seems to be an invisible thread of the history of the textually colonized Eastern woman. I seek to demonstrate that the Old English period and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries mark the formation, development, and dispersal of the story of the Eastern woman as a figure characterized by stereotypical features like sensuousness and violence. She is deviant and abnormal, while Western observers are normal and rational. We see these polarities in the Old English mirabilia texts, Wonders of the East and Alexander's Letter to Aristotle. Sensuous and violent Eastern princesses and ascetic Christian knights are presented as structural opposites in Middle English romances like Sir Beves of Hamptoun and The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Fermubras. Absolute saintliness is pitted against a violent pagan Eastern woman in Chaucer's "The Man of Law's Tale" in The Canterbury Tales. The Eastern princess, Canacee, in "The Squire's Tale" occupies a textual space of threatened incest. Moreover, in the English translations of the Eastern medieval saga, The Arabian Nights by Richard Burton, the learned Eastern woman is presented as "dangerous," and womanhood, in general, as a space for voluptuousness and deceit in the textual notes.

---

pictures came to represent (4-5).

I see the story of the Eastern woman, from her textual colonization in the Old English period to her political colonization in the nineteenth century, as a chronological space in the study of English literature. In this project, I examine the speech, silence, action, and character of the Eastern female as presented by the narrators in the texts. The telling of the tales of the Eastern woman in these texts forms a "silent discourse." The individual texts are utterances which constitute this discourse, and which, in turn, comprises the speaking and writing subjects, and the potential readers and listeners.<sup>5</sup> I locate the Eastern female's colonization in language and discourse.

What I do in this work is to focus my analysis on Easternness and feminine, two categories of repression. I trace the story of the doubly colonized Eastern female from the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon texts to the nineteenth-century translations of the medieval Eastern saga, The Arabian Nights. My last chapter is a study of the problematics of the representation of the Third World feminine. This project is to write the "repressed" into my study of the texts.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>See Terry Eagleton's definition of a discourse (Literary Theory 115). He treats language as an utterance and discourse as constitutive of speaking and writing subjects and potential readers and listeners.

<sup>6</sup>Cixous uses the notion of writing the "repressed" differently as a description of her "écriture dite féminine" (Andermatt 129, 148).

This is an effort to bring to critical focus a body of knowledge about the Eastern female which lies buried in medieval texts, an undertaking aimed at analyzing the narrative methods which project the female as a sensuous and violent "other," and an endeavor to re-see her in her "otherness."

We can look to the knowledge about the East passed on to the West by travel documents, trade records, missionaries' writings, and literary works. The study about the Orient, as Edward Said observes, is a task carried on in a colonial context between the East and the West. In his introduction to Raymond Schwab's The Oriental Renaissance Said writes, "Calcutta provided, London distributed, Paris filtered and generalized" (ix). While acknowledging the primary emphasis of Schwab on Europe's benevolent awareness of the Orient in the book, Said, however, brings out the positional strength of Europe in the enterprise of an analysis of the East.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Schwab's book, written as a doctoral thesis, is an erudite account of Orient's impact on Europe's Romanticism. Bringing together India, the Middle Ages, and Romanticism, Schwab examines in minute detail the literary, religious, and philosophical contributions of the East to Europe. While describing the wholesome impact of the East, the book also discusses, in brief, how the Indo-European linguistic relationship was used in the nineteenth-century Germany for Pan-Germanism (184-262). Said provides an analysis of Schwab's work in The World, the Text, and the Critic. He gives a summary of the work, and shows the informative and encyclopedic nature of Schwab's monumental accomplishment while pointing out the latter's lack of political interpretation (248-267).



Calcutta was the English colonial seat in the nineteenth century; it was the center of the Asiatic Studies in the last two centuries. London and Paris, as colonial capitals of England and France, with their far-flung colonies in the East, had made a systematic study of the phenomenon, namely, the East. This system of knowledge about the East is called "Orientalism" by Said. He defines Orientalism as the Western mode of constructing the East:

(Orientalism is a) corporate institution dealing with the Orient--dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, ruling over it: in short, ... (it is a) Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Orientalism 3)

The East is seen, experienced, and commented upon through the Western frame of perception and codification. The Orient, thus examined and scrutinized by the West, does not include what the former has to say about itself. The textually controlled East is denied of its speech and voice. Hence, the Orient of the West is the latter's imaging experience, a formulated entity, and an Occidental restructuring. Rereading and rewriting the East are the urgent imperatives implied in Said's book.

The dominance of the cultural paradigm of the West has been exhaustively studied by both Said and Gayatri Spivak. They critique from comparativist and deconstructivist stances respectively. As someone coming from a formerly colonized society, I share with Said and Spivak the existential angst

and interpretive complexity which colonialism has caused. I share with Said, in particular, the textual strategy of thematically locating opposite voices, those of the colonizer and the colonized, in the texts. Said's critical imperative in Orientalism is that cultural archives should be read so as to include the voice of the other. Said's notion can be theoretically rendered through Mikhail Bakhtin's concept that utterances are two-sided. V.N. Volosinov, one of the principal adherents of the Bakhtin school of thought, says that an utterance is "a bilateral act" which takes into account "the fact of whose it is as well as for whom it is." A text contains utterances which embody both the speaker's voice and the possible response of the listener (Bakhtin, Rabelais ix).<sup>8</sup> I connect the notion of dual voices to the feminist notion of texts containing the dominant patriarchal discourse and the subordinate female discourse. The centralist-marginalist paradigm in my project covers Western romance writer and the Eastern female character. In other words, I utilize Said's notion of two voices for a theoretically-rendered, gendered criticism.

I also incorporate Said's notion about travel and imperialist vision in texts which deal with "travel" and

---

<sup>8</sup>A detailed exposition of Bakhtin's theory of two voices is undertaken in Dialogic Imagination.

"terrain." (Orientalism 166-197).<sup>9</sup> I use his concept of travel and terrain, in brief, for the texts under study which bring together images of an imperialist traveller and a defeated East. The basic metaphors of medieval literature are journey and pilgrimage. Behind the spiritual, metaphysical, and symbolic strands of human life knit together by the paradigm of pilgrimage and travel, there is a heretofore unattempted treatment of journey metaphor in medieval literary texts. Travel and terrain are ideologically rendered spatial markers. These are entry points, as it were, to the formulations of the knowledge about the East. I relate the notions of travel and terrain to the representation of the Eastern female. I accomplish this by applying narratological perspectives to analyze the traveller's voice and the Eastern female's silence on the colonized territory.

I share with Spivak certain common history, which in turn, is related to my positionality. Certain colonial history precedes academic feminism in both cases. Situationally

---

<sup>9</sup>The special issue of Critical Inquiry edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr., "'Race,' Writing, and Difference," deals with Eurocentric travel notions about colonized societies. See especially, Pratt's "Scratches" (119-43). In addition, in his talk on "Geography, Imperialism, and Methodology" at the University of Chicago on November 28, 1990, Said said that texts should be analyzed in the context of empire and space, and travel and terrain bringing out the opposite voices, those of the colonizer and the colonized. This notion, not yet converted into a methodology, is, however widely present in his analysis of the English and French travellers to the East in the nineteenth century in his chapter on "Pilgrims and Pilgrimages" in Orientalism.

placed in Bengal, the colonial seat of East India Company, which later passed the rule of India over to Britain in 1858, Spivak's childhood is familiar with scenes of the Eastern female's internalization of colonization. She narrates this with reference to two washerwomen in "French Feminism in an International Frame." Even after India got independence, she sees the East India Company internally ruling the unskilled women's consciousness (Other Worlds 135). As a girl, Spivak sees colonization's manifest effect on her grandfather's estate on the Bihar-Bengal border in India where the two women discuss colonial power by a river.

I saw the direct effect of colonialism as a child on a tea-estate in Sri Lanka. I watched the spectacular sight of native laborers climbing the slope of a monsoon-shrouded tea plantation. They moved in horizontal human lines with baskets tied down to their backs in the steady act of picking tea leaves by hand under the direct supervision of a native conductor. The leaves were processed in a nearby colonial factory by tea-makers, a group of skilled natives, and the quality brand tea, named class I, was sent to England. I often walked alone in evenings to the office premises which controlled this monetary mechanism where my father worked under the supervision of a lone European on this estate, Scarborough, Upcot, Sri Lanka. I had the "privilege" of being invited, along with my parents, to this supervisor's

family for dinners. But I also saw the native tea-pickers, "coolies" as they are called, being given tea-dust, the least of the manufactured product, for brewing tea. I bring this indelible impression of my childhood as part of my migrant experience in Sri Lanka to the subject-position of an academic feminist engaged in this writing project in a Midwest University in America. My positionality is partly constructed by this inherited condition of in-betweenness; by seeing power and powerlessness foistered at two extremes.

Spivak resorts to the left-wing politics of Bengal, which matures, in her case, into an academic Marxism to redress the effects of unequal labor and profit division. I take an arduous route. Scheherazades cannot wrest power from Shahryars by overthrowing them. Gandhian politics of India is another mode of politics of the marginalized in the face of imperialist power. Gandhi incorporates the element of religion in his resistance to colonialism. I differ from Spivak because she does not address the issue of religion which is both a colonizing and liberating force in the Third World female. However, I apply Spivak's notion of symbolic clitoridectomy to my non-essentialist, gendered analysis of the Eastern female (Other Worlds 150-52).

While relating my colonial past to Spivak and Said in similar, though not indentical ways, I turn my attention, specifically, to medieval studies. As a field of knowledge

about the East, medieval studies has not been examined from the perspective of postcolonial voices.<sup>10</sup> Said's inquiry explores Orientalism from what he calls the "roughly defined starting point of the late eighteenth century" (3). While Orientalism as a discourse climaxes in the nineteenth century, there are perceptions, instances, and practices in the pre-modern texts which either form or transfer the various forces converging on Orientalism as a discourse. An investigation into the strategies, values, and assumptions of these pre-modern texts offers a focus into a still latent aspect of Orientalism: the formation and dispersal of it as a discourse. The transition from the Orientalism of the medieval texts to that of the post-medieval period could be approximately called a passage from what Said calls exteriority to its implied opposite, interiority. That is, the medieval tellers under study are not situated in the Orient. The East is given a voice, and is represented to the West (Said, Orientalism 21).<sup>11</sup> An imaginary knight or a traveller brings the Orient within the mimetic realm of the texts for

---

<sup>10</sup>Metlitzky's Araby is an erudite historicist treatment which has to be supplemented by the recent feminist and postcolonial voices. Friedman makes references to Asianism by tracing the tradition of the Marvels of the East in early medieval texts ("Marvels" 319-341). Frantzen, however, makes some astute connections between Anglo-Saxon scholarship and Orientalism. See Origins (27-61).

<sup>11</sup> Bové treats Orientalism as an explicator of the voice of the oppositional intellectuals (27-28).

the reader. The Orient is at a double remove from the reader--from the narrator and the fictionalized character. Distinct from these mimetic acts, however, the recording of events has been done in the modern period by the trader, missionary, warrior, colonizer, philologist, scientist, and anthropologist. Their presence situates the Orient and constitutes it for the West.

My project, however, primarily, investigates certain aspects of the narrations which enter into the world of exteriority related to Orientalism. These are narrative strategies, translating methods, sites of speaking, and speaking subjects which help form or transfer a systematic part Orientalism plays in the beginnings of the English literary world. By looking into these narrative methods, I locate Orientalism as a silent discourse in the making. The task is similar to what Michel Foucault requires an analyst to examine in texts. An analytical reading, Foucault claims, should give form to the unanalyzed, suppressed voice in a text. An analyst should explore the hidden text behind the manifest one,

... reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from within the voice that one hears, reestablish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them.  
(Archaeology 26)

Concurring with Foucault, I see the already present productive contradiction of two voices in texts and recover the

submerged texts of Orientalism through my critical practice. By a choice of select texts, I confine my analysis to what I call the dormant phase of Orientalism in the pre-modern texts.<sup>12</sup> However, I will demonstrate how the dormant phase which is related to exteriority becomes the dominant phase, which deals with internality, by means of a specific example.<sup>13</sup> That happened with the appearance of Richard Burton, a flesh and blood soldier, on the colonial scene in the nineteenth century. I do not seek to elaborate this phase which Said and Rana Kabbani have studied.<sup>14</sup>

However, in this dissertation, I would also like to posit an extra dimension to the study of Orientalism in its hegemonic phase when the natives themselves have internalized the rule of the colonialist, and that is, religion, a subject mostly overlooked by Said and Spivak because of their intellectual stance of an adopted secular humanist

---

<sup>12</sup>Foucault gives a definition of the suppressed voice of the other as "Subjugated Knowledge." This is the knowledge of those who cannot represent themselves, or even if they represent themselves, their knowledge is deemed inadequate (Power/Knowledge 82-83).

<sup>13</sup>JanMohamed applies the terms, dominant and hegemonic phases, to colonialism in his "Economy" (81). By the dominant phase of colonialism, he refers to the political subordination of the native people. By the hegemonic phase, he refers to the natives' internalization of the value system of the colonialist. I have borrowed these two terms in my discussion of Orientalism in three major phases. My primary emphasis, however, is on the first phase.

<sup>14</sup>Kabbani's Europe's Myth is a thematic study of the Orient as an other seen through the eyes of Europe.



approach.<sup>15</sup> Religion is a troubling, resistant force which defies the neatly patterned, race-class-gender formula in the Eastern female context. Hence, I will treat the Eastern woman as a multilayered text with a covert text, religion. I have done so because the medieval linguistic practice has the "story" behind all stories, and "the Book" as an activating paradigm behind all linguistic activities.<sup>16</sup>

Medieval theory itself places language against the background of the Fall. The prelapsarian language has one-to-one correspondence between the Word and words. The Fall interrupts this signification. Human beings are related to language and production of meaning through the Judeo-Christian story of the Fall. Further, medieval studies themselves work mostly within an assumed Christian framework. Medieval texts

---

<sup>15</sup>Said is aware of the role of religion in Eastern female intellectuals. He refers to the incident of a female English faculty member in Cairo University, Egypt, who asked him about "the theocratic alternative" to the methods of "independence and liberation as alternative cultural practices" he proposed as a "secular intellectual and critic" ("Figures" 4). Said also deals with Islamic Orientalism (Orientalism 225-284). His brief discussion of Renan's and Massignon's philological attitudes to Islam is seen in "Islam, Philology" (World 268-289). Said's inquiry is based on Orientalist acts of representation of Islam. Spivak's Marxist underpinnings, while exposing the popular religion's negative control over people, exclude an inquiry into theology as an interpretive mode of texts.

<sup>16</sup>Hisco analyzes, in brief, the medieval theoretical notion of language in "Heavenly Sign" (228-230). See also Haidu's discussion of the referential and evacuated languages ("Repetition" 885). Colish's book, The Mirror, is a detailed examination of the medieval theory of language.

posit a Christocentric world as differentiated from a pagan world. The Eastern female is portrayed as a pagan as distinct from the Christian traveller from the West. The fictional strains of the chosen texts which are mostly romances are religious confrontations to a great degree. Romances seek a solution to this confrontation, religious and territorial, by means of the sexuality of the Eastern female figure--her aggressive pursuit of the Christian knight and her willingness to renounce her religion.

Criticism of the Eastern female has either shunned her or appropriated her. This is akin to the desert fathers fleeing from woman or the romance writers appropriating her. The material dealing with the so called Third World, in general, stands in this curious relation to the First World critical practices. However, I have situated my stance beyond these two far-flung stances--an audacious pose, no doubt--and examined the Western writings about the Eastern female, and in the process, investigated the problem of perspective.

The perspective positioned in the texts often fails to see the ambivalent--and often enabling contradiction--in which the Eastern female exists in relation to religion. Reinterpretation and not renunciation of her religion is the complex tool of criticism, along with the Western gender and Eastern colonial considerations I bring into this study. In

other words, I argue through general and specific instances, that "contextualizing" should be the textual enterprise. This is a pluralized inquiry into the Eastern female in her context--to see her in the synchronic framework of gender, terrain, sexuality, and intervention of travel, namely, Macedonian and Crusading presences which appropriate or Westernize her.

In the following chapters, I have explored the textual construction of the Eastern female as object from her possible perspective as distinct from the traditional medievalist position of seeing from the vantage position of medieval people themselves.<sup>17</sup> In this shift of perspective, I have positioned the Eastern female as a marginalized voice with reference to the centrally rendered voice of the romance writer. However, the central/marginal opposition is not a permanent structure but a culturally produced one. The marginality I have encountered in the texts relates to positionality--a view shared by the French feminist theorist, Julia Kristeva. That which occupies the margin may not be a permanent factor (Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics 166). Today's silenced voices may become tomorrow's central figures.

Enclosed in the textual periphery of the chosen texts

---

<sup>17</sup>See Bynum's reference to this traditionalist approach (Holy Feast 29).

is the "silenced" figure: Woman. I see the female trapped in her representation through language, narrativity, and discourse. She is made an object of desire, a figure of monstrosity, and an object of exchange in the texts under study. Decolonization involves locating the various modes of colonization behind the apparent, linear narration of the events in the texts.

Hence in each text, I examine a second layer of narration which is related to the subordinate voice of the Eastern female. Getting at the second layer and analyzing the Eastern female are accomplished in two stages. In making manifest the hidden layer of narration in each text, I utilize narratological concepts which also help reveal the relation between the subject-position of the narrator and the object-status of the Eastern female. In the second stage of investigation, which is the analysis of the Eastern female body, I re-examine the linguistic, narrative, or discursive practices of the writers in each text.

The subject's desire transforms the Eastern female body into a monster in Alexander's Letter to Aristotle. The translator's use of words makes her an exchangeable object in Wonders of the East. Discursivity produces her as an object of sensuousness in Sir Beves of Hamptoun and The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras. Narrative strategy transmutes her into a woman of religious

violence in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale." The narrator's father-son relationship in his "Squire's Tale" renders the Eastern female as a product of desire. Patriarchy and colonialism project the woman as a re-producer of images of female violence and sensuality in Burton's translation of The Arabian Nights.

In all these texts, the Eastern female is relegated to the status of an object. She is also invested with certain negative characteristics. I use feminist concepts to investigate why her body is transformed into female constructs embodying these traits. I apply the concepts of Catherine Clément ("Sorceress" 7) and Hélène Cixous with reference to the abnormal portraits of women in my analysis of the monstrosity of the Eastern female ("Utopias" 255). I use Luce Irigaray's concept of woman as an exchangeable body in the portraits of women given as exchange objects to promote kinship between men (This Sex 170-197). I also apply Trinh T. Minh-ha's notion of nativist discourse which promotes a similar partnership between colonizers (Woman, Native, and Other 68).

After treating the texts separately, I then focus on the similarities of the colonized condition in a cumulative analysis. I relate the object-position of women and their suppressed voice in all these portraits to Spivak's concept of symbolic clitoridectomy. The female tonguelessness in all

these representations is analogous to the removal of the clitoris. The other side of the suppressed status is the dominant position. These two positions are bound in a complicated way. Subject and object are intrinsically related. Though they are isolable, one is seen in relation to the other. Hence Eastern female's learning to speak is connected to the romance writer's unlearning to speak as a subject. The making of the "I" is an interconnected complex task of language, narration, and discourse. I use the concepts of Ferdinand de Saussure (Barthes, Elements 13-24) and Emile Benveniste ("Subjectivity" 225) to trace how the "I" is an occupant of the position of agency of action, the subject in language. This "I" relegates the Eastern female to the object position. I also demonstrate how at the next level of language-use, narration, the frame narrator's vision positions itself as the regulating "I" of the events and the Eastern female as the embodiment of sensuality and violence. Further, with the help of Jacques Lacan (Cohan and Shires, Telling Stories 162), I map out the position of the subject at a more complex level of language-use in discourse.

There is no single theoretical strategy to locate and liberate the Eastern female because there cannot be a direct insight into her conceptualized form. Hers is a multiform, negative representation. The marginal is not confined to textuality alone; it is found at the level of narration and

discourse. The question of decolonization is not only the struggle of the feminine but also Easternness. Since no single strategy or level of language-use is employed by the romance writer in subordinating the Eastern female in her double bind, that which seeks to liberate her also has to be plural. Discursive, narrative, and linguistic conceptions of the Eastern female work together to subordinate the Eastern female in the categories of the female and Easterner. Multiple oppression could be counter-read only by analytic pluralism. Hence, in locating the muted texts, in listening to the voice of the Eastern female, and finally in building the discourse of the subjugated knowledge of the female, I follow Said's direction to apply analytic pluralism in the examinations of complex entities ("Opponents" 145).<sup>18</sup>

The chapters, organized around a chosen number of medieval texts belonging, in particular, to the romance genre, focus firmly on the Orient. While bringing out the constructed image of the Orient, I show that the East exists

---

<sup>18</sup>In his discussion of Gramsci's and Vico's concepts of society and history respectively, Said points out the inadequacy of applying a single interpretive skill. Society and history are made of many emerging forces constantly reshaping them. Bhabha refers to Said's analytic pluralism in his study of the concept of nation through its narrative. Because language is in process in the making of the nation, it is hard to analyze the latter through a single strategy (Nation 3). In my analysis of the Eastern female figure, a product of the multifarious forces of discourse, I agree with Said and Bhabha that a single interpretive strategy cannot be applied to the analysis of the successively emerging, stereotyped figure of the Eastern female.

in the interplay of translated medium--Latin to English, French to English, and Arabic to English. The making of the image of the Orient goes hand in hand with the emergence of English as an independent medium of expression, over years of linguistic colonization by Latin and French in the medieval period. When, finally, in the nineteenth-century, the Age of Empire, English attains its moment of imperial status--formerly occupied by Latin and French--the image of the Orient as Europe's other is also complete. I have tried to analyze this sprawling image of the East as the other across the span of ten centuries from the tenth century Latin translations of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle and Wonders of the East to the nineteenth century English translation of the The Arabian Nights, depicting the march of the English language from its status of the colonized to the colonizing linguistic mode: the intertwined story of the East and that of English.

Working within the paradigm of colonization, Chapter II depicts the narrator's colonizing tendencies at work by treating the Old English texts under study as prefigurations of the medieval romances. The protagonist's travel, the movement of the West towards the East, is a loaded image. To me, the traveller himself, recording the events, evaluating the passing panorama, and subjugating the East is a troubling figure. So also is the knight, in the ensuing chap-



ters, with his quest motif. Travel makes a troubling text, especially, when the Eastern female comes under the gaze of the traveller, voyeuristic and imperialistic. Chapter II examines the figure of the East as an object of desire under the imperial gaze of the Macedonian traveller, Alexander the Great. The East in Alexander's Letter to Aristotle is written under the twin operative notions of "desire" and "command." I use the narratological perspective of A.J. Greimas to reveal the speaking subject's relation to the East as an object (Structural Semantics 203-207). I also apply the feminist notions of Clément and Cixous in my analysis of the Eastern woman's representation as a monster. In the same chapter, by reexamining the Wonders of the East, as a picture-board of a traveller's record, I present the Eastern female as an object of triple cycles of colonization in the text: configurations of language, gender, and kinship. She is a gendered gift in the kinship exchange between the Eastern men and Western travellers in the politics of translation and reading. The basis of kinship or an archaic society lies in the exchange of women as gifts between men.<sup>19</sup> The Eastern female is silent in this male

---

<sup>19</sup>Lévi-Strauss evinces this notion as his basic argument. See Anthropology, 66. Feminist approaches of Rubin in "Traffic" (157-210) and Irigaray in This Sex on the question of woman as a gift are an organization, difference, and refinement built around this concept. Appadurai's Social Life is a revision of the notion of gift and commodity exchange. He sees gifts in their social, political, and cultural network taking

interaction; she does not speak. I use Irigaray's notion of women as exchangeable object in the investigation of this Eastern female.

Chapter III investigates the text in terms of the Eastern female's inverse quest in search of the Christian knight in Sir Beves of Hamptoun and The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras. This chapter expands the problem of the representation of the Eastern female in relation to her sexuality. I examine the problem of female desire again in relation to Irigaray's notion of the female's natural body and her exchangeable body. Under this feminist exploration, her natural and constructed bodies collide against the romance writer's representation. This chapter argues that the twin romances do not define the reality of the Eastern princess. Rather they enable her to appear as a "discursive object" without any historical materiality. Using Foucault's notions of discursive object, the study demonstrates that the Eastern princess's libidinal energy and penchant for violence are stereotypical features assigned to her to justify the knight's travel to the Orient and his relation to the Eastern terrain (Archaeology 40-49).

Chapter IV comprises the treatment of Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" as a double-voiced text against the backdrop of

---

into account the various points in the social lives of the commodities ("Introduction" 3-63).

the travel of a missionary and bride, Custance. Analyzing the text as a conveyor of two voices, the dominant voice of the hagiographical narration and the subordinate voice of the Islamic Orient, the chapter illustrates that the violence and animosity attributed to the Eastern female are portrayed behind a sophisticated structural arrangement of narrative voices and stances. The non-desirability of the violent female is projected against the "hiddenness" of the compiler-author position of Chaucer. The submerged layer of the text is recovered through a process I call a palimpsestic analysis.

Chapter V reevaluates the Eastern princess in Chaucer's "Squire's Tale" as a palimpsest, namely, the dominant image of the romance heroine that contains the subordinate strains of threatened incest. Capturing the paradigm of travel, once again--this time, an Eastern knight's journey to the Tartary court--the chapter places the Eastern female' in relation to the gifts offered to her by the knight, the mirror and the ring. These are two problematic female-oriented gifts. I argue that the mirror and the ring enable her to see, in an ornithoid language given to her from outside, her female plight of melancholic abandonment, male betrayal, and abject dependency. In addition, the troubling resistant closure of the romance by her possible incest-ridden marriage to her brother is another thread in the skein of the constructed sexuality of the Eastern female. This chapter

offers, as the other chapters do, a "resisting" reading.<sup>20</sup> By means of a psychoanalytical stance, using the father-son relationship of the knight and his son, and their contrastive story-telling abilities, the chapter presents the figure of the East and that of the female as "objects of desire" in the adolescent renegotiation of the homosexual homage of the Squire to his father.

In a sprawling movement of ages and texts, retaining, however, the related presences of the knight, the lady, and the Eastern terrain, this dissertation thus grapples with the core problem: the portrayal of the Eastern female's sexuality as the problem of representation. The project attempts to retrieve, recuperate, and reenvision the silence of the Eastern female. Chapter VI takes the use of Scheherazade's speaking site to analyze the text's passage from a sexual discourse to a colonial discourse. The text under study is the first book of Richard Burton's translations of the Eastern saga, The Arabian Nights. Exploring the travel image of Burton, the chapter shows how his textual notes are a historical appropriation of the fictionally colonized woman in the Eastern narrative for a colonial purpose. The knight, no longer a romance presence, is an actual soldier under colonial service. The Eastern female too gradually steps out of her fictional status to that of the

---

<sup>20</sup>Fetterley uses this phrase in Resisting Reader.

co-habiting partner of the British soldier in Burton's notes. This chapter discusses the actuality of the sexualized position of the Eastern female--the subaltern--in the British cantonment as the ironic Eastern princely female completeness in Burton's records. The study is again a re-reading of Burton's translation of The Arabian Nights as a complicitous text which transfers a sexual discourse into a colonial discourse. I expand Irigaray's argument on the female's exchangeable body being related to male language. I also use Minha's discourse of the nativist which promotes kinship between the speaker and the listener in this chapter (68).

Chapter VII is a complex retrospective analysis of the haunting "why" of the problematics of sexuality in its relation to textuality in the preceding chapters. The subordinate voice of the female, a sign of her subjugated knowledge, can be related symbolically to clitoridectomy. I demonstrate with the help of Spivak's notion of symbolic clitoridectomy, how female subjectivity is inhibited and silenced. Correlated to this notion is male subjectivity. I explain how the dominating subject retains its power by occupying the agency of action in language, frame narrator's vision in narration, and the place of the signifier in discourse. In mapping out the positionality of the speaking "I," I use select Structuralist and Post-Structuralist con-

cepts from Saussure to Lacan.

The individual texts under study make statements, pass comments, and evaluate the Eastern female and thus contribute to the body of knowledge about the East in literature. In Foucault's terms, the medieval manuscripts which describe the Eastern female form an "archive."<sup>21</sup> The books no longer exist solely in a pre-modern past. They constitute a present by their presence in the postcolonial world by the discourse they have created, the corpus of the knowledge about the Eastern female they have silently formulated, and the representation of the East they have articulated. The collectivity of the image produced and sustained by this archive needs the supporting casts--the travelling knight and the Eastern terrain in texts. To retrieve the image of the Eastern female is the task of feminism. That is precisely what I have done: to disappropriate the archival statements including the collective image of the Eastern woman made in these medieval records, proposing a "double-voiced reading" and "dislocating the subject 'I.'" I adopt an ethical stance to face the other in its otherness and not in its absolute alterity. This ethical enterprise is meant to give back the Eastern female her body.

Because the archival statements are powerful inscrip-

---

<sup>21</sup>I have used this notion from his "Archive" in Archeology, 126-31. See a paraphrase of this concept in Said's World, 51.

tions, the theoretical machinery I have used also remains complex and sophisticated. I am aware of the space cleared for me to speak from--as an Eastern woman from the academic West. The representability of East as a culture, however, is overridden by the discursive and theoretical enterprises of the West. Chapter VIII explores this problem of representation in relation to the Eastern culture. I have mapped out in this chapter the element of undecidability in the representation of the Eastern female. Knowledge about her has to co-exist with undecidability because of the multiple texts which have interpenetrated her being--law, culture, empire, the English language, and postcolonialism. These are self-contradictory and fiercely opposing texts. The Eastern female is a "process" that maneuvers these texts, consciously or unconsciously. Any reading of the Eastern female is to take into account a different set of texts, multiple and ambivalent, which the Eastern female has to negotiate in relation to the West and the patriarchy in her culture. Her "culture" itself cannot be restored and given back in its pristine entirety because colonization and empire as an intervention and interruption have passed through the Eastern terrain.

However, Eastern culture as a context, as distinct from the Western discourse about the East, is what Chapter VIII offers. This chapter contextualizes the Eastern female and

presents her as a polyphonic text in terms of a reading model. While non-knowledge about the Eastern female exists with a great deal of decidability, curiously enough, knowledge about her is to rest content with an element of undecidability and unrepresentability as an image and a sign.

I have endeavored, then, to locate and recover the retreated text of the Eastern woman's story caught in the "textual, sexual politics" of writing. I place the story of the hunted by the side of the hunter's. I have no solution to offer, textual or theoretical, to free the Eastern female from her double or triple-colonization in her social lot. Writing may be a liberating and healing process. But it is a First World luxury denied to many of my sisters in the East. I believe, however, that I have spoken as an Eastern woman, albeit, from a privileged intellectual site, the West, while they continue to write the feminine and the maternal through "blood, sweat, and tears" and in silence which is their mother-tongue.



## CHAPTER II

### IMAGE OF THE EAST IN ANGLO-SAXON LITERARY TEXTS

The image of the Eastern female as a stereotyped literary realization in medieval texts has not been fully explored. The East, in particular, the Eastern woman emerges as a sensuous and often violent figure. This stereotyped image is often conveyed in Old and Middle English texts through a fictive traveller to the East, or the negative representation is rendered in the thematic context of the conquest of her land. This chapter seeks to analyze the Eastern woman in three ways: as intertextually placed, ideologically oriented, and metaphysically problematic. She is a figure of the East constituted in the text, and thus a Western attempt to fit the East--the other--into the symbolic order. I want to examine the cultural and ideological network in which the Eastern figure is presented, and demonstrate how the story of the Eastern woman, textually colonized and politically subordinated, functions in English literature.

This chapter, in particular, studies the earliest formation of the Eastern woman's image in Alexander's Letter to Aristotle and Wonders of the East. I intend to explore how

societal and ideological voices mediate the image of the East. Studies of Anglo-Saxon texts have not yet adequately dealt with the negative representation of the Eastern woman which co-exists with an imperial figure like Alexander the Great. This is particularly true of the Old English representation of the men and women of the East as a series of monstrous figures in Alexander's Letter to Aristotle. I want to argue that behind the epistolary narrative of the royal protagonist's travel to the East, the text contains a narrative progression based on the principles of desire and causality. I aim to demonstrate that the text is more than a mere mirabilia text about the wonders and miracles Alexander the Great meets in his imperial travel to the East. The text is a mythic narrative whose form is determined by the element of desire.<sup>22</sup> Analyzing the operative terms in the text, "wolde," "I desired," and "hette," "I ordered," I explore the relationship between the subject, the royal commander, and the object of desire, the East. The wonders and marvels of the East receive their representability as beneficent or hostile figures according to the assistance or hindrance they offer to the protagonist's conquest of the East. Notions of the wild and fierce are assigned to the resisting women figures. On the other hand, kindness and

---

<sup>22</sup>I utilize the narratological perspective of Greimas in his Structural Semantics.

generosity are qualities attributed to the Eastern men who willingly exchange their women as gifts to Western travellers.

I also show that the sender of the message about the East in the text is the Greco-Macedonian domain in the figure of Alexander the Great. The receiver is the reservoir of Western knowledge about the Orient. With the help of Said's definition of the textual constructs of knowledge in Orientalism-- referred to in Chapter I--this study demonstrates how the genre, mirabilia, is used to project concepts of Eastern monsters and miracles. In short, the narrator of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle changes the mirabilia text into a mythic narration with an ideological component.

This chapter also analyzes the literary usage of the monster figures, especially the female characters in Wonders of the East. I want to examine the double colonization of the Eastern female--by the Western male and his Eastern counterparts--in the text. I seek to use the feminist concepts of "Medusa" ("Utopias" 255) and "anomalies" ("Sorceress" 7) by Cixous and Clément respectively for a brief analysis of the self's act of othering which creates monstrous women. I also intend to analyze the notion of woman given as a gift, briefly, with Irigaray's concept of woman's exchangeable body (This Sex 170-197). In effect, the

chapter is a critical inquiry into one of the earliest attempts by the self in Anglo-Saxon literature to assign the marginal, inferior, and abject position to the other while assuming the role of the center of the knowing subject to one self.

#### A. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE EAST IN THE OLD ENGLISH TEXTS:

The East has been a source of interest to the West from the Classical period to the present. There have been systematic attempts on the part of the West--literary, commercial, philosophical, and ideological--to absorb, assimilate, and incorporate its experience of the East. Travel narratives, trade documents, philosophical treatises and literary works recount and appropriate the European experience of the East. In all these writings, the West has taken the initiative, the burden, so to speak, of representing the East.

Some of the earliest attempts to know, perceive and experience the East as a geographical and cultural entity, knowable, yet foreign, are of classical origin.<sup>23</sup> Greek and Latin accounts about the East, first written around and

---

<sup>23</sup> McCrindle gives a detailed account of the classical writers from Herodotus to Virgil in India. See Lach's "India and the Greek Tradition" (Asia 5-12). Inden's India is a critique of the knowledge of "others" which Europeans and Americans have created since the Enlightenment. Halbfass examines the early connections between Europe and India (2-35).

after Alexander the Great's invasion of India, in 326 B.C. textualize some of the originary impulses of the West's meeting with the East. Based on his military adventure and encounter with the East, these writings, which focus on the Macedonian prince, are from historical, cultural, and, often, romance and anecdotal perspectives.

A short summary could provide the essentials of some of the major writings on the East. For instance, one of the early discussions about the East is the History of Herodotus which is based on the reports of Hekataios of Miletus, written around 500 B.C.<sup>24</sup> Hekataios relied, in turn, on the information provided by the journey of Skylax to the East around 515 B.C. In the fourth century B.C., Ktesias wrote Indika, a treatise which presented India as a land of wonders and monsters.

Alexander the Great's invasion of India is a significant landmark in the East-West encounter in the geographical, historical, and literary concepts of the Orient. The writings of Callisthenes of Olynthus, the nephew of Aristotle and the historian of the court, are part of the efforts at representing the East in the wake of the

---

<sup>24</sup>See Wittkower (159-197). The information used in this and the next paragraphs about the literary transmission of the tradition of the Marvels of the East is from Wittkower. For more information, see McCrindle's account of Herodotus and Pliny (A-5, 6-107). See also Lach's Asia in the Eyes of Europe (11-13).

Macedonian prince's conquests. Callisthenes' magnified and extravagant accounts of the adventures of Alexander popularized and apotheosized the latter, forming what is known as "the Alexander Romance." Megasthenes, sent after Alexander's invasion as ambassador to India, wrote another Indika, a record of the former's observations about the country. His history is interspersed with stories about the monstrous races of India.

Early medieval English contact with the classical texts about the East was made mainly through Latin sources. Pliny's Historia naturalis, completed in 77 A.D., borrows its information about the East from the fabulous accounts of its Greek sources. Solinus based his Collectanea rerum memorabilium on Pliny. The fifth century works of Macrobius and Martianus Capella were known in the Anglo-Saxon period. Since these texts were known in the early Middle Ages, the geographical concepts of the East including the monsters and wonders of the Orient were familiar to the medieval readers. Further, Isidore's Etymologiae, written in the seventh century, draws heavily on Solinus in its notions of the monsters. Isidore lists the various monsters in a vaguely drawn boundary called the East.<sup>25</sup> He refers to the monsters, "Ichthyophagi," residing in India which Alexander

---

<sup>25</sup>Wittkower refers to the cartographic uncertainties regarding the boundary of the East (161).

the Great encountered (PL 82. IX 418- 419). Isidore looks into the notion of monsters being portents, divine foretellers, in the section, De Portentis.

Two of the Christian writers who grappled with the issue of monsters in general are Isidore and St. Augustine. Isidore says that monsters are not "contra naturam" but they are part of the natural order of creation (PL XI.1-3) Isidore's argument is a rebuttal of Varro's view that monsters are contrary to nature.<sup>26</sup> Further, St. Augustine states that the wonders are created by God.<sup>27</sup> He says that we are to believe in all existence of all the marvels, though it is hard to prove them in a rational fashion. But Augustine also implies that they are to be mostly believed. Though this view does not offer any definite stand, Augustine believes that the monsters are part of the scheme of creation and they are to be brought under the saving knowledge of Christianity.<sup>28</sup>

Interest in the unknown areas of the world was further

---

<sup>26</sup>For a brief discussion of Isidore's references to animals and monsters, see Klingender (163-164). Wittkower (168) and Gibb (35-36) analyze Isidore's treatment of the monsters.

<sup>27</sup>In De Civitatae Dei 11.8.

<sup>28</sup>Gibb explores Augustine's position regarding monsters (42-45).

activated by Orosius, once attributed to King Alfred.<sup>29</sup>

Scanty Old English references to the East, especially to the Christianized India, are seen in the Peterborough Chronicle<sup>30</sup> and Cynewulf's Fates of the Apostles.<sup>31</sup> The former mentions King Alfred's men's visit to the shrine of Apostle Thomas in India; the latter alludes to the missionizing efforts of the disciple in the same land. Two of the less well known texts, which deal with the East are Alexander's Letter to Aristotle and Wonders of the East.

These two texts are "monster tales" which offer a literary perspective of the presence of miracles and wonders. Further literary efforts to deal with the supposed presence of the monsters are demonstrated by the use of the genres, the bestiary and mirabilia. Literary interest in oriental monsters is evident in the prose texts, Solomon and Saturn, Wonders of the East, and Alexander's Letter to Aristotle (Greenfield and Calder 98). The physiologus which

---

<sup>29</sup>Wittkower refers to the interest in geography fostered by this text in the Anglo-Saxon public (172).

<sup>30</sup>Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, ed. Charles Plummer (Oxford 1892). "þy ilcan geare laedde Sighelm & AE elstan þa aelmessan to Rome þe AElfred cing gehet þider. & eac on Indea to sce Thome. & Bartholomee" (79). Quoted in Hahn's "Indian Tradition" (220). See also for a brief discussion of Cynewulf's references to Thomas's mission and martyrdom in India by Cross in "Cynewulf's traditions" (167-168).

<sup>31</sup>The Vercelli Book edited by Krapp, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 2 (50-53). Quoted in Hahn ("Indian Tradition" 221.)



deals with bestiary is common knowledge to the Old English audience. Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, draws his animal-riddles not only from Isidore's Etymologiae, but also the Latin Physiologus (Klingender 186). The latter converts the animal characters of the ancient naturalists into Christian symbols" (Klingender 94). The Latin Physiologus, and the Old English poem of the same name, in particular, present the allegory of the death and resurrection of Christ through the portraits of the panther, whale and the bird usually identified as the Partridge (Greenfield and Calder 241). The Liber Monstrorum also deals with monsters. Paul Allen Gibb observes that this literary tradition goes back to Homer and spans a vast historical period reaching towards Shakespeare; in this span of 2,500 years which covers both Classical and medieval eras, the "educated audience never lacked texts about monstrous races" (32). While the circulation of ideas about monsters in texts--literary and otherwise--are identified, confirmed, and defined by criticism, the organization and function of the oriental monsters as characters in texts need redefinition.

In particular, the use of certain stereotypical features such as monstrosity, violence, and sensuousness in the characterization of Eastern monsters has not been fully explored. Especially, Alexander's Letter to Aristotle and Wonders of the East, which deal with such figures, are often

set aside as unimportant. This is evident from the lack of critical references to them in standard literary histories. Even when these texts are mentioned, their function as a means of passing on an "orientalized" view of the East is overlooked.<sup>32</sup> That is, scholars have often ignored the Occidental restructuration of the latter by the use of the genre of the mirabilia which images the Orient negatively. But these texts of crucial importance are some of the earliest attempts to intensify, regulate, and project the image of the East already formulated and shaped through the classical texts introduced into Anglo- Saxon England. The East, and especially, the Eastern women, are presented as sensuous and violent figures in these two texts which I have chosen for critical and narratological analyses.

B: ALEXANDER'S LETTER TO ARISTOTLE AS A NARRATIVE OF DESIRE:

A brief survey of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle shows that the original source of this letter is the pseudo-Callisthenes Greek version.<sup>33</sup> The assumed author, Callisthenes, was the nephew and pupil of Aristotle who accom-

---

<sup>32</sup> However mention should be made of J.B.Friedman who discusses Western imperialism and Asianism in the mirabilia texts ("Marvels" 322-339).

<sup>33</sup> Information for this brief survey is taken from Gunderson. Also see Davidson and Campell ("The Letter of Alexander" 5). Hahn gives a short survey of the text in "The Middle English 'Letter of Alexander to Aristotle'" (107-08).

panied Alexander the Great in his military campaign. The Greek text was translated into Latin by Julius Valerius in the fourth century A.D. An abridgement of this text, made in the ninth century and commonly known as the Julius Valerius Epitome, became the source of the Alexander legend. This text has sixty-seven surviving MSS in Latin. Though the exact copy of the Latin source of the Old English Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, the Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem, is not known, the Latin version of the letter in Three Old English Prose Texts is not far removed from the Anglo-Saxon version in content.

The Old English Alexander's Letter to Aristotle is found in British library, MS. Cotton Vitellius A. xv with Beowulf. The manuscript, a composite codex collated in the first half of the seventeenth century, consists of Old English codices known as Southwick and Nowell (Kiernan 70). Alexander's Letter to Aristotle belongs to the latter which further consists of The Life of St. Christopher, The Wonders of the East, Beowulf and Judith.<sup>34</sup>

Alexander's Letter to Aristotle is in the form of an epistle, supposedly written by the Macedonian prince to his

---

<sup>34</sup>Two of the English editions of the letter are in Stanley Rypins' Three Old English Prose Texts (1924) and Kemp Malone's Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. xv. (1963). The first modern English translation of the Old English version is by Davidson and Campell (1972).

renowned teacher, Aristotle. Its Latin source, Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem, along with two other letters by Alexander, namely "The Letter to Olympias and Aristotle" and "The Letter to Olympias," are included in "The Alexander Romance" by pseudo-Callisthenes.<sup>35</sup> The three epistles are "Miracle-Letters" (Gunderson 76) sharing common literary features. The figure of Alexander, popularized by Callisthenes in mythic proportions, forms a prominent narrative component in these letters. The Macedonian hero's adventures, especially, those related to his Indian expedition, are a significant thematic constituent of these texts. Moreover, they have what Gunderson calls a "common teratological framework" (90). That is, the "teratos" or the wonders which the royal troop comes across also constitute a shared feature. Devoid of historical accuracy and authenticity, these epistles give an account of the hero and his triumph over these wonders or monsters in an exotically rendered geographical locale: the Orient of the Miracle Letters. The epistles, however, strive to give an apparent historical verisimilitude.

These letters, further, share a literary affinity with romance. They use several conventions of romance: the Macedonian prince appears as a mythic hero; his long travels are

---

<sup>35</sup>See Gunderson's "The Letter about India and the other miracle-Letters" in Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India for a detailed analysis of the material (76-90).

undertaken against fabulous settings; he demonstrates supernatural prowess in his encounter with the wonders and monsters.<sup>36</sup> Gunderson observes that the generic title of romance can be applied to "The Alexander Romance" because "sensational possibilities of the story become the center of attention," and history is treated "irresponsibly" (26). He argues that this is done mainly through the inclusion of marvels which forms the "teratological outer layer" (91) of this epistolary narrative. Gunderson reveals the historical inaccuracy and brings out the distorted treatment of the subject.

However, though Alexander's Letter to Aristotle may be treated as a romance in a general sense, such a grouping ignores the ideological significance of the monsters in relation to the royal prince. Because the "teratos" are a thematic constituent of the text, Alexander's Letter to Aristotle belongs to mirabilia literature in Old English. The centrality of monsters in the Nowell Codex, where this letter is found, has been pointed out by critics. Kenneth Sisam observes that the Beowulf codex is compiled as a book about monsters (65). Similarly, Peter Hunter Blair says that with the exception of Judith, the texts owe their presence in that codex to the fact that they deal with monsters in

---

<sup>36</sup>See Gunderson' list of romance elements (11).

one way or another (339).<sup>37</sup> Further, "oriental monsters" (Greenfield, Critical History 64) are a unifying factor of the three Old English prose texts, Solomon and Saturn, Wonders of the East, and Alexander's Letter to Aristotle. The miracles which are specifically related to the East in both the Latin and Old English versions of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, however, serve another purpose. Beyond the thematic requirement of the genre are classical and Anglo-Saxon constructions of the negative image of the Orient. Latin and Old English texts have both contributed to the institution of reordering the East in the literary imagination of the ancient audience. The monsters, which I will deal in specificity, are an expression of classical attempts, later passed on to the Old English texts, in dealing with the East as the other. Translation and narration capture the monsters as orientalized figures, images conveying stereotyped traits of the East.

The narrative line of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle could be traced in a linear pattern. The text begins with an eager student's desire to incorporate in writing the things empirically unfolding before his eyes to his teacher, Aristotle. The wonders of the East are seen through constant military action. The royal protagonist strives to master the East experientially, militarily, and epistemologically.

---

<sup>37</sup>See also Stanley's "Beowulf" (Continuations 106-107).

Defeating Darius, the king of Persia, Alexander the Great appoints his officers over the Eastern people. Stretching between the rivers, the Fasis and the Ganges, India itself is a home of wonders which the protagonist would not have believed, if somebody had told him of it.

When subjugated, it is also a place which yields immediate wealth. Alexander is enriched through Porus' defeat. Fasian India opens its Eastern splendor through Porus' gem-adorned, ivory-panelled palace, supported by gold pillars inside. The East presented is a land of many wonderful things, "fela wondorlicra þinga (2,1.10) and marvellous created things, "wunderlice wyhta" (2,1.16).<sup>38</sup> Further, the magnificence of the royal palace, its golden pillars, "gyldene columnan swi e micle & trum/lice & faeste" (6,1.2-3), golden vineyard, "gyldenne wingearð (6,1.9), with fruits of crystal and precious stones, "cristallum & smaragdus" (2,1.13), is an external spectacle which spurs the desire of the narrator to see the land from within, "þa wilnode ic in-deum innan/ wearde to geseonne" (7,1.10-11). Arrayed with the plundered gold, the advancing soldiers meet with obstacles both from the elemental forces and the serpents and wild animals.

Further, the narrator and his army see a fearful group

---

<sup>38</sup>Citations are from Rypins' Three Old English Prose Texts. Page number is followed by line number. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

of half naked men, shaggy, warlike women, the Amazons, "wifmen" (33,1.1), and wild men who are nine feet tall, "the ictifafonas " (33,1.6). The army also sees dog-headed people, the Cynocephali, "healfhundinga micle maengo" (33,1.13-14) in India.

The desire to see the crowning wonder of the East increases when two old men direct the royal traveller to the sacred oracular trees of the sun and the moon. These trees announce the impending death of the hero but, at the same time, assure him that he will be the lord of the world. The arboreal pronouncement, tactful and cautious, further suggests the possibility of the hero's death by poison without naming the villain. While the Old English text ends abruptly,<sup>39</sup> the Latin text includes an additional passage dealing with Alexander's men, who meet with misfortune in their sexual intercourse with the Eastern women in the Ganges.

Beneath the linear flow of the narrative is at work the principle of desire and causal sequence. The movement of the narrative, based on desire and causality, can be seen from the perspective of narratology. The studies of Northrop Frye, Vladimir Propp, and A. J. Greimas have added to the

---

<sup>39</sup>Greenfield and Calder are of this view. See New Critical History (99). Butturff takes a different position. He argues that "the ending" of Old English version is "more focused" than that of the Latin which has a "panoramic sweep of the camera" ("Style as a clue" 85).



considerable advancement of reading strategies of narratives whose components are either mythic or folklorist. Greimas, in particular, locates the element of desire at the heart of mythic narrative.

Discovering the element of desire at the core of narratives with a mythic component, Greimas says in Structural Semantics that the central feature of these tales is the "object of desire aimed at by the subject" (207). In his "Actantial Mythical Model" (207), a theoretical framework, based on characters appearing in mythical narratives and the relationship which sustains them, Greimas observes that the "object of desire" and the "subject" are related to each other in a network of opposing and aiding forces; the desire of the subject is "modulated in projections from the helper and opponent" (207). Realization of desire or the inability to do so is dependent on the availability of conducive factors or the dominance of adversarial powers. The object of desire is, further, "an object of communication" (207). For instance, the subject is sent by a "dispatcher," father, king, or God toward the object in order that "humanity," or in its place, any other "receiver," may benefit by it. Hence the object of desire, which is the object of communication, is also situated between the "sender" and "receiver" (207). Greimas illustrates his theoretical model by a compact diagram.



The subject and object are related to each other in Greimas's model by taking into consideration what he calls the "semantic investment" (203), the major narrative content which centers around the element of desire. This is a theoretical enhancement over Propp's in Morphology of the Folklore, which bases its thirty-one "functions" patterned in folklore solely on the actants or the dramatis personae of the narratives. Greimas argues that the relationship between subject and object cannot be defined by their roles as actants, characters, alone in narrative. These two actants are related by the narrative content in which events are produced. The major factor that triggers the chain of occurrences is desire in narratives which have a "mythical dimension" (203). Greimas calls this relationship between the subject and object effected through and by desire the "semantic investment" of the narrative. The other elements, the sender, receiver, and helper and opponent are called "supplementary investments" (207) in Greimas model of mythical narratives.

Seen in this narratological model, Alexander's Letter to Aristotle contains a narration based on the operative terms, "wolde", I desired, and "hette," I ordered. Using the expression "I wished" about thirteen times and the words

"I commanded" about twenty six times, the narrator advances the movement of the story about the East caught in the desire of Alexander the Great. Those elements which prove an obstacle to the imperial march towards the object of desire are destroyed by Alexander. His imperial persona, the subject "I" of the text, is reaching towards the forever receding East: Babylon, Egypt, and India and its interiors. Desire almost becomes a quest. The writing "I" desires to pass on the knowledge about the land being explored to his beloved teacher, Aristotle. The protagonist writes that he wishes that his teacher might perceive and learn of the former's deeds which the philosopher loves, and the things unseen by the latter (2,1.3-4). This knowledge is about "India seen through manifold struggles and dangers with the Greek army"; "indie geseah þurh monigfeald gewin...greca heriga" (2,1.5-6). The epistemological position of the narrator, the desiring subject, is through an imperialistic gaze. This seeing is projected as a faithful and just recording of facts. The narrator avows that the epistle is not an attempt to boast or exaggerate the struggles and fights; "gelpan and secgan be þære micelnisse ures/ gewinnes & compes" (3,1.7-8). On the other hand, the record is characterized by "Gemerce," limit, and "soðes & rihtes," truth and duty (3,1.3).

Having removed the audience's possible doubt about the

narrative, the royal writer goes on to enumerate his experiences inside India. Sustained by the co-presence of power and desire, the royal army defeats Porus, and takes over his kingdom. The protagonist wishes to write about the mighty and royal riches given to him and his army in honor; "...ic wolde þu þa þing ongeate þa þe weorðe" (5,1.9). The captured capital's splendor, its golden columns--immense and elevated--cast a spell over the experiential self. The narrator desires to examine this brilliance more attentively; "...ic...wolde geornlicor/þa þing geseon" (6,1.7-8); "I wished to see more eagerly." Porus' principal chambers which are adorned with carbuncle and gems, and supported by cyprus and laurel columns open up their interior treasures to the eager gazers. The seductive spell of the treasured riches goads him on to a further exploration of the land; "þa wilnode ic indeum innan" (7,1.10); "I wished to see India from within." This desire is coupled with the longing to capture Porus, the king of the land, who might escape through more dangerous paths; "...ic wolde frecnan wege and si fatum/ foeran" (8,1.5-6); "I wished to march along the dangerous ways and paths more."

Moreover, urged by power and desire--components of an imperial vision--the protagonist intermingles the verb, ordered, "ic hette," to strengthen the focus of the retinue by aiding friendly forces and destroying hostile powers. The

repeated usage of this verb structures the world under imperial eyes into a binary division: friend and foe. The narrative progress is simultaneously effected by the self defining the other. The verb, "Ic hette," often has a differentiating function. Friend and foe are marked by it. For instance, when the locally appointed guides lead the Greek soldiers into native waters infested with "ready monsters" (hippopotamuses), "þa nicoras gearwe" (16,1.10), the furious protagonist commands the leaders to be thrown into the dangerous river. The water monsters, as thick and as numberless as ants, tear them to pieces. Encountering a similar occasion, when the army encounters a three-horned monster called "dentes tyrannum" (22,1.17) which cripples and kills the royal retainers, Alexander commands the native convoys to be thrown as prey to the thirsty snakes nearby. The fierce monster itself is killed by the Greek army.

Men and women who prove an obstacle to the imperial army or the protagonist's desiring impulses are harmed or destroyed. When the inmates of a town see the approaching army, they are afraid and hide themselves. The narrator wishes to see the appearance of these men, and so orders a few arrows, "fea straegla" (15,1.9) to be sent at them. These arrows are aimed at them so that if the people do not show themselves voluntarily, they will be forced to do so for fear of being attacked (15,1.10-12). The interplay of

desire and power projects thus an image of the other. These hiding natives are described as "mennisce men" (122,1.3)-- "human men"--an expression used only once elsewhere in Old English in King Alfred's translation of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae. Here the phrase is used to heighten the inadequacy and insufficiency of earthly beings, as distinct from God's abundance and plentifulness of resources. Wisdom tells Boethius that God alone has the great five things of the world, namely power, abundance, glory, dignity, and pleasure, and no human being, "nan mennisc man" (xxxiii: 2) can fully have all these five, while he is on earth. Using this rare expression to intensify the difference between self and the other--a gulf as wide as that between God and human being--the Old English text institutes a typology; the civilized human West and the less than human East under the shadow of flying arrows.<sup>40</sup>

However, there are aiding forces which are a beneficent presence to the marching army. The native men sailing on a craft fashioned out of reeds and trees (16,1.16-20), direct the thirsty army towards fresh waters. The protagonist leaves them unharmed, and orders his men to water their beasts. Further, to the protagonist's surprise, Porus himself turns out to be a friend of the conqueror and

---

<sup>40</sup>The Latin version uses the expression "seminudos ... homines" to describe these men (12). Citations are from Boer's Epistola.

his army (25,1.5). The Eastern king erects two golden statues of Hercules and Libri, and the protagonist desires to know whether the figures are filled with solid gold. On finding them so, he orders the holes to be refilled with the precious metal, and arranges for a sacrifice to both the gods (29,1.15- 30,1.2). The life of Porus is spared because he is an aiding force.

While the helpful human forces escape physical death and being inscribed as marvels, the others come under the representational act of being portrayed as monsters. The Eastern female figure, under the Western scrutiny of the marching army, in particular, is a shaggy and fierce figure. The writer presents a group of these women. They are Amazons and they are warlike women. The observing eye sights "male men" too. The narrator says:

þa ferdon

we on oþer eodlond india. Ða cwoman  
 we on sumne micelne feld Ða gesawe þaer  
 ruge wifmen. & waepned men waeron hie swa  
 ruwe & swa gehaere swa wildeor waeron hie  
 nigon fota uplonge. & hie waeron þa men  
 nacod & hie naeniges hraegles ne gimdon.  
 þas men indeos hata intifafonas & hie  
 of aem neaheum & merum. þa hronsiscas  
 uptugon & þa aeton & be þaem lifdon...  
 (32,1.19-33,1.8)

We marched into the other land of India. We saw in some large field shaggy women (Amazons & warlike women) and male men who were likewise covered with hair. They were like wild animals & nine foot tall. The men were naked. They did not care for garment. The Indians called these men "ictifafonas," and they were from the neighbouring rivers and waters. They drew

up whales and they ate and lived on them.

The Eastern female figure, savage and fierce, foreshadowing similar women in the Old English Wonders of the East, embodies notions of barbarity. John B. Friedman says that in the medieval concept, nakedness stands for "wildness and bestiality--of animal nature thought to characterize those who lived beyond the limits of the Christian world" (The Monstrous Races 31). The East, seen through the translated medium of Old English, is outside the norms of civilization and culture. The imperial narrator "wishes" once again to "see and observe" "geseon & sceawigon," these Eastern figures (33,1.10). They are monsters to be looked at; extraordinary tallness is considered monstrosity.<sup>41</sup> They flee away into the waters, offering an image of the receding East forever escaping the Western efforts to scrutinize it and view it from the vantage point of targeted arrows.

Later Alexander is met by a great crowd of "Cynocephali," "healf/ hundinga micle maengo" (33,1.13-14), dog-headed people, who want to harm the Greek army.<sup>42</sup> The

---

<sup>41</sup>See Greenfield and Calder for a reference to Hygelac, an exceptionally tall man, who was considered a monster (13).

<sup>42</sup>Davidson and Campell have translated this passage in an agreeable and elegant way saying that the Greek army saw "among the groves and trees a great horde of half-dogs coming to attack them" (13). Such a rendering fails to present the other as it is recorded in the text. Exposing false representation through faithful translation and rereading the passage can be a way of reducing the silence



latter shoot them with arrows and the monsters set out towards the woods. The army continues to march into the deserts of India. These monsters, a literary inheritance of multiple Classical sources, are reinforced images of the violent East in the Old English text.<sup>43</sup>

Further, the picture of men and women, clothed in the hide of panthers and tigers, "palthe/ra fellum & tigriscum ara deora hydum" (39,1.15-16), is again a literary precursor of a similar image in Wonders of the East. The medieval notion of "a hair or animal garment" gave a person the status somewhere between animal and human" (Friedman, The Monstrous Races 32). The semi-barbarous Eastern men and women, who are clothed in the hide of a panther in this verbal picture, and who are nourished by the meat of whale in the previous picture, are positioned in the borderline between animality and human nature. The adjacency of the images of panther and whale brings to a reader's mind a differently evoked, but a closely neighboring idea of panther and whale in Physiologus. For instance, the dialectically opposed impulses of good and evil, enacted through the figures of Christ and the devil, are embodied in the literary beasts of the Old English period in Physiologus. This bestiary presents "Panther-Christ drawing

---

of the other.

<sup>43</sup>Pliny Naturalis historia VII.2.

men to good deeds" and the "whale-devil luring men to fleshly lusts" (Greenfield and Calder 241). The Eastern woman, in particular, clothed in panther hide or nourished by whale meat, is positioned in incongruous syntheses and incompatible formations before an audience whose love for the marvels is insatiable. The Orient which occupies the in-between territory is a foil to the normative, regulative, and centrally positioned self of the imperial traveller.

Another picture of the East is seen in the culmination of the military journey of the royal narrator. The protagonist's long expected dialogue with the trees of the sun and the moon takes place in an Eastern grove. The twin wonders, the male and female trees, are supposedly endowed with the gift of prophecy. The two men who direct the royal narrator to these trees explaining their prophetic nature fall under his suspicion. These men are represented as two senile barbarians, "elreordegan" (38,1.17), liable for punishment, who willfully waylay him. But the protagonist who spares them soon finds out the prophetic worth of the trees as reported by the two men. The narrator asks the trees about the possibility of world conquest for him and his safe return to his mother and sisters. While assuring his victory over the world, the oracular trees warn of his impending death. Saddened by the premature shadows of death,

the protagonist wishes to retire from his friends' company. On further inquiry, the narrator finds out from the oracle that his mother will die a shameful and foul death, and her body will be thrown in the streets. While the letter ends with the foreshadowing of death and blemish of the female, his sisters' predicted good future and his kingship over the world offer a gratifying sense of triumph to the protagonist.

While the Old English text ends with a reference to maternal transgression, the Latin text ends with the correlated presence of female sexuality and violence demonstrated in the deep and treacherous waters of the Ganges. This additional passage, which has been left out in the Old English translation, nevertheless, exists subliminally in the latter text. Waters and monsters remain close in the text--a feature it shares with Beowulf.<sup>44</sup> The Latin text conveys the representation of the Eastern female as a sexualized figure who refuses to aid in the progress of the army. This passage deals with Alexander's men's misfortune with the Eastern women in the Ganges. These long-haired women suffocate the men while they swim. Further, these men who are taken by

---

<sup>44</sup>See also the story of the giantess who drags Grettir into the waters in Grettis Saga in Chambers' Beowulf (161-181). Pliny narrates Alexander's battle with the monsters in the Ganges (McCrinkle 116). Pliny says that in India, seamonsters go out into the fields on shore and after feeding on the roots of shrubs, they return home.

fond affection for these women are killed in the act of sexual consummation.<sup>45</sup> Alexander's army captures two of these women. They were nymph-like, fair-complexioned, and long-haired; "Quarum nos duas tantummodo cepimus colore niveo, similes nymphis, diffusis per terga capillis" (57). The Latin syntactic ambiguity in placing "similes nymphis" between "colore niveo" and "diffusis per terga capillis" is a linguistic equivalent of the enigmatic, narrative placement of sex and death in the turbulent flow of the Ganges through its eddies and reeds; a familiar place for the Eastern women but an unknown span of death-dealing waters for the Greek men (57).

The Orient, which is verbally muted and enclosed within the parameters of the desire and command of the narrator, often lies close to the image of water. The quest for the East is linked to the search for water. When Alexander and his men come to a waterplace, they find it bitter to the taste, and neither men nor cattle can drink it. The royal narrator says that he is literally "oppressed" for the dumb animals, for he knows that men might be able to

---

<sup>45</sup>This interplay of desire and death is used as a warning instance in a victory sermon supposedly delivered by Bradwardine. In this sermon preached after the battle at Crecy in 1346, he refers to the enervating quality of sexual intercourse. The results of such an act are "destruccio corporis et abbreviatio vitae et corrupcio virtutum, legis transgressio et mores generat feminicios" ("Sermo Epinicius" 324). See Bugge's reference to it (10).

bear the thirst more easily, "y elicor" (12,1.19), than the dumb animals. But in their utmost effort to fight thirst, a physical and symbolic equivalent of desire in the text, the soldiers lick their swords.

...þa men þonne hwilum hie þa  
 iren geloman liccodan hwilum hie ele  
 byrgdon & þon þone hrimman þurst  
 celdon... (13,1.15-18)

The men therefore licked their iron tools at times, and they tasted oil now and then and cooled their horrible thirst.

This is an act which captures at once for the reader the keen-edged despair of Alexander's men and also their imperial slaking of territorial thirst through swords. This scene which pictures the soldiers' enervating thirst and energizing swords, is handed down from the Latin text and is passed on to the Speculum historiale of Vincent of Beauvais.<sup>46</sup> This, in effect, is an intertextual inscription of the twin working of desire and quest through sword: a very image of empire and colonization inscribed in the transcultural psyche of East and West.

The East is written under the twin operative notions of desire and command, with an unslaked imperial thirst--not quenched by the title, the king of kings, voluntarily

---

<sup>46</sup>"Milites fere sudorem lambent," Chapter LIII Speculum Historiale. Quoted by Voorbij in Beauvais (Aerts 68).

conferred upon the hero by all, "ic was nemned ealra kyninga/kyning (3,1.15-16). Unlike the watery expanse in Beowulf, which offers a space for the hero's demonstration of power over monsters and his salvation of the oppressed, the Eastern waters are a dark reservoir of oppressiveness or a dangerous source of failing sexuality to the protagonist and his men. The sword wielded by Beowulf has a liberating purpose, whereas the one used in the latter context has a colonizing intent. Writing is a deathless effort to preserve the heroism of the protagonist in Beowulf. But writing is connected with discontinuity and unintegrable syntheses in Alexander's Letter to Aristotle. The sword restores wholeness to society in the former, whereas the weapon creates an interruption and intervention in the East.<sup>47</sup> Beowulf's sword kills monsters, and the landscape is free of them. Alexander the Great's writing, which is done with the help of the sword, creates monsters in the East.

Beowulf does not write; the writing on the sword is a buried treasure; it has to be unearthed from the miry expanse. But the fictive narrator who conquers the East holds the narrative elements by his will to power and desire to write. He accomplishes it from a vantage site. The scenes of conquest and sequences of writing are a simultaneous accom-

---

<sup>47</sup>Frantzen examines the sword in Beowulf as a text, and interrelates writing and "cutting through" (187-90).

plishment. The scop and the wielder of the sword are one in the narrativity of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle; they are different and far apart experientially and epistemologically in Beowulf. The writing site from which the Macedonian prince writes is significant. It is the East seen from the positional strength of a military conqueror who has subdued it.

The knowledge, then, communicated to the West by the narrator is through the eyes of the conqueror. The East is reordered, restructured, and perceived through the eyes of the imperial writer (Said, Orientalism 7). Hence, the arrangement of the monsters with their endowed characteristics of monstrosity or violence is a linguistic colonization of the East in the royal writer's text. The object of desire, the East, which comes under the colonizing instincts, is also the object of communication. The narrating "I" sees the Orient as an end of an articulated wish. The sender of the communication, the narrator, is the Greco-Macedonian imperial domain; the receiver, the reservoir of Western knowledge about East, otherwise called "Orientalism" by Said (3).

#### C. THE IMAGE OF THE ORIENT IN THE WONDERS OF THE EAST:

Another Old English text which presents the East in terms of the marvels, passing on stereotypical attributes

about the Orient, is Wonders of the East. It is a text about the monstrous races and fabulous animals which inhabit the far fringes of the known world of the West. Tracing its literary origin from Latin antiquity, and rooted in the popular tastes of the tenth-century England, the Wonders of the East offers thirty-seven verbal sketches of the East (Gibb 86-99). The Orient, constructed within the enclosed space of this written text, is further illustrated by pictorial additions. This twin representation, both verbal and pictorial, is a unique feature of the Wonders of the East, missing in the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle, Beowulf and Judith, some of the other Old English texts found in the same codex, Cotton Vitellius A. xv. The interacting presence of the East, its men and women, and the power of Alexander the Great to keep or destroy the Orient are some of the analogous images present in Wonders of the East. The process of image-making lies close to imperial impulses in the text, a rhetorical act already seen to be present in Alexander's Letter to Aristotle.

The three manuscripts of Wonders of the East, Cotton Vitellius A. XV., Tiberius B.V., and Bodley 614 were produced between 970 and early twelfth century.<sup>48</sup> These MSS belong respectively to tenth century, early eleventh

---

<sup>48</sup>Information on the MSS and sources is taken from Gibb (1-30), Sisam (74-80), and James (B-10).



century (about 1050), and ca. 1120-40. Cotton Vitellius A. XV. has only the Old English text. Tiberius B.V. contains both Latin and Old English texts. The text of Bodley 614 is in Latin only.<sup>49</sup> The major source of the the Old English MSS is the Latin apocryphal Letter of Fermes to the Emperor Hadrian, written between the second and the sixth centuries, and transmitted to England in the eighth or ninth century through Carolingian Europe (Gibb 1).<sup>50</sup> Gibb bases his argument on the text's retention of certain French words, especially those which refer to the unity of distance, in the pre-Conquest English copies of the MS (10). Two other texts related to Letter of Fermes are Epistola Premonis to the Emperor Trajan and the Liber Monstrorum (Sisam 74-75). Gibb observes that the Old French translation of the Liber Monstrorum, belonging to the seventh or eighth century, and the Old English Wonders of the East could have been from an identical Latin original (27). Further, the writer of Wonders of the East has drawn his sources from the Alexander tales. Gibb says that one half of the text has analogues in the Alexander materials and one can safely say that the

---

<sup>49</sup>James's edition of the Marvel of the East contains the pictorial illustrations from all these three MSS. The Cotton Vitellius text of the Wonders of the East, along with the pictures, is reproduced in Kemp Melone's Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile. But the quality of the pictures is less refined than those found in the other two texts printed in the edition of James.

<sup>50</sup>For a different view, see Sisam (82).

original author was well-versed in the legends of Alexander (21).<sup>51</sup>

WONDERS OF THE EAST is a picture-board of the Orient. A discussion of the pictures can demonstrate this. Among the three MSS which carry illustrations of the text, namely Cotton Vitellius A. xv, Tiberius B.V. and Bodley 614, the second opens with a magnificent picture of a neatly clad onlooker, on an elevated plane, at the left corner, with an open book looking at a gigantic and fierce monster, teeth-grit and claws outspread ready to attack the beholder. Lesser monsters roll around. What is significant is the viewing site and the raised position of the observer. Similarly, at the end of Bodley 614, a viewer sees the monsters with a closed book. The open and closed books may suggest knowledge gathered by and embodied in the person using them. He too watches the monsters from a higher angle of elevation. These wonders and marvels, are looked at, observed, and commented on, from a location above the monsters through a Western masculine gaze with a power embodied in the book. From this textual site are produced a series of images about the East.

The first two word-pictures are about a colony in the East which has come under the influence of Alexander the

---

<sup>51</sup>The editions of Rypins and James are the only two Old English texts of Wonders of the East besides Gibb's Critical Edition.

Great. In fact, the first word introduced in the text is "seo landbuend," the colony.<sup>52</sup> This settlement, near Babylon, measured in Greek "Stadia," and French "league" houses many wonders, "mycclan maerða" (86,1.13). These marvelous works are there as a result of the royal behest of Alexander the Great: "ða geweorc ðe se miccla macedonisca/ Alexander het gewyrcean" (86,1.12-13). The physiognomy of the Orient which emerges to the reader's first view is stamped by the imperial presence of the Macedonian prince.

The pictures presented subsequently are a verbal collection of fast moving scenic exposures of the Orient. For instance, Lentibelsinea, a place by the Red Sea, is marked by the red hens on its landscape: deadly fowls which devour anyone on the first physical contact. Similarly, death-dealing are the wild beasts, which are endowed with eight feet and Gorgon eyes, and which set fire to anyone who tries to seize them. The Orient of the narrator is an abode of unheard of witchcraft, "ungefregelicu lyblac" (87, 1.2). Double-headed and shiny-eyed serpents zealously guard the growth of the pepper, a commodity to be obtained after setting fire to the place. The narrator adds that due to this reason, the pepper from Babylonian and Persian towns are black.

---

<sup>52</sup>All citations from the Wonders of the East are from Gibb's critical edition.

Further, on the southern side of Egypt are the Cynocephali, "healfhundigas" (88,1.16), a race with manes of a horse, canine teeth of a boar, and heads of a dog. Equally deadly are the "Homodubii" (89,1.4), the Double ones, who live on raw fish, and who have beards down to their knees and hair to their heels. There are also men in Egypt who are fifteen feet tall and whose two mouths are set on one head. When these men wish to beget children, they proceed to India and there they bring forth their kind.

The sketches of monstrous races, unrelated to each other, yet drawn in neat verbal frameworks, continue. Beyond the river, Bryxontis, there are "hostes" (91,1.6) a venomous group, armed with multiple legs and feet, and seven-foot-long breasts. Further, fierceness, reinforced by subtle cunning, is embodied in the figures of "donestre" (93,1.8). Endowed with human language, they call people by their familiar names. Once trapped, the unwary travellers are a prey. The "donestre" eat their bodies and weep over their trunkless heads.

The ethnological marvels are further illustrated verbally by the people whose large heads have fan-like ears. These monsters spread under one ear by night; with the other, they cover themselves. If any one sees them, they take their ears by hand and fly as quickly as a thought. (93,1.16-94,1.1-7).

The East is, further, projected for the reader under the advancing figure of the Greek army in the description of the Eastern women. Among the three verbal pictures of the women in the Orient, in Wonders of the East, two present the female figures as uncivilized, fierce and inhuman. The writer says,

Ɔonne sindon oðre wif ða habbað eoferes tucxas and feax  
 oð helan side and on lendenum oxan taegl. þa wif syndon  
 tyne fota lange, and heora lic bið on marmorstanas  
 and hi habba olfenda fet and eoseles teð. For heora  
 nesse his gefelde wurdon fram ðam mycclan Macedoniscan  
 andre. þa he hi lifiende gefon ne mihte, þa acwealde  
 ðam his syndon acwisce on lichoman and unweorðe.  
 (96,1.1-7)

Then there are other women. They have the tusks of a boar and hair up to their heels and a tail of an ox from out of their loins. The women are thirteen feet tall and their body is in the color of marble. They have a camel's feet and tooth of an ass. Because of their uncleanliness, they were destroyed by the Great Macedonian, Alexander. He killed them, when he could not seize them alive for they are foul (unchaste) in body and contemptible.

Invested with animal features, fierce appearance and contemptible hygiene, the figures provoke a physical alienation and moral distance. What is conveyed through words is effectively reiterated by graphic illustrations in the text. These are not mere marginal additions; they offer a pictorially built-up semantic equivalence to the verbally

sketched Eastern female monsters. While commenting on the interaction between pictorial and word representations of the medieval psalters, Otto Pachatz says that the pictures are "written as verbal statements" and they "need to be read..." (173). In fact, Friedman points out that among its influences, Tiberius B.V. shows a striking awareness of the elements in Utrecht Psalter ("The Marvels-of-the East tradition in Anglo-Saxon Art" 326). The illustration of the Eastern woman (Tiberius B.V. fol 85a) described in the passage above shows a naked woman with hair down to her feet. Her body and hands are human. The cloven feet and long tail are clearly marked. What seems to be a tusk is a slight projection from the mouth. James says that the "tusks are doubtful" in the picture (28). The image, thus verbally and pictorially presented, is a picture of monstrous Eastern women caught between human and animal features. These are deviant beings and far from the norms characterized by the ambitious and powerful military leader and his army; the former are filthy and degenerate. Hence the female monsters are a blot on the landscape. They are either to be captured alive or removed from the scene. The Latin version shows a narrative empathy with such an act; the writer says that the women were killed by "magno nostro Macedone" (121, l. 14,

emphasis mine).<sup>53</sup>

A related portrait of fierce, beast-like dwellers of the land is presented in (26.1-6). These are women who are less than human.

Ymb þa stowe beoð wif acenned, ða habbað beardas swa  
 side oð heora breost, and horses hyda hi habbað him to  
 gedon. þa syndan huntigystan swiðe genemde, and  
 tigras and leopardos þaet hi fedað, þaet syndan  
 deor. And eallu ðaera wildeora kynn, þaera þe on ðaere  
 akende beoð, þaet hi gehuntigað. (95,1.9-14)

Around this place are born forth women. They have beards likewise ample (broad) (down) to their breast. They are huntresses. They have garment made of horse's hide. They are especially called huntresses. They feed four hundred tigers, lions and lynxes. These are the fiercest animals.

The women in this description are slightly different in appearance from the female figures discussed earlier. The huntresses are clothed in rough animal skin. Nevertheless, they too convey the notion of barbarous, savage and untrimmed nature. Drawing a comparison between this picture and the one describing the unclean women, Gibb says that the depiction of the huntresses "represents the pure," whereas the verbal portrait of the unhygienic females conveys notions of the "lustful and wordly" (75). While the image of the

---

<sup>53</sup>Citations of the Latin version of Wonders of the East are from Gibb's "Edited Latin Text" from his dissertation.

latter conveys moral and physical blemish, ideas of spotlessness and purity are not the underlying concept of the picture that presents the huntresses. What these two pictures suggest is the commonality in their features, barbarity and semi- barbarity, and not an implied contrast between defilement and untaintedness. The Eastern female monsters occupy a grey zone between the worlds of the civilized human beings and fierce animals through the anatomical study of their features presented to the reader. These women are caught in the interstices separating the two worlds of civilization and barbarity.

Commenting on similarly marginalized figures, like sorceresses and the hysteric, Catherine Clément points out, with the help of the cultural insights offered by Lévi-Strauss and Jean Paul Sartre, that a society may not be able to fit everyone alike into its structure. There are some "in the interstices" who are "afflicted with a symbolic mobility"; these are the people who are tormented by what one calls "madness" "anomaly" and "perversion" (7). These figures who remain outside the symbolic order of the society, the dominant principle of power and law, are made "to simulate imaginary transitions" and "embody incompatible syntheses"<sup>54</sup> Clément argues that mad people and women are two groups which embody these anomalies (7). That which

---

<sup>54</sup>Lévi-Strauss quoted in New Born Woman by Clément.



cannot be assimilated is alienated by the self and made an other.<sup>55</sup> The Eastern female also is thrust into incongruous combinations and irreconcilable realizations. The female figures seen in the two pictures analyzed take on features sufficient enough to suggest their closeness to the human race, yet too deviant by far to be classified as animals. They represent a resistant force to Alexander by their untamed, wild, foul and contemptible appearance. The fiercest ones are removed from the landscape.

However, there is another group of people who are considered human and hospitable in the Old English text under study. The writer says,

Dis mannkyn lifað fela geara, and hi syndan fermfulle  
 aerenn. And gyf hwylc manna to him cymeð, þonne gyfa  
 hi him wif  
 aer hi hine onwef laetan. Se Macedoniaca Alexander,  
 þa he him  
 to com. þa waws he wundriende hyra menniscynsse. Ne  
 wolde he  
 hi cwellan ne him nawiht laðes don. (97,1.1-5)

These men live many years and are beneficent men. any one comes to them, they give him a female (wife) before he leaves on his way. When the Macedonian Alexander came, he wondered at their humanity. He

---

<sup>55</sup>Overing's application of Clement's concept of hysterics is slightly different from mine. She includes "illegitimate monsters," "pedigreed peace-weavers," and heroes who are exiles as well under the category of anomalies (75). I have confined my notion of anomaly to that which is unassimilable by the symbolic order, and that which is exiled by the Law. Self-exiling, on the other hand, can be an enabling condition such as a writer's. See Kristeva "New Type" for a concept of an exile who exercises thought as "dissidence" (Moi, Kristeva Reader, 298).

would not want to kill them; not one.

This verbal sketch, rendered pictorially in Tiberius B.V. fol.6 a, offers a structural opposite to the fierce female monsters discussed earlier. It shows four well clad men and a fully arrayed Eastern woman. Three of the men, Easterners, give the woman as a gift to the Western traveller. One of the men holds her around her shoulder and body and is seen in a posture of handing her over to the visitor. The woman's face shows reluctance. The Old English writer says that these Eastern men are beneficent, "fremfulle (97,1.1) and show humaness, "menniscysse" (97,1.4): rare qualities assigned to the people in the Eastern landscape. Alexander did not kill a single soul among them; "Ne wolde he hi cwellan he him nawhit (97,1.5-6). Desire and death are closely associated imperial impulses. Barbarity and beneficence are words related to resistance or gift of the female.

Arranging these women figures, the three unrelated portraits of the foul females, courageous huntresses, and the unwillingly gifted woman, Gibb says that the "linking concept" (64) of this cluster is Alexander the Great, "the destroyer and preserver..." (65). These female figures are viewed in terms of Alexander's norms of acceptability. These Eastern women are exposed to the reader, as it were, through the imperialistic gaze of the royal presence, though

the Macedonian prince does not occupy a central role in Wonders of the East.

Further, the notion of the Eastern woman being offered as a present to the Western traveller is a product of a scribal error. Sisam points out that "mulieribus" in the Tiberius B.V. is a corrupt version of "muneribus" (78). This, as he observes, has already been noted by James; the latter says that the true reading should be "cum muneribus" instead of "cum mulieribus eos remittunt" (29). The notion of "muneribus" is present in the word "remuneratos" used in the Letter of Fermes (Sisam 79). The linguistic confusion of "gift" as suggested by these words, with the "female," as in "mulieribus," has given rise to a pictorial and verbal creation of the Eastern woman offered as a gift. The corruption is already present in Epistola Premonis, a relative of Letter of Fermes (Sisam 78). The gift, "muneribus," turned woman, "mulieribus," is an instance of corruption in scribal transmission. The pictorialized Eastern woman made to appear on the margin of the Latin and Old English texts based on this scribal error and mistranslation is more than an instance of hurried scholarship; it is a textual violence done to the concept of an Eastern female.

A structural contrast to this picture of the Eastern woman being treated as a gift is offered by another Old English text. The Sabines refuse to give their women to the

Romans in the Orosius (39/5-16). Eastern and Western responses are markedly different in the texts. In Orosius, the Sabines turn away the request of the Romans to give the former's daughters. The latter, however, obtain the women against their wishes by treachery. The Romans tell the Sabines that the women are needed in helping to offer sacrifices to the gods. But the women are treated as wives without being given back to their natal families. This results in many years of war and bloodshed. Finally, Roman women intervene and implore their men to end the war. The unwilling Eastern woman, offered as a gift to please or appease the Western traveller, is a contrast to the Sabine women who are refused as gifts.

The Eastern female in Wonders of the East is doubly colonized. She is a piece of goods given by her men to their Western counterpart in a transsocietal exchange of hospitality. In Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry, women are gift-givers. Wealtheow--a name which suggests "foreign slave"<sup>56</sup>--is presented in her queenliness and generosity as an initiator of gift-giving in Beowulf.<sup>57</sup> The Eastern woman, however, is an induced gift in the problematic grasp

---

<sup>56</sup>Helen Damico discusses the etymological significance of the name, "a curious appellative for the queen of Danes," in Beowulf's Wealtheow (59).

<sup>57</sup>See for a discussion of the "ambivalent" response which the women of a defeated tribe evoke in Fell's Women in Anglo-Saxon England (67).

of the other in an interterritory created on the Eastern landscape by the East-West encounter, a hesitant yet handy in-between. Her natural body becomes an exchangeable body by this transaction among men.<sup>58</sup> That is, her biological body becomes a passage of commerce. What is important is not the body which is exchanged, but the act of exchange which creates a binding agreement--a kinship between the transactors.<sup>59</sup> Here in the textual context, the translator becomes a transactor. By changing the Eastern female from a lifeless gift to an exchangeable female flesh, he circulates the Eastern woman's body in phallic discourse. She is mute; others write through her body; she does not write with it. She is etched as a doubly colonized woman in phallic inscription in the text.<sup>60</sup>

The Eastern female is either trapped in the text in her half human and half bestial attributes, or she is given by her willing men to travellers from the West. Her destiny is

---

<sup>58</sup>See Irigaray's "Women on the Market" (This Sex, 170-197). See also Overing's discussion of the role of peace-weavers in Beowulf who enter into the process of weaving as an act of "differance" (74).

<sup>59</sup>This basic concept of Lévi-Strauss is subject to a brilliant scrutiny by Rubin. In "Traffic," she argues that feminist task is more complex than viewing men as the origin of patriarchy. Culture itself has to be substituted by some "new phenomena" in order to remove patriarchy (176).

<sup>60</sup>For a different opinion, see Gibb. His critical sympathies seem to be with "Alexander the Great who quite appropriately destroys the voluptuous race and spares the benevolent one" (76).

dependent on "wif" killers or givers. She is a figure of violence or a sexual gift, shadowed by the wings of imperial presence in the text. She is given representability within unintegrable extremes. While talking about the in-between position of women, Cixous says that women are being caught between "two horrifying myths" in phallogocentric writings: "the Medusa and the abyss" ("Utopias" 255). The Eastern woman also falls into the monster/lack paradigm. She is the monstrous other of the normal West, or the emptiness and depravity to be substituted by the Western traveller's filling. Cixous wants her readers to see beyond this binary division; "to look at the Medusa straight on to see her"; the Eastern monster is "not deadly. She is beautiful and she's laughing" (255). To see the Eastern woman in her "otherness," as distinct from being the portrayed "other" of the West, is to see her "laugh" in her gay abandon of her double incarceration.

The literary and pictorial attitudes of the West towards the East, depicted in Wonders of the East and Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, pose the self's mute dialogue with the other. The construct of the other involves a "constitution" of the self.<sup>61</sup> It is the urge to build

---

<sup>61</sup>See Jonathan Friedman's "Beyond Otherness" (170). From a postmodernist anthropological perspective, Friedman discusses the problematic of the absolute knowing "I" which projects notions of the other. Zhang writes about China being the other of the West, a "fictionalized space" for dreams

one's own identity as the center of the knowing subject, absolute and whole, that assigns the marginal, inferior, and abject position to the other. Othering assigns monstrosity and violence to that which cannot be confined by the symbolic. Referring to Henri Baudet's idea of two ways in which the West has described the East, J.B. Friedman says that one is the actual relationship between the East and the West, concrete meetings of people and countries. The other concerns this conclusion. The "images of non-western people and worlds" are not "derived" in the second category from "observation, experience, and perceptible reality but from a psychological urge" (176). The transmitted images of the East stem from a psychic need to cope with the other. Also a transcultural opposition of seeing the East in terms of the West, like the male/female binary division, has benefitted the self which privileges one notion above the other. The problem is a "metaphysical" one; there is no "vantage point" from which to evaluate different "others," and self and the other (Said, "Anthropology's Interlocutors" (216). Assumed notions of possessing such an elevated position, however, leave their traces in texts. Inscription of the images of the East through verbal and pictorial texts represents the West's dialogue with its other, the mute and voiceless East;

---

and fantasies, in "Myth" (108-131).

hence, this discourse is "monologic,"<sup>62</sup> where the potential response of the listener is not included.

---

<sup>62</sup>Borrowed from Bakhtin.



## Chapter III

### THE ORIENTALIZED EASTERN PRINCESS

The image of the Eastern female presented in Chapter II as a deviant and abnormal figure is reinforced in a different fashion in medieval literary texts. The Eastern female embodies sensuousness and violence in her characterization. The imperial figure of Alexander is replaced by the courtly knight who travels to the East. The female monsters are substituted by royal womanhood. Unlike the Old English mute female figures of the East, the Muslim princess of the East is engaged in dialogue, a salient feature of the medieval romances, which are the forerunners of the novel. Yet behind her apparent linguistic facility, the Eastern woman's voice is distorted. She is invested with a language divested of her cultural self: transcultural anomaly projected through the crusading vision of the medieval narrators. My general aim in this chapter is to analyze the Eastern female's figure in The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras his Sone who Conquered Rome, and argue that her problem of representation is the

problem of sexuality.<sup>63</sup>

Behind the dominant layer of the text which contains an archetypal, fairy-tale pattern of a hero who is saved by his prisoner's daughter, there is a subordinate layer which deals with the inverse quest of the Eastern princess. This quest is characterized by female excess.<sup>64</sup> The Eastern princess's verbal expressions of desire, physical acts of violence, and manipulative uses of food constitute this female excess. She uses speech, force, and food as means of communication to make herself available to the Christian knight.<sup>65</sup> She exploits these elements as signs to establish kinship with Charlemagne's knights. At the same time, the narrator utilizes these key signs to promote notions of the Eastern female to his audience as a sensuous and violent figure. In my examination of Eastern female excess, I intend to draw examples, in brief, from The Romaunce of Sir Beves of Hamptoun. Utilizing Irigaray's notions of natural body and exchangeable body, which I referred to in Chapters I and II, I aim to analyze how the

---

<sup>63</sup>Brown and Adams refer to the problem of sexuality as a problem of representation in relation to the theory of infantile sexuality (40).

<sup>64</sup>I have borrowed the idea of female riot being linked to that of speech from Bloch (5). The treatment of this idea is mine.

<sup>65</sup>Lévi-Strauss treats women, along with food, as the most valuable form of communication in a society (Kinship 61-75).

culturally curtailed body of the Eastern female becomes a commodity between the narrator and his audience (This Sex 170-197). Speech, force, and food are exploited for a dual function in the text. They disrupt the East and validate the crusading enterprise of the Christian knights. The Eastern princess is caught in the antithetic processes of love and war, sexual and crusading motifs, in the romance material. Enamoured of the Christian knight, her father's martial enemy on the Oriental soil, she renounces her religious, cultural, and natal bonds in her active and amorous support of the reluctant, asceticized warrior. The Eastern woman, who is caught in this double signification, as an exchanger and a sign, is made to appear as an object in discourse. I intend to demonstrate that the Eastern female figure, projected in her sensuality and violence, is created not only to satisfy the aesthetic tastes of the medieval audience but also to fulfill an ideological purpose. She is an object produced in the romances by the interplay of power and knowledge; a created image, ideologically mediated by the crusading motifs of the Middle Ages. I utilize Foucault's concepts of discourse object in my examination of the Eastern female figure in the medieval discourse.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup>In "Oriental Subtext," Schaub analyzes the spiritual Orient, especially the Buddhist system of thought, as the rational West's unconquerable and impenetrable other in Foucault's writings 306-316. My use of Foucault in this chapter is confined to his notion of discourse object (40-

A: MEDIEVAL ROMANCE AS AN EMERGING NATURALIZED GENRE:

Medieval English romances do not trace their literary origin to Anglo-Saxon texts. The Eastern female character undergoes a literary detour in the generic transmission of romance material. Her portrait is no longer a direct offshoot of the now indigenized English romance matter of the pre-Conquest English. With the Norman victory of 1066, the English language itself undergoes the colonizing influence of the French. Within this colonized language, the Eastern female exists as a trapped figure retaining stereotyped traits such as sensuouness and violence.

The origins of the medieval English romance could be traced back to the twelfth century. Geoffrey of Monmouth, a native of Wales working in Oxford, wrote Historia Regum Britanniae (1136), a combination of history and romance, which presents King Arthur as a legendary figure. The newly emerging medieval genre, however, takes a divergent route to

---

49) which I have referred to in Chapter I. Dreyfus and Rabinow give a theoretical explication of Foucault's "Objects" in Beyond Structuralism (61-66). Said follows Foucault's methodology of discursive analysis in Orientalism. Metlitzki gives a thematic assessment of the Eastern princess in The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras and The Romaunce of Sir Beves of Hamptoun in "The Treatment of the Saracens" (Araby 167-175). My analysis is theoretical and gendered.

French models.<sup>67</sup> The prevailing Anglo-Norman tastes of the Court of Henry II and Eleanor influenced the writing mode. Ambitious romance writers preferred to write in French, a more prestigious linguistic counterpart of native English. Thomas and Benoît de Sainte-Maure and Robert Wace, part of the Court of Henry II and Eleanor, catered to the French tastes in England. Wace wrote Roman de Brut (1155) and Roman d'Eneas (c.1160). Benoît wrote Le Roman de Troie and Roman de Toute Chevalerie. Further, the history of the English and Norman royal lineage, these writers produced, is mixed with romance material. Referring to the lack of strict boundaries between romance and history in the early stages of the development of romance in the twelfth century, Douglas Kelly says that "estoire" is the earliest recognizable designation for romance.<sup>68</sup> The use of the "merveille" is common in the history of Wace and Benoît (148). The gradual separation of the historical matter from the romance material did not, in fact, completely obliterate the sharp division between the

---

<sup>67</sup>Information is based on Boitani's Medieval Narrative (36-37), Barron's Medieval Romance (28-57), Hume's "Formal nature" (158-180), and Kelly's "Matiere" (147-159).

<sup>68</sup>Vitalis' Ecclesiastical History contains romance material in the form of an episode about the Eastern princess, Melaz, who liberates her father's prisoner, Bohemond, a well-known warrior in the First Crusade. Metlitzki discusses this merger of history and romance (161-165). Warren gives an analysis of Vitalis' text (341-58). Vitalis' translator, Forester, refers to the author's use of romance element in the depiction of Melaz (310).

two genres. Further, Anglo-Norman output is seen in romances like King Horn, Amadas et Ydoine, Ipomedon, Protheselaus, Guillaume d'Angleterre, and Estoire de Waldef. Writing of English romances remained a clerical activity in the beginning. Later, because of the gradual development of English as the national language and the use of the Caxton Press, laymen began to write romances in English (Barron 56).

As for the audience to whom the romances are written, we have only speculation. Critics have offered theories of possible audiences for each age. Though the earlier romances and classical stories written from the twelfth century to the end of the thirteenth century were directed towards the sophisticated readership of French-speaking Anglo-Normans in England, by the beginning of the fourteenth century, romance writing in English was aimed at another audience, the "minimally educated native speakers of English" (Hume, "Formal Nature" 168). By 1350, English romance writers were able to satisfy the demands of an audience who were not well-versed in French but who wanted a reading entertainment like their "social betters." The Middle English romances were written primarily for a "lower or a lower-middle class audience" (Pearsall, "Middle English Romance" 12). With the decline in the knowledge of French, the medieval romances spread to other classes as well. By the later Middle Ages,

(i.e., the end of fifteenth century), the reading of English romances was "part of the ordinary education of aristocratic children" (Benson 240). Because of lack of specific details about the constituent audience of each English romance, these comments, at their best, could offer us only a broad background idea. On the other hand, I agree with W.R.J. Barron who says that the form of English romances could only give "suggestive" and not "conclusive" evidence about the nature and make up of the audience (54).

The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Bayloyne and of Ferumbras his Sone who Conquered Rome and The Romaunce of Sir Beves of Hamptoun, like many of the medieval English romances, have their origin in France.<sup>69</sup> Their appearance in England is also due to the Anglo-Norman influence and the gradual ascendancy of the English language over French. Under the directed gaze of the romance writers, these texts present an image of the Orient at once sensual and violent.

---

<sup>69</sup>Hibbard gives information about the manuscripts and dates of the texts. She argues that neither of the sources of these texts could be placed prior to the twelfth century (116). Matzke discusses the manuscript history of Sir Beves (1-36). See also Severs (25). For a brief analysis of the Anglo-French and Continental versions of the text, see Kolbing, EETS, ES 1894 (viii). A thorough discussion of the Anglo-French source of this thirteenth-century Middle English romance is given in Kolbing, EETS, ES 1885 (46). Billing gives information about the only manuscript of Sowdone. She assigns the date of the first part of the romance to the beginning of the fifteenth century and the second part to the second half or the last quarter of the fourteenth century (51-57). Also see Nicol (b), and Bedier (22-23).

The sexually-surrendering, royal female is presented in an inverse quest in the subordinate layer of these texts. Reading the Eastern female requires a pattern of looking beyond the linearity of events in these texts, as I have suggested in the preceding chapters.

Critics postulate that reading of romances, in general, requires an eye for patterns and types rather than causality of narrative sequence. Eric Auerbach, for instance, in Mimesis: the Representation of Reality, observes the presence of certain recurring patterns, "paratatic" elements, in Chanson de Roland. He says that these are posited in the text without any explanatory discussion and explanatory connectives. The knight's setting out for adventure, his notions of honor and loyalty, and the attitude toward the pagans and Christians that the former are wrong and the latter right, are set literary conventions within which the romance rules operate (101-102). I agree with Auerbach on the general need for looking into patterns. He states that not all romances fit into the commonly observable pattern (140). However, a reader might well look into the why of disruptive and reverse patterns within this general schema. These may contain ideological components which need to be analyzed in the context of the larger



patterns.<sup>70</sup>

Northrop Frye sees archetypal patterns in romance reading. His taxonomy of literary types is based on the hero's force and action in mastering the environment and relates tragedy, comedy, romance, and epic to the four seasons. Frye's romance mode includes saint's legends, folktale, and their literary affiliates (Anatomy 33). His extended treatment of romance is seen in The Secular Scripture. However, he does not take into account the historicity of the genre and the ideological underpinnings of the knight and the lady. Frederic Jameson argues in a similar vein and says that Frye's modal approach to genre must be pursued by means of "radical historization" (115).<sup>71</sup>

Situating the romances in the material world is as much important as placing them in the realm of intertextuality. Eugene Vance adds this dimension to the reading of romances. He states that a medievalist reading should include not only the variants of a given text but also its relationship in a

---

<sup>70</sup>Auerbach treats the romance genre as an escape into the world of the fable and fairy tale which does not have any basis in political reality (133-138). While acknowledging Auerbach's perceptive separation of the fairy tale and historical elements in the "matiere de Bretagne," Nerlich comments on the critic's lack of historical and ideological analyses of these elements (13).

<sup>71</sup>Haidu raises his objection to Frye's classification saying that the latter shows "ignorance or disregard of the textual production of other cultures, including that of the Middle Ages" ("Idealistic Genre" 4).

network of "intertextuality" (xxvii). Vance stresses the relationship between the text and its immediate textual family, and its place in the larger linguistic family. His argument relates textuality to narration, and narration, in turn, to discourse--a notion I maintain in the development of this study.

Kathryn Hume, however, presents a different reading of the patterns within a psychological framework. She observes three basic stages of the thematic structure of romance: "Equilibrium, Struggle, and Higher Harmony." She relates this schema to the passivity of the infantile ego, its struggle to "enforce separation between the conscious and the unconscious" and the ego's identification with the conscious. The romance hero, seen as the "ego-figure," achieves a final synthesis, a maturer harmony, after his psychic struggle (131-138). Useful as it is, Hume's model internalizes terrain. The figure of the knight obliterates the notion of terrain and the question of other. Self defines a territory as much as a territory defines the self.<sup>72</sup>

Underlying these reading assumptions--mimetic, mythic, intertextual, and psychological--is a common feature, a strategy of looking for patterns and generic features in the

---

<sup>72</sup>Jackson discusses the unreal world of romance in "Nature" (12-25). Finlayson analyzes the courtly romance in "Definitions" (44-62).

reading of romances. The basic pattern in the text under study is the hero's adventure in a foreign territory, the king's daughter's help to the hero, struggle against the pagans, and victory over them. The irreducible archetypal pattern in the interlinked romances of the Sowdan is the fairy tale figure of the Ogre and his aiding daughter. Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson list this as type 313 in The Types of Folktale (104).<sup>73</sup> This pre-given pattern of the hero being helped by the enemy's daughter is seen in the figures of the Christian knights and Floripas in The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras.<sup>74</sup> A summary of these texts is an expansion of this core classificatory model.

The linked texts deal with the story of the plunder of the holy relics of Rome by Sir Lavan, the Saracen king of Babylon. The ravaging king's ally, Lukafer, kills ten thousand Christian virgins and promises the Eastern king that Charlemagne and his twelve knights will be brought into submission. The Sowdan promises the hand of his daughter, Floripas, to Lukafer in marriage in exchange for his zealous offer. Meanwhile, Rome calls for Charlemagne's aid.

---

<sup>73</sup>Luttrell discusses the relationship between type 313 and Sir Gawain in "The folk-tale Element" (92-128).

<sup>74</sup>Hereafter, I will use this slightly shortened title. All citations from this text are from Nicol's printed edition.

The Christian knights of France arrive in the Saracenland. In the fights that ensue, Oliver and Roland, the peers of Charlemagne, are taken prisoners by the Sowdan; his son, Ferumbras, is captured by the Christians, and is baptized with the young prince's consent. Charlemagne, further, sends the imprisoned Christian knights additional enforcement through Sir Guy of Burgundy. The emperor also asks for the knights' release and the return of the "Releques also of Rome (1672). The outraged Sowdan threatens to hang the prisoners; yet he is reminded by Floripas that her brother is a captive in the enemy camp, and hence the lives of the Christian knights should be spared.

Floripas joins forces with her father's enemies. Her aggressive role in releasing the prisoners is due to her love for Sir Guy. Providing strategic plans to defeat her father, she helps the knights regain the plundered relics, restore honor to Christendom, and annihilate the pagan resistant forces. After being baptized, the princess enters into the Christian society through her marriage to Sir Guy.

The contextualizing force inherent in the texts is seen through the focused significance of the actions of two groups: the heathens and the Christians.<sup>75</sup> The act of the Sowdan's gods, Mahounde and Appolyne, pitted against the Christian God, is replayed in multiple images of fights,

---

<sup>75</sup>Altman discusses Roland as a dual-focus work (17).

physical and spiritual; the Sowdan against the Christian king of Rome; Sir Lavan, the heathen, against the replenished Roman forces; the Saracens against the newly sent force from Charlemagne's court; Ferumbras, the Sowdan's son, against Sir Rowland in a single combat; Sir Lukafer against Oliver, the Eastern priests spiritual support to the Sowdan and Bishop Turpyne's sacramental presence by Charlemagne, and above all, the strength of the foe, in the "hye name of Sathanas" (2778) and the towering height of Charlemagne and his twelve peers, a paradigm of the apostolic presence. Character development of any of these opposed figures is neglected in the binarily conceived plot which stresses instead the fierce effort to save and salvage the relics on either side.<sup>76</sup>

#### B: INVERSE QUEST:

However, the Eastern female is a complexly portrayed figure compared to the other characters. The traits she is invested with suggest female excess. Her speech, violence, and sexuality embody this excess and are deployed exactly in order to bring about a resolution to the romance. The Eastern female is used as a principle of imbalance to upset the neatly conceived power balance between the self and the

---

<sup>76</sup>Altman refers to individuals in Roland as "placeholders" rather than as characters (17).

other.<sup>77</sup> The Eastern female's aggressive pursuit of the Christian knight can be called an inverse quest. This reverse quest is different from most of the knightly quests.

For instance, a knightly quest is mostly represented in a twin quest for land and lady in romances.<sup>78</sup> Haidu observes that the "the dominant narrative pattern of medieval romance is the quest." He says that the physical movement of the hero is towards a desired object. This dual object consists of a lady and a fief ("Narrativity and Language" 134). Haidu's statement emphasizes the subject position of the knight which moves, seeks, and acts in a land of adventure, and finally locates the objects of quest. The knight as an agent of action engaged in a dual pursuit is seen in The Romance of Tristan and Isolt. Instead of going in search of a fief, Tristan redeems Cornwall, the kingdom of his future rival in love, King Mark, from the servitude inflicted on it by King Thonosor of Ireland. The quest for the female is fraught with entrancing adventure and perilous love. He undertakes the bride quest--the task of bringing the Irish princess, Isolt, for King Mark of Cornwall--for the sake of knighthood. The search, dangerous and passionate, survives

---

<sup>77</sup>Altman refers to the "equal-arm balance" in Roland where the final resolution is achieved by the tilting of power to one side (17).

<sup>78</sup>See Auerbach's reference to the only two themes considered worthy of a knight, adventure and love (140).

Isolt's marriage to King Mark, Tristan's to Isolt of Brittany, and the tragic deaths of the lovers themselves. The "bramble, fair and green and leafy" descends from Tristan's grave in search of Isolt's tomb and enters it" (91). The emotional roots, intertwined with the bridal quest, defy earthly honor associated with knighthood, and render the romance a tragi-comic dimension.

Some of the courtly romances depict the knight as serving the lady or her father.<sup>79</sup> For instance, in Gui, Felicia orders that Gui serve as knight in alien lands for seven years. Gui fulfills that command in order to marry the lady. In Squyr of Lowe Degre, the lady also bids the squire similarly to serve as knight in foreign lands for seven years. The squire marries the lady at the end. Ipomedon is depicted as serving as a squire in the lady's court in Ipomedon. Roswall has also a similar pattern. Roswall serves as a squire in the lady's court, and he marries her.

However, in The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, it is the Eastern princess who does services, or is willing to do them--often sensuous, violent and subversive in nature--to prove her love for the hero. While the romance knight is asceticized, the princess is

---

<sup>79</sup>Information taken from Wittig's "Table II" (155-157). She traces the pattern of the knight's service and marriage in twelve medieval romances including Emaré, Horn, and William under this table.

sensualized. His non-involvement in the love component of the story is a stark contrast to the carnality of the heroine. The sexualized Eastern princess's willingness to surrender her body and goods to the Christian knight, who is presented as an abstinent figure rejecting her offer--a recurrent image in the romances dealing with the East and West--is a representation of the other in multiple transgression. Feminine sexuality as embodied in the Muslim princess seeks political subversiveness and violence as a means to fulfill its goal, the approval and love of Sir Guy of Burgundy, one of the peers of Charlemagne.

The co-presence of violence and sexuality is exploited in the characterization of the Eastern princess. Frye states that "violence and sexuality" are the two elements which are used as "rocket propulsions" in romances (The Secular Scripture 183). The narrator of The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras invests precisely these two qualities in the character of the Eastern female. Floripas, the Eastern princess, is presented as gentle and benign to the Christian knights imprisoned by her father. In her effort at saving her father's prisoners, Roland and Oliver, she is, however, ruthless and coldblooded to her father's royal household. She uses force to remove the Eastern obstacles which will hinder the knights' quest for the relics. In this act, she is similar to Alexander the Great



who kills the resistant figures on the Eastern landscape in order to reach his object of desire. However, the Eastern princess is a subversive force from within--a native informant and a collaborator. When her "maistras," Maragoude (1563), refuses to listen to Floripas' direction to feed the knights, in obedience to the Sowdan's order, the princess asks her chaperon to go to the window to see a "wonder syght" (1574); in a gesture of sheer ingenuity marked by pitilessness, the princess shoves the woman at the window "oute in to the flode" (1578). Systematic violence is executed without any remorse.

Further, Floripas takes two of her maids to the prison and attempts to bribe the prison-keeper with gold and gloves (1589). When he refuses to do her will, she plucks the key clog (1603) so swiftly and strikes him so hard that his brain comes out of his head (1606). Having done this, she immediately informs her father that she saw a loathsome sight: the prison-keeper feeding the knights. Hence she kills him (1613). The Eastern princess meets out life and death without any qualms of introspection. Next the reader sees Floripas with her maids drawing the knights by a rope to her chamber (1651). In complicity with the Christian knights, the Eastern princess conspires, actively and aggressively, against her father. The narrator makes her use violence as a means of communication, a sign, to build

alliance between the Eastern princess and the Christian knights. What the narrator reiterates through her use of force is her image as a violent woman--an argument which I will take up again in Chapter IV in my discussion on the Eastern female in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale."

Further, unlike the Eastern women in the Old English texts, the Eastern princess in the medieval romance is given speech. But she uses speech as a mode of communication to promote filial relationship with the Christian knights. However, through the use of her speech, the narrator circulates notions of the sensuous Eastern woman. When Sir Guy goes to the Sowdan with the other ten peers of Charlemagne and demands the release of the prisoners and the repossession of the relics, Floripas intercedes on their behalf to the Sowdan. He orders Floripas to take the Christian captives to the prison and bind them fast in iron and steel (1850) so that these enemies could be hanged the next morning (1853-54). Contrary to the command of her royal father, the princess takes the prisoners to the protection of her tower (1856), and makes possible the happy reunion of all the twelve knights in her own bower (1869-70). Her acts of kindness are motivated by her love for Sir Guy of Burgundy, whose prowess she has heard of but whom she has never met. Securing adequate protection for the knights in her bower, she professes her love to Sir Guy through his

companion, Duke Neymes:

A him have I loved many a day  
 And yet knowe I him noght  
 For his love I do alle that I maye  
 To chere youe withe dede and thought  
 For his love wille I christenede be  
 And lefe Mahoundes laye  
 Spekith to him nowe for me...." (1891-97)

The Eastern princess, enamoured of the Christian knight, represents a structural antithesis to the male quest of the female in romances. She is also a characterological opposite to her father in her willingness to embrace the faith of his captives. Her speech is a subversive act to her father and the terrain he represents. Her desire finds expression for her repeated oral transgressions.

This is further evidenced when she arranges a feast for the Christian knights without the knowledge of her father. Offering a golden cup of wine to Sir Guy of Burgundy, she proclaims her love for him:

"...my love and my lorde  
 Myn herte my body my goode is thyne  
 And kissed him withe that worde  
 And sir she saide drinke to me  
 As the Gyse is of my londe  
 And I shalle drinke agayne to the  
 As to my worthy hosbonde." (1928-34)

Food, kiss, and speech are the oral expressions of the Eastern female's desire here. She breaks woman's silence in the traditional patriarchal world and articulates her desire that her heart, her body, and her property are the Christian

knight's. The initiative assigned to the Eastern princess in the passage defies the cultural reality of the usually silent woman who is an exchange object in the royal political gambles and negotiations. The narrator's manipulation of her speech to convey his vision of the seductive Eastern female is not confined to this single text.

A similar, though not identical, picture of an Eastern princess in her excess is seen in The Romaunce of Beves of Hamptoun.<sup>80</sup> Josian, the Eastern princess, is enamoured of the Christian knight, Beves, in her father's court. At her father's direction, Josian serves the victorious knight who has defeated her unworthy suitor meat and drink. After he has eaten well and is seated on "the maiden's bed" (1090), she decides to reveal her heart to him. She says to him,

"...Beves lemman thin ore!  
 Ichauē loved e ful ore  
 Sikerli can i no rede,  
 Bouteþow me loue, Icham dede,  
 And bouteþow wiþ me doþe wille" (1093-97)

Her claim that without his response she will starve meets with a cold response. The unaffected Christian hero swears that he will not do what she expects him to do: to return her passionate love. Sensuously persistent, the princess

---

<sup>80</sup>All citations are from Kolbing, EETS, ES 46. Metlitzki gives an account of Josian's wooing scenes and her denigration of natal religion (167-169).

says:

Merci, he deide, yet with an  
 ichauede e leuer to me lemman,  
 þe bodi in e scherte naked,  
 þan al the gold that Crist hath maked,  
 And þow wost with me do þe wille. (1105-09)

Laying bare her heart in such a naked language, Josian becomes the very opposite of what the Christian hero represents: a chaste and virtuous youth who is above the fleshly wiles of a pagan woman. The princess is presented as aggresssive and sensuous whereas the knight is restrained and morally upright. The Eastern woman who steps into the romance hero's chamber uninvited, and who initiates her next maneuvre of love by kissing him in his "mo " and "chin," belongs to a represented reality, at once twisted and distorted. She reminds a reader of the seductive lady in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the uneasy compromise of the knight between courtesy to a lady and promise to a host. Again, in The Romaunce of Beves of Hamptoun, the lady goes into the knight's chamber unbidden, when he is asleep or at least pretending to be asleep, in spite of his solemn assertion that she should not see him any more. Falling on her feet, she pleads for her amorous cause, saying that she will forsake her false gods and become a Christian. The writer says,

þe fel adoun & wep wel sore  
 'Men, sai he seide, "in olde riote,  
 þat wimmannes bolt is sone schole:  
 For- em me þat Ichaue misede,

And Ich wile ri3t now to mede,  
 Min false godes as for-sake,  
 And Christendom for þe loue take!"  
 "In that maner," que the kni3t,  
 "I graunte þe, me wete wi3t!  
 And kiste hire at þat cordement.  
 þar fore he as ne3 after schent. (1190-1200)

The image of the Eastern princess is that of a seductive, pleading, enamoured woman willing to renounce her cultural moorings and religious faith to attain her quest: the knight in arms. What both Josian and Floripas in their different contexts do is to exploit their speech for a passionate cause. Woman and "olde riote" are positioned adjacent to each other in the passage I have quoted. In a different context, in commenting on the Old French word "riote," which is the same as the Middle English word used in the passage, Howard Bloch says that it refers to a specific kind of writing pertaining to nonsense poetry. Riot also means "upset" and "chaos." He states that woman's speech is related to her riotousness. He relates female riot to the nature of lan- guage and discourse itself ("Misogyny" 4-24).<sup>81</sup>

Riot refers to a certain kind of imbalance and chaos. Female speech is made to correspond to this condition of

---

<sup>81</sup>Bloch's etymological insight is useful. However, I find Bloch's analysis of female inadequacy and excess in language and discourse elusive. He does not pinpoint the role of subjectivity in these two systems. Suleiman's Female Body in Western Culture offers an informative investigation into the question of woman as an object in language and discourse.

instability.<sup>82</sup> What the Eastern female introduces is disruption. But it is precisely this disruption which leads to the denouement of events. While the arms of the knight are not able to bring about a resolution to the equally poised strength of the Christians and pagans, the speech of the Eastern female does. By her declaration of love, she crosses over to the side of the Christians and upsets the balance of the neatly divided Christian and pagan forces. On the level of characters, she exploits her speech in order to promote partnership between herself and the Christian knights. At the narrative level, she is made to represent the image of the sensuous and amorous female. Hence, female speech, used as a riot by the male narrator, causes an imbalance as well as a thematic resolution; disturbance of the Eastern landscape and reiteration of a negative image.

However, the constructed image of the Eastern woman and her speech has no relation to actual experience. Traditionally, the Eastern woman has had little to say in the contract, negotiation, and decision related to her betrothal or marriage. The romance texts give examples of Eastern princesses, in particular, offered as prizes in the chequered game of political winning and knightly exploits.

---

<sup>82</sup>Benkov gives a detailed analysis of woman's speech ("Language and Women" 245-265).

In the Romance of Guy of Warwick, the Eastern king offers his daughter and his kingdom to Guy for his valorous acts (3053-3056).<sup>83</sup> In The Romaunce of Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, Lukafer requests the king's daughter's hand with the promise that the former will bring Charles and his peers to the Eastern ruler. In Sir Beves of Hamptoun, the king is willing to give Josian marriage to Beves only if he renounces his faith. Further, in Floris and Blaunceflor, the Eastern women are secluded in a harem. Floris hides himself in a basket of flowers and is carried to Blaunceflor, his beloved, who is kept in a harem along with other women. The concept of Eastern women hidden from public sight is not an unknown concept to the medieval romancer. Commenting on the Eastern princess' initiative in the male quest, Norman Daniel says that the "total absence of restrictions of the sense of respectability and seclusion normal at any period in a Muslim household, precludes any an Arab model" (75). Because of the exteriority which I have referred to in Chapter I, the East is at a double remove from the narrator and the character. Moreover, in reality, the Muslim female undergoes clitoridectomy which is intended to curtail female pleasure, and her body is reconstructed for a vaginal mode of pleasure. Her pleasure is reordered for the male's. Clitoridectomy is analogous to female silence. The narrator

---

<sup>83</sup>The citation is from Schleich's edition.



of the romance restructures the tongueless body of the Eastern woman on another level. He gives her speech. The body is made riotous. Female excess runs through the narration.

The Eastern princess is unlike the mute female characters in the Anglo-Saxon texts I analyzed in Chapter II. Situating the Eastern female's desire in a newly invented narrative feature, dialogue, the romance writer makes the princess speak. In referring to the writers' use of monolog and and dialogue, D.S. Brewer states that this is a main contribution of the romances (1-16). Though slightly exaggerated, Brewer's statement emphasizes one of the significant developments in romance as a forerunner of the novel as a genre. Dialogue is a worthy feature denied to the Eastern woman's tribal prototypes in Old English mirabilia. Though the newly emergent national language, freeing itself from the French linguistic colonization, is capable of the smooth dialogic narrative patterns in the romances, it fails to express the Eastern woman's voice. It lies under the colonizing impact of language. Her voiced utterances are used for the political subversion of her native royal home.

However, from the medieval Eastern point of view, the Christian women of the crusading times demonstrated a liberated behavior which appalled those familiar with the oriental concept of womanhood. For instance, Usamah Ibn-

Munquidh of Syria, an aristocratic warrior and a man of letters during the twelfth century, argues that the Franks lacked jealousy in sex affairs (Hitti, Arab-Syrian 164). The case of a Christian wife taken by the hand by another man to converse with her offers a curious sight to the Arab male observer. Usamah shows his surprise that her husband stands on oneside waiting for his wife to conclude the conversation. If she waits too long for him, he leaves her alone with the conversant and goes away.

This freedom, astounding enough for the medieval Eastern courtier, assumes startling proportions in the amorous example of the wife of a Frank who sold wine for merchants. On finding a stranger sharing bed with his wife, the husband asks a series of questions, and tells the man that he should not be found doing such a thing again. Equally surprising to Usamah is the behavior of the Frankish knight who requests the help of a bath-keeper named Salim to perform some personal physical cleansing for the former and his wife (Hitti 164-165).

Besides these Eastern male observations of the Christian women during the Crusades in the Orient, there is an instance from Usamah's family, during a local battle in 1109 between the Syrians and the "Isma'ilites," which demonstrates the sense of honor expected of an Eastern female. Usamah's mother distributes his swords and "quilted

jerkins" to men fighting on behalf of their family thinking that her son is already dead in the battle. She asks her daughter to put on her shoes and "wrapper," the covering veil of the Muslim women, and leads her to the balcony and seats her there. When Usamah comes back home, to her surprise, and asks her why his sister is seated at the balcony, their mother replies that in case the enemies reach them, she would push her daughter and throw her into the valley, preferring to see her dead rather than to see her captive at the mercy of her ravishers. Usamah writes that he thanked his mother for her deed; his sister also thanked her and prayed that her mother be rewarded (by Allah) in her behalf. Usamah concludes, with a typical Eastern expectation of its womanhood's sexual sanctity, "Such solicitude for honor is indeed stronger than the solicitude of men" (Hitti 153-154). What the romance narrator constructs, then, is a riotous body out of the culturally bound self of the Eastern woman. Her speech is distorted by the narrator's use of dialogue; her body is manipulated by his vision, and her voice orchestrated for romance circulation.

Besides expressions of speech, violence, and sexuality, Eastern female excess is further seen through images of food. Lévi-Strauss places food, along with women, as an exchangeable object. Dietary signification is a mode of communication (Kinship 61-65). Food binds people and

promotes harmony in social relationships. Floripas uses food as a sign of communication between herself and the knights. But she deliberately disrupts this basic system in her royal household. She positions the attack of the Christian knights strategically at her father's elemental social activity: the time of supper. This act of violence reminds a reader of a similar strategy which another Eastern royal woman adopts in Chaucer's "The Man of Law's Tale." Food, betrayal, and death are arranged in a strategic order. Custance and the Sowdanesse stand as opposites representing female fortitude and excess respectively. In The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, the Sowdan's act of eating with his men is disrupted. For instance, when the ten peers of Charlemagne, headed by Sir Guy of Burgundy, arrive from France, they see the Eastern king at Egremouore at "his mele proudely sittynge" (1886). When the Duke of Neymes of Bauere demands the relics and release of the prisoners, cursing the Sowdan and all his men who believe in Mohemet, the Sowdan is enraged (1815-16). He protests that he is insulted in front of his knights, while "at mete" in his "owene halle" (1834). This disruption of the Eastern feast is immediately followed by another feast: the banquet of the knights in Floripas' tower. Supplied with venison and wine, rare victuals for prisoners, the newly united twelve knights feed on the bounty of their royal hostess. By being part of this group,

Floripas disrupts the united feast of her father's household symbolically. By her offer of mighty wine and liberal kiss, she subverts the Eastern order which the Sowdan is trying to defend and preserve.

Symbolically, the good wine, venison, bread, and meat which the newly joined knights share represent the act of Christian social integration in a hostile, threatening, pagan Eastern landscape. At the same time, these victuals are stolen; they are eaten without the knowledge and permission of the head of the royal household. In the imprisonment of Roland and Oliver, the Sowdan orders that the former should not be given meat and drink (1536). H.M. Smyser says in his note, "Starvation was a common condition of imprisonment in the Middle ages" ("The Sowdon" 204). Floripas kills both Maragounde and Bretomayne, her chaperon and the prison-keeper, in an effort to feed the prisoners. In fact, she justifies her murder of the prison-keeper by telling her father that she saw the jailer offering food to the prisoners. Feeding the prisoners is, therefore, a trespass in the Eastern social and political order.

She advises the knights to attack her father with his men while he is at supper (1943); the knights are counselled to spare none; they are to "Sle downe and breke bake and bones" (1946). There is more than one reference to the Christian attack of the pagan king at supper. Provided with

armor by the princess, the knights see the Sowdan at supper and are ready to attack him (1954); the pagan king is raided at supper time (2028). The well conceived and ably executed plan of the Eastern princess destroys the Eastern royal band in the act of partaking of food. Bread, wine, and betrayal are a recurrent memory in Christian religious rites.

Gathering the twelve knights in her upper bower and celebrating a banquet with them while planning a master strategy to kill her father, the Eastern pagan princess draws unawares literary and religious shadows of the core Christian story of betrayal.

Furthermore, she expresses her willingness to circulate her maids as objects. She offers the sexualized body of her maids at the service of the knights. Supplying the knights with a well drawn plan to defend the tower where they are staying, she makes a gift of thirty maidens for "sporte" (2087). Referring to this offer in the French Fierabras, Margaret A. Gist observes that it is "indubitably one of sexual hospitality" (Gist 5). This is a congratulatory gesture for killing her paternal peers. Gist, further, points out that the "English Ferumbras, Firumbras (Fillingham MS.), and Charles the Great, record that the knights accepted the courtesy," whereas in The Romaunce of the Sowdan of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, Roland reprimands Floripas (5). He says:

"...pat were myscheve;  
 Oure lay wol not, pat we with you dele  
 Tille that ye Cristyn be made;  
 Ner of your play we wole fele

For than were we cursed in dede." (2750-54) The virtuous stance taken by Roland is a contrast to Floripas' willing offer of her maids as sexual gifts. Gist emphasizes the "moral concern" (7) and "moral tone" (4) of the English authors in comparison with French romances. Behind the rhetorical differences of the romance authors, one factor remains the same. The Saracen girls are offered as gifts to the Christian knights by their royal mistress. This is different from the Eastern female being given as a gift to the Western traveller by the Eastern male in Wonders of the East. Lesser women become pawns in the hands of powerful women. While the princess makes an exchange of these women in the text, she herself remains a transferrable object between the narrator and his audience. Class can be as complicitous as gender is. Women who belong to a lower class are likely to come under a multiple oppression.

Another act, intended to ingratiate herself with the Christian knights, is the Eastern princess's eagerness to be baptised. Her entry into the kinship of the knights is validated by this external avowal. The dominant motive of the heroine is often marriage with the Christian knight rather than genuine interest in the Christian faith. Daniel cites analogous situations in French romances. He points out

that Malatrie of Siege de Barbastre evinces "little interest in Christian religion and a great deal in Christian knights." Similarly, Nubie in Prise de Cordes has a "mixture of motives, love and religion." She receives baptism partly for the love of God the son of Saint Mary but anticipates a greater reward. She wants to marry the hero, Bertrand. Floripas also receives baptism for matrimonial reasons. Daniel says that she has no religious reason for her conversion; she subordinates all else to her marriage plans. He contrasts the motives of her brother's conversion with hers and demonstrates that Ferumbras accepts Christianity because of his defeat at the hand of Oliver which has proved the true God, whereas Floripas has personal and sexual motives. The actively sought after baptism is an "admission ticket to Europe" (Daniel 193-196). Agreeing with Daniel's assessment of Floripas, I would add that the act of othering involves assimilation of certain figures and excluding of others--a notion which I will explain shortly.

In her effort to integrate herself into the Christian society of the knights, Floripas adopts baptism as a "rite de passage." As any other rite of passage, baptism on her part involves three stages. Arnold van Gennep's study of the rites of passage shows that these triple phases are "separation" (35), "transitional period" (28), and "incorporation" (28). Floripas's detachment from her



religion, as demonstrated by her renunciation of her Gods, leads to the next stage gradually, the transitional phase. While her father and others revile against their gods, when they fail them in the battle against the Christian knights, the former do not change their religion. The princess, however, willingly opts for the third stage--incorporation into the Christian society of Europe by the act of baptism. On the Eastern female's part, this is the ultimate demonstration of her political allegiance to her father's enemy, as Daniel rightly points out (179-212). By this changed loyalty, the Eastern female breaks the basic religious principles laid down in the Hadith, the compiled sayings of Mohemet. It enjoins a person to have the basic courtesy toward a parent though the latter may be a worshipper of idols (Siddique, 14.128). Further, the baptism of the princess and her renunciation of native religion earn the Christian hero his legitimate conjugal, rights for he cannot marry a pagan wife. Daniel observes that a great impact of canon law is the reluctance of heroes to sleep with non-Christians (74). Transcultural marriages are regularized by principles of Christianity. Chaucer's pagan king of Syria becomes a Christian in order to marry the Christian princess of Rome in "The Man of Law's Tale."<sup>84</sup> The tragic effect of

---

<sup>84</sup>See Beichner's discussion of the marriage laws for spouses coming from different cultures in "Disparitus Cultus" (70-75).

such a religious change is seen in the vengeful act of the Eastern woman which I will discuss in Chapter IV. Renunciation of religion is an ideological and legal necessity for the Eastern princess.

Baptism scenes, further, serve as a means for the textualization of the voyeuristic gaze of the onlookers and readers in some writings. Commenting on Sidney Painter's response to the scenes of Muslim girls' baptism in the French romances in French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Medieval France, Gist points out the author's keen awareness of how the baptism of a fair Saracen gives scope to the French romance narrator "best lyrical efforts." She quotes Painter:

The lady could be undressed and her charms and their effect on the knightly onlookers described in great detail all with the pious and worthy object of recounting a solemn religious ceremony. (Gist 4) The

English Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, however, leaves out the description of the ceremony, but simply states that Floripas and her maids took baptism.<sup>85</sup> In her renunciation of religion, manipulation of wills, betrayal of kinship, and dissimulation of affection, the lady of romance has just one object in mind: the knight. While the knightly adventure of redeeming the

---

<sup>85</sup>Metlitzky refers to the final scene in Sir Ferumbras where Floripas undresses before the assembled courtiers to be baptized (186).

plundered relics forms the dominant linear structure of the text, the fondness of the Eastern princess for the knight develops another pattern behind it, a quest in reversal. The text which contains these two patterns is criss-crossed by love of enemy, betrayal of family, commitment to passion, and disloyalty to native kinship.

### C: THE EASTERN FEMALE AS DISCOURSE OBJECT

What the inverse quest effects, through the images of speech, violence, and food, in particular, is the stereotypical characterization of the Eastern female. The narrator uses the reverse quest as an act of othering. Such an act is not confined to literary texts alone. Critics can also be complicitous with this act. For example, alluding to non-Western heroines like Floripas in the text under study and Melaz in The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, F.M. Warren emphasizes the domineering and aggressive behavior of these ladies which is foreign to the concept of the French feminine:

The traits of Melaz or a Floripas...are not the traits of the medieval woman of the West. Compare their dispositions, for instances, with Bertha's in Girard de Roussillion...Melaz and her sisters are the action itself. They guide and direct. The knights heed their least word. They are the genuine descendants of the pirate's daughter, who made absolute confirmity to her behests, even to the extreme of marriage, the price of her prisoner's freedom...the masterful nature of these women, foreign to France and to the feminine ideal of the French, would therefore be ancestral and

inherited...Did their example affect in any degree their more retiring sisters of the West, nurtured in the true faith?...It would be difficult to say. (356-57)

Two linked but opposed images in the passages are those of aggressive Eastern women and "their more retiring sisters of the West"; those brought up in the false faith, by implication, and those "nurtured in the true faith." It is precisely this typology which the romances seek to reinforce in the mind of the medieval audience.<sup>86</sup> In the act of othering, Western women are differentiated from the Eastern women. "Selving" genders. It is also a culturally divisive act. While the Christian knight is often asceticized in order to repel the advances of the Eastern princess, she is a sensualized pagan willing to give up her virtue in order to win him. Her Saracen father is invariably the villain of the text; he is finally defeated and presented as an abject figure who curses his gods for his failure. In short, the East and West are placed under a neatly drawn binary division: they versus we. While the Eastern father is defeated and reinforces the binarily conjured image of "they," the princess erases the secondariness of the lower position assigned to her as "they," and crosses over to the

---

<sup>86</sup>Metlitzki says that the character of Floripas presents the popular image of a good Muslim princess, and also supports the "theory" that the aggressive nature of these heroines is foreign to the feminine ideals of the West (169).

privileged "we" by the rite of passage; baptism into the Christian religion and willing renunciation of her father's household. The princess is an object, projected and renegotiated, by the romance narrators.

The figure of the Eastern princess and that of the knight enter a textual world already defined by the demand for adventure. The notion of adventure itself receives an ideological impact. In Ideology of Adventure Michael Nerlich maintains that the knightly adventure undertaken for the sake of "chevalerie" is ideological. The knight who is sustained by the courtly ideology is a figure of political and economic necessity. The knight has to set out on an adventure to earn a living and find a rich wife. His going out supports the feudal order at home. The knight protects the royalty as a class and serves the religious ideals of the clergy as Christ's soldier. During times of war and famine, by setting out of the court, the knight alleviates the courtly economy. The going out and the coming in of the knight revolves around the court. Knightly adventure is an ideology which evolves out of the combined necessity of the royalty and the clergy (8-12). What Nerlich demonstrates is that the knight is not a disembodied and disinterested figure in courtly literature. The agency of action invested in this figure is not merely narrational. Political and ecclesiastical forces have contributed to the emergence of a

chivalrous figure like the knight. The untouched area of Nerlich's criticism is the gendered impact of such an ideology on the figure of the lady. A princess like Floripas is co-created for adventure. The chivalrous knight and the sexualized princess are equally sustained by an ideology.

The church presses the figure of the knight to its great service during the Crusades. Charles Moorman points out that because of the spread of Islam, the Christian West found the Holy War inevitable. As a result, the knight is put to use in these wars. The motif of adventure is supplemented with the desire to punish the pagan (14). Moorman sees the figure of the knight during the Crusades as a power completely wielded by the church. Moorman's statement is partially true. However, in a text like The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, a text written by a clerical writer, a reader sees the twin presence of the court and the church behind the knight. Charlemagne and Bishop Turpyne are as much interested in the recovery of the saints' relics as the salvation of the Sowdan.

What is important is the relevance of the other characters in a text who support the knightly ideology. The princess is created to heighten the ethical values of the knight. Her sensuousness is a foil to his ascetic

principles. He pursues the relics; she seeks his body. He is loyal to the feudal order. She subverts hers. The feminine and the terrain are interrelated. Her sexual surrender is connected to the political subordination of her land. The knight's setting out implies leaving home, a familiar place, and inhabiting a foreign terrain. The lady's quest equally involves a renunciation, the giving up of her natural body. She is made to put on an exchangeable body. She inhabits a constructed body given to her by the narrator. The knight cuts out a fiefdom. The princess not only builds a filial relationship with the Christian knights, but also helps establish kinship between the narrator and his audience. I have explained how the translator makes the Eastern female an exchangeable body in Wonders of the East in Chapter II.

Referring to the compact between the narrator and the audience in French medieval texts, Wister Comfort states the audience's demand for adventure and the writer's supply of this through the creation of a character like the Eastern princess:

...the Saracen princess is a literary type... her portrait is not painted from life. She is a response in the heroic poetry to the contemporary demand for adventure. It was pleasing to the French, as it was to the poets of other nations, to portray their heroes as irresistible breakers of hearts. The Saracen princess must be fair and intelligent worthy to become the consort of a Christian hero; she must be passionately enamoured of his manly beauty and prowess; she must be willing to sacrifice all - even her home and her gods - to save her lover and to marry him. (657)

What Comfort maintains here is the notion of the created figure of the Eastern female who does not have any lived reality. Without any recourse to theory, he argues that she is the literary answer to a particular demand of an audience who would love to see the Eastern royal feminine giving up everything for the sake of the Christian knight. What exists between the narrator and the audience is a kinship. What is trafficked is the figure of the Eastern female as a sexualized object. The figure of the Eastern princess, then, enters the textual world already defined by the demand for adventure: to satisfy the unspoken contractual agreement between the Anglo-Norman poets and the audience.

Further, the English and French romances, which exist in a familial, textual relationship, reflect social and ecclesiastical forces. Conventional attitude towards the Islamic Orient is a textual product further disseminated by translations of Arabic material and the returning Crusaders. Daniel discusses how Peter the Venerable's zealous efforts to translate Arabic books with the help of his team spread the notions of the sensuous and the violent with regard to Islam. Jaques de Vitry, who went with the Fifth Crusade and stayed in the East as Bishop of Acre, interpreted the Islamic view of life while in the Orient with "little



accuracy." The images of "luxuriosus" and "bellicosus"<sup>87</sup> attributed to the Islamic Orient are reinforced by Vitry (Daniel 69). Production of knowledge, in fact, is controlled by the Church in the Middle Ages. Further, the genre can be a conveyor of an ideologically mediated story, a vehicle for the presence of two sets of characters who act out the notion that "pagans are always wrong and the Christians right." A romance focus like this can be useful for nationalism. Barron mentions the "emergent French nationalism," in particular, in his discussion of the romances dealing with Charlemagne and his peers (16).

Romance, like any other genre, exists in what Foucault calls a discursive domain. Romance, as an object of study, should not be confined to the area of literature alone; romance exists, in Foucauldian terms, in relation to a network of plurality of texts, history, power, and knowledge. Foucault says that the world of discourse is characterized by a "multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies" (Sexuality 100). The texts, The Romance of Sir Beves and The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, then, exist in relation to the other genres in literature in the context of medieval history, ecclesiastical power over production of knowledge,

---

<sup>87</sup>From Matthew Paris' Cronica Majora vol. 3,40, quoted in Daniel (15).

and societal force.

Referring to the interested activity of the texts dealing with the Orient, Comfort says:

In the time of the Crusaders the local memory of the presence of the Saracens preserved in popular tradition and in clerical records was utilized by the purpose of arousing popular interest in the holy war. (628)

Concurring with this notion, I would like to add that romances are one among many ideological and historical forces at work in institutionalizing the Crusades. The holy wars had to be incorporated, sustained, and legitimized in the minds of the people. In the medieval English historical context, arousing interest in the holy war and maintaining the institution of the crusader was a systematized effort. Christopher Tyerman analyzes the Christianization and institutionalization of the warrior ethic in England and the Crusades 1095-1588. His study offers a crucial understanding of the various historical and ideological forces which contributed to the formation of the institution of the crusader. The crusade taxation called the "Saladin tithe," the propagandist preaching, and crusade literature are some of the means through which this process was accomplished (86-88, 188-194, 251-252).

Romances which are part of this crusade literary writings do not always have historical authenticity. In fact, the historical background of the first part of The Romaunce

of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras may have been the "expedition against Lombards who were menacing the Papacy in 773," according to Anna Hunt Billings, who argues that the "popular imagination, inflamed by the spirit of the Crusades, substituted the Saracens for Lombards" (49). By the inscription of Saracen figures like the pagan Sowdan, and his sensuous and manipulative daughter, the romances justify the presence of the Crusaders in the Islamic Orient. Complicitous with the prevailing institutions of power, these romances do not define the reality of the Eastern princess. Rather they enable her as an "object" "to appear...to be placed in a field of exteriority" (Foucault, Archaeology 45). The romance writer and the historian, caught up in the network of knowledge and power formulate the discursive object, the Eastern princess, and make her appear in the texts of the time. In other words, the Eastern princess of the romances do not have any existence in the lived historical reality. She is produced by the medieval writers who are part of the ideological matrix of discursive practice of the time. She is created as a beautiful, opulent, pagan princess, invested with excess of libidinal energy and a penchant for violence; she is made to undergo the rite of passage by her conversion to Christianity and marriage to the Christian knight. The other in its female dimension is conquered under self's own terms, politically

and sexually.

On the other hand, the resisting giantess, "Dambarroke the bolde" (2939), on the Eastern side, in The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, is defeated and killed by the Christian knights. Her sons are Christened "Roulande" (3027) and "Olyvere" (3028). While the unflinching, monstrous, witch figure on the Saracen landscape is eliminated, her textual double, the young, beautiful, and opulent Eastern figure is absorbed into the Western society. The giantess is a masculinized figure. Like the monstrous images in the Anglo-Saxon texts under study in Chapter II, she is made an undesirable figure. She is removed from the romance landscape. However, the Eastern princess is sexualized. Her aggressiveness is made to advance the adventure of the knight. By the depiction of the sexually willing, politically surrendering feminized East, the other is textually controlled; its alienness domesticated; its threat undermined. The figure of the princess who aids in this textual process is a symbol of the "de-Easternization" of medieval Oriental royal womanhood.

The Eastern princess, created and sustained in the romance texts, in all her amorousness and manipulative skills, is a rhetorical necessity. She is at once beautiful, brutal, and indomitable to her chosen enemy--her natal family--and obliging to her father's opponent, the Christian

knight. Drawing on such contrarities, she merges as a discursive object produced and constituted by texts which exist in the medieval discursive domain. The comely yet subversive Eastern princess, thus made to appear in romances as an invented motif, performs an ideological task. In the textual space assigned to her, she affirms the presence of the Crusaders in the Islamic landscape. In doing so, she remains a textualized symbol of the politics of desire in a genre, at once "new" and "seductive" in the Middle Ages (Barron 8). An object of sensuousness and violence, she joins the rank of such Eastern figures in the Old English texts we have seen and similar women in Chaucer's "The Man of Law's Tale" and "The Squire's Tale" I will analyze in Chapters IV and V. The stories of the narrator and the Eastern women continue to speak with different voices in the next phase of English as an independent, national language.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EAST IN CHAUCER'S "MAN OF LAW'S TALE" : A DOMESTICATED IMAGE

In the previous chapter, I explained the romance narrator's differing responses to the older, resistant Eastern female and the younger, sexually pliable princess. In the next two chapters, I intend to examine the figure of an older Eastern female, the Sowdanesse, in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale," and a young princess, Canacee, in "The Squire's Tale" respectively. The Sowdanesse is presented as a violent female, whereas the princess is portrayed as an incest-shrouded figure. The Orient of the Sowdanesse is domesticated and Canacee's Tartary is feminized.

Examining briefly the common literary and ideological features which bring these two tales together, I seek to explore "The Man of Law's Tale" as a conveyor of two voices, the dominant voice of the hagiographical text and the subordinate voice of the Islamic Orient. I want to investigate the neatly placed narrative stances to demonstrate that the representation of the violent and hateful Sowdanesse is a product of the sophisticated, structural manipulation of narrative voices. The Eastern female is an image engineered

by the compiler-author position of Chaucer. The violent Eastern female and the domesticated East are textual representations produced by the narrative incorporations of the possible responses of Chaucer's pilgrim and court audiences.<sup>88</sup> The narrating voice is in constant replacement because of the multiform narrative stance of the text. The Eastern female remains a colonized figure due to the repressive effects of narrative voices.

The primary image which lies at the heart of "The Man of Law's Tale" and "The Squire's Tale" is the female pilgrim's woe in her journey across a foreign land. Within the framework of a group of pilgrims going to Canterbury, which is allegorized by the parson's story of the human soul's odyssey to the heavenly Jerusalem, the two tales present the poignant image of a lonely female, betrayed and deserted, in her pilgrimage to alien lands. Custance, in "The Man of Law's Tale," takes the gospel and her infant in

---

<sup>88</sup>I have borrowed the concept of the interrelation between the speaker and the possible response of the listener from Bakhtin. An extensive analysis of this process known as "dialogization" is done in Dialogic Imagination. My paper, "Beowulf and Bakhtin: A Study in the Interplay of Voices," was read at the International Conference on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo in May 1988. Strohm applies Bakhtin's use of dialogization to The Canterbury Tales in Social Chaucer ("Audience" 47-83). Strohm's perceptive treatment of the text does not take into consideration the impact of the notion of several audiences on the subject-position of the narrator. My study has an added dimension of the decentering effect of the embedded, narrative framework on subjectivity. I deal with it in detail in Chapter VII.

a treacherously tossing ship, left adrift on the high seas. Widowed and unwed through circumstances beyond her control, and compelled to traverse continents to escape death, she presents the very figure of a weary pilgrim. A similar lonely figure is to be found in the pilgrim falcon from a foreign land (F 428) country, in "The Squire's Tale." Both appeal to womanly pity. The bird entreats Canacee's womanly kindness (F 486); Custance implores the pity of Virgin Mary through her glory of womanhood (B 851).<sup>89</sup> Behind this in-built notion of pilgrimage is at work an image-making process.

Another theme which relates the two tales is incest.<sup>90</sup> Custance, in the original story, is a princess who runs away from incest. But Chaucer's version is free from any allusion to this. John Fyler calls Chaucer's text a "sanitized" version (1). Though Canacee in "The Squire's Tale," is threatened by overtones of incest, she is silent; she remains caged in discursivity. Palimpsest readings take a reader beyond the apparent texts to the subordinate voices of the texts. Caught in the subordinate layers of the text or marginal zones of the dominant male discourse, the Eastern

---

<sup>89</sup>All citations in the text from "The Squire's Tale" and "The Man of Law's Tale" are from Baugh's edition.

<sup>90</sup>Fyler analyzes the distinctive concerns of romance narrative such as doubling, incest, questions of identity, and self and the other ("Domesticating the Exotic" 2).



female's voice and sexuality are distorted in "The Man of Law's Tale" and "The Squire's Tale" respectively. The older and the younger Eastern women of these tales lend themselves to a palimpsest reading. The Eastern female--the maternal and sisterly--is caught in the "textual, sexual politics" of these Chaucerian Tales.<sup>91</sup>

Further, the Eastern woman's linguistically determined role is a structural opposite to the culturally placed position of the Middle English language itself. She is a colonized figure trapped in the official and narrative stances of Chaucer. No longer caught in the colonizing effect of the French tongue, the English language emerged as a distinct national language. Gower mentions in Confessio Amantis that "fewe men endite/ In oure Englissh" (22-23).<sup>92</sup> Though writing in English was an "avant garde" attempt, career diplomats, civil servants, officials and administrators seemed to be open to serious writings in the vernacular in the court of Richard II (Scattergood 37-40). Paul Strohm discusses how the love for the English language emerged as a strong force among the lower rungs of the gentry. The knights, chancery clerks, secretaries, lawyers,

---

<sup>91</sup>A phrase borrowed from Moi. See also Dinshaw's title, Chaucer's Sexual Poetics.

<sup>92</sup>See Scattergood's brief discussion of the use of the English language as part of the emerging literary culture at the court of Richard II (36-37).

and esquires of royal families constituted this section of the society ("Social and literary scene" 7). Hence, after undergoing a phase of Norman linguistic modification which I have referred to in the last chapter, English gradually became the national language. It was also used as a vehicle of school teaching and of legal proceedings (Trevelyan 1). Gaining in literary force and respectability, it came to be an independent verbal medium. Chaucer uses this newly liberated, malleable linguistic medium to help indigenize European poetic tradition at home (Wallace, "Chaucer's Continental inheritance" 19-34). However, the elementary situation of the Eastern woman inscribed in the Middle English language shows the same stereotyped features. Her image captured in it is a symbol of the ideological repression of Chaucer's language. But the Chaucerian narrator's storytelling apparatus is so structured in The Canterbury Tales that the originating site of the stereotypes ascribed to the Eastern female presents a complex study of sources. For instance, in the General Prologue, the narrator says,

...this ye knowen al so wel as I,  
 Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,  
 He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan  
 Everich a word... (A 730-733)

Chaucer disavows linguistic and literary accountabilities for the tales by assigning them to an original teller; the former will simply "report" to the fellow auditors what he has "heard" already. The narrators of "The Man of Law's

Tale" and "The Squire's Tale," in turn, say that they have heard their tales from other sources. The narrative stance appropriates this reported information of the negative image of the Eastern female, and incorporates the possible responses of the fictive audience.

A: THE TALE AS A PALIMPSEST:

"The Man of Law's Tale" deals with the story of Custance, the daughter of the emperor of Rome. Hearing her goodness and beauty through his merchants, the Sowdan of Syria wants to marry her. After consulting his learned men, he comes to the conclusion that marriage with the Roman emperor's daughter is impossible without his conversion to Christianity. Expressing his willingness to become a Christian, the Sowdan sends his request for the hand of Custance through his ambassadors. The Church and the State in Rome view this proposal favorably on condition that the Sowdan of Syria and his lords be baptized.

While Custance's royal entourage sets out for Syria and her marriage, the Sowdan's mother, instigated by religious animosity, conspires with her lords to kill the bridal party and the converted lords of Syria. Feigning that she would honor the Christians at home and from abroad, the Sowdanesse gets her unsuspecting son's permission to arrange a royal feast for them. In that ceremonious partak-

ing of food, her hired lords kill all the Christians, including the Sowdan. Custance alone escapes. She is cast into a rudderless ship, at the mercy of the wind and the waves.

The weather-beaten sailing vessel carries Custance, weary and "ful of care" (B 514), to Northumberland. She marries Alla, the king of the land, and receives further ill treatment from her second mother-in-law. She is exiled with her child. In her second exile, she meets a Roman senator returning from the East after taking vengeance on Syria and destroying the kingdom. He takes her kindly into his house which eventually becomes the meeting place for Custance and Alla, who comes to Rome to pay penance for killing his wicked mother. In a feast, arranged in honor of the emperor in the senator's house, the long lost daughter and father are reunited. Maurice, her son, becomes the emperor. For a brief year, Custance goes back with Alla to England. On his death, she comes back to Rome, rejoined in love to her father (B 1151).

Besides this linear reading, the text offers a palimpsest analysis. "The Man of Law's Tale" is double-voiced containing a dominant story and a subordinate story.<sup>93</sup> The dominant story is a hagiographical narra-

---

<sup>93</sup>Showalter uses these phrases in a different context in "Feminist Criticism." She mentions Gilbert and Gubar's treatment of women's fiction as a "double-voiced discourse," a palimpsest, containing a dominant story and a muted story. By double-voiced discourse, Showalter refers to women's position

tion; the subordinate layer is composed of the voiced silence of the Eastern female figure, the Sowdanesse. This dual voiced text is a metaphoric extension of Chaucer's portrait of the Man of Law in the General Prologue. The Tale and the Teller convey two different value patterns. The values presented in the tale of the secular saint are incongruous with the worldly figure of the Man of Law constructed by Chaucer, the pilgrim narrator. The secular values of the Man of Law are highlighted in the Portrait, as a "greet" "purchsour" of land (A 318), and as someone capable of drawing legal deeds with effortless ease; "Al was fee symple to hym in effect;/ His purchasyng myghte nat been infect" (A 319-320). Further, the General Prologue suggests that he is not what he "seems" to be. Referring to the repetition of the verb, "semed," and underscoring the word used in the Portrait, such as "Discreet he was and of greet reverence-/ He seemed swich..." (A 312-313), and "...he semed bisier than he was (A 322)," Alfred David points out that the Man

---

within the patriarchal culture in what she calls a "wild zone" (262-266). Colmer uses the term, "palimpsest reading," in "Franklin's Tale." She treats the tale as a palimpsest "superimposed on, but not obliterating" (375-380). Her approach is thematic arguing for the necessity to see the teller of the tale as Franklin rather than Chauce. My usage is related, however, to Said's directive to see two voices in a text. I have related this to the concept of dialogization in Bakhtin where he sees the subordinate voice in relation to the dominant in a social context.

of Law is "a man of appearances" (221).<sup>94</sup> His worldly nature is, indeed, suppressed by the unworldly tale he narrates. The narration is a mask he hides behind. This suppression of worldliness for the sake of the narrative projection of sacred values is also extended to the thematic level of the story.

The aim of the dominant layer of the Tale, the hagiographical text, is religious and devotional.<sup>95</sup> This story centers around Custance, the royal female saint. The Man of Law says, "Of Custance is my tale specially" (B 1125). The combination of royalty and holiness is traced back to Chaucer's immediate source, Nicholas Trivet's Anglo-Norman Chronicle. He brings together the genre of the saint's legend with the motif of a persecuted queen. J. Schick posits a theory that this motif is derivative of the third-century Clementine Recognitions.<sup>96</sup> Margaret Schlauch's Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens is an extensive and detailed study of the folk tale origin of this motif. David Fowler observes that Chaucer's story of Constance is a relatively late version of the Accused Queen (560). Borrowing the motif of the persecuted queen, who is

---

<sup>94</sup>Brody expresses a similar view (1-2).

<sup>95</sup>Yunk refers to the homiletic and devotional aim of the text (249)

<sup>96</sup>From Schick's "Die Urquelle der Offa-Kontanz Saga" Britannica quoted in Fowler (561 & 563).

already exploited in the context of the hagiographical elements in *Trivet*, Chaucer presents the stock type of the suffering royal female.

Constance is introduced to the reader through what Bernard Duffey calls "a catalogue of traits" (184). She is a rare combination of great beauty without pride, and youth without immaturity or folly (B 162-163); royal lineage and humility; a wished for queen of all Europe (B 161), and a very chamber of holiness (B 167). A possessor of unique gifts, Custance is peculiarly fitted to accomplish her mission as a bearer of the gospel through her marriage to a newly converted pagan king of Syria. Her Christian grace is demonstrated through her womanly roles. Unlike the ascetic female martyrs commonly dealt with in the legends of saints, Custance is a "secular saint."<sup>97</sup> Within the network of The Canterbury Tales, Custance is a contrast to the ascetic version of the female saint, Cecilia in "The Second Nun's Tale." Unlike Saint Cecilia, Custance lives a long life of girlhood, wifhood, and motherhood, and dies a natural death.

Custance's body, unlike the idealized body of Cecilia, lends itself to what Irigaray calls a "mediation, transaction, transition, transference between man and his fellow

---

<sup>97</sup>Brody gives an analysis of secular saints (113-131).

man" (193). Her body, at one level, is a vessel through which God functions. At another level, she is seen at the beginning of the story being subjected to an exchange value; she is passed on from the Roman emperor, her father, to the Sowdan, her husband to be. Chaucer says that the marriage is conducted through "...the popes mediacioun,/ And al the chirche, and al the chivalrie" (B 234-235). The exchange of Custance is done through "certain gold" of unknowable "quantitee" (B 242); it is given as a "suretee" (B 241). Her body, then, represents, at once, the exchanged price in gold, and the dedicated medium of God's message. Moving from the natural body of the virgin, she yields herself to a reproductive use value, and thus becomes an exchangeable object (Irigaray, This Sex 170-97).<sup>98</sup> Custance's Christian

---

<sup>98</sup>After I wrote this chapter, I discovered that Dinshaw has analyzed the exchange value of Custance. Dinshaw states that incest is suppressed by the Man of Law in order to promote patriarchal storytelling. She argues that Custance's final reunion with her father suggests "implications of incest" ("the Law of Man" 124-130). I disagree with Dinshaw's perception of the presence of incest in the last scene. I also argue in this chapter that the suppression of incest in the tale is effected in order to develop the villainous character of the first mother-in-law. My emphasis is on the Eastern female who is imaged as a violent figure. Further, specific reference to the male donor and receiver of gifts is not clear in the Tale. Hence criticism cannot explore the cultural differences in gift-giving. In the Eastern culture of the Sowdanesse, part of the gift is given by the male to the female on her wedding; during divorce, the rest of the agreed gift is given to the female. Culture-specific analysis of gift is not possible in this Tale. Further, while Custance submits herself to patriarchy at one level, she disrupts Eastern culture at another level. She is not a mere bride. She is a missionary. Therefore, the Sowdanesse's crime is presented as doubly de-



female destiny is lived out through the ordinariness of a world governed by male economy; her saintliness is traced through this oft-travelled female path, whereas Cecilia walks the less trodden path of choice martyrdom. Aligning herself with the common lot of womanhood under patriarchy, Custance, in particular, presents the very picture of the sublimation of the ordinary: a core Christian symbol of Mother and Infant.

Further, Custance's language is related to the composite portrait of a child and mother. She is a child and mother at once. Her expressed language in the text is related to this elemental relationship between child and parent. Two of her speeches are given in the moments of her forced separation from her loved ones; her constant exchange of the familiar for the alien, home for an exiled existence, and security of the permanent for the life of pilgrimage. For instance, when she leaves her parents at a tender age for an Oriental marriage, she bemoans her forced separation from her parents (B 274-287). She also beseeches the protection of the Virgin Mary for Maurice on leaving the palace of Alla, the supposedly "routheless" husband (B 863). Her third long speech is given on her reunion with her royal father in Rome; she pleads piteously that he should never

---

testable. It is against helpless womanhood and true faith. What the act of telling effects is an otherness which at once involves Easternness and the feminine.

more send her away from home. Her language, then, is mostly defined and determined through the primary relationship of parent and child. Custance is presented as leading a profound Christian life through elemental relationships. Her Christianity is grounded and rooted in this world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer would have called it "die tiefe Disseitigkeit des Christentums,"<sup>99</sup> a religion marked by the profundity of "this worldliness."

Custance's travel to the East, unlike the knight's, conveys the story of divine suffering. The figure of the knight is, on the other hand, related to adventure. The reader does not know what is in store for the knight in his quest. Adventure, as Haidu observes, contains an element of the unknown, whereas hagiography deals with a reenactment of the divine passion which is known to every one. Haidu says:

Hagiography sets forth a hero re-enacting, for the benefit of his own and that of his fellow creatures, the ascetic agony of their common Master. The outcome and its meaning are known ahead of time, they exist in a realm which, if not theologically eternal, stands outside the reach of narrative time...the saint's life is... a ritualistic reincorporation of a thought as it is a narrative. (Introduction 4)

Haidu's perceptive comment on the pre-determined meaning of hagiography is relevant in the analysis of Custance's character. In reexperiencing this timeless act of sacred suffering for the witnessing community, Custance fulfills

---

<sup>99</sup>See Sandberg and Wendel (123).

the role assigned to her as the heroine of a hagiographical text. Her missionary quest operates within the anticipated narrative sequence of suffering and triumph. Hence that which offers resistance to the saintly character is also evil in the ultimate sense. The Eastern female stands in relation to Custance in this typology.

Further, Custance is made to represent not only an individual soul's victory over the evil but also the Church's triumph over the pagan world. The bride from the Latin West, sailing to the Islamic East and then to Northumberland from which Christians have fled to Wales, is the Church itself, stretching beyond its local roots and implanting itself in pagan lands. Syria presents a militant opposition to the gospel. Yet in Northumberland through her gentle influence, she enables the now converted Hermengyld to exercise her faith in restoring eyesight to the "blinde Britoun" (B 561). The narrating voice commends the royal saint saying that she has helped her friend, Hermengyld do the "wyl of Crist, as doghter of his chirche" (B 567). Custance's Christian influence is felt in a more dramatic way in King Alla's court, when the accusing Saxon knight who killed Hermengyld swears on the "Britoun book, written with Evangiles" (B 666) that Custance is the murderess. A mysterious hand smites him down with a deadly blow, and a divine voice tells the offender, "Thou hast desclaundred, giltelees, / The doghter of hooly

chirche in heigh presence..." (B 674-75). Both the narrating and heavenly voices authenticate Custance's saintly role as the daughter of the church. She is, made to represent, on another level, the early Church itself, uninstitutionalized and powerless, establishing Christ's kingdom in hostile cultures. The narrator visualizes her image as the suffering church, persecuted and reviled, and yet carrying on the Gospel to the ends of the known Christian world and beyond it, to the very heart of non-Christian faiths. She is presented as the symbol of the Christian church, the bride of Christ on earth, carrying out his Great Commission.

B: SUBORDINATE VOICE

Beneath the dominant hagiographical text is the subordinate text delineating the East. The reworked character of Custance, the guiding voice of the narrator in the delineation of the Sowdanesse, the altering pictures of the Christianized and fierce Orients, and the final annihilation of the East are a textual means of domesticating the East. By presenting this story pertaining to the sixth century in fictive terms, the narrator seeks to reinforce the image of the fierce yet tameable female East which lies abject and defeated at the end of the story.

The reworked character of Custance retains the predominant feature of an accused queen, while rejecting

the closely allied motif of the incestuous father in the earlier sources. A.B. Gough says that the oldest extant version of the Constance Saga is the Vitae duorum Offarum (53). The life of the Mercian king, Offa, recorded in the Vitae dvorum Offarvm, supposedly written by Matthew Paris in the early twelfth century, contains the incest motif and the flight of the heroine from her father's unnatural affection.<sup>100</sup> A similar plot is found in La belle Helene de Contantinople, a French romance of the early fourteenth century.<sup>101</sup> Helene, the heroine's mother dies, and the father, the emperor of Constantinople, falls in love with his daughter. Both the heroines flee to England from their incestuous fathers and marry the rulers of that country. As early as 1845, a Swedish scholar, Backstrom, concluded that the story is of Anglo-Saxon origin (Schlauch 5; Block 572). W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster are of the opinion that Trivet, Chaucer's immediate source, may have borrowed the Constance material from these two tales, and that he suppressed the incest motif and added to the hagiographical material of La belle Helene de Constantinople (160-61).<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup>See "Historia De Offa Primo" in the Vitae Dvorvm Offarvm in Historia Major (1-10). Chamber also gives the story in The Life of Offa I in Beowulf (217-236).

<sup>101</sup>Schlauch gives a short summary of it (120-121).

<sup>102</sup>For a different stance, see Krappe pp.361-369. He argues that the story of Offa is not Anglo-Saxon origin but a migratory Oriental tale.

Trivet may have done this, since he wrote the Anglo-Norman Chronicle, as Bryan and Dempster point out, for the royal nun at Almesbury convent, Princess Marie, the daughter of Edward I (156-161). Trivet's suppression of the incest, then, may be an instance of the incorporation of the possible reader response of his regal patroness.<sup>103</sup>

Chaucer, in fact, retains Trivet's model, because, as the Introduction to "the Man of Law's Tale" suggests, it is a violation of literary decorum to narrate "unkynde abhomynacions" (B 88) and to tell stories of the nature of the "wikke ensample of Canacee" (B 78), a tale of incest by Gower borrowed from Ovid's Herodies. Since the Man of Law believes in the stately purpose of literature, the original motif of incest in the Constance material is removed. However, the Eastern woman in "The Squire's Tale" retains the overtones of incest because of her name and the ambiguous ending of the Tale--a contrastive study fully analyzed in the next chapter. Purged of the incest motif, Custance is set adrift, not due to the unnatural affection of her father, but because of the wickedness of her mothers-in-law. Like Trivet, who avoided the references to incest and used the figures of the two mothers-in-law, Chaucer too follows the general pattern of the accusing mothers-in-

---

<sup>103</sup> Emaré, "an altered version of the Custance story" retains the flight of the heroine from her incestuous father." See Brock in Furnivall James' Originals and Analogues (x-xi).

law.<sup>104</sup>

This change is gendered. Villainy is ascribed to a mother-in-law. The transfer of evil especially from the father to the the first mother-in-law has additional bearing on her characterization. Religious animosity is added to her portrait. There is a corresponding change in the delineation of the character of Custance. She emerges as a more feminine figure. Dissociated from any notion of impending incest, Custance is presented against the background of the venerable rule of a virtuous father in Rome who arranges her marriage in a punctilious manner in consultation with the higher ecclesiastical and political authorities. Further, Custance is a simple, passive young woman, unlike Trivet's heroine. In the latter, she is proficient in "the seven sciences," "logic, physics, morals, astronomy, geometry, music," and "perspective"; she is also "instructed in various tongues."<sup>105</sup> An Arabic analogue of Trivet's story, the Tale of Tawaddud in the Spanish "Historia dela doncella Teodor," has been suggested by Metlitzky. In this text, the heroine has similar intellectual accomplishments. Tawaddud, the fourteen-year-old maiden, answers questions put to her by

---

<sup>104</sup>See Bryan and Dempster's reference to Trivet's deletion of the shocking episode and the duplication of the motive of persecution by a mother-in-law (160).

<sup>105</sup>All citations are from Brock in James Furnivall's Analogues.

the "learned men" of the Kaliph's court. She excels in "the fields of theology, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, rhetoric, philosophy, and music " (Metlitzki 157). Tawaddud is presented as a medieval Arabic symbol of the leading intellectual of the day. Chaucer's Custance lacks such an extensive and empowering knowledge of secular subjects. In short, there is an absence of what Sheila Delany calls "Trivet's bluestocking heroine" (63) and the Arabic Tawaddud's intellectualism in Chaucer.<sup>106</sup> In her place emerges a naively quiet and resigned woman whose only language tool abroad is "A maner Latyn corrupt" (B 519), unlike Trivet's heroine who speaks "Saxon" "as one...learned in diverse languages" (12), and the remotely possible and yet not established prototype, Tawaddud, who possesses technical and scientific language skills.

Trivet's Custance, further, uses the power of her words to preach, convert, and baptize. For instance, she is an ag-

---

<sup>106</sup>Metlitzky argues that the figure of Tawaddud inscribed in "Historia de la doncella" may have its incorporation of Christian elements due to the influence of L'Enfant. The figure of Tawaddud is that of a Christian slave exchanged as an object by a merchant to the King Miramamolin. Metlitzki maintains that Chaucer's possible visit to Spain, and his wife's service at the household of John of Gaunt may have influenced Chaucer in drawing on Tawaddud's character in the depiction of Custance. Metlitzky's references to Chaucer's wife's services and Chaucer's use of Tawaddud are far fetched. Tawaddud remains only a remote speculative possibility. The represented figure of the Eastern Christian slave is not an established literary link to the missionary daughter of a Western Emperor.



gressive evangelist who "preached" to the "heathen merchants out of the great Saracenland" who came to the court of her father in Rome; "she caused them to be baptized, and perfectly taught the faith of Jesus Christ" (4). Closely following Trivet, Gower too makes Custance convert the merchants while at Rome. Chaucer does not attribute these zealous efforts at Christianizing to his heroine.<sup>107</sup> The change from an aggressive preacher to a passive woman is noticeable, further, in Trivet's Custance's doctrinal exposition to Hermyngyld, which takes fourteen lines; the listener is converted (16). Chaucer's Custance, on the other hand, takes a more powerfully silent route toward the same end; "In orisons, with many a bitter teere" (B 537), she accomplishes a change of heart in Hermyngyld.

Moreover, for Trivet's Custance, language is a powerful means for self-defence. The sexual solicitation of the Saxon knyght is met with a fierce flow of words in Trivet. Custance "reproved" the knight thrice (20); "she reviled him with great indignation"; she compared him to "a hound, who after the holy sacrament of his baptism would return to his dung" (20). Chaucer's Custance, nevertheless, is not given any words; "she wolde do no synne, by no weye" (B 590). By disappropriating linguistic facilities while confronting her attacker, and investing her with silence and spiritual

---

<sup>107</sup> See Yunck's analysis of Chaucer's use of Trivet (250).

strength, Chaucer presents her as an image of passive femininity.<sup>108</sup> Her "orisons" and "teere" are made to be a more effective language. Chaucer's Custance brings out the primordial relationship between parent and child through extended speeches.<sup>109</sup> Language as an interaction, interchange, and causative force is removed from her in order to give place to language as an imploring act and rhetorical outpour, a monologic exercise, to elicit emotional response from the pilgrim and courtly audience of Chaucer. Projecting Custance's "corrrupt" syntax of Latin in conversation and the elegant flow of intense emotion in speeches, the narrator engineers the character's language-use for dramatic affective impact on the audiences.

A corresponding change is worked out in the character of Custance on a physical level. Trivet's Custance uses muscular defence when Thelous entices her (34). However, her spiritual strength summons divine aid in Chaucer (B 919-923). Shorn of any aggressive movement to defend herself, Chaucer's heroine presents a picture of utter helplessness. Yet her mute spiritual strength summons divine aid. The deletion of Custance-initiated murder for self-defence, and the introduction of dramatic heavenly succor sustain the

---

<sup>108</sup>See Block's textual notes which discuss Chaucer's treatment of Custance's language (579).

<sup>109</sup>See Duffey's reference to Custance's use of direct discourse instead of dialogues (184).

image of the passive and victimized figure of Custance against odds.<sup>110</sup> The reworked character of Custance, then, retains the element of persecution while removing the incest motif of the earlier sources. The reworked changes in Chaucer bring out Custance's feeble, helpless, and passive outerframe, yet solidly grounded mute, inner strength of character.

In contrast to the reworked passivity of Custance, Chaucer's Sowdanesse emerges as a darker villain because of the addition of the element of religious fanaticism. The origin of the religious motif, without its extreme manifestation, is traced back to Trivet. He suppresses the initial episode of the royal father's incest which is the cause of the heroine's flight from home, and introduces two mothers-in-law, instead, who drive the protagonist into exile twice. These twin figures, appropriated by Chaucer from Trivet, however, undergo modification. An analysis of the change introduced into the second mother-in-law helps situate the complex transformational force at work in the delineation of the first mother-in-law. While the second mother-in-law, Donegild, is an embodiment of folklore motif, the first mother-in-law, the Sowdanesse, is an ideological

---

<sup>110</sup>This point has been also pointed out by Linda Lomperis in her paper on "Feminization of Custance" in the 24th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University on May 5, 1989. See also Block and Yunck for the reworked character of Custance in Chaucer.

construct.<sup>111</sup>

The two traitorous acts attributed to Donegild in Chaucer are her accusation that Constance has given birth to a "horrible" and "feendly creature" (B 751), and the mother-in-law's wicked exchange of "countrefeted" (B 746, 793) letters through a drunken messenger from the young queen to Alla, and from the latter to the former. These motifs are folkloric. In her extensive analysis of such motives in "The Man of Law's Tale," Schlauch says,

The persecutor who writes the forged letter in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" is the mother-in-law, a typical marchen character, and her accusation that the young Queen has borne a monster is a typical marchen accusation (11)

Donegild, then, is a demonstrable villainous type in folklore. Schlauch observes the global occurrence of such a figure in French, Greek, Siberian, Turkish, Malay, and Zulu folk tales.<sup>112</sup> She further points out that in "The Man of Law's" early source, the medieval French romance, La Belle

---

<sup>111</sup>Dinshaw treats the two mothers-in-law together as a threat to the voice of patriarchy, the Man of Law. She maintains that they want to retain power over their sons ("the Law of Man" 132-35). I think differently. The mothers-in-law require separate treatment. The Sowdanesse's desire to retain power over her son is different from that of Donegild. For the Sowdanesse, her son's marriage is a religious transgression. Dinshaw portrays the Sowdanesse as a woman who desires independently (136). What the Eastern female desires is the preservation of native religion and culture and not the establishment of female autonomy.

<sup>112</sup>See her chapter on "The Accusation of Animal Birth" (21-47).

Henene de Constantinople, the heroine, Helene, is accused of giving birth to a monstrous child by her mother-in-law, the mother of King Henry. The older queen steals the heroine's "letter-seal" and "writes that two puppies have been born" (Schlauch 29). A similar motif of exchanged letter is found in the Offa story too. Here the exchange is done by the incestuous father, the King of York, and not the mother-in-law. In fact, Donegild, the second mother-in-law, exists in a typological pattern whose twin-motifs--accusation of the young queen of giving birth to monsters and the exchange of sealed letters--can be traced back to the network of international folklore literature. Such motifs conjure the unsubstantial edifice of the world of folklore incorporated into the romance genre. Bryan and Dempster refer to the "terror and unreality of a 'marchen' world" which such motifs bring to the text (161).

Besides the unreal element built into the structure of Chaucer's Tale, the text also retains the psychological core of Donegild's hatred for Custance: female jealousy. Trivet refers to the "great envy" of Donegild because "the rich and poor" loved Custance for her "goodness," "holiness," and "marvellous beauty." Further, the mother-in-law's "wrath increased greatly at the songs which the maidens of the land made and sung of her." Apart from this female envy directed towards the younger queen due to her native charms, spiri-

tual beauty, and the people's preferential treatment of her, Trivet's mother-in-law "right mortally" hates Custance because "King Alla had, for the love of a strange woman... forsaken his former religion which all his ancestors had loyally and entirely kept" (24-26). Chaucer removes the "religious" motive of the second mother-in-law and highlights only her envy.<sup>113</sup>

The suppressed religious motive is given an added perspective in the reworked character of the first mother-in-law, the Sowdanesse. Trivet says that the Sowdanesse's hatred for Custance is due to a religious motive. He says that the Sowdan's mother feels threatened that "her religion was already on the point of being destroyed by Christians who were in the Saracen's country..." (8). This is the sole reference to the Sowdanesse's changed attitude towards her Christian daughter-in-law and the newly converted Sowdan and his lords. In Chaucer, however, the narrator presents a prepared cultural matrix in which the Sowdanesse has to appear by a number of specific references to her religion.

For instance, the Sowdan falls in love with Custance and consults his council about the further course he should take. Because of the "diversitee" (B 220) between the "lawes" (B 221), religions, of the two countries, the coun-

---

<sup>113</sup>See Block's brief reference to this omission in Chaucer (575).

sellors state that "no Christen prince" would allow "his child" to marry someone taught by "Mahoun," Mahomet, the "prophete" (B 222-224).<sup>114</sup> The explicit reference to Islam is absent in Trivet. Further, in Chaucer, after consulting his own council, the Sowdan decides to become a Christian. In Trivet, however, Tiberius consults Pope John, "the other great ones of the Holy Church, and the Romans of the Senate," and consents to the wedding provided that the Sowdan would "receive baptism and the religion of Jesus Christ" (6). The Sowdan not only agrees but also allows Christians "to visit the holy places of the Sepluchre and Mount Calvary, and Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and the valley of Jehoshaphat..." (6). Chaucer avoids any reference to pressure from the Christian West to make the Sowdan change his religion.<sup>115</sup>

In addition, Chaucer's narrator mentions Mohemet four times (B 224, 333, 336, 340); and there is no mention of the Koran or Mohemet in Trivet.<sup>116</sup> Further, the Man of Law uses the word "maumetrie," in the sense of idolatry and it is related to Mohemet (B 236). In Trivet, the religion of the

---

<sup>114</sup>Beichner discusses Chaucer's use of canon law in this context of interfaith marriage (70-75).

<sup>115</sup>Block analyzes Tiberius' consultation and the condition imposed upon the Sowdan with their narrative implication on Chaucer (576).

<sup>116</sup>See Block for this reference (602).

sowdan is unnamed; it is related to the Sultan's "idols and his false beliefs" (6), "ses maumetz & sa mescreauncez" (7). Block says that Chaucer may have got the hint from Trivet's use of the word "maumetz." The word means "idols," and it is a corruption of "Mahomet" (602). However, there is no explicit reference to Islam in Trivet. Moreover, the fictive temporal framework of the story revolves around the latter part of the sixth century. Concurring with Skeat, Block points out that Mahomet was only twelve years old when the historical emperor Tiberius II died in A.D. 582 (602). Trivet's Saracen land, then, is pre-Islamic with its idols. The Man of Law, on the other hand, gives the impression of Islam as an idolatrous religion through his reference to "maumetrie" with other specific allusions of Mohemet and the Koran in the Tale. This amplified view of the bare hint in Trivet's French version is different from that of William Langland in Piers Plowman, where "Sarrasines" "ayther loueth" or "byleueth in o god almyhty" (C XVII, 135).<sup>117</sup> Metlitzky makes references to "the core of tolerance" in Langland in "the acceptance of Islam as a monotheistic faith" (197-98). This is absent in the world view of the Man of Law. He uses the conflict between Christianity and Islam as the cause for the Sowdanesse's hostility towards Custance. In Trivet's Anglo-Norman Chronicle, the religious

---

<sup>117</sup>All citations are from Persall's edition.



animosity is absent. References to the Sowdanesse's religious fanaticism, the inflexibility of her determination to kill the Christians (B 326-343), and her contemptuous jests about the newly converted Muslim lords and the "fontful" of water which Custance will need to wash away the blood (B 351-357) are Chaucer's additions (593).<sup>118</sup> Gower's version of the same story in Confessio Amantis, however, projects envy as the motive of the Sowdanesse's cruel behavior. She thinks that she will lose her "joies" and her "estate" (649). The poet says that "close Envie" is the motive (684). Inscribed as a hostile religious other, the Eastern mother-in-law in "The Man of Law's Tale" is situated in a material world with real motifs in operation, unlike the second mother-in-law, Donegild, whose existence is mostly defined by "marchen" motives.

Further, the narrator uses the rhetorical device of apostrophe in the delineation of the Sowdanesse. For example:

O Sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee!  
 Virago, thou Semyrame of secounde!  
 o serpent under femynnytee,  
 Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!  
 O feyned womman, al that may condounde  
 Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,  
 Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice! (B 358-363)

These Chaucerian additions enable the narrator to maintain what Gerard Genette in his Narrative Discourse calls "an af-

---

<sup>118</sup>See Block 593. Also Brock VIII in Furnivall James.

fective relationship" with the story (256). This narrating voice, excessive and manipulative, strives to regulate the emotional response of the audience. These comments which break in upon the narration are as sentimentally powerful and as devoid of spontaneity as the Man of Law's initial comments on poverty in his Prologue to the Tale. Referring to the intrusive remarks on the Sowdanesse as feats of "rhetorical pyrotechnics," R.E. Finnegan says that they serve not only to install the Sowdanesse as "evil," and her "machinations" deplorable but also help the narrator assume "center stage, bludgeoning the Sultanness, and Satan, with the club of his rhetoric." This is "an occasion for display" (230). The apostrophes which are related to the Sowdanesse, in fact, help define the two absolute binary divisions of this romance, evil and good, without the grey areas which life often has a way of presenting. However, the apostrophes are not merely to project the compulsorily felt presence of the Man of Law, as Finnegan points out. Besides his exhibitionist narrative tendencies, the Man of Law has another motive--an ideological one--in the use of these apostrophes. These comments, along with other narrative markers, indeed, may help situate the "why" of the narrating stance adopted by the speaker.

The apostrophes given to the Sowdanesse, in fact, are taken directly from the Bible. Hence they may constitute an

attempt to please the ecclesiastical pilgrims like the Clerk and the Parson, well-versed in the Bible, and the other hierarchized ones like the Monk, the Friar, the Prioress, the Pardoner, and the Summoner. The apostrophes "...roote of Iniquite" (B 358) from I Tim. 6.10 (Besserman 73.358), and "O serpent under femynynytee..." (B 360) from Gen. 3.1. and Peter Comestor's Historia Scholastica Libri Genesis define the Sowdanesse as "evil" in scriptural terms<sup>119</sup>. Similarly, the address, "Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!" (B 361), is from II Peter 2.4, Jude 6, and the Apocalypse of St John, the Gospel of Nicodemus, and the vernacular Biblical drama (Besserman 74.361). These comments, then, are meant to appeal to the religious consciousness of the users of the Vulgate. It is significant that the narrator does not apostrophize in a similar vein regulating the audience's adverse response towards the villain when Custance discovers her murdered friend, Hermyn-gyld. Finnegan points out the noticeable absence of the narrator's "intrusions" in the first section of Part II and the subsequent parts (232, 239), and "a marked contrast to his presence in Part I" (232).<sup>120</sup> By the use of these

---

<sup>119</sup>In Besserman, I have included the page number and Chaucer's biblical allusion number respectively.

<sup>120</sup> Finnegan arrives at a different conclusion that the notable absence of apostrophes and interjections by the narrator in the process of narrating the Custance material in the second and subsequent parts demonstrates that the narrator is

apostrophes, the narrator presents the Eastern woman as someone outside the "ecclesia," to the Biblically learned pilgrims. She is the evil in the ultimate spiritual sense. Her cry for a theocentric world in the East, a world which could exist beside the "ecclesia" of the Latin West, is made unjustifiable and illegitimate in the eyes of this group of pilgrims riding to the Canterbury shrine. In violently inscribed terms, she represents the absolute, dark forces: a female incarnation of Satan. Her fight is, however, for a concept of a God-centered world, as distinct from a Church-centered universe. Her relentless, militant stand for this position, unlike the sexually and religiously pliable attitude of the younger Eastern princesses in romances, meets with an equally ruthless poetic justice: death by the imperial command of the Roman emperor. Swallowed by death, branded as evil in Vulgate terms, the Eastern woman exists as a religious enemy, fit to be annihilated by political forces in the eyes of the fictive ecclesiastical pilgrims. The other listeners on horseback would have found the outcome generically satisfying because pure evil is pitted against absolute good in a saint's narrative.<sup>121</sup>

Besides these religious expectations, generically

---

"converted, despite himself" (227-40).

<sup>121</sup>See Brody for the "world of absolutes" in this genre (115).

rendered in the Tale, the text also appeals to a special group of pilgrims who may be interested in listening to the intensification of religious conflict and the struggle between the violent and irrational figure of the Eastern woman and the good, yet passive forces embodied in Custance. Among the pilgrims, two have already visited the East, one as a militant pilgrim for a crusading cause and another for pleasurable religious trips to Jerusalem: the Knight and the Wife of Bath. The Knight, especially, has ridden far to Christian as well as heathen kingdoms, as the General Prologue tells us. The pilgrim narrator says, "At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne" (A 51). The battle referred to took place on October 10, 1365. Albert S. Cook alludes to a "picturesque incident" of "fighting in the shallow water on the beach where 8000 Christians engaged a much larger number of Mussulmans." The knights from "Provence, Lombardy, Flanders, England, and Germany" took part in this fight (57). This is a demonstration of the triumph of Christian forces over the pagan East. The Knight of The Canterbury Tales belongs to the triumphant force.

Further, the Knight was present in other crucial victories over the East. In the General Prologue, the narrator says "In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be/ Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye" (A 56-57). Algezir is an Arabic name meaning "island"; the "siege of Algeciras" is "the most im-

portant military operation in Granada" conducted by Alfonso XI between 1342- and 1344 against the Moors (Cook 57-58). The Mohammedan occupation of Algeciras came to an end with this siege (Cook 59). For a brief period, Henry, the Earl of Derby and William Montagu, first Earl of Salisbury helped fight the Moorish army, on the side of Alphonso XI. Chaucer's Knight has been a participant in this siege.

He was also in "Lyeys" and "Satalye" (A 58). Cook gives a historical account of these battles. Lyeys or Ayas was temporarily captured from the Saracens by Pierre I of Lusignan, King of Cyprus in 1367; the Earl of Hereford was with the king. Pierre I also captured Satalia, a very "important place on the southern coast of Asia Minor" in the Middle Ages, in 1361. Satalia or Adalia was previously ruled by the richest Sultan in "pagandom." The pilgrim Knight also has taken part in these battles. He "foughten" for the Christian faith "at Tramysene" (A 62) in 1382, most probably on the side of the Earl of Cambridge along with the "English serving in Spain" (Cook 70-74). The Knight had fought a "heathen in Turkey" (A 66).<sup>122</sup> The picture of the Knight presented through these victorious military expeditions demonstrates his official standing towards the advancing threat of Islam. The religion is a force to be checked, curtailed, and an-

---

<sup>122</sup>Tyerman analyzes the historical perspectives of the crusades in places like Prussia, Alexandria, and Granada ("Crusades in 'Hethenese'" 259-301)

nihilated.

In addition to military and ecclesiastical representatives who are interested in the religious outcome, the Canterbury pilgrims include a rich woman like the Wife of Bath who has visited Jerusalem thrice. In the Prologue to her Tale, she says that her fourth husband died when she "cam from Jerusalem" (D 495). A dominant Islamic force could close access to Jerusalem for such female pilgrims with a mercantile and financial status. The emerging figure of the Eastern woman, then, is a product of the group dynamics at work in story-telling. In the portrayal of her character, the potential responses of fellow pilgrims like the Clerk, the Parson, the Monk, the Prioress, the Friar, the Pardoner, and the Summoner, in short, the ecclesiastical group, and further, the possible reactions of the Knight, the official opponent of Islam, and the Wife of Bath, an affluent traveller across Islamic lands to Jerusalem, are taken into active consideration.

The Man of Law not only takes into account the potential responses of his audience, but also the social effect of such a literary act in a gathering like this consisting of the Canterbury pilgrims. He is a literary critic who has a theory of what good literature should be. He says that Chaucer's choice of themes is commendable. Incestuous love, as seen in Gower's Confessio Amantis, is to be avoided.

Chaucer the poet has a "simple style"; by implication, the Man of Law seems to say that lofty style is an appropriate literary medium. He is also conscious of the potential social elevation which a story of "high seriousness" is capable of providing him. Concurring with this view, critics have emphasized the self-seeking, literary motif of the Man of Law. Kevin Harty observes that the Tale is a "rhetorical tour de force and an advertisement" for the Man of Law (368). Ann Middleton states that the Tale assures his "membership in polite society"; "a literary performance" for him is a social performance." The Tale demonstrates the "self-serving social gesture" of the teller (23-30). Robert E. Finnegan refers to the teller's "desire for self-promotion" (227). What these critics stress is the narrator's purposeful effort to convert his textual performance into a social value. He is shrewdly aware of the worldliness of telling. Tellers and tales are always in relationship with the listeners. Tales are transferrable objects for him. His tale is a value, an exchangeable commodity, and a social pledge for him. Inscribed characters like the villainous Eastern female and the saintly character help circulate his tale. What he builds is a social kinship by means of this tale.

The site of narration also brings together Chaucer, the narrator of The Canterbury Tales, and his court audience. To



what extent does the presence of Chaucer the poet and Chaucer the pilgrim-narrator alter the story? The references to Chaucer the poet are an instance of Chaucer's self-conscious artistry. Chaucer sees himself through his critics' eyes in a pleasantly good-humored way. The Man of Law acts as a critic of Chaucer in the "Introduction" to the Tale. The Man of Law tells the pilgrim auditors that Chaucer has already composed texts dealing with "thrifty" (B 46) tales; while his metrical scheme is "lewedly" (A 47) rendered, the rhyme effect is "craftily" (A 48) accomplished in these stories. Such self-reflexive stylistic comments on "unskilful" metrical, yet sophisticated rhyme patternings show that Chaucer is aware of his critics' awareness of his art. This is, further, made clear by the Man of Law's comparison between Gower's and Chaucer's choice of their respective themes. The self-conscious poet, in effect, has before his vision his narratees, learned and critical, who are capable of judging his works not merely from a close perspective of form and theme but also in a larger context of poetic discourse; critics like the fictional equivalents of the Man of Law. Chaucer may have been also conscious of the socially significant people of his day--a class represented by the Knight in The Canterbury Tales.

While the embedded narrative--the narrative within the narrative--caters to the aesthetic tastes of the fellow

pilgrims, Chaucer may have had his contemporary audience also in his mind. He may have taken into account their potential responses in "The Man of Law's Tale." Strohm says that during the period when Chaucer wrote The Canterbury Tales, he was away from London and the court. Between 1386 and 1389 he was not in direct touch with the courtly audience. Because of this absence, he may have had this audience in mind in the fictionalization of the pilgrims. The fictional audience can be seen as an "enabling device" with which Chaucer communicated with his contemporary audience (Social Chaucer 64-65). While concurring with Strohm that Chaucer may have taken into account the potential responses of his contemporary audience, I would like to take a different theoretical position regarding the narrator's position. The merging of audiences affects the narrating stance in a divisive fashion. The narrator's subjectivity is not stable. It is in process--a notion I will take up shortly.

Incorporating the potential responses of the contemporary audience, Chaucer is aware of a larger poetic discourse comprising of European works. The privileged audience, too, is exposed to other literatures. Further, Chaucer was likely to have known the work of Dante and the treatment of Islam in it. In the hierarchized realm of Dante's Divine Comedy, Mahomet is assigned to the eighth circle in the

Inferno. His punishment is being split from head to anus perpetually. Dante reaches Mahomet after passing through the first seven circles containing people who have committed lesser sins. The eighth circle contains the fraudulent scourged by "Horned Demons"; the ninth and the last circle is assigned to Judas and Lucifer. When Virgil guides Dante to the eighth circle, Mohemet is made to say to Dante, "...Now thou seest how I/ Do rend myself; how mangled, Mohemet" (Canto VIII 30-31). Dante's guide explains to him:

And all the others whom thou seest here  
Were scatterers of scandal in their lives,  
And schism, and for that reason are thus cleft. (34-37)

Chaucer's literary treatment of Islam should be seen in this broader range of textual attitude. Mohemet enters the literary world already defined by religious views. He is cleft, separated, and excluded. He is a desemanticized and dismantled presence in the text. Said calls Dante's poetic vision of Mohemet the "Orientalist vision" (Orientalism 69). The representation of Mohemet is an othering act which is perpetuated in other discourses also.<sup>123</sup>

The transgressive position of Mohemet is reinforced through images of the Islamic Orient handed down through medieval theology. St. Thomas Aquinas says of Mohemet in Summa Contra Gentiles:

---

<sup>123</sup> See Said's discussion of Orientalism in the modern context ("Orientalism Reconsidered" (89-107).

He seduced people by promises of carnal pleasure to which the concupiscence of the flesh goads us. His teaching also contained precepts that were in confirmity with his promises, and he gave free rein to carnal pleasure...he was obeyed by carnal men... Those who believed in him were brutal men and desert wanderers, utterly ignorant of all divine teaching through whose numbers Mohemed forced others to become his followers by the violence of his arms. (73)

Such literary and theological perceptions of the Orient further contribute to notions of Orientalism. The Orient projected through these texts assigns an image of violence and libidinous excess to the East. The Orient, thus represented, is a muted voice. Hence the text, "The Man of Law's Tale," exists in the medieval poetic discourse as an orientalizing force along with the other medieval romances which deal with the East-West encounter.

Further, in the political landscape of England, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there was an attempt to curtail the threat of Islam. Metlitzki states that there was alliance building between the rulers of England and Armenia, which was the Christian outpost on the Muslim frontier, against the threat of Islam. During Chaucer's time, there were diplomatic activities of Leo V, king of Lesser Armenia at the court of Richard II (130). The subordinate story of the Man of Law, then, may have ideological relevance not only to the fictive pilgrim-listeners like the knight, but also to his contemporary equivalents in real life at the court, Chaucer's audience.

To this audience, the thematics of the old story of an accused queen is a repetition. However, since the contemporary audience is familiar with the content, especially of the story of Trivet's Anglo-Norman Chronicle, their chief pleasure lies in watching how the poet has reworked the known Custance plot through the medium of rhyme royal verses.<sup>124</sup> Edmund Reiss expresses a similar view that the pleasurable reading or hearing does depend upon the "restatement of old material" and the play of "individual talent against the tradition" (Reiss 398). This reworked content, different from Gower's treatment of it, may have had an ideological impact on Chaucer's audience.

While the tale yields itself to this palimpsest reading, of a dominant and a subordinate story, the narrating site from which the teller tells this story presents an intriguing problem. Who is responsible for the Orientalism manifest in this story? The characterization of the orientalized Eastern woman, caught in the subordinate layer of the text, cannot be traced either to the author or the narrator. The arrangement of the narrating stance produces a constantly decentering subject-position. In accordance with his stated promise in the General Prologue, Chaucer, the narrator, simply "reherces" or reports the pilgrim-

---

<sup>124</sup>See Scattergood's list of books in the possession of Thomas Woodstock, the uncle of Richard II, who died in 1397 (34).

narrators' tales. Chaucer's literary manifesto is to literally repeat every word of the narrative as he receives it from each teller. In other words, Chaucer the narrator, does not take any "personal responsibility"; he is only a "compiler" (Minnis 190-196). This technique of refusal of personal responsibility is reenacted by the Man of Law. He says that he has heard the tale from a merchant (B 132). In short, the same literary form of "compilatio," which A.J. Minnis refers to, is exploited by the Man of Law too. Minnis says that Chaucer is an author who hides behind the "shield" and "defence of the compiler" (210). This "hiddenness" of Chaucer, if I may use the word, is accomplished by Chaucer's deliberate ambiguity in situating the narrating stance.

In this speaking site, compiler and author exchange places. The Custance-material changes hands continually, from Trivet to Chaucer, from the Man of Law to Chaucer, the pilgrim narrator, and from the merchant to the Man of Law. Hence the narrating site is a shifting place of "disavowal" of responsibility. It is the point where the presence of Chaucer, the poet, and Chaucer, the narrator, is felt. Only in "The Man of Law's Tale," among the pilgrim tales, the poet gracefully acknowledges his critics' possible comments. The Man of Law's literary remarks about Chaucer are rendered with an awareness of the latter's presence among the

pilgrims.<sup>125</sup> The presence of the poet, in the text, in fact, is incorporated in a subtle way. In the presentational process of The Canterbury Tales, a narration containing several narratives, Chaucer plays the intricate roles of poet, pilgrim, narrator, and narrators within the narrative. The corporate presence of all these personae is not felt in all the narratives. But the narrating stance of the Man of Law is a multiform where these different roles merge. It is from this collective sign that the text derives its dual voice. The narrating voice is in process. This voice is in constant displacement.

Because of this, the Tale is no longer a center-embedded text, an unlikely feature in The Canterbury Tales. In the opening section of "The Man of Law's Tale," the court of Rome is at the center with its powerful Christian influence. Syria is at the periphery with its pagan influence, beyond the known boundaries of the "ecclesia." With the shifting power from the male-run Roman court to the female dominated Syrian palace, Christianity is marginalized; so also is Rome. As Custance moves towards Rome, Christianity triumphs; the pagan East occupies the periphery for awhile and then it is annihilated. Hence marginality is also a shifting stance in the Tale which has no center. This is due to the narrating act which patterns the altering per-

---

<sup>125</sup>See Knowlton (89).

spectives of the dominant and the subordinate voices with an apparently manifest single layer of text.

This enactment of disruption is related to the domestication of the East. The pagan Sowdan willingly becomes a Christian without any genuine change of heart; with him are his loyal band of friends likewise converted. The Christianized East in the Tale comes under the moral and ethical power of the Latin West. The female power in Syria, characterized by violence and fury, however, is subdued, not with religion but with the force of a naval fleet from the imperial presence. The Eastern female figure is vanquished; so is her political sway. The Roman emperor sends a "roial ordinance" (B 961) to take "heigh vengeance" on "Surrens" (B 963). The moving army of soldiers "brennen, sleen, and brynge hem to merchance/ Ful many a day..." (B 964-965). The Orient, which occupies the periphery, in the shifting scenes of center and marginality, becomes nothingness, a wild zone of ashes and memories. Language itself moves away to life and life-giving sources of the Roman court; the core image there, however, is an aging pair of father and daughter.

The East, then, is an inscribed memory of a fierce female fury, subjugated and subdued in a text without a center. Because of the ambiguous narrating stance, the speaking voice undergoes constant displacement. Narratologically speaking, Chaucer the poet's "absence is absolute"



in other tales; here "his presence has degrees" (Genette, Narrative Discourse 245). Hence Chaucer's Orientalism is to be traced to this intriguing presence in the narrating stance, at once, complex and ambiguous. He is the author of the reworked passages which project the Sowdanesse as a religious fanatic but he manages to say through this narrating stance, "Blameth nat me."

## CHAPTER V

### THE EASTERN FEMALE AS A PALIMPSEST IN CHAUCER'S "SQUIRE'S TALE"

As I have shown in Chapter IV, the relation between the Eastern female and Chaucerian narrative signification occupies a marginal and colonized position. By way of continuing my analysis of the Eastern woman and the Orient in Chaucer, I want to focus my attention on the image of pilgrimage in "The Squire's Tale." The pilgrim is the "faucon peregryn" (F 428), which, like Custance, encounters trials and griefs.<sup>126</sup> The bird narration in "The Squire's Tale" is more than a vision offered to the Eastern princess, Canacee. It promotes male circulation of the female image as an abject and dependent figure. I want to argue that the story of the bird is a constructed female discourse within a male discourse. In my analysis of the dependent status of woman in the embedded, bird narration, I intend to use Irigaray's notions of woman as a mirror, the reflector of male image, and speaking as woman, the masculinist appropriation of female speech (This Sex 129-135, 187).

Relating the image of the bird to that of the Eastern

---

<sup>126</sup>All citations are from Baugh's edition.

princess, I intend to argue that the image of the Eastern female as a nurturant and caring figure is closely linked to that of the abject and subordinate female. Behind these interrelated images is the representation of the Eastern female in the tale as an incest-shrouded figure. Sharing a colonial relationship to male language, like the other Eastern women I have analyzed in the preceding chapters, Canacee also embodies the problematics of sexuality in a similar, though not identical fashion. The problem of representation is once again related to the problem of sexuality. Trapped in an incest-invested image, she is circulated as a passive, nurturant figure in male discourse. The Eastern princess is presented as a sign of non-conformity by the narrator's suggested notion of her incestuous marriage to her brother. However, she is made to conform to the general pattern of good women by a male narration which presents her as a good, dependent, and nurturant woman. She is a dual-voiced figure, a palimpsest.

I also want to demonstrate that the textuality of "The Squire's Tale," which is often criticised as fragmentary and unfinished, is not the result of the rhetorical failure of the Squire. The tale's failed reputation can be revived if the text is read in a new perspective. That is, a linear reading can be substituted by an examination of the tale as a series of feminine images. In this chapter, I seek to in-

investigate three feminine images in the tale--the bird, the princess, and the feminized East. The problem of narration in "The Squire's Tale" is the problem of the narrator's adolescent renegotiation of the Oedipus complex. Images of the abject female, nurturant woman, and feminized East are products of the problematics of the narrator's adolescent constructs of objects of desire. What is significant is the relation between these three feminine others and narrative representation. Hence, the fragmentary nature of the tale is not the result of the storyteller's failed narrativity but the consequence of his adolescent, sexual, and family politics.<sup>127</sup> I want to argue in this chapter that "The Squire's Tale" is at once a narrative of desire and a conveyor of trapped and colonized images of the Eastern female and the Orient.<sup>128</sup> My focus is the relation between the three Eastern, feminine others and the Squire's narrative representation. I utilize Lacan's basic psychoanalytic notion of the chain of desire, as explained in Terry Eagleton, to examine the subordinate layer of narration which contains these feminine images (Literary Theory

---

<sup>127</sup>I have borrowed the phrases "sexual politics" and "family politics" from Mitchell (195, 174). She uses the expression, family politics, in relation to the Oedipus complex. I also use the term in the context of the Squire's adolescent maneuvering through the Oedipus complex.

<sup>128</sup>In Chapter II, I made a similar, though not identical, analysis of "Letter of Alexander."

164-174). In short, I intend to argue in this chapter that the problem of "The Squire's Tale" is not the problem of narration but that of representation. The incest-shrouded Eastern princess and the feminized Tartary Orient are distortions constructed within the confines of the narrative chain of the Squire's desire.

The image which links "The Squire's Tale" and "The Man of Law's Tale" is that of the pilgrimage of a female. The "faucon peregryn" from a "fremde land," like Custance, is a lonely figure. The bird is a pilgrim because its nest is never found (Baugh 466). The bird is seen and caught only in its flight, and never in its breeding place. In its avid pilgrimage, the bird in "The Squire's Tale" experiences love's homage, male duplicity, brutal desertion, and a piteous bleeding down the "drye tree." While the "faucon peregryn" shows womanly woe caused by male abandonment and "doublenesse" (F 543, 556), Custance demonstrates saintly sorrow wrought by female jealousy and deadly forces. Both are forsaken and alone. The bird is "lorn withouten remedie" (F 429); Custance has no champion (B 631).

Further, bird and pilgrimage are two connected concepts which the Spring imagery of the opening lines of the General Prologue evokes. The pilgrim bird's narration has a larger motif which relates the story to the rest of the Canterbury framework. The narrator, the Squire, is a pilgrim and a

lover who "slepte namoore than doth a nyghtyngale" (A 98). Spring summons forth desire at the heart of fowls and folks; the birds "slepen al the nyght with open ye" (A 10), their human counterparts long to go on pilgrimages (A12). Spring, then, invokes longing in the heart of bird and pilgrim, an eternal mating instinct structured in the flesh and soul respectively. The Squire's bird is a pilgrim falcon, found in great numbers in the land of Tartars, the locale of "The Squire's Tale."<sup>129</sup> It is a land to which Brother Peregrine went as a missionary in 1318.<sup>130</sup> The pilgrim and the bird, then, are a composite imagery at the back of the Tale about the Tartary Orient. The male narrator who loved with such intensity, keeping awake all night due to the prick of Spring, writes about female woe and male desertion. The bird-narration, though problematic, can be cardinal to the frame story, as I will explain shortly.

A common technique used to project the image of the Eastern female in "The Squire's Tale" and "The Man of Law's Tale" is doubling. The Man of Law doubles his tale and presents two wicked mothers-in-law to torment his heroine (Fyler 2). While the second mother-in-law's cruelty stems

---

<sup>129</sup>Taken from the reports of the medieval missionary William of Rubruck to the Tartary. See for a discussion of the animals and birds used for domestic uses and consumption in Dawson's Mongol Mission (100).

<sup>130</sup>For more information, see "Letter of Brother Peregrine" Mongol Mission (232-234).

out of her jealousy, the first one's is due to religious intolerance, as I explained in Chapter IV. The Squire doubles his narrative through a different strategy. The story of the caged bird is a "mirror" of the tale of Canacee. She, in turn, serves as a "reflection" and "an image of and for man."<sup>131</sup> The tale of the Eastern princess, Canacee, is a narrative of female imprisonment in a male discourse. Further, the theme of incest, which I referred to in Chapter IV, connects these two tales. In the original story, Custance leaves her father's home to escape incest. The name, Canacee, invokes images of incest. Canacee is seen in her incestuous relationship in Gower's Confessio Amantis and Ovid's Heroides. She is also presented as an incest-shrouded figure in "The Squire's Tale."

The narrator who relates this story about the East is a man of twenty. The Squire is introduced to the readers in relation to his father in the General Prologue. The young man is introduced with his father (A 79). The narrator closes the portrait with the Squire carving before his father at the table (A 100). The young narrator is seen in filial, feudal, and social relationships rendering his service as a Squire to the Knight. Special mention is made of the Squire's relationship with language; "He koude songes

---

<sup>131</sup> See Irigaray (This Sex 187)

make and wel endite" (A 95).<sup>132</sup> The young Squire, then, exists in a network of relationships pertaining to the paternal and language; he is presented in relation to the symbolic. Further, he hopes to "stondon in his lady grace" (A 88), to attain the favor of the object of desire. His connections with the paternal and the linguistic, and his desire for the female, are worth investigating in the context of his storytelling. This triple relationship has a psychoanalytical bearing on his narration and in the production of the female constructs, the Eastern princess and the feminized East. Applying this approach enables us to see the hidden layer behind the apparent, linear flow of events.

The Squire's fragmentary tale opens with the court of the Tartar King, Cambyuskan. The reader is introduced to his wife, Elpheta, and their two sons, Algarsif and Cambalo, and daughter, Canacee. While the royal family is engaged in the act of feasting, a strange knight comes with four magical gifts from the King of Araby and Inde. They are a brass horse, a sword, a mirror, and a ring; the former two are given to the male members of the family, while the latter two are gifted to Canacee. The sword and the horse can carry

---

<sup>132</sup>Haller refers to this feature saying that the Squire is distinguished from among the other pilgrim singers in that he could compose his own songs (286). Larson states that the Squire is "the closest thing to a poet on the pilgrimage" (599).



the owner wherever he likes and make him a conqueror, and the mirror offers insight into the possessor's friends and foes. The ring offers the wearer an ability to understand a foreign language. After receiving her gifts, Canacee gets up early from the feast, and retires to her room. She goes to sleep after looking into the mirror. Induced by a vision, she rushes to the garden. There she finds a bleeding bird and listens to its story of desertion. With the help of Cambalo, the bird is restored to its mate. The story ends up with an ambiguous reference to Canacee marrying one Cambalo.

Behind this linear narration is a story-telling effected by the Squire's desire. In psychoanalytical terms, the father, language, and the object of desire are interrelated. The father represents the young boy's severance as a child from the maternal. The mother stands for fullness and fulfillment. In her absence, the child moves with the father into language. However, the longing for a reunion with the missing maternal is expressed through language. The subject moves from one signifier to the other. Lacan calls this movement the desire of the subject, an attempt to recapture the lack symbolized by the absent maternal. The subject constructs substitute objects in language, which is the world of the father. The desire which makes the subject construct

these objects is the desire for the other.<sup>133</sup>

Seen in this psychoanalytical perspective, the Squire moves with his father into language in a pairing relationship. In his adolescent renegotiation of the Oedipus complex, however, the Squire moves away from his father in an effort at an imaginary union with the maternal. This move from one signifier to the other causes a chain of desire. The female others constructed along this narration of desire in its movement towards the recovery of origin are the abject female, the nurturant princess, and the feminized East. The subordinate layer which contains these objects is a narrative of desire. What is significant is the representation of the Eastern female and the Tartary Orient.

A: ABJECT FEMALE BIRD:

One of the significant feminine constructs in "The Squire's Tale" is the "faucon peregryn" jilted by its male.<sup>134</sup> The image of the Eastern female is closely related to the figure of the abject female bird. The representation of the pilgrim bird is effected through the

---

<sup>133</sup>Information taken from Lacan paraphrased in Eagleton. Mitchell analyzes the notion of the Oedipus complex from a feminist perspective (Psychoanalysis 61-73). Gledhill discusses the Oedipus complex in relation to film criticism in "Developments" (18-48). See also Cohan and Shires (161).

<sup>134</sup>The bird can be considered a metamorphosed princess. For a similar view, see Baugh (467) and Skeat (384).

strange knight's gift-giving. His gifts are gendered. As I will demonstrate shortly, female-identified gifts such as the mirror and the ring help circulate images of abject and dependent women.

The Squire narrates the knight's act of gift-giving in a detailed and elaborate fashion. The brass horse, the sword, the mirror and the ring are magic objects. Such things form a romance and folk-tale motif. Romance landscape abounds in magic girdles, brass heads, flying horses, and wishing rings. The basic notion of gift-giving, too, runs through the romance texts. In Li Roumans de Cleomades by Adenes li Rois, a possible source of "The Squire's Tale," the king of Sartaigne receives three suitors with gifts for his daughter; they are a golden hen with three chickens that could walk and sing, a golden man with a trumpet that would sound at any threat of treason, and a wonderful horse to cover magical distances (Jones, "Squire's Tale" 366).<sup>135</sup> The Eastern knight's gifts too have specific functions. The steed of brass (F 115) could transport a person anywhere he liked. The naked sword (F 156) will carve and hew (F 158) any armor of the enemy and bring victory to the user. These are two male-identified gifts, given to the royal male members of the Cambyuskan family. There is only one reference

---

<sup>135</sup> Jones also analyzes the textual relationship between Cléomadès, Méliacin and an Arabian tale in detail ("Cleomades" 221-243).

to the use of the "steede of bras" (F 666) towards the end of the tale, in an abrupt closure of the text where the narrator says that Algarsif, one of the sons of Cambyuskan, was helped by it (F 666) when he was in great danger (F 665). The sword is never wielded.

While the male-identified gifts are not used in the text, the other two gifts, the ring and the mirror, are used. The female-identified gifts function as a sign in the circulation of stereotyped images of the female as an abject, subordinate other. Criticism has not considered the role of these gifts in relation to the Eastern female's representability. The Eastern knight says that the mirror can show one's friend or foe, political or personal (F 136). John Stevens summarizes the mirror's usage by saying that it allows "political foresight and amorous insight" (100). The ring gives the possessor an understanding into the language of birds and offers the wearer the knowledge of herbal healing. These two gifts, the mirror and the ring, are meant for lady Canacee (F 144), the excellent daughter of the king of Tartars (F 145). Commenting on the four gifts, John Fyler says that these presents are intended for "translatio": two explicitly and the others in a less direct sense. The ring can transport the user to another realm and language; the other two can "close gaps, recover unities, pull together what has been dispersed." He adds that the gifts come "from

an innocent world to the fallen one" (3).

Fyler's contrived bringing together of all these gifts under a single function and positing a clearly differentiated world of innocence and that of experience overlooks the gendered nature of these presents and the problematic relationship of the narrator to these presents. A world which could foresee political adversities, jilting partners, wounded birds, and a death-dealing sword cannot be a world of innocence. What the gifts suggest is a world of male discourse containing a structured female discourse. The gifts open up a marginalized female discourse. What the gifts posit is not a passage from the world of innocence to that of experience but a momentary understanding, a pilgrim-insight, into the colonized female existence, especially that of the Eastern woman in the Middle English language.

Further, among the four gifts, only one, the ring, is closely related to the narrative process of the text. The ring in "The Squire's Tale" is not a fairy-tale motif; it is not a "wishing ring" which enables the user to perform all his wishes.<sup>136</sup> It can be the very center of narration which, as a rhetorical mode, colonizes the princess and the bird with notions of linguistic and emotional dependency on

---

<sup>136</sup>Aarne and Thompson list the wishing ring as Type 560 in their classification of fairy tale motifs ("The Magic Ring" 202).

the male respectively.<sup>137</sup> The Eastern princess who now owns the ring and the mirror (F 369) realizes a closely related usage for them. On appropriating these gifts, she retires to her bed, sleeps her first sleep (F 367) and then wakes up on account of the joy of possession of the mirror and the ring. She changes her color twenty times (F 370). Soothing sleep brings this time a vision to her mind (F 372). Hers is not a dream produced by drinking wine (F 352) or the domination of blood, one of the humors (F 352) as in the case of the other participants in the Cambyuskan feast. The narrator does not want to relate these wine-induced dreams (F 357). But Canacee has been "ful mesurable" (F 362). She is the only exception in the indolent court of generously overflowing measure of wining and dining. On seeing a clear-headed vision, she rushes out of her bed and goes to the royal park with a chosen group of friends.

Stimulated by her vision, she walks towards a tree "drye as whit as chalk" (F 409).<sup>138</sup> She sees a bird in its plaintive distress. The narrator alerts us that this is "the knotte" of the tale to which he should "condescende" (F 407). The Eastern princess' movement towards the nodal point

---

<sup>137</sup>For a different view, see McCall's notion of the "evanescent" nature of the gifts which raise the reader's expectations and frustrate them in "Squire in Wonderland," (105).

<sup>138</sup>See Manly's discussion of Polo's and Chaucer's uses of the dry tree (359-36).

of the story, the female falcon's narrative, is a matter of differing textual and critical opinions. The word, "knotte," has been translated as "the main point" by Alfred C. Baugh (465). Walter Skeat says that "knot" is cognate with the Latin word, "nodus," as it is used by Horace (383). Explaining the classical writer's usage of the word, Robert Haller points out that Horace uses the word "nodus," knot, to characterize the difficulties of plot which may require a 'deus ex machina' to cut away. Haller says that the Squire has not understood Horace's use of the word, "knotte." Haller argues that if the Squire has not produced enough of a plot to cause a knot in the Horatian sense after four hundred lines, he is "indeed slow moving." Haller is further of the opinion that the Squire fails in narrativity even if he considers a knot as the object of story telling (291). The dual fault attributed to the Squire's method of narrating does not take into account the gifts, which lead the royal female steps to the "knotte" of the tale: an entanglement of the gift and the receiver. The gifts given to the male members of the family, the sword and the horse, concern physical movements and political triumphs; they are action-oriented gifts. The mirror and the ring, as I will demonstrate, are language-directed gifts.

Further, the "knotte" is a site of female colonization characterized by male betrayal, sexual rejection, and female

abject dependency on the deserter. The bird's mangled history is narrated from Canacee's lap. She holds "hir lappe abrood" (F 441) so that the falcon could drop itself into it from the dry tree moist with the bird's blood. Only after it is persuaded by Canacee that she, as a king's daughter, will redress its grievance and heal its wounds, does the bird fall down with a shriek, pale and exhausted. Canacee, then, holds the bird on her lap (F 475).

This lap, the cozy emotional bond of the maternal, is the speaking site of the bird narrative. The princess understands the repressed element in the female fowl through the magic ring. The bird goes on with the story of her lover, the tercelet, his love services to her, her total surrender of self to his will, his duplicity in exchanging her love for "newfangelnesse" (F 610) in the shape of an upstart kite. With a piteous cry that it is alone without remedy (F 629), the bird again swoons in Canacee's lap. Canacee bears the bird home in her lap and applies healing herbs to the wounded bird. The ring possesses curing properties too. The strange knight, the conveyor of the gift, has already said that the owner of the ring will have knowledge about "every gras" (F 153) and "whom it wol do boote" (F 154). What the ring offers--the twin gift of language and healing--is not to be taken at face value as the mere restorer of a bird's health. More than that, the repressed in the female finds



expression in language. Such story-telling is healing. Speaking and writing, allied skills of language, are a healing process to the long repressed female psyche of the bird; "herstory" hidden in humankind's shabby history of betrayal and manipulation.

What the bird narration embodies is a story of abjection. The Squire chooses to exploit the traditional sphere in romance signification where the female has power over the male: the heart. But the tale of the female bird is a story of abandonment, a sexually irresponsible tercelet, and a masochistic female response to male betrayal. In relating her recent history of betrayed love, the bird describes the tercelet as someone who seemed to be gentle (F 505) but was instead full of treason and falsity (F 506). He put on a humble appearance (F 507). No one could suspect that he could be hypocritical (F 510-511). He was "a serpent" (F 512) under flowers, and "ypocryte" in love (F 514). Not knowing the tercelte's inherent duplicity, the falcon gave all her heart and thought to him (F 533), while he continued to be a "tigre, full of doublenesse" (F 543), a treacherous Jason who deserted Media, a Paris who jilted Oenone in Classical literature, and a Lamech who married two women in the Old Testament. Narrating this emotional outpour of feelings is pain of death to the falcon (F 582). But drawing on her consolation from Boethius, the bird chirps out a philo-

sophical truism, "all thyng, repeiryng to his kynde,/ gladeth hymself" (F 608-609). Chasing the ever new novel-  
ties, "newfangelnesse" (F 610), a caged bird may leave its  
protected ease and refined food for worms. The male bird,  
too, has left the cozy ease of the tried in response to the  
pleasures of a soaring kite. In one last effort at twitter-  
ing out her melancholic outpour of emotions, bemoaning her  
loss of power over her male, the female bird says "Thus hath  
the kyte my love in hire servyse,/ And I am lorny withouten  
remedie" (F 628-629). Having said this, the bird falls in a  
swoon in Canacee's lap.<sup>139</sup>

The deserted bird and Canacee's nurturant barm demon-  
strate the two traditional male pictures of women, the fe-  
male as a caring figure or a quiet sufferer. Mary Jacobus  
calls these two the best and the worst roles assigned tradi-  
tionally to women. She says, "At best, women are the bearers  
of a traditional ideology of love, nurturance, and domesti-  
city; at worst, they are passive victims" (101-102). Canacee  
and the female falcon neatly fit into these two prescribed  
slots. Chaucer's extended treatment of the dependent women  
and betraying men is seen in The Legend of Good Women. The  
god of Love directs the narrator that he should make a  
glorious legend of good women. The god of Love defines these

---

<sup>139</sup>Friend examines Chaucer's bird narrative in relation to  
the twelfth-century stories of Nequam and Berechiah (57-65).

women as maidens and wives who have been true in their love "al hire lyves," while their male counterparts are "false men that hem betraien" (484-486).<sup>140</sup>

These images of the passive victim and caring figure are analyzed in the subsequent paragraph with a contrast drawn from outside the Chaucerian fictive realm. Such a critical estimate of difference is useful in the examination of the feminization of the East which is at work in the text. I will take up this analysis briefly at the end. While the male fantasy of the Squire ascribes a passive victim role to the "faucon peregryn," and an uncaring and duplicitous role to the tercelet, the female fantasy of Marie de France in Yonec, which is a medieval lay written in the second half of the twelfth century, presents a beneficent male falcon and invests the lady who is in love with this knight in disguise with the capacity to triumph against odds. This lay, Yonec, like the Squire's, deals with a woman's caged condition in love. A young lady married to an old man is shut up in a tower. The lady longs for the oft-heard of appearance of a knight and the state of being married to a male on her own will. A falcon flies into her chamber and this tercel becomes a young knight before her eyes. Sealed in love, the knight and the lady live a life of bliss, using the metamorphosing ability of the lover. On

---

<sup>140</sup>All citations are from Baugh's Major Poetry.

discovering this, the husband kills the tercel. The dying knight gives a ring and a sword to the lady, now pregnant with Yonec, his child. The ring is not only a sign of remembrance but also a magic agent to ward off her husband's anger; the sword is to be used to avenge the knight's death, when the son grows older. The lady fulfills her promise of revenge (French Medieval Romances 125-131). France uses the male falcon's gifts of ring and sword, signs of her textual and sexual fantasy, for the triumph of the female over adversity: liberated flight over a caged condition. The medieval female writer valorizes female resistance, action, and empowerment against male imprisoning. In short, while the male seeking to express the female in "The Squire's Tale" privileges emotional outpouring of abandonment over positive action, the female speaking as woman, as seen in Marie de France's Yonec, accentuates valor, courage and energy in the incarcerated woman. However, the embedded narration in "The Squire's Tale" promotes images of female abjection and subserviency.

The bird narration is not the text where woman speaks as woman. The Squire is speaking for woman. The bird-narrative is a caged discourse because, as Irigaray aptly points out, "Speaking (as) woman is not speaking of woman" (135). Speaking of and for woman produces a mediated discourse. In this discourse, the female in her entirety es-

capacities expression. The quest, then, absent in the apparent text, is the quest of the male seeking to express the female through the bird and the East. This is a slightly altered metaphysical version of the archetypal romance situation: the man seeking a woman, the knight in quest of a female.

B: THE EASTERN PRINCESS AS A PALIMPSEST:

The feminine construct, Canacee, cannot be separated from the bird. The site of the bird-narration is the lap of Canacee. She is presented as the very picture of the maternal and nurturant. Further, the bird which narrates the tale may indeed be a princess herself. Skeat and Baugh support the view that the bird may have been a princess. Baugh says that it is likely that the bird is a princess temporarily transformed into a falcon (467). Skeat is also of a similar opinion that the falcon is really a princess (384). Canacee holding the bird, a metamorphosed princess, in the royal lap, in a nurturing narrative stance, is the very picture of the maternal, the womb.<sup>141</sup> But, by making the Eastern female nurturant, the narrator places her only in a colonial relationship to the symbolic. She can be the symbol of the female allowed to be in touch with her unconscious through the vision offered to her by the magic mirror and the lan-

---

<sup>141</sup>Irigaray talks about woman as womb, the unconscious womb of man's language. The unconscious of the female is marked by absence and dispossession (This Sex 94).

guage acquired through the enchanting ring. These are two problematic female-oriented gifts. What the mirror and the ring enable her to see is her female plight in language: her subordinate position in signification. The language, essentially foreign, is given to her from outside; it is external to the experience of her body, her womb, hence her unconscious. A receptacle of an alien language, woman is caged in a male discourse. Her very aliveness, being close to herself, has to be interpreted in the colonizer's language. Hence the bird's language, available to Canacee's intellect, knitting her closer in a maternal bond to a frail bird, is male authorized. Her access to the embedded narration of the bird is a reiterative narrative device to show her dependent status in language. What the Squire's narration reinforces is the lack of Eastern female's subjectivity. She is again an object of desire constructed by the subject in the chain of desire.

In psychoanalytical terms, Canacee's image of bearing the bleeding bird is a vision given to her through the mirror offered by the knight. At best, she can bear the bird, listen to its cry, and then release it to the male who has once betrayed her and deserted her. The figure of Canacee holding the deserted bird corresponds to the marginalized, the differentiated, and the colonized lack in which she stands in relation to the whole, fullness, and order in the

male representation of the female. There is no female subjectivity but only that which is given to her by male narration. Canacee holding the bleeding bird is made to be a symbol of the lack, castration, or bleeding wound which is a male inscribed sexual differentiation of the female. The male narrator, the Squire escapes the supposed castration by taking possession of the mother symbolically through the endless chain of desire constituting images of the female. While he enters into language as a subject, she does so by being a lack, his negative. Canacee's condition can best be explained in the words of Laura Mulvey, who refers to woman as a "bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (Gledhill 32). Characterized by lack of subjectivity, she cannot produce meaning; she is not the signifier. She can only be a signified in relation to the signifier, the male. The East in its feminine dimension in discourse is once again an object. It is inscribed; it does not inscribe. At the level of the story, Canacee enacts woman's dependency on the male by restoring the female bird to its mate. By this act, she is made to affirm the goodness of the female bird by its subservient status to the male. Once the bird is handed over to its mate, the princess is not found speaking. She enters the symbolic as a subordinate to Cambalo who "wins" her--a willing submission to her cultural lot of bearing meaning. Canacee is at once a nurturant and a doubly colonized figure.

Linked to the images of caring figure and passive victim is the representation of the Eastern female as an incest-shrouded character. The Eastern princess, who epitomizes nurturance and compassion, exists in an intertextual realm suggestive of incest. She enters "The Squire's Tale" as a figure already defined by a close intertext. While Chaucer presents what Fyler calls a "sanitized tale" in his version of "The Man of Law's Tale," removing notions of incest in the earlier versions, he retains the overtones of aberrant sexuality in "The Squire's Tale." Incest, in fact, is one of the recurrent motifs in romance (1). However, such a shadowing motif, disavowed in "The Man of Law's Tale," is allowed to reappear in "The Squire's Tale." For instance, the narrator introduces male biological mediation to bring about an abrupt closure to the narrative dealing with the passive victim and caring female figures in the text. Cambalo, Canacee's brother, brings about a reunion between the bird victim and its repentant lover. Thus the bird-narration achieves a close ending by the "mediacioun of Cambalus" (F 656). Cambalo is, further, used as a male principle to bring about an ending, open and disruptive, in the story of Canacee. The Squire refers to "Cambalo,/ That faught in lystes with the bretheran two/ For Canacee er that he myghte hire wyne" (F 667-690). Baugh says that this Cambalo is "hardly the same as the Cambalus" who restores the



tercelet to the female falcon (469). Alluding to Spenser's version of Canacee's story in book 4 of Faerie Queene, Fyler says that the poet offers "a textbook case of elegant exogamy" by making "Cambell and Triamond trade their sisters Canacee and Cambina" (4).

Critical opinion is divided between the use of the name of Cambalo, while agreeing that there is an "unnecessary confusion of nomenclature" (Pearsall, "Squire" 90). Haldeen Braddy, like Fyler, supports the notion of the presence of incest in the Tale. Braddy points out that Chaucer uses the word "win" meaning "espousal," when he says that Algarsif "wan Theodora to his wif" (F 664). The critic adds that "it seems most likely that Chaucer means that Cambalo wedded his sister Canacee" ("Genre" 287). Braddy supports this possibility by saying that the incest motif appears in an Oriental tale analogous to "The Squire's Tale" ("Oriental Origin" 11-19). In view of the lack of authenticated critical information about a definite source of Chaucer's "Squire's Tale," the passage of incestuous theme from the Orient to the Middle English tale cannot be proved. However, as Braddy suggests, notions of incest do shroud the figure of Canacee. Fyler also concurs with the view that in "The Squire's Tale," "incest is much closer to the surface." He also adds that the reports of Franciscan missionaries "number incest among the Mongols' outlandish practices" (14). Critical

pointers to the East, literary and missiological, as the origin of incest are not accurately construed. The observation of the thirteenth-century Franciscan missionary, John of Carpini, as recorded in Speculum Historiale of Vincent of Beauvais, shows that the Tartars married "their relations with the exception of their mother, daughter and sister by the same mother" (Mongol Mission 7). There is no evidence in the Tale to show that Cambyuskan, the Tartar king, had any other wife besides Elepheta. The Squire says,

This noble kyng, this Tartre Cambyuskan,  
 Hadde two sones on Elpheta his wyf,  
 Of whiche the eldest highte Algarsyf,  
 That oother sone was cleped Cambalo.  
 A doghter hadde this worthy kyng also,  
 That youngest was, and highte Canacee. (F 28-33)

The relation between Cambalo and the Eastern princess, insofar as the passage suggests, is that of brother and sister. There is no room for speculating that Canacee is Cambalo's half-sister; neither can the reader conjecture that a very close endogamous marital relationship is possible between the two in the Tartary way. Further, history speaks of her marriage in a different way. William of Rubruck, a thirteenth-century missionary from the Order of Friars Minor to the Tartars, mentions that Genghis Khan gave his daughter in marriage to the king of Uigurs (Mongol Mission 141) The historical evidence of the exogamous marriage of the daughter of the founder of the Tartar kingdom rules out any possibility of the fictive Canacee's endogamous

marital relationship in any capacity.

Though there is no documented evidence to demonstrate that the incest motif of this romance has its origin in literary and missionized East, the incest-shrouded figure of Canacee is a textual reality.<sup>142</sup> Her presence conjures up classical and contemporary literary memories. The body of Canacee, the Eastern princess, is once again written through and appropriated in a space considered as a sexual and religious taboo. This is done through the reappropriation of her mangled name in literary works. For instance, while most of the names in "The Squire's Tale" evoke Eastern resonance, Canacee's reminds a reader of familiar sources.<sup>143</sup>

Metlitzki says that Elpheta, the name of Camyuskan's wife, appears in the star lists and on the face of medieval astro-labes." The name, Algarsif, contains "a common component," "sif" or "saif" which means "sword" in Arabic. This linguistic element, present in many names, was well known to medieval Europe. Further, Metlitzki mentions the possibility of the name, "Tawaddud," which may have become "Theodora" in medieval Spanish versions of the Arabic Tale (77-78, 156).

---

<sup>142</sup>In a different context, however, the fictive construct of the incestuous East was found in the medieval travel report by Mandeville. He mentions an island off the coast of India where the people "taken hire doughtres hire sustres to here wyfes." See Seymour's edition of Mandeville's Travels (208).

<sup>143</sup>See Weever's Chaucer Name Dictionary (70).

Besides "Theodora," other names in the Tale have only Eastern resonance. Theodora, nevertheless, is not a representative name in literary texts.

The name, Canacee, however, is a sign in isolation. It occurs in Ovid's Heroides. Canacee is the writer of the eleventh letter<sup>144</sup> in this text. This epistle relates in first person the story of Canacee's seductive and illicit love for her brother, Macareus. It is a tale of love shadowed by impending death--an agent evoked to put an end to a poignantly prohibited relationship and its tenderly powerful manifestation, her infant. Canacee inscribes her story with a pen in one hand and a sword in the other. She herself is an epistle written with and through blood. Chaucer mentions her name in his Prologue to The Legend of Good Women (265) but dissociates himself from Gower's treatment of unnatural love, "unkynde abhomynacions," ("The Man of Law's Tale" B 88) in Confessio Amantis. Gower's Canacee is a pathetic example of her father's wrath. The tale, in fact, is written to demonstrate the negative effect of "wrath." The heroine writes a letter to her "dedly frend," her brother, that on her death, her little son should be buried with her. She transcribes:

With teres and with enke write  
 This lettre I have in cares colde:  
 In my riht hond my Penne I holde,

---

<sup>144</sup>See XI "Canace Macareo" in Heroides.

And in my left the swerd I kepe,  
 And in my barm ther lith to wepe  
 Thi child and myn, which sobbeth faste.  
 (III. 298-303)<sup>145</sup>

Gower highlights the ill consequences of the King's fury at his daughter's conduct and not the unforeseen results of Canacee's unnatural affection. To the listeners of "The Squire's Tale," then, the name Canacee may be associated with critical aversion and sexual deviance. They may laugh over the female sexual transgression of Alison in "The Miller's Tale" and May in "The Merchant's Tale," as these youthful women, replete with animal passion, hoodwink their old husbands. But these women do not belong to the class of "gentillesse" in the fictive world of The Canterbury Tales. Dorigen, in "The Franklin's Tale" is saved from her unwittingly given commitment to Aurelius. Female sexuality is related to integrity and honor in the romance heroines who usually belong to an aristocratic class in The Canterbury Tales, whereas sexual transgression is associated with women placed in a lower social rung in the generic opposite, the fabliau. Canacee, a romance heroine, is an exception to this genre-defined female sexuality.

Literary echoes of Canacee's image of unnatural love in a royal household may have situated the Eastern princess, Canacee, in the memory of Chaucer's pilgrim auditors as the

---

<sup>145</sup>All citations from Gower are taken from Macaulay's edition.

eater of the forbidden fruit of consanguine sexual knowledge. She is, at once, the caring and nurturing image of a woman and an agent of incest.<sup>146</sup> While the magic of most other names in "The Squire's Tale" releases a romantic aura of the exotic, the far away, and the unfamiliar, Canacee's exercises a cautious restraint. She is caught in a semantically active intertextual space. The association of classical and contemporary nomenclature surrounding her figure projects her as an "equivocal palimpsest."<sup>147</sup> Her name is a puzzle and an ambiguity, half-revealing and half-concealing. She stands in a space between sign and meaning; between what the translated medium of the classical text, Gower's Middle English, conveys through her name, and Chaucer's choice and actual re-usage of the word. Her interstitial existence, then, could be interpreted only by a palimpsest reading.

Projected through the images of a feminized entity and an incest-shrouded princess, the East remains a female enigma seen through the eyes of an ardent lover, the

---

<sup>146</sup>Manly refers to the problematics of Chaucer's use of the name, Canacee. Manly speculates that Chaucer may have "wished to rehabilitate" her name but the motif for such a possibility is hard to predict because of his unfavorable allusion to Canacee in "The Man of Law's Tale." Manly also considers the possibility of her name in an unknown original which Chaucer may have used (362).

<sup>147</sup>A phrase borrowed from Genette (Figures 213).

Squire.<sup>148</sup> At the heart of this medieval male representation of the East as a female is, in Sarah Kofman's words, the "riddle of female sexuality," the eagerness to "discover" the Mother through a primal, yet forbidden way of incest (94). The emerging figure of the maternal and the incestuous, a psychoanalytic composite presented through the image of the Eastern princess is a self-imposed task of arrogating the male on the part of the narrator and making the Orient yield its secret, as the other, the woman.

The Eastern princess does not counter-read such an attempt. The few words she speaks are addressed to the distressed bird. Further, the bird-vision itself is conjured to her through a "flat mirror" presented to her. Drawing on comparisons between the reflection and reproduction of a plane mirror and the notion of woman being reduced to the likeness of the surface of a plane mirror, Irigaray argues elaborately in Speculum of the Other Woman that this mirror, unlike the concave mirror, duplicates the image and the representation given to her by the male. Seen in this perspective, Canacee who literally holds a mirror given to her by the knight reflects what the narrator wants her to do. That is to reproduce the image of the female bird as someone forever fixated on the male and subject to the paternal. The

---

<sup>148</sup>See Kofman's use of a slightly different phrase for the title of her book, The Enigma of Woman.

Eastern female is also made to see through a male-given mirror, language. What it reflects is a male desire and male discourse; his longing that she should be his passive other in desire, and also his subordinate in discourse as the male dependent other. Her desire and language are mirrored according to masculine formulations. The bird twitters out its bleeding self in a language patterned according to male desire--female abandonment, and male mediation and restoration as curative principles.

The feminization, then, of the East is traced back to the narrative stance of the Squire, the teller, which, in fact, is the site of medieval Western discourse. This place, as Irigaray emphasizes, privileges sameness, self of the male, over the other: a terrain of signification which views the other in relation to itself. This site offers, in her words, a mirror, and not a "looking glass from the Other side" (Irigaray, This Sex 9-22).<sup>149</sup> Desirous of making Canacee speak his language within the parameters of the Tale, which is a foreign language to Canacee, the Squire presents her a recipient of a flat mirror. What Canacee sees, then, is the desire of the Squire as a male writer to present her as he sees her--as an Easterner and female. Her access to his language, as inscribed in the bird's language, is guaranteed through the ring. But in this admittance into

---

<sup>149</sup>See publisher's note under "other/same" (219-222).



another language, she stands in a colonial relationship, a mere dependant on the symbolic. Hence Canacee is a doubly caged bird, incarcerated within Western and masculine representations. A woman ordinarily caught in a single colonized process due to a flat mirror imaging "can come into being as the inverted other of the masculine subject" (This Sex 129). The Wife of Bath, in fact, seeks to subvert this male mirroring which presents the female distorted other according to male desire, and she suggests--in no uncertain post-medieval terms--that female desire can be privileged in texts only by rewriting them from the latter's point of view. Unlike the Western fictive female, Canacee does not speak. She is silent. Her body and her land are the Squire's signifying sites.

#### C: FEMINIZATION OF THE ORIENT:

Related to the projection of the palimpsestic figure of the Eastern female is the feminization of the East. While the East is domesticated in "The Man of Law's Tale," the Orient in "The Squire's Tale" is feminized. The Eastern knight himself is a feminized figure. He is an object of fascination and not an agent of action. He does not bring about any dramatic turn of events. Rather the strange knight helps inscribe images of magic and mystery associated with the East.

A comparison between the Squire's knight and the Indian king in "The Knight's Tale" offers a striking difference. The Squire's knight is unlike his fictive counterpart in "The Knight's Tale," the warrior king of India, the great Emetreus (A 2156) who fights for Arcite in King Theseus' theatre to help him win his lady, Emelye. The Knight says that the Eastern king rides like the god of arms, Mars (A 2159). Then the narrator focuses the reader's eyes on the visual effect of the armorial bearings of the Eastern king. The Knight says:

His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars  
 Couched with perles white and rounde and gret;  
 His sadel was of brend gold and newe ybete;  
 A manteler upon hi shulder hangynge,  
 Bret-ful of rubyes rede as fyr sparklynge;  
 (A 2160-2164)

Belligerent and spectacular, Emetreus is a picture of robust virility and Eastern splendor. He endorses, by his presence in Athens, what Clein calls the "Heraldic View," the celebration of the "values of the military elite" (25). The strange knight who makes an unexpected entry into the court of Cambyuskan is a pale version of a curious foil to this Eastern king. He neither exemplifies the heraldic view of Emetreus, nor the romance vigor of a knight like Gawain referred to in the text (F 95).

He is, further, a far cry from Chaucer's ideal picture of knighthood, as embodied in the first storyteller, the

Knight.<sup>150</sup> His knightly duties were offered for the defense of the Christian faith, a cause which the Church imposed on the medieval knights. He is a valorizer of ideal knighthood by his chivalry, courtesy, deportment, and speech. Compared to the fully detailed career of the choicest of the pilgrims on the way to Canterbury, as presented by Chaucer, the Eastern knight's portrait is fragmentary and elliptical.

Further, the narrator accomplishes the feminization of the Orient by exploiting some of the romance features such as ceremonious feasting, appearance of a (strange) knight, magical gifts, female prize, and reunion of the lovers. The Orient, which emerges from "The Squire's Tale," is a fictional locale, half-revealed and half-expressed. The exotic landscape holds an aura of mystery and the marvellous essence of magic. It is a supernatural world of enchantment, an antithesis to the rational West.

The reason why the Squire feminizes the East does not find an easy answer. The failure of narration is not attributable to the narrator's inability. The Squire may have been well versed in medieval rhetoric. Chaucer's Squire, as analyzed by Robert Haller, is familiar with medieval rhetorical notions of writing. Aspects of writing were expounded for the late Middle Ages through the "ars dictamini" and the

---

<sup>150</sup>A different view is expressed by Terry Jones in Chaucer's Knight.

"ars poetica" by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Matthew of Vendome, and Peter of Riga. The Squire shows his familiarity with these features of writing by his use of description and other medieval narrative strategies. Haller, however, sets out to prove that the Squire's knowledge of these strategies is inadequate and incomplete (285-295).

Differing from Haller, I want to say that what the Squire lacks is not competency in the use of narrating skills but the ability to escape from constructing objects of desire in his effort at arriving at fullness, the imaginary union with the maternal: the writerly predicament of being caught in the chain of narration of desire. In other words, the problem is not rhetorical but psycholinguistic. In deference to his father's narrativizing effort at presenting a tale of manly courage, sworn brotherhood, courtly love, and winning a lady against the backdrop of supernatural agencies, the Squire tries to seek his own fief in the act of narration. He leaves the familiar world of classical gods, fighting romance heroes, inspiring liege ladies to carve out a fief in the territory of the unfamiliar other, the East. This is a realm already subdued, to a great degree, militarily, by his father's campaigns but not yet in narration.

In psychoanalytical terms, the Squire moves away from his father's narrativizing effort, renegotiating his own

relationship with language and narration. The father-son relationship is remaneuvered; the spell of homosexual homage to the paternal in narration is broken. The son moves toward the maternal, a symbolic return to the mother's womb. In this process, the Squire constructs feminine others through the figures of the bird, the princess, the East, and implies in narration a threatened incestuous joining of the heroine with her brother. The father-son bond is redirected toward the female in the endless shift of differences in the Squire's narrative: a forever substitutable object of desire. The symbolic rediscovery of the mother through incest is hinted at through Canacee's marriage to her brother--an abrupt foreclosure of the tale and the narration of desire. Hence, the tale is a narrative outcome of the sexual renegotiation of an adolescent caught in the family politics of the Oedipus complex.

On the thematic level, moreover, the Host asks the Squire to tell a tale of love. Most other pilgrim narrators, more experienced in matters of love and marriage, choose to limit the area of narration to domestic power play between the male and female spouses: a more practical subject for a provincial group of people. The Squire, on the other hand, the only poet among the pilgrims, a person capable of "enditing," decides to give aesthetic actuality to the far away, the East; the self seeking the other, the Orient, to

formulate his thematics of love revolving around female woe and abjection.

The East and the female, a conjoined feminized entity, instead of being presented in its observed otherness, remains as the mysterious other. The Orient, in particular, emerges as a doubly mediated entity; it is twice distanced by the Occidental mediator, seen through a feminized mediation. In short, there is no dialog between the West and the East, but only a verbalized monolog. The Eastern female, especially, is magically evocative, sexually aberrant or ambiguous. She is circumscribed by her name, and designated as a covetous prize for incestuously warring romance instincts. She enters the intertextual because of the narrator's naming of her, as an excluded figure. Due to the narrating impulses of the storyteller, she exists in a colonial relationship, at once maternal and sexual. She is an ambiguous figure, excluded by her nomination and included as a nurturer and a captive. Her caged existence in the text is a sign of the colonizing tendencies at work: the textual, sexual, familial politics of pilgrim narration.

The tale is an unfinished fragment, an example of the endless chain of desire in narration, Canacee, the East, and Squire's longing to stand in his lady's grace. The final abrupt vision of the triumph of the reunion of the male with the maternal is presented through the possible incestuous

ending of the tale. The Squire has thus renegotiated the father-son relationship, breaking away from the paternal, the phallic authority, by a longed for union with the mother through narrativity in which Cambalo marries his sister. The East, then, exists in the Occidental patriarchal narrative control in threatened incest. Denied of a subject-position, Canacee does not speak; she exists in silence. Hence the tale is an untold story of the Eastern woman.

However, a single narrating site cannot be assigned to the speaking subject. Chaucer makes his narrator, the Squire, tell the tale. He, in turn, says that the tale is taken from other sources. Phrases like "as tellen knyghtes olde" (F 65) and "as the storie telleth us" (F 655) suggest the narrator's position as a compiler--a notion I discussed in Chapter IV. The story, then, is narrated from a dispersed stance. Further, adult impatience at this Tale is conveyed by the Franklin who says that it is a story of "gentilesse," and who goes on to narrate his romance. Besides this prudent adult dissociation from a youngster's adolescent effort, the Tale has the signature of the youngest narrator as a hot lover and a youthful poet, as evidenced by the General Prologue. Chaucer, then, hides behind this contrived narrating stance, and says, "Blameth me nat" -- a disavowal of the colonizing process at work. A similar narrative engineering can be seen in the next chapter which

deals with the representation of the woman in the Eastern medieval context. As I will explain, the narrator and the East are not far removed in this representation as they are in "The Squire's Tale."



## CHAPTER VI

### SEXUAL DISCOURSE TO COLONIAL DISCOURSE

My discussions of Canacee, the Sowdanesse, Floripas, and the unnamed Eastern female figures in Chapters V, IV, III, and II respectively are related to what I have referred to in the Introduction as the dormant phase of Orientalism. This stage is related to exteriority. That is, the Orient of this period is doubly removed from the reader--from the narrator and the fictionalized character. In this chapter, I seek to explore the Eastern female figure in the dominant phase of Orientalism, which includes the nineteenth century, the age of Empire. The Orient is no longer a fictive world. It is a political colony. The last chapter, briefly, refers to the hegemonic phase of Orientalism when the East internalizes the textual system of the West and passes it on to its posterity.<sup>151</sup> In dealing with the dominant phase of

---

<sup>151</sup>JanMohamed applies the terms--dominant and hegemonic phases--to colonialism in his "Economy" (81). By the dominant phase of colonialism, he refers to the political subordination of the native people. By the hegemonic phase, he refers to the natives' internalization of the value system of the colonialist. For a similar but more elaborate inquiry into hegemony, see Williams, Marxism (108-113). Basing his argument on Antonio Gramsci's concepts, Williams points out that "rule" is a direct political form. Hegemony, however, is the imposition of the ideology of a ruling class on a subordinate class.

Orientalism, I intend to analyze Richard Burton's image of the Eastern female in his annotated notes to The Arabian Nights. The study examines the double colonization of the Eastern woman in The Arabian Nights by exploring her dual exchange in the realm of male economy. She exists as an object of interchange both in the textual contract between the Eastern oral narrators and their medieval audience, and the interpretive signification between the Western textual editor and his chosen readership. Burton's textual notes are an historical appropriation of the fictionally colonized woman in the Eastern narrative. His English translation is a double take-over which produces her as a sign of sex and violence in both her fictive and interpreted historical existences. Hence the Eastern woman is a prisoner of narrativity twice. My investigation analyzes Burton's first volume of The Arabian Nights as a projection of a "sexual discourse," put into the imperial service of a colonial discourse, with particular reference to the representation of Scheherazade as a masculinist-imperialist construct.<sup>152</sup>

This chapter investigates Scheherazade's site of narration. This is a place of circulation of female body and male stories. Her speaking site is a place of Eastern

---

<sup>152</sup>I have borrowed the phrase, "sexual discourse," from Kabbani (36). She deals with the topic from the point of thematics. My analysis is from a feminist theoretical perspective which looks into the subject-position of the protagonist as a male-imperialist construct.

patriarchal inscription and Western colonialist discourse. The Eastern female is lost in the site of speaking by her double colonization in the act of being presented as a masculinist-imperialist construct. The Eastern female is trapped both by the narrative skills of the medieval Eastern reciters and the apparent scientific mode of Burton's interpretation. This chapter examines the first volume of Burton's Arabian Nights as a transcultural regulator of the knowledge about the Eastern woman and her desire, for the purpose of nineteenth century empire-building. In my analysis, I seek to iterate and expand Irigaray's notion of the exchangeable body, which I have utilized in Chapters II, IV, and V. I also use Minh-ha's notion of the discourse of the nativist for a re-visioning of the Eastern woman. Inter-relating these two concepts, I argue that Scheherazade's body is circulated in the male economy by her sexual submission to the king. In a similar way, the stories she narrates also promote relationship between male and male in the Eastern patriarchy by her textual submission to male narrativity. Burton uses this textual kinship by extending the circulation of the sexualized Eastern body as a commodity in the colonialist discourse. In short, the chapter demonstrates a significant development in the Western image-making process of the Eastern woman from the dormant phase of Orientalism to the dominant phase.

The Arabian Nights known as the Alf laila wa laila did not have a definitive text in the vernacular literature when it was translated into Les et une Nuits by Antoine Galland in 1704.<sup>153</sup> It may have originated as an Arabic and Persian oral narration with an Indian frame story. The tenth century Ibn-al-Nadim refers to the text. Though some of the European works of the Middle Ages such as Cleomades and Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelone are analogous to the Eastern tale of the "Enchanted Horse" and the story of "Qamar al-Zamaan," the Oriental corpus was known to the West for the first time through Galland's translation of it between 1704 and 1717. The anonymous Grub street translation of Galland's work is not known. However, Duncan Black Macdonald demonstrates the availability of the first translation in English in 1706 (389).

The popularity of the tales in the eighteenth century led to the serialization of the The Arabian Nights in portions.<sup>154</sup> The London News published four hundred forty-five installments of the work for three years from January 1723. The Churchman's Last Shift printed "The Voyages of Sindbad

---

<sup>153</sup>Information about the textual background of the narrative is taken from Kabbani (23-24 & 48). See also Ali's Scheherazade (10-15). For detailed information about the background, history, and manuscript study, see Houtsma's First Encyclopaedia (17-21) and H.A.R. Gibb's Encyclopaedia (358-364).

<sup>154</sup>Information about the serialization taken from Ali (11-12).

the Sailor," selections from the tales in 1720. General Magazine put forth extracts in the latter part of the century. While the Lady's Magazine and Monthly Extracts sent out parts of The Arabian Nights, the Novelist's Magazine printed the work in its entirety. Edward Lane's translation appeared in 1839-41 in three volumes. Though his translation is not complete, it contains detailed comments. John Payne's translation was published in nine volumes in 1882-84. Burton's translation was printed in ten volumes in 1885. His supplemental volumes appeared in 1886-88. His translations are often heavily dependent on Payne's.

A: THE SITE OF STORYTELLING:

The frame story of this Eastern romance opens with King Shahryar taking over the kingdom of India and China from his father. Shahryar's younger brother, Shah Zaman, becomes the ruler of Samarcand. On his older brother's invitation, Shah Zaman sets out to the former's royal place for a visit. Forgetting something he should have brought with him, he goes back to his palace only to see his wife in a faithless act with his cook. In a moment of rage, he kills the two. In answer to Shahryar's inquiry why he is sad on reaching his brother's palace, Shah Zaman replies that he has an

"internal wound" (1.5).<sup>155</sup> When Shahryar goes out on a hunting trip, Shah Zaman sees his sister-in-law in a similar act of infidelity with her slave. On Shahryar's return from the hunt, the younger brother tells his own tale of betrayal. The angry royal listener says that if the "case" had been his, he "would not have been satisfied without slaying a thousand women..." (1.8). But exposure to his own queen's sexual transgression the next day sets him on a different course.

United in common woe, the two brothers leave the palace in order to find out whether this "calamity" has befallen others too (1.10). In their wandering, they come across a Jinni, "a supernatural anthropoid being" (1.10). He opens his coffer which is fastened with seven keys of padlocks and lets out his wife, who is endowed with the brightness of the sun. Keeping her safe by his side, he goes to sleep. The lady signals the two royal watchers and threatens them that she will arouse her sleeping husband's malignity if they do not have sexual relationship with her. They yield their virtue and signal rings to her. The gloating lady exhibits "signets of five hundred and seventy men" (1.12) which she has acquired by similar sexual coercion. With a passionate commitment to the notion of female infidelity, they return

---

<sup>155</sup>All citations are taken from Burton's Thousand Nights. Volume and page number are cited in the text.

to their respective kingdoms.

Shayryar commands his wife and concubines to be killed. The king further gives order that his Wazir, minister, should bring the king "the bride of the night" (1.14) who is beheaded the next morning. After supplying brides for three years, the exhausted Wazir comes home to his daughters, Scheherazade and Dunyazad. Scheherazade, the older daughter, decides to offer herself sexually to the king. She tells stories for a thousand and one nights. In the course of this long narration, she gives birth to three sons. When the telling ends, she pleads with the king to save her for the sake of her children. The king marries her.

Within this well known frame story is a place of speaking which Scheherazade utilizes for the sexual and textual appeasement of the king. Sexuality is closely knit with textuality in The Arabian Nights. Both these are related to circulation and establishment of relationship between male and male. What Scheherazade seeks to do is to subordinate her body and the corpus of the stories to an act of reproduction. In this, she submits herself and the stories to masculine sexuality and textuality respectively. The dynamic exchange between stories is kept alive by Scheherazade's admonition to Dunyazad that the latter should help her in this s/textual enterprise. Scheherazade tells Dunyazad:

Note well what directions I entrust to thee!  
 When I have gone into the king and seest that  
 he hath had his carnal will of me, do thou say  
 to me:- O my sister, an thou be not sleepy, relate  
 to me some new story, delectable and delightsome  
 the better to speed our waking hours...I will tell  
 thee a tale which shall be our deliverance, if so  
 Allah please, and which shall turn the king from his  
 blood-thirsty custom (1.24)

Here Scheherazade brings out her relation to desire. She does not have any right to her own desire. This is one of the characteristics of an exchangeable body which Irigaray points out. She says that sexual labor requires that a woman maintain her body as the "material substratum of the object of desire, but that she herself never have access to desire" (This Sex 188). An exchangeable body exists as an object for male desire. Such a body reproduces male desire. Seen in this perspective, Scheherazade's body also comes under the domination of male desire. Female desire does not exist. The Eastern female storyteller is under the narrative control of the frame narrator.

However, Scheherazade decides to speak by telling stories. The relationship between commodities and speech is a curious one. The exchangeable objects cannot speak the language of the symbolic. They have to speak within it. Even if they speak, their language is limited and restricted. In her observations on commodity and speech, Irigaray says that commodities speak but they speak "mostly dialects and patois." She says that the remarks of the commodities



"confirm the exchangers' plan for them" (This Sex 179).

Irigaray's insight brings out the double bind of a commodity. It reflects both the desire and speech of the male-- a concept I have used in Chapter V on Chaucer's "Squire's Tale."

Scheherazade, too cannot speak her desire and write her text. She can only mimic the male desire and tell stories which are given to her by a male narrator. She cannot subvert patriarchy. She can only circumvent it. Commenting on female speech within the symbolic, Irigaray points out that woman has to resubmit her body to the symbolic order and then reduce the silence of womanhood through speech.

Irigaray suggests that the role of woman is to "recover the place of her exploitation" by resubmitting herself within the system of discourse and representation (This Sex 76). In the Eastern textual context, what Irigaray suggests is not possible because Scheherazade is a figure lost in the site of speaking by her double colonization in the act of being presented as a masculinist-imperial construct. She attempts to subvert male authority through a complicated strategy: sexual and textual reproduction. She redeems herself and Eastern sisterhood by taking on the role the society assigned to her--an exchange value which places her body as a medium between and for male communication. She not only insists that her father hand her over to the king but she also

fulfills her female destiny by giving birth to children in the course of her narration. She could neither position herself outside this symbolic order nor appropriate it from inside--a dilemma feminist criticism often maps out. The royal hand writes her destiny and her sexuality. Hence she decides to tell stories to postpone death from a couch, where many a woman has previously lost her life.

Scheherazade's stories are not her own: they have already been told by someone else. This is an instance of her submission to culture again, as I will demonstrate. For instance, in the "Tale of the Trader and the Jinni," she initiates the narrative with the passive statement, "It is related, O auspicious King that there was a merchant..." (1.30). On the second night, when the king commands her saying, "Tell thy Tale," she says, "It hath reached me, O auspicious King..." (1.27). There are references to "a twice-told tale" (1.27). On the third night, when the king tells her, "Finish for us that tale of thine," she replies, "With joy and goodly glee! It hath reached me, O auspicious King..." (1.37). Again at the beginning of "The Fisherman and the Jinni," she says, "It hath reached me, O auspicious King..." (1.38). The expression, "It hath reached me, O auspicious King," is a repetitive device used at the beginning of almost all the tales. By using a comment of reportage like "it is related," or "it hath reached me,"

Scheherazade lays down the responsibility of ownership of the tales to other sources. They are reported to her by a calif or a spirit. They are not her tales; she simply reports them--a similar feature seen in the narratives discussed in my Chapters IV and V dealing with The Canterbury Tales.

What Scheherazade does here is to use a literary convention closely connected to her culture. She is made to activate what Irene Gerhardt calls a "witnessing system" in Arabic literature (378). This system originated to preserve the authenticity of the sayings of Mohemet which are not recorded in the Koran. This witness-chain comprised of the contemporary who heard the sayings from Mohemet, the intermediary witnesses who passed them, and the trustworthy person who is finally committed to conveying the message at present. Hence Arabic narration makes a distinction between anonymous tales and compiled reports (Gerhardt 379-80). By adopting the method of narrating compiled stories, Scheherazade proves the authenticity of her narration as do the narrators in Chaucer under study. But more than that, she affirms the patriarchal stories narrated in those compiled texts. She chooses to speak indirectly. Nevertheless, in her hiddenness--a feature I referred to earlier in Chapter IV she is reinforcing the images of the Eastern women inscribed in those reports.

Among the reported tales of the first thirty four nights which form the first volume of Burton's translation of The Arabian Nights, only "The Eldest Lady's Tale" (1.163-1.173) and the "Tale of the Portress" (1.173-1.186) are narrated by women. These female narrators are, however, only embedded narrators who are positioned within patriarchal parameters of the frame story. The subjectivity of these women is controlled by male recitation. Hence Scherherazade's vision of the female figures is mostly through male-mediated tales within the larger masculinist discourse. These female images are Eastern male constructs presented to an uncultivated audience. The narrating site too is constrained; it does not conjure up images of fire-side or bedtime stories in the ordinary sense. The place of narration is the bed, befouled by the former queen, and reminiscent of the guiltless blood of many a female occupant. The point of departure of the tales is also a tale of wicked women, in particular, the story of a childless woman who tries to kill the child of her husband by a slave (1.27-31). Scherherazade is thus guaranteed physical survival by her submission to the vision of the male narrator of the frame story to see woman as object of sex or violence--a textual act which makes the power of gender

visible.<sup>156</sup> She is not someone who "survives by condemning her kind," as Rana Kabbani suggests (51). The women in the work are as powerless before this male attempt at narrating female sensuality as they are before King Shahryar's intention to sexualize violence. The female protagonist is, thus, a sign of specularization (Irigaray, Speculum 72), an object of male subjectivity and vision.

Because of her subordination to the narrator of the frame story, her subjectivity is separated from the rest of Eastern womanhood in the text.<sup>157</sup> She enters the frame story to tell her embedded narrations as a subordinate self, a signified, to the male subject. She is presented as the cultured elite, knowledgeable and intelligent. She is given these accomplishments to give a semblance of power to the female. However, she is made to use her stories to comment on the behavior of the fictive women through power of words, grammar, and logic. She is differentiated from the other women. Made to distance herself from the other women in the text, she presents images of lecherous women for an exclusive male audience's view. Kabbani observes that though

---

<sup>156</sup>The notion of a female possessing a male gaze is analyzed from the point of view of film theory in Teresa de Lauretis's Technologies (113). My analysis is confined to narrativity.

<sup>157</sup>The notion of the unauthoritative speech of the heroine is discussed from the point of view of film theory in de Lauretis' Technologies (123).

scheherazade is learned, her knowledge "serves only to please and placate a man," and that such a learning has "no other function at all" (51). Agreeing with Kabbani's basic notion of the powerlessness of Scheherazade's learning, I want to add that the problem is to be traced to her site of speaking. Male depiction has projected her image so.<sup>158</sup> The women's promiscuity, boldy and visibly etched, sustains the male logic of Shahryar that sees womanhood as a space for sexual betrayal. The frame narrative opens a world of female sexual transgression to the reader. The jilted males are often those who possess political power, supernatural might, or social worth. Shahryar and Shah Zaman are kings; the Jinni is in command of superhuman powers. In "The Third Shaykh's Story," the betrayed male, the narrator, is a chief. In "The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot," the cuckolded husband is a merchant. "The Tale of the Ensorcelled Prince," presents a deceived Sultan. Royal households, Jinni's resting place, princely residences, and merchant's couches become spatial markers of women's infidelity; these stories are voiced fragments of aris-

---

<sup>158</sup>In his "Terminal Essay," Burton states that many readers have commented on the female characters' independent decision and masterful action. Burton responds saying that "women, all the world over, are what men make them." Amazonian women fiction presents women "without masculine guidance" (Thousand Nights vol. 10. 192). My feminist approach differs from Burton's positive notion of man-made fictive women.

tocratic female deceit. The good women are presented as lacklustre figures.<sup>159</sup> Scheherazade's narrating position is mediated by the frame narrator's vision. Her site of narration is a "place of exploitation." She neither desires to "recover" this place nor "unveil" the tyranny of her royal listener through her "discourse," as Irigaray suggests women to do (This Sex 76). This is because of the disempowerment inherent in the Eastern female's subject-position. Her sexuality and textuality are both controlled by the king and the frame narrator respectively. Irigaray's concept of woman entering male discourse to expose masculinist tendencies by being not absorbed by them is not applicable to Scheherazade's site of speaking.

She does not write. She is given a body of stories already inhabited by women both lecherous and violent. For instance, in "The Tale of the Ensorcelled Prince," the narrator, the Sultan, is beaten by his faithless wife when her husband punishes her lover. She turns the Sultan into "half stone and half man" (1.76). Taking care of her lover in a mausoleum, she comes, however, everyday to wreak her violence on him. The victimized husband says that she "strippeth" and "whippeth" him daily "with an hundred strokes of the leathern scourge" (1.77). Eastern female is a

---

<sup>159</sup> See Kabbani for a discussion of the pious and prudent women in The Arabian Nights who are "not disturbingly sexual" (50).

figure of violence in romance signification.

Further, in "The Porter and Three Ladies of Baghdad," the three women who are found in verbal dalliance with the porter exhibit sadistic violence. The first woman, the procuratrix of the residence who hires him to carry her load of purchase, provokes him into lewd comments in the act of washing her body, and cuffs and bashes him for his "ugly" words (1.90). The oldest lady of the house soon joins this brutal game. She comes down on him with "sorer beating" (1.90). She is followed by another lady who lures the masochistic male into more lurid verbal play by directing his looks towards female anatomical details and buffets him till the salon rings with the blows (1.91). Lane's translation of the same scene, however, avoids references to the sordid male gaze projected through the three women and the porter. The narrator in Lane's translation of "The Porter and the Ladies of Bagdad," says that one lady "slapped" the porter, and another pulled him, and the third beat him with sweet-scented flowers..." (1.59).<sup>160</sup> Allusions to female anatomy rendered through the exchange of words, which is characteristic of Burton's translation, is carefully deleted in Lane's version. Burton hastens to add in his textual notes, however, that these three women, "'nuns of

---

<sup>160</sup>All citations from Lane are from his translation of The Thousand and One Nights. Volume and page number are cited in the text.



Theleme' are physically pure: their debauchery is of the mind, not the body" (1.93). What the scene highlights is not the dichotomized notion of mind and body but the close-knit presence of sex and violence, a romance feature exploited by the reciter in order to inscribe the female in an uncanny representation.

Incongruous images of women are produced from the narrating site. Related to the sensuous and violent image of the Eastern woman is the figure of a witch. A witch is someone who stands outside the traffic of women as marketable commodities. Woman as an incoherent self in a tension-ridden relationship with her hearth, home, surroundings, and landscape is projected through the figure of the witch in The Arabian Nights. She often possesses magical powers to transform others into shapes in order to deal with her problems. For instance, in "The First Shaykh's Story," the narrator's childless wife changes her husband's concubine and child into a heifer and a calf respectively. Female resorting to magic is a counterforce to deal with the problematics of childbearing relationship in the story. Sorcery tilts womb-power. Witchcraft is a patriarchal inscription in this instance, because the childless woman disrupts circulation of male economy by negating the reproductive use value of being a commodity. Hence, she is depicted as an anomaly, an incongruent figure, since she resists cir-

ulation of exchangeable objects. I have discussed resistant women who are presented as giantesses or monsters in Chapter II and III.

Further, women handle conflictive situations by their recourse to magic. In "The Second Shaykh's Story" (1.32-35), when the second chief's wife sees that her brothers-in-law are going to murder her husband while sailing to seize his money, she becomes an "Ifritah" (1.34), a female spirit, and carries him to an island. Her sister transforms the two brothers-in-law into two dogs. Fraternal jealousy is controlled by the aid of supernatural powers.

The transformed object, the dog, occupies a low place in the Eastern landscape. "The Third Shaykh's Story" presents the chief's wife in a disloyal act with her slave. When she is exposed, she changes her husband into a dog (1.36). A similar episode is related in the Tale of the En-sorcelled Prince" where the Sultan's wife uses her "egromancy" (1.76) to transform her husband into half-stone and half-man, and the citizens of his kingdom into fishes when her husband penalizes her leper-lover. Women as sorceresses are seen exercising their supernatural powers for their sexual and familial conflicts. Often the women do so for the wrong reasons. Kabbani alludes to the category of demonesses, procuresses, sorceresses and witches in The Arabian Nights who form a negative stereotype (48-49).

Feminist criticism has exposed this male classificatory impulse at delineating the witch, as I have referred to in Chapter II. What is significant in this chapter is the status of the transformed objects. They are dogs, half-stones, or fishes metamorphosed by hysterical women. These images stand for diminished respectability. In Islamic worldview, dogs can be one of the "vilest of creatures" to which personhood could be reduced.<sup>161</sup> The witch figure is a sign of patriarchal sexual anxiety in the Eastern cultural matrix. Woman's purity is a needed requirement for her value as an exchangeable body. Once this body becomes a use value--from being a virgin to a wife--the female is subject to further male maternal anxiety. This is related to the male concern that only his legal offsprings should inherit his property. Hence circulation of the patrilineal name is to be unsullied and intact. Male sexual anxiety, then, is connected to the smooth and legal flow of circulation of commodities. The female who is likely to resist this even flow of traffic is made an incongruous figure.

---

<sup>161</sup>Clinton argues in "Madness" that the king suffers from psychosis and Scheherazade's stories are a talking cure (37-51). He says that the transformation of men into dogs is analogous to the queen's act of changing the king's royal state into one of psychological humiliation. This has reduced him to the status of a dog, the vilest of creatures in Islamic terms (47). By her stories, the protagonist makes the king confront these images as a cure. Rowe applies feminist concepts to the treatment of fairy tales ("Feminism" 237-257).

While ensuring reproduction of male stories through her narration, Scheherazade also affirms the use value of being a commodity by giving birth to three sons. They are marked with the royal paternal name. She appeals to the king in the name of sexual labor that she should be saved as a "dole" to the infants, and that they will not have any other woman to "rear" them if she is killed (10.54). Simultaneously, she refers to her textual labor also that she has narrated stories about Kings of Chosroes, caliphs, and other royalty who have had "greater" and more "grievous" sexual betrayals than the king (10.54). The king decides to marry her.

Royal mediation is something that the body of the stories affirms often. The final act of invoking the royal mediation is prepared for in the stories. This is an interested activity of pleasing the sovereign listener. For instance, in the "Tale of the Enorcelled Prince" (1.69-82), when the Sultan of the Black Islands is transformed into half-stone and half-man by the fury of his faithless wife, it is the king of the land who redeems him. The spell cast over the city is released by the intervention of the king. In a similar way, in the tale of "The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad, the Caliph of the place enters the mansion of the ladies where two wicked women were turned into two black bitches and restores them to their human shapes. The Caliph helps mend a broken marriage contract. He gives

protection to the procuratrix who needs it (1.185-186). Scheherazades, at best, can postpone death by entering into male textual exchange. But only political power can save them.

Women's power of storytelling at best can circumvent patriarchy. But oppressionist forces of patriarchy can be controlled only through political means. Scheherazade is analogous to the hunted who tell the story of the hunter. Her site of speaking is complicitous. She is like those elite and educated women in the Third World who perpetuate the hunter's story in classrooms for fear of academic reprisal. She has the privilege of class, education, and the ability to tell. However, she, like many of her sisters, tell the tales of the hunter. Empowering women is a political task. Education, at best, can only circumvent patriarchy in the Third World. Such an education may often reproduce unwitting hunters by the internalization of patriarchy on the part of the hunted.

On another level, Scheherazade is also like one of those token women in the public or academic spheres in any society who has to think and act in accordance with the male status quo of their work places. These women are rewarded, and are made to feel that they are different from the rest of the women because of their talents. These token women are made to strengthen the center by accepting the place in the

margin. For these women, the only way of public and professional survival depends on certain compromises. They are willing to perpetuate the centralist vision of the marginal, and they also separate themselves from the other women.<sup>162</sup>

B: THE COLONIAL SITE OF SPEAKING IN THE TEXT:

Besides the site of speaking assigned to the hunted, Burton's translations of The Arabian Nights reveal another site. This is the place where an Orientalist is engaged in the image-making of the East. Unlike the medieval romance writer, the Orientalist situates himself in the East, studies it, masters its texts, and translates them from the site of research, as I have described in Chapter I. The knowledge thus collected, formulated, and disseminated to the West is a cultural re-presentation of the East to the West. The annotator, the glossator, and the grammarian interpret the East. This specialized knowledge comes to co-exist with the height of colonial power in the nineteenth century. The Orientalist becomes the spokesperson of this awesome power and knowledge. The Orient is no longer a fictive entity but a "career" in the expression of Benjamin Disraeli (Said, *Orientalism* 164-166). The Orientalist cuts out a fiefdom for himself in this interested research. Often

---

<sup>162</sup>This description is based on Rich's definition of token women confirming to the centralist position in their places of work. Quoted in Spivak's Other Worlds (106-107).

he is the consulted expert, a resource person, in the colonial rule.

The translation of The Arabian Nights into English not only inserts it into the textual system of the period but also serves as an interested activity, an interpretive reading, that promotes colonialist comprehension of the subject race. The Western narrator who projects the Eastern female image is no longer a fictive narrator. He is a flesh-and-blood soldier in colonial service. The hunted in the text undergoes a double colonization. While Scheherazade's locus of relating the tales is used for Eastern male inscriptions of femininity, the same site is appropriated for Western colonial writings.

What distinguishes Burton from the fictive narrators who give reports about the East is his linguistic mastery over the land. His travel becomes an entry point to penetrate the mystery of the oriental text. His translation is done during what he calls his "pilgrimage" in the Arab lands (1.xxi). In fact, his reports about the East are given in the form of pilgrimages elsewhere. He is the central narrator and the observing consciousness of these narrations. Said points out the intertwined motives of travel and imperialism in Burton's The Land of Midian Revisited (194).

An interested traveller, Burton is also an annotator and a self-styled scientific observer. In The Arabian

Nights, he sets out to render the East with linguistic and anthropological precision. He says that he has "carefully Englished the picturesque turns and novel expressions of the original" ("The Translator's Foreword" 1.xiv) (emphasis mine). He also states that he has "carefully sought out the English equivalent of every Arabic word..." (1.xvi) (emphasis mine). The choice of English and its stated use for a faithful rendering of the original are more than a multilingual person's effort to promote cultural literary sharing. The voice of the translator and that of the empire are interrelated in Burton's text. He draws the reader's attention to England being the "greatest Mohammedan empire" and his country's need to learn more about the most powerful pagans, the Muslims ("Forword" 1. xxiii). The speaking site is negotiated for the voice of the empire. Said alludes to this blended voice when he says that Burton's utterance "feeds into the European ambition for rule over the Orient" (Orientalism 196). English itself occupies an imperial status. It is a tool used for empire building and Orientalist constructs. Just as the Eastern female is mediated through desire, language, narrativity, and constructed site of speaking in the texts analyzed so far, she is also mediated through another kind of presence: colonial considerations.

Burton invests his translation with an additional



motive: anthropological study of the East. He asserts that The Arabian Nights shows the ease of the "Oriental fancy" of seeing the "spiritual and the supernatural" as "the material and the natural"; hence the work is "a perfect expositor of the medieval Moslem mind" (1. xviii). Burton is engaged in a two-pronged appropriation. One, he uses the literary text as place of information and description about the East. This is analogous to the naked appropriation of native information I will be referring to in Chapter VIII. Two, by doing so, he ignores the romance elements of The Arabian Nights, and thus its constructed nature. This is a complicitous process. It de-aestheticizes the generic approach--a native mode suitable for its contextualized reception, and shapes the literary type as the study of the other for an imperial audience. In fact, the statement about the medieval Moslem mind being an unempirical one not only deprives the native of his or her superior scientific and cultural heritage during the Middle Ages but also helps create a colonial space in nineteenth-century literature; the native is fitted for it. Images of an irrational subject race who are given to sexual appetites people this space. Knowledge and power reinforce each other in the realm of discursivity, as we have seen in a similar ideological construct, the Eastern princess, in Chapter II.

Burton adds scientificity to his literary project by

saying that the "speciality" of The Arabian Nights is its "anthropology" (1.xviii). He refers to the "best help" he offered to found the Anthropological society" (1.xix), affirms that his "explanatory notes...will form a repertory of Eastern knowledge in its esoteric phase," and further states that for the "facility of reference an index of anthropological notes is appended to each volume" (1.xix).

What Burton has done is to transform The Arabian Nights into an anthropologist-nativist text. This change takes place with the consent of the female. Scheherazade's unwitting affirmation of the Eastern male narrator's vision of the female is teased out of the text. The native is made to conform to the fictive romance image given to him or her through interpreted anthropological notes. Further, a close company of receptors is formed through the Burton private reading club. Burton believes that the text has afforded him "a long-sought opportunity of noticing practices and customs which interest all mankind" but which "'Society' will not hear mentioned" (1.xviii). So only the initiated, namely, the Burton club, are in a position to appropriate the special information which the rest of the Victorian society rejects by its notions of "respectability" and "propriety" (1.xviii).

The act of adding scientific authority to his interpretive notes and giving them as knowledge about the colonized

other to a select group of "us" is less from a point of dialog than "gossip." In fact, Minh-ha refers to anthropology as gossip (68). The original impulse of this, as she shows, is to be traced to the Old English "godsibb," a "profuse, idle talk between kinsmen" which is the outcome of "boredom and the need to talk" (68). In the nineteenth-century site of "godsibb," the voices of them are under study by us. Kinship is the basis of this gossip. The transference of one sign system of a romance text into another sign system, an anthropological record, is done because of the bonded nature offered by the kinship; "a willing suspension of disbelief" the close-knit readership assures. Minh-ha refers to such anthropological efforts as a "commitment from both the speaker and the listener" which makes possible the "tightly knit strength of Nativist discourse" (68). In fact, a discourse about the colonized by the colonizer, with the apparent consent of the fictive voices of the spoken about, rests on conspiratorial silences of the teller and the listeners. These silences are, however, fillable blanks by those voices talked about. Burton's nativist gossips, because of the lack of the counter-voice of the ethnic woman in the kinship-club, are monologic. The club itself is a metaphorical place where the Eastern female is exchanged as commodity from the oral reciters of the Middle Ages to the nineteenth-century anthropological nativist audience.

The appropriation of the female body through double subjection for hegemonic purposes is accomplished through male signature and scientific practice. By renegotiating the site of Scheherazade's speaking for an emergence of a supposedly scientific anthropological notes, Burton has converted his interpretive tool as a cultural apparatus to inscribe the female other, doubly removed from him--once by his masculine stance and twice by his imperial practice.

In the imperial appropriation of the Eastern female, Burton supplies the voice of historical authenticity to the romance figures of The Arabian Nights. The work which opens with the world of female sexual transgression is conjured up as Eastern reality in the textual notes. For instance, Shahryar's wife's infidelity is pictured in the text in lurid terms. She is presented in her act of faithlessness with a "blackmoor slave" (1.6) when she goes to a fountain with her maidens. In his notes, Burton says,

Debauched women prefer negroes on account of the size of their parts. I measured one man in Somaliland who quiescent, numbered nearly six inches. This is a characteristic of the negro race...consequently, the "deed of kind" takes a much longer time and adds greatly to the woman's enjoyment. In my time no honest Hindi Moslem would take his womenfolk to Zanzibar on account of the huge attractions and enormous temptations there offered by them. (1.6)

The voluptuous Eastern woman, transferred from the fictive realm to historical realism, is subject to an analysis of her pleasure. The repressed in the Eastern female's desire

is exemplified in the figure of Scheherazade who submits herself to the sexual and textual will of Shahryar--the one who has control over her body and narration. The narration projects the image of repression through the characters of the two sisters whose sole intent is to appease a male tyrant by telling and listening to embedded narratives which depict images of women who are characterized by sexual transgressions. This is a contradiction showing the effect of male desire in imagining female subjectivity.

Apart from the contrariety embodied in the subject-position of the protagonist, the middle Eastern female's "jouissance," as fantasized by Burton, lacks religious-cultural reality--a fact which any assessment of the Eastern female sexuality has to take into consideration. Reference to Hindi Moslem woman's desire is to be seen by an analyst in the context of the Koranic view of adultery punishable by death. Her East Indian cultural origin further places her in a network of territorial and kinship relationships where female honor is given prime importance. Her language, Hindi, and religion, Islam, situate her in a religiously-sanctioned power relationship within a tight-knit social group of kin.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, the practice of clitoral removal among

---

<sup>163</sup>For a detailed analysis of the "Concept-metaphors of Territoriality and of Woman," see Spivak's "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" in Other Worlds (359).

the middle Eastern womanhood in several communities is a proof of the female's violated pleasure. Burton is aware of this practice of "female circumcision" (1.90). The fictively ascribed figure of the woman in her jouissance endorsed by Western textual notes is one of the induced images in the work; they are "not an imaginary which would correspond to the specificity of female sexuality" (Irigarary, "Women's Exile" 72). In other words, both the narration and the notes deprive the female subjectivity of her consciousness. The site of enunciation is a place of silence; it conceals male and imperial oppressions.

Furthermore, closely allied to the representation of the Eastern female is the figure of the black slave who is her sexual partner. King Shah Zaman's wife is seen with "a black cook of loathsome aspect...foul with kitchen grease and grime" (1.4). Shahryar's wife is sighted in the company of "a blackamoor slave" (1.6). In "The Third Shaykhs's Story," the chief's wife is detected lying with "a black slave" (1.36). In the "Tale of the Ensorcelled Prince," the wife of King Mahmud is with "a hideous negro slave" (1.71). Libidinal excess in these instances is not only chromatized but also subalternized. These men are black and slaves; marginalized entities. The sexual alliance of elite women and socially inferior men in The Arabian Nights is a romance construct. In reality, the royal women are objects of ex-

change in a kinship to which the medieval plebian audience are outsiders. The very exchange of the veiled and inaccessible royal women is invisible to the latter. A desire to appropriate the female textually is realized by means of de-classing her through black slaves: a vulgar act of discovering the royal maternal. Like the Eastern elite female, the male slave also has no voice. He is not given a subalternist position to speak from. Hence the portraits of female libidinal excess and black participation remain an uneasy sexual joke--subversion by an uncultivated audience through bawdy laughter. Scheherazade is made to take side with the male audience but not the silent or silenced womanhood or manhood.

Further, the figure of the speaking woman, Scheherazade, itself undergoes distorted representation by Burton. The meta-narrator of The Arabian Nights introduces Scheherazade in the following manner:

(She) had perused the books, annals and legends of preceding kings, and the stories, examples and instances of by-gone men and things...she had collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers. She had perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart; she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts and accomplishments...(1.15)

The heroine of the Eastern saga is presented as an embodiment of knowledge, a tool of apparent power. Separated from the other women in the text, she is made to represent talent, skill, and power of words. Narrative manipulation in

the course of the events, however, renders her as a means of circulating male stories. She undergoes a double colonization when Burton inserts a different concept of the educated Eastern woman into his notes. He says, "These learned and clever young ladies are very dangerous in the East" (1.15). Burton's textual authority is engaged in a double task here. It negates Scheherazade's literary prototype; also his notes endorse the colonialist view of natives' knowledge. Metlitzky demonstrates, as I have shown in Chapter IV, that the prototype of the Eastern women who combine beauty and brain in Arabic literature can be traced to Tawaddud. Tawaddud, like Scheherazade, is an exchangeable object. The merchant who owns her tries to sell her to a king. Though these women are intelligent, they are not dangerous. Burton's nineteenth-century comment obliterates this medieval Eastern notion of a learned Oriental woman who is an intellectual with an exemplary character.

In addition, he reinscribes his notion as an imperialist--a preceived notion of Eastern woman's scholarship as dangerous. In the nineteenth-century imperialist episteme, native knowledge is either dangerous or lacking. The proponent of the notion of lack is Thomas Babington Macaulay, who introduced English education in India--a reference I have already made in Chapter I, and which I will briefly discuss in Chapter VIII in connection with the



hegemonic influence of English on the natives. Seen in this two-part paradigm, the Eastern woman's knowledge is either to be shunned or absorbed. She is a sexually fraught figure or a possessor of knowledge which is to be regulated by Western scholarship. Her intellect is unknowable as the territory she is in: a "terra incognita" waiting to be brought under Western classificatory impulses. Both her knowledge and her supposed jouissance are controlled by a narrative whose speaking site is exploited for the transformation of an Eastern patriarchal inscription to a Western colonial discourse.

The Eastern woman who emerges from Burton's Arabian Nights is doubly disempowered. Her subjectivity is unexplored by her. Silence surrounds her subject-position. A similar disempowerment is seen in the instance of an Eastern woman's relationship with Burton in real life. She exists in his life as a fragmented silence in his sexual and linguistic lives. Going to India in 1842 as a cadet to advance himself quickly through a military career, Burton also plunged into the study of the Eastern languages. His linguistic conquests are spectacular. He learnt Sindi, Punjabi, Telugu, Pashto, Multani, Armenian and Turkish, and preferred Arabic above all others. He refers to the Arabic language as "a faithful wife following the mind and giving birth to its offspring" (Brodie 50). Burton's conquest of the linguistic

other is accomplished by positing a female core to it.

The female and the language, as seen in the figure of Burton's East Indian mistress, however, pose interpretive problems for him. He deals with it by applying the principle of cultural reductionism. Unlike the easily conquered languages, she possesses a silence, a colonized inner force, which Burton does not seem to comprehend. He says that every British officer was provided with a "Bubu," a "coloured sister," who serves as a native mistress (Isabel Burton 1314.5). Listing down the advantages of having the system of keeping a "Bubu," Burton says,

(She is the) "walking dictionary"...indispensable to the student, and she teaches him not only Hindostani grammar, but the syntaxes of native life. She keeps house for him, never allowing him to save money, or if possible, to waste it. She keeps the servants in order. She has an infallible recipe to prevent maternity, especially if her tenure of office depends on such compact. She looks after him in sickness, and is one of the best nurses, and as it is not good for man to live alone, she makes him a manner of home. (Isabel Burton 135).

Language and care are the two things the Eastern woman offers her colonial master. She is in a linguistically and sexually exploited position. Her body and language placed at the service of her master, the Eastern female remains an alien to the powerful discourse of the colonialist male. The economically, politically, and sexually subordinated "Bubus" are a class created to sustain the libidinal energy of the British soldier. Establishing and maintaining colonies are a

demanding enterprise on the emotional energy of the rulers.<sup>164</sup> Constant mobility and rapid cultural adjustments in a foreign soil are a strain to the body and mind. The colonialists' need for emotional well-being and sexual services are supplied by the native women in this context before the arrival of the Western women. Beverley Gartrell refers to these functions of the Eastern women in relation to the British colonial army as "sub-contracted nurturant and restorative services" (173). The women are a cultural castaways in their own society, and they are a partially alienated presence in the British cantonment. They occupy what Isabel Burton calls a gray "half-married" zone in the military quarters (135).

The "Bubu" can be related to Scheherazade to a certain extent. The "Bubu's" body and language are also appropriated. Sexuality and textuality are related concepts in both these Eastern women. However, the subalternist, colonized position of the former places her as a devalued reference text. She teaches her master language usage and mastery over native culture. Because she offers undifferentiated linguistic and sexual services, the site of teaching, the bed, becomes a place of ridicule in language. She is the "bed-book" or "bed-dictionary" which is substitutable for a mistress or

---

<sup>164</sup>See Gartrell for a discussion of the role of native women in providing sexual and domestic services to the British colonialists in "Colonial Wives" (165-185).

keep (Brownfoot, "Memsahibs" 191). She is a sexualized text in the colonialist vocabulary.

As for her sexuality, it is further scrutinized from the colonialist perspective of Burton. He alludes to the East Indian woman's contemptuous attitude towards the British soldier's bungling sexual techniques. He says that the Hindu women "cannot be satisfied, such is their natural coldness, increased doubtless by vegetable diet and unuse of stimulants, with less than twenty minutes" (Brodie 52). Such a coldness, in his view, is the cause why "no stranger has ever been truly loved by a native girl" for Hindu women contemptuously compare the Europeans to "village cocks" (Brodie 52). Corroborating this notion, Burton adds, "...while thousands of Europeans have cohabited for years with and have had families by 'native women,' they are never loved by them--at least I have never heard of a case" (Brodie 52).

The detached Eastern woman who is incapable of any bonding relationship is not the product of her dietary preferences but the result of a colonial confrontation--the situationally weak meeting the strong. She is silent because the one who writes through her body and writes about her is her political colonizer. Her land itself is molested by colonial activity.<sup>165</sup> Hence her detached emotions are the

---

<sup>165</sup>See Kabbani for her reference to the patriarchal values of colonial enterprise resisted by the native female (48).

only silent weapon she could use against her colonizer whose body and soul she could never claim as a legal spouse, though hers are at his disposal because of a master-slave relationship. In Burton's interpreted sexuality of the Eastern woman, she does not not have any thing to say; she does not speak; she does not counter-read. Her existence is defined by her relational silence and Burton's passionate account. Just as the subject-position of Scheherazade deprives her of her female consciousness, the depiction of the Eastern women in the imperial travel notes robs her of her sexuality. There is no individual female experience freed from male vision and colonial appropriating aesthetics.

Burton's relationship to the "Bubu" is different from that of Lane to the slave girl, Nefeeseh. Lane teaches reading and writing to the Eastern female. Finally, after what Kabbani calls "much confusion of feeling varying from contempt to dependence" (45), Lane marries her.<sup>166</sup> The legal status of a spouse in the latter's case places her in a more respectable position socially. Nevertheless, both the translators of The Arabian Nights, Lane and Burton, stand in a curious colonial relationship to these subaltern women.

The "Bubu" in the British colonial India and Scheherazade in the Arabic text, however, show a greater

---

<sup>166</sup> Ahmed offers a detailed account of Lane's life and works in Edward W. Lane.

linguistic skill. In spite of this, they demonstrate an inability to conceptualize the female. They possess language skills which are used only as survival techniques under multiple oppression. Both the women are under constant peril of identity. They labor under fear of colonial and royal swords. The sexual and linguistic energies of these women are harnessed to placate a male system. Female use of language helps perpetuate male colonizing impulses and unitary utterances. The Eastern female body which has been read with the twin-pair of male and colonial eyes remains unrecovered in the nineteenth century.

The centrality of sensuousness and violence, and sexual demand and body-code in the Eastern female figure has ideological significance too. Colonizers' vision in the form of annotated notes steals the Eastern woman's identity and inscribes her anonymity as a space for lust. Eastern women are commodities at the service of the empire's men. Kabbani says,

Eastern women were doubly inferior, being women and Easterners. They were even more conspicuous commodity than their Western sisters. They were part of the goods of empire, the living rewards that white men could, if they wished, to reap. (51)

What Kabbani articulates is the connection between constructs and ideology, knowledge and power. She adds that if it "could be suggested that the Eastern women are inherently licentious, then they could be exploited with no qualms

whatsoever" (51). Subjugated and silenced, the Eastern women form a muted group in the texts. They do not have any easy access to tools to counter-reading or writing.

A double colonization cannot be easily overcome. However, in order to liberate the Eastern female from her colonial discursivity, Burton's interpretive tools may be reused. For instance, the Eastern woman's relation to her social reality is mentioned in some of his textual notes. In "The Tale of the Portress" (1.173-184), the narrator says that the portress is seen donning her "mantilla," the covering garb, and taking an "old woman and a slave girl" to the "khan of the silk-mercens" (1.178). Burton says in his textual notes:

In the Moslem East a young woman, single or married, is not allowed to appear alone in the streets; and the police has a right to arrest delinquents. As a preventive of intrigues the precaution is excellent. During the Crimean war hundreds of officers, English, French, and Italian, became familiar with Constantinople; and not a few flattered themselves on their success with Turkish women. I do not believe that a single 'bona fide' case occurred... (1.178)

The female is related to another language here. Her carefully guarded sexuality is seen in terms of her veil, codition of being chaperoned, and even policed. Her femininity is situated in the context of these marks of socialization. These are visible signs of repression and the Muslim male appropriation of femininity. What is exposed here is the contrary image of the woman. She is no longer the space for

mere voluptuousness and sensuality. The contrasted female image of this paragraph undermines the anthropological notion of the Hindi Muslim woman's unrestrained passion mentioned earlier.

The passive, protected image of the woman reemerges in Burton's notes to the same tale. He refers to the custom of "Jila," the "displaying of the bride before the bridegroom for the first time, in different dresses..."; the commentator also alludes to the practice of the bridegroom giving a fee called "the tax of face-unveiling" before he can see her features" (1.174). The Eastern woman is a socially defined being in relation to a group, a clan, and a kinship. Burton's notes conjure up two different images--the passive and the sensuous. The contrary notions about the Eastern women built into the textual notes demonstrate disconnections in the image-building activity. But the feminine has not put itself into the text to write itself in the nineteenth century.

Female readers share the perspective of exclusion in these male stories and reading practices. Mention should be made, however, of Isabel Burton's edition, which deletes "two hundred and fifteen pages of an objectionable nature" from her husband's edition in order to provide a book which



"no mother shall regret her girl's reading" (Ali 127).<sup>167</sup>

Though Isabel Burton responds to a female readership through her edition, it is a cautious response to the lack of moral component in her husband's translation which a Victorian female audience might object to. The female receptive sensibilities and the site of reception, the Victorian drawing room, are taken into consideration. But the female site of storytelling and the male-possessed and male-conditioned female responses inside the text are not investigated. But it could take another hundred years before the female site of speaking, subject-position, and consciousness were investigated by feminist theorists. Such analyses, along with political decolonization, have enabled us to do what Isabel Burton, the colonialist wife, could not do. Hence Isabel Burton's text is only an attempt to realign the text in an abridged form within the colonial parameters.

Without being liberated by any feminist strategy, the Eastern female figure remains a product of male and colonial economies. She is transacted as a sexual exchange between the Eastern narrator and his audience. She undergoes a double articulation when she is made a sexualized being again in Burton's notes to promote colonial kinship between the translator and his club. Caught in complicitous kin-

---

<sup>167</sup>From Isabel Burton's "Preface" to her Household Edition of the Arabian Nights (vol.1.6).

ships, the Eastern female is unable to break out of a closure at once patriarchal and colonial.

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM DISCURSIVE SILENCE TO DIRUPTIVE SPEECH

My discussions in the previous chapters show the Eastern female's subordinate voice in relation to her textual, discursive, and political colonizers. In her role as a subjugated other, she does not represent herself; she is represented. The problem of representation is, as I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters related to the problem of sexuality. In this chapter, I examine the inhibited voice of the Eastern female in terms of the suppression of the clitoris. Restructured for male desire, the mutilated female body is inscribed in a textuality produced for male imperatives. The removed tissues are a silence, a muffled female cry, which represent the forced deletion of female desire. Utilizing Spivak's notion of symbolic clitoridectomy, which I referred to in Chapter I (12, 27) I locate male restructuration of the female not only in the effacement of the clitoris but also in the negation of her soul.

Locating the subjectivity which cuts out the clitoral mode of narration, a discourse which is organized around the clitoris as the signifier, can be a helpful means in reducing

the silence of the Eastern female.<sup>168</sup> This chapter examines the subject-position in language, narration, and discourse. [Suppression of the Eastern female's voice is effected at the discursive level through a similar--though not identical--symbolic procedure: "suturing." I use Lacan's notion of suturing of the subject in relation to the dominant voice. The subject is grafted to the realm of discourse through the signifier. Because of this grafting, the Eastern female is relegated to the position of the signified. Removal of female tissues and grafting of the subject are related to suppressed and dominating voices respectively. Cutting out is to grafting as subjugated knowledge is to dominant knowledge. Clitoral removal alienates woman from woman. Suturing promotes discursive kinship among the signifiers. I will analyze the implication of suturing for the representation of the figure of the Eastern female. The Eastern female, who has been an object of narrative exchange, becomes an object of discursive exchange.] This chapter offers an extended analysis of suppressed female narration, and the construction of subject-position in language, narration, and discourse.

In my discussion of the construction of the subject-position at the level of language, I also intend to use Saussure and Benveniste briefly. In examining the subject-

---

<sup>168</sup>Spivak refers to the clitoris as the signifier (Other Worlds 153).

position at the level of narration, I will be using Cohan and Shires. In short, this chapter is a study of the problem of female sexual amputation and its symbolic relations to textuality. The "I" in the texts performs an amputative role. Giving back the Eastern female's body caught in this amputative textuality is a feminist enterprise. In its ethical implications, this task is equal to the medieval knightly undertaking of saving a lady in distress in alien fiefdoms.

A: SYMBOLIC CLITORIDECTOMY AS A MEANS OF SUBJUGATING THE OTHER:

The subordinated and sexualized female figures in the texts under study go through another level of suppression in social reality through an imposed clitoridectomy. The body of the Eastern woman in Burton's translation of The Arabian Nights and The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras is a restructured one. Her honor is a duty she has to render by protecting it at the cost of her life. I have referred to it in detail in Chapter III in the narrated incident of Usama Ibn-Munquidh's sister's willingness to die instead of losing her virginity to an enemy soldier in a local battle in 1109. Existing within cultural constraints, the female body of the Muslim princess is a reconstructed one. For instance, Herodotus has made references to the ex-

istence of female circumcision in seven hundred B.C..<sup>169</sup> In the medieval period, Muhammed, the prophet of the Islamic faith, is reported to have told Om Attiah, a woman who performed tatooing and clitoridectomy:

"If you circumcise, take only a small part and refrain from cutting most of the clitoris off...The woman will have a bright and happy face, and is more welcome to her husband, if her pleasure is complete." (El Sadaawi 39)

A pre-Islamic custom, the practice of restructuring the female was continued in the medieval East: curtailment of the erotics of the royal female body.

The Muslim princess is made to give up the clitoris in favor of the vagina--a childhood enactment of the preservation of honor. This foreshadows, on a physical level, the blood stains on the royal bridal sheets on her wedding night. The removal of the clitoris has a multiform effect on female sexuality, and hence on textuality. From a psychoanalytic perspective, female renunciation of the clitoris is a requirement of the needs of conformity and balance. The clitoris is given up in favor of the vagina for the union of the male with female. Woman's sexual development depends on her suppression of the clitoris in order to become a wife and a mother. Renunciation of the clitoral mode of pleasure for the vaginal mode inscribes conformity

---

<sup>169</sup>Reference to Herodutus is taken from El Sadaawi (41).

of female pleasure in relation to the male.<sup>170</sup> Such a renunciation could be interpreted from a feminist perspective. The female yields "her" symmetry for another symmetry, the union with the male. In relation to the latter, her possession of the clitoris is an excess, an asymmetry. It has to be removed physically or otherwise. While Freudian psychoanalysis stresses the female renunciation for symmetry, the feminist interpretation sums up the same act as renunciation of symmetry (Johnson 265).

Moreover, the presence of the clitoris has a problematic relation with the concept of woman as an exchange object. As we have seen in the previous chapters, virginity and reproduction encode exchange and use value on the female body. Male access to the womb has to deal with the clitoris as female excess. Excess resists. Access to the womb promotes circulation of the female body. In her definition of woman as an exchangeable object, Spivak points out that what is appropriated stands in relation to what is effaced. That is, the use value of womb is taken possession of, and the existence of the

---

<sup>170</sup>Taken from Johnson's paraphrase of Freud's interpretation of woman's relation to the clitoris and the womb in her passage to sexual maturity in his "Female Sexuality" in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love. For a detailed analysis of Freud's notion of a woman's maturity in relation to the clitoris and the vagina, see Mitchell (Psychoanalysis 105-108) Johnson discusses Aylmer's removal of the little mark on his wife, Georgiana's face, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Birthmark" as the story of the fatal removal of the clitoris. See her reference to Freud in "Female to Male?" (265).

clitoris is effaced. She says that this circulation which depends on female reproduction has a textual implication too. Male discourse achieves "coherence" by treating woman in relation to man. This involves "cutting the excess of the clitoris out" ("Displacement and the Discourse of Woman" 191). I concur with Spivak saying that the removal of the clitoris is a normalizing act.

On a symbolic level, the analysis could be pressed further. In romance signification, the Eastern female is positioned and her sexuality regulated in relation to the Christian knight for the imperatives of the text. She is made to renounce and negate certain culturally authenticated customs, namely, her idealized female honor and the communal reverence for the paternal-divine authority figure. The Muslim princess's love for her parents is closely related to her love for god. This twin-mandate can be seen in the reported saying of the Prophet Mohemet, as given in the Hadith: the "pleasure of the Lord lies in the pleasure of father and wrath of the Lord lies in the anger of the father" (Siddique 14.129). Further, Nawal El Saadawi, the author of The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World, observes that Islamic teaching forbids women from marrying non-Muslims, whereas men could marry people of other faiths ("Woman and Islam" 200). The liberty of men to marry is restricted to the "persons of the book," the Jews and Christians, according to Islam. This is because the



Jews, Christians, and the Muslims share the Old Testament. However, in the process of her reconstructed spiritual-paternal relationship, the Eastern princess is made to internalize what the romance writer wants her to renounce. What she gives up in the romance is complex, and yet she does it without any painful efforts. The maternal is often absent in the texts. The co-presence of the virginal and the maternal--a Christian longing--is not present in the landscape. There are no nurturant Eastern mother figure; only the resistant female images. The royal virgin transfers her love for her absent mother to the paternal, law, and God: the symbolic. She renegotiates the paternal and the spiritual in favor of the Christian knight in the course of the story. This transference of female pleasure from the clitoral to the vaginal, in her case, is marked by painfully complex signs of complicity.

However, she does not demonstrate any misgivings or self-doubts. The neatly patterned self of the princess, unmediated by any trace of doubt, is an internalization of what the romance writer makes her undergo. What she renounces, by this internalization, is herself, her natural body. This giving up of sexual symmetry is done for the sake of textual symmetry: the hero's realization of his fiefdom. The asymmetry of the romance pattern, initiated by the inverted quest of the female for the male, is regulated toward balance, order, and equilibrium by the prince's renunciation of her natal family,

religion, and culture--a symbolic removal of clitoris in favor of the vagina: the union of the female with the male.

The renunciation of symmetry for the sexual, textual balance leaves a gap in Muslim female desire. This sexual, textual lack is paradigmatic of female silence. The suppression is analogous to silencing a clitoral narration, the story of the amputated body and the muffled female cry. Phallic narration dismembers the female flesh and replaces herstory" with "history". In her discussion of the clitoris in "French Feminism in an International Frame," Spivak calls this textual amputation "symbolic clitoridectomy," as I have referred to earlier.<sup>171</sup>

At the textual level, removal of the clitoris corresponds to the suppression of the counterstory, a counter reading, which could reclaim the indigenous female caught in the amputative textuality of phallic narration. The clitoris is a mechanism for reading otherwise. Paraphrasing Spivak and Naomi Schor, Barbara Johnson points out the clitoral mode of writing:

...the clitoris itself could be taken as a synecdoche for the possibility that the world could be articulated differently, that resistance is always the sign of a counterstory.  
("Female to Male" 264)

---

<sup>171</sup>Her definition of the clitoris as a metonymy includes woman's inferior social and legal status along with her mutilated position in the text (Harasym, Post-Colonial Critic 10). However, I confine Spivak's notion of the clitoris to the textual and symbolic levels in this chapter.

Removal of the clitoris, an apparatus for reading sexuality, therefore, textuality otherwise, is a colonizing act. Renunciation of the clitoris, in its physical and symbolic sense, runs counter to the knowledge of the Eastern princess's voice, herstory: history's undeciphered underside.

Removal of the clitoris further relates to the absence of female subject-position. The clitoral mode of narration institutes a female subjectivity that questions this effacement. In other words, reclaiming the clitoris is analogous to inserting the questioning female subject. Spivak states that putting woman as the questioning subject facilitates a "critique of discourse of woman as produced, as defined by men" (Harasym, Post-Colonial Critic 42). Though Spivak does not explicitly render the clitoris in a metonymic relation to the questioning subject in this particular passage, such an analogy is implicit since she talks about the need for a female to take the position of a questioning subject in the context of phallogentric discourse. Concurring with Spivak's notion of the questioning subject, I would add that the clitoris can be a symbolic site of reclaiming the retreated texts of the hunted. The questioning subject investigates and exposes the manipulative narrative engineering of texts. This feminist enterprise is a refusal to acquiesce by stabilizing oppressive narrative roles assigned to women.

One such role, as we have seen, is woman as a sex ob-

ject. In relating the absence of the clitoris to that of female subject-position, Spivak says that effacement of the supposedly excess organ is connected to male attempts to define woman as a "sex object" and as an "agent of reproduction" with "no recourse to a subject-position except in terms of those definitions or as 'imitators' of men" (Other Worlds 151).

Spivak's observation brings out the arrogating power of male subjectivity and woman's assigned role of mimicry. The remark also points out the resulting positive impact on male circulation. The comment does not, however, consider the possibility of another denial which may be related to the denial of female subjectivity, that is, the denial of the soul to the female during the Middle Ages--an important factor in subject-constitution which I will take up shortly.

Removal of the clitoris is metaphorically equivalent to the female's dispossession of the logos. Medieval subjectivity is apparently related to the possession of a soul. For instance, the query whether women had souls definitionally excludes woman from her compact with the speaking "I." The doctrinal appearance of such a question was addressed as late as 1545 by the Council of Trent: "Does woman possess a soul?"<sup>172</sup> The suppression of the clitoris can correspond to the medieval denial of soul to the female. Commenting on male tendency to

---

<sup>172</sup>See reference to it in Feral's "Difference" (90). Also Miles (152).

vagina is given the power to ensnare and capture the viewer's "subjectivity" or "selfhood" (Miles 159). This representation-al act does not so much devour the spectator's selfhood as annihilate female subjectivity through the use of the grotesque.

Further, female dispossession of the logos is related to her exiled position in language and signification. Constituting an indigenous female subjectivity could be called an act of instituting "cliterologos" in narration.<sup>173</sup> The womb is not exiled from the clitoris in this act. The former's preeminence is shared with the latter. Clitoral narration is organized around female subjectivity, and it takes into account both the vaginal and clitoral modes of pleasure.<sup>174</sup> Mere reproduction of texts--the mode in which Scheherazade functions--is stopped by this kind of operation. Cliterologos resists the totalizing activity of the logos by undoing male

---

<sup>173</sup>I have borrowed the usage from Marcus in "Still Practice" (83). Marcus relates cliterologos to the mode of pleasure and life characterized by the protagonist in Inanna in the Bankier and Lashgari Women Poets of the World. Inanna celebrates the "power of her vulva under the apple tree." Marcus highlights "the politically powerful and sexually free" Inanna in the company of sisterhood. Womb value or chastity do not constrain her. My use of the word, cliterologos, is related to a female subject-position which does not exclude the womb.

<sup>174</sup>In a different context, Cixous talks about femininity and bisexuality which go together. By this, she means a new kind of writing which inscribes bisexuality, the clitoral and vaginal modes, rather than monosexuality ("Sorties" 85). Spivak also states that uterine organization cannot be written off in favor of the mere clitoral (Other Worlds 152).

partnership which promotes women as exchange objects in intellectual production.

Suppression of the clitoris purports to another type of exile: the alienation of the female from female and the maternal. This is conspicuous in the medieval English texts under study. The Eastern female is often seen in the absence of her mother. The young heroine is depicted within the formulaic role of seducer who is not in relationship to any nurturing, maternal figure. Hence the affinity between the Eastern female and her experience with the maternal is ill defined because women tend to exist in unspoken connection with their mothers through the body.<sup>175</sup> The Eastern female, disherited from the mother, does not exist in relationship to the maternal and feminine subjectivity but only as an object of masculine vision.

To see the Eastern female as an object is to assign the marginal to her. Stealing female personhood through sexualization or depiction of the monstrous or the marvellous, in part or whole, pictorially or textually, doubly marginalizes the Eastern female; through her being the gendered other and cultural other. Giving her back her body, linguistically and discursively appropriated, against the mysogynistic background

---

<sup>175</sup>Concurring with this notion, Kristeva observes that, "women...reproduce among themselves the strange gamut of forgotten body relationships with their mothers ("Stabat Mater" 180).

of medieval literary and artistic practices, is to offer selfhood to her. Displacing male subjectivity and installing female "I" is to hear her voice--the voice of the hunted.

B: SUBJECTIVITY FROM LANGUAGE TO DISCOURSE:

The suppressed voice can be related symbolically to the clitoris, as distinct from the dominant voice which could be related to the phallus. The phallus is more than a physical organ. It is the organizing principle, the symbol of difference, which regulates the signifying system of opposites such as male and female. At the language level, the Eastern woman is presented in terms of difference, as I have shown in the preceding chapters. The basic revolutionary concept of the differential function of language is articulated by Saussure. In Course in General Linguistics, he says that in language there are only differences without positive terms (Barthes, Elements 13).<sup>176</sup> Dominance and subordination could be presented through differences. "I" or "we" can be constituted only in relation to "you" and "they." However, the interlinked, subordinate and dominant subjects cannot be simultaneously represented in Saussurean model because language is conceived in terms of linearity without any linguistic provision for a hidden layer behind it. Language

---

<sup>176</sup>See Scholes' discussion of Saussure in Structuralism (13-17)

analysis does not incorporate silences. The opposite of speech is writing, and not silence in language analysis. The spoken and the written are the major opposites in Western linguistic and metaphysical analyses. Speech is not opposed to silences in these analyses. Rather, silence remains untheorized and untheorizable. Hence, that which is silent eludes the grasp of linguistic and metaphysical analyses.

Because of the conspicuous exclusion of silence as the opposite of speech, and incorporation of writing as the opposite of speech, an Eastern analysis, which deals with silences and muted voices as its focus of analysis, is constrained. Functioning within the epistemic constraint of exclusion of silence, an analyst has to be content with working through the structuralist notion of differences.

That which assigns the binary characteristics of sensuous/abstinate, pagan/Christian, and barbarian/civilized to the Eastern female and the Western male respectively could be traced to the subject-position of "I," as I have mapped out in the previous chapters. The subject-position is derived complexly in language. For instance, Saussure says that the speaking "I" does not effect difference in language. On the other hand, the speaking subject is a function of the language. The speaking "I" confirms its position to the system



of language which is taken as the system of differences.<sup>177</sup>

Placed within the linguistic constraint of differences, the speaking subject does not assign meaning. Language which exists as a system of differences offers the possibility of producing meaning. Basing his theory on the core concept of Saussure, in his post-Saussurean linguistics, Benveniste argues that only by adopting the position of a subject, and referring to oneself as the "I," one can enter language. The subject-position is an indicator in language, and as such does not embody identity, or consciousness (225). Seen from this perspective, the speaking "I" is an occupant of the grammatical position of the subject. Arrogating the subject position is related to assigning object position to the Eastern female. She is a difference and an opposite because of the complicity of language with the speaking "I" in making the latter an agent of action. The Eastern woman is acted upon. The writing hand of grammar captures her as an object in a subject-predicate-object relation. She is a transitively rendered grammatical position.

The speaking "I" which enters the subject-position at the linguistic level does so as a character at the level of

---

<sup>177</sup>See Derrida for a paraphrase of Saussure's notion of the speaking subject existing as a function in Speech (145-6).

narration.<sup>178</sup> Just as words are placed in a sentence, characters are placed in a narration according to their functions. Subject and object are the two significant functions the characters occupy in a narration. In the narratological perspective of Greimas in Chapter II, we see the speaking subject, Alexander the Great, and the invaded East, India, being conceptualized as subject and object. The rest of the characters help or hinder the movement of the conquering subject towards the object of desire. The syntactical relation between subject and object is transferred from language to character. In a similar but not identical fashion, we see the Squire in Chapter IV as a subject in relation to the object of desire, the East.

The speaking subject's appropriation of the grammatical function of the subject at the narrative level is further evidenced by its multiple subject-positions. Frame narrations enclose embedded narrations within them, as in the case of Chaucer's tales under discussion and Burton's translation of The Arabian Nights. The narrating "I" of the frame narration negotiates its position with the embedded narrator's speaking site. Because of this constant negotiation between narrators, there is a manipulated, mediated, and divisive subjectivity. The subject-position of the embedded narration is controlled

---

<sup>178</sup>Cohan and Shires offer a simple and concise account of the function of characters and their relation to syntactical placement of words in a sentence (69-72).

by that of the frame narration. As a result, the Eastern female who is the object of the narration comes under mediated and plural signifying effects (Cohan and Shires 108). She undergoes a double or even triple mediation because of the shifting stance of the subject-position.

Further, at the level of narration, the subject functions within the differentiating functions of the "actor," compiler, and the "auctoritas," the original composer of the texts. Without being the original composer or the witness to the act of composition, the compiler, the actor, inserts the narrating "I" into the romance.<sup>179</sup> All the romances under study, from Alexander's Letter to Aristotle to Chaucer's narrations, derive their content from an original either in Latin or French. The interpretive voice is often an appropriated one; it reports, disagrees, and contradicts itself in its palimpsest process of echoing its bilingual, translated past. The subject of these romances not only exists within the translated medium of the vernacular texts, but also in a literary intimacy with the original voice of the "auctoritas." Containing vestigial and residual linguistic traces of an "I" in the originals, the narrating "I" is not a single voice

---

<sup>179</sup>See Ascoli for a brief discussion of the author and compiler (25). For a detailed analysis of compiler and original composer, see Chenu "Auctor, Actor, Autor" 81-86. Minnis describes the function of the compiler as the organizer of the structure. The story belongs to the "auctoritas" and the manner of narration belongs to the compiler (191).

speaking within the monolingual cultural context. Hence sharing blurred boundaries, bicultural and bilingual, the "I" speaks also with an "otherness" of voice.<sup>180</sup> Having first lived in the narrations of the "auctoritas," the speaking "I" transfers its linguistic residency to the "autor's" romances. Hence the mobility of the subject in process is intertextual, bilingual, and transcultural. The Eastern female, likewise, is the product of the constantly changing and divisive subjectivity.

Besides subject and object, there is another important factor which needs analysis at the level of narration: the audience. This is theoretically related to intersubjectivity. In Chapter IV, I examined how the Sowdanesse exists as an object of religious violence between the male narrator of the frame story and the audience. In Chapter VI, the Eastern female is also seen as an object of exchange between Burton, the translator, and his private club. There is no dialog between the Eastern women and the audiences. Gossip and conversation are promoted through the circulation of her as an object. As for the subject in medieval English discourse, there is no clearly drawn boundary marker. There is a shared subjectivity where the speaking-position can be identified with a social group, as Haidu observes in "Romance: Idealistic Genre or Historical text?" He writes that the speaking subject allows

---

<sup>180</sup>A word borrowed from Hult's "Author, Narrator" (87).

a discourse which includes both the subjective and the objective. Because of the merger with the subjectivity of the audience, the subject-position is caught in a perpetual shared psychic mobility between the speaker and the audience. This subject transgresses modern notions of selfhood, and does not have a "differentiated interiority" (16). The establishment of a relation between "I" and "you," the subject and the audience, excludes the object spoken about. Hence, in a close conversation of this kind, the object exists to promote the circulation of kinship between the two, as we have noted in our discussion on Burton's translation for his private club.

This conversational model is similar to Lacanian psychoanalytical model which emphasizes two important factors in the analysis of language: the analysand and the analyst.<sup>181</sup> The speaking "I" or the analysand is not merely an individual subject. The "I" exists in relation to the other, the analyst. Dialog is intersubjective. But that which is spoken about does not have any participatory role. Transferred to linguistic paradigm, the subject is in dialog with an audience, who are often referred to as "you" in the texts. The Eastern women are exchanged in the dialog between men and men. The former do not

---

<sup>181</sup>Benvenuto and Kennedy give a critical summary of "The Rome Discourse" where Lacan stresses the importance of the speech of the subject. He emphasizes that the subject's speech is articulated and named before the other (83). The chapter examines the relation among the subject, the role of language, and the symbolic order (77-89).

participate in it. Referring to women's status in male linguistic economy, Irigaray says that they remain marketable goods, and "never partners in the dialogue" (Whitford, "Irigaray" 6). What Irigaray emphasizes here is the second level of colonization for women beyond the biological: linguistic. I have discussed this second level of colonization in the preceding chapters.

The medieval subject has to function in relation to another Other which a modern literary text mostly does not have to take into consideration: the divine presence waiting to be appropriated through the allegorical level of interpretation.<sup>182</sup> Medieval subject-position is placed within a linguistic plane of absence. That is, the medieval writer's "I" positions itself in a postlapsarian, fallen language. In the prelapsarian linguistics, however, the Word, God, manifested himself fully in the universe and the human language (Hisco 229). In other words, redeemed language is one which focuses on "God's message as inscribed both in Scripture and in the created world" (Haidu, "Repetition" 865). Redeemed signification is a "mirror through which men may know God in this life through faith" in Augustinian concept (Colish

---

<sup>182</sup>I have borrowed the usage of Other for God from Lacan who expands the concept of the other to include God, the Artist, and the Absent One. See Heath's "Notes on Suture" (61). The application is mine.

26).<sup>183</sup> There is a one-to-one correspondence between the Word and the flesh. But postlapsarian signification functions within the absence of this Word. However, a text like The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras sets out to demonstrate the absence of divinity at the thematic level. As I have shown in Chapter III in my discussion of the text, the writer wants to make evident that "man" should "love and serve" God, and failing to do so brings about the loss of the divine presence (14). This loss is acted out by the pagan plunder of the saints' relics. The subject-position is constructed to convey an absence in language which has already experienced an identical absence because of the Fall. The medieval reader has to be conveyed the double absence of the presence. Because of the need to convey the absence of the divine other, the subject reinforces its place with the signifier to produce a reading which will focus its audience towards the divine other. The Eastern female who is produced in this exchange undergoes further devaluation. She is a woman, an Easterner, and a pagan. I have explained in Chapter IV the status of the Sowdanesse as a pagan outside the ecclesia. This resisting woman is killed by the Roman army in an act of vengeance for her religious fury. Similarly, in Chapter III, we have seen that the giantess who resists the

---

<sup>183</sup>Hisco discusses pre-and postlapsarian significations in brief (229).

Christian knights is killed. But the young princess and her maids are appropriated through baptism.

However, the Eastern princess is not constructed as an absolute other. There is an effort at transforming her into the self or the same. She is baptized and made part of the Christian nobility by her willingness to embrace the religion of the knight and renounce her native gods. The Sowdan, on the other hand, is presented in the act of smiting the bishop and spitting in the baptismal water. In other words, the Sowdan is presented as the absolute other and his daughter as an alterity. Biddy Martin's distinction between an "absolute other" and "alterity" could be applied here. By absolute other, she means that which is radically opposite to the self. This absolute other is outside the cultural order because of total exclusion (25). She defines alterity as "internal exclusion" (10). In this position, woman is not completely excluded but her speech is assimilated (18).<sup>184</sup>

Furthermore, the subject enters a more complex site of signification when it moves from the level of individual texts to that of discourse. Subject-object relation, which is at work at the linguistic and narrative levels, is present

---

<sup>184</sup>In her analysis of Foucault, Martin says that he speaks from a position of alterity rather than "absolute otherness." However, she maintains a distinction between absolute otherness and absolute other. Absolute otherness stands for an imagined place where difference exists on its own, as distinct from being defined by the self (10).



in a more intricate fashion at the discursive level. Literary discourse is one among many other discourses. History, art, ecclesiastical practices, and political treatises, to name a few, are among the other discursive realms constantly placed in an interrelational field. Foucault defines discourses as "tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations" (Sexuality 101). These discourses are not to be seen from a binary perspective of being the dominant/dominated. The analyst, however, has to view "the multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies" (Sexuality 100). These discourses are constantly engaged in enabling objects to appear. Discourses are not mere "groups of signs"; they are "practices that form the objects of which they speak" (Archaeology 49). The discursive objects like the Eastern princess, as I have shown in Chapter III, have no relation to reality. A more complex signification takes place at the level of discourse when these objects and subjects in these individual texts relate themselves to similar objects and subjects in other discourses.

For instance, the relation between the narrators' dominant subject-position and the Eastern women's subordinate object-position in the individual medieval English texts under study is reinforced by the already existing subject/object relationship between West/East in other discourses. Critical discourse can reinforce this binarism. I have ex-

plained in Chapter III in my discussion of the Eastern princess how notions of aggressive pagans and retiring Western women are perpetuated in criticism. The Eastern female becomes a multiple, reinforced signified because of a similar reinforcement of the position of the signifier in these discourses. The subject relates to similar signifiers which have identical relationship with the Eastern woman as a sensuous, violent, or monstrous object (Cohan and Shires 136).

The relation between the subject and the narrative acts has another significant feature. The reinforcement of the subject and the signifier is a grafting process, unlike clitoridectomy which is a surgical procedure of removal. The joining of the subject and the signifier takes place through what Lacan calls the "suturing of the subject" (Cohan and Shires 162).<sup>185</sup> Just as the "I" enters the position of the subject at the linguistic level and assumes the grammatical function of the agent of action, the subject also occupies a place, a position, in discourse. The subject lacks a place at the level of the discourse since the signifier is the occupant of the place. Hence subjectivity is achieved at the discursive level through a suture. Suturing is a reinforce-

---

<sup>185</sup>Heath examines the notion of suture as the subject taking-the-place-of the signifier, and the subject's relation to lack in the structure of signifying chain. Heath draws on Jacques-Alain Miller's elaboration on Lacan's concept of suture. The article expands the concept to include film theory in the context of Oudart's application of the notion of suture to cinematic texts ("Suture" 48-76).

ment. Clitoridectomy is a disablement. Suturing enables the subject to enter into the discursive camaraderie of the signifiers. Suturing empowers the dominating subject-position. The subordinate woman who is the object becomes part of the signified. The Eastern female enters the position of the object of discourse.

In thematic terms, the entry of the subject into discourse has a significant implication on the role of the author. At the narrational level, the hiddenness of the author is connected with the subject which is in process. The subject is in continual change. At the discursive level, the author disappears as an entity and becomes a function in discourse. Medieval texts, as distinct from modern texts, already embody this complex role of the author. Authority, compiler, reciter, and scribe already undermine the notion of central role of the author in a text. The author is constantly replaced in a text taken over by the compiler and the reciter. Commenting on the effect of the roles of authority, author, and the compiler on the texts, Paul Zumthor states rightly that the "notion of origin disappears" ("Autobiography" 31). What Zumthor locates in medieval writing as a decentering practice, is a concept expounded by Foucault in his article, "What Is an Author?" (141-160). Foucault says that the author is a mode of existence in a discourse, and he does not have ownership in it. This concept, theorized by

Foucault, is seen to be at work in the medieval discourse. For instance, except Chaucer's texts, all the other texts under study do not have a proper name. Even though Chaucer's proper name is in the texts, because of the use of narrators, compilers, Chaucer does not own personal responsibility of the narration, as I have explained in Chapter III. Often medieval documentation is done through a "signature, 'engin,' or the tradition of copyists" (Zumthor 30). Hence texts and the notion of their being in discourse is very much alive in the medieval literary practices. The often repeated idea in medieval texts that one is only a compiler and not the author valorizes the composer's existence as a function in discourse, though such a postmodernist term has not been specifically used to describe it. The implication of author as function for the Eastern female figure is relevant to my study. The "author-function," as Foucault calls this role, helps circulate a certain discourse in a culture (148). Even after the name of the author disappears, the discourse continues to live. The Eastern female becomes an object of exchange at the level of discourse.

Further, because of the merger of the texts into discourse, the dominant subject which enters into the position of the signifier could make and remake the object, and also represent the latter's image to a readership from a particular reading perspective. The subject in discourse is

able to do so because discourses are not only related to one another intertextually but also to culture and social formations -- a relation I discussed, in brief, in my analysis of the Eastern princess as an object of discourse to justify the presence of the Crusaders in the Eastern landscape in Chapter III. The subject-position is sometimes identical with the voice of the church, and sometimes this voice adopts a hovering stance between "the church and lay society" (Hult 82). The "I" which inscribes Floripas as an assimilable other and her father as an absolute other, as I explained in Chapter III, speaks from the ecclesiastical centrality. The figure of the knight itself depends on the religious and intellectual support of the church in the depiction of the former as the soldier of Christ (Nerlich 6). The subject-position in Chaucer is a powerful lay voice, critical of the lower rungs of the Church, but which adopts a Biblical and ecclesiastical core image--the pilgrimage--in *The Canterbury Tales*. However, his voice is a split voice in "the Retraction" oscillating between the secular and the sacred usages of language. He moves towards the concept of the redemptive use of language disparaging his "translacions and enditynges of worldly vanities" ("Retraction" 533), and giving voice to the anguish of the artist who works within the materiality of language whose property has been claimed --in its sanctified usage--by the church. Chaucer's "hovering stance" is between the actual

worldly rendering of the language and his acknowledgement of the ecclesiastically defined redemptive use of the language in the "Retraction." The knowing self's relationship to knowledge is also determined by the knower's relationship with the knowledge in quest. This is explained by Colish's observation that the "I" is the "knower" and "God" is "the object of knowledge" (1). While this notion fits into the redemptive use of language, the knower also exists in relation to other voices. The knowing subject is not confined to the relationship with the divine alone. For instance, though a monastic scribe may be the translator of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, the knowledge aspired for in this literary task is that of the human other.<sup>186</sup> While the Old English texts deal with mythicized travelogs, the Eastern romances deal with transmuted histories. Subjectivity is constructed within language in a simultaneous relation to social formations. This simultaneity is like the "recto and verso of a piece of paper."<sup>187</sup> The medieval subject, then, is a composite of several positions interrelated with discursive signifiers, intertextual and intersubjective contexts, pre-and postlapsarian significa-

---

<sup>186</sup>See Davidson and Campell's reference to monastic scribes' effort to preserve the tradition of the "marvellous" in the Nowell Codex (3).

<sup>187</sup>Heath refers to simultaneity in the construction of a subject and its placement in social formulations in Willemen's "Subjectivity" (45). Heath's reference is made in the context of film texts.

tions, enunciatory contexts, medieval grammatica, authority/author constructs, and social formations.

C: OTHERNESS:

The silence of the Eastern woman, constituted at the discursive level, has to be disrupted by the speech of otherness. This can be done by certain theoretical and thematic means. Writing another discourse, bringing out the subjugated knowledge of the Eastern woman, is one method--the one which has been attempted in the preceding chapters. This is in accordance with what Foucault terms as recovering the voice of the suppressed which I have referred to in Chapter I (13-14). The knower and the known--the hunter and the hunted--constitute two sets of knowledge one buried beneath the other waiting to be recovered.

Further, at the linguistic level, the Eastern female's binarily coupled relation to the Christian knight is a relationship of difference. Difference, however, can be redefined. To see beyond the binary division can be a textual imperative. That is, to see the other not in relation to the self but as an unabsorbed entity. Jacobus states that difference can be reformulated as "a multiplicity, ambiguity and heterogeneity which is that of textuality itself" (30). Woman is not reduced in this definition. She is released, on the other hand, from the normalizing paradigm

of difference. Freed from the standardizing effect of the self, the other can be seen in its otherness: Difference. To write the other is to see the Eastern female in her otherness as opposed to her being a secondary position in language. Variety, diversity, and difference without any normalizing point of reference such as uniformity, sameness, and likeness releases otherness.

At the level of narration, where the woman is circulated as an object between the narrator and audience, a feminist reader should make an interruption in writing the female. The reader should become an enabler to make the silent female speak. This enabling act can be explained in terms of the psychoanalytic paradigm used earlier in this chapter. The woman, like the analysand, should be enabled to speak the repressed. The repressed cannot take on the responsibility of subjectivity without the analyst's positive intervention. Feminist writing, according to Irigaray, should effect this intervention. Writing can function like the analyst who introduces a positive change. It should "effect shifts in the unconscious, open up other possibilities for the analysand who cannot effect the shift unaided" (Whitford, "Irigaray" 6). Translated into political parlance, this strategy is like helping a newly decolonized nation to speak its own language, free of hegemonization; opening up spaces in the internalized language, in the un-



conscious of the people. The indigenous mode of speaking includes the reclaiming of the cultural voice of the repressed. The Eastern female has to be seen, as I have shown in Chapter III, in her context. In an analysis of the Eastern princess, Eastern materials, such as An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades and Hadith, can enable contextualization. But speaking has to be done in such a way that it is not again absorbed by male subjectivity. Some of the decolonized nations, at one point in history, have gone back to a colonizing power because of their inability to sustain their independence. Speaking a decolonized language is a refusal to come under the same colonizing power, but have an ongoing dialog with the other. In other words, freed Eastern woman's speech has to be part of a dialog and not a margin that is made to sustain the centrist Western discourse academic or otherwise.

In a reading like this, multiple meanings heretofore marginalized and silenced, emerge without being absorbed by the discourse of the self or sameness. This kind of reading is a "refusal to be integrated as the Same." It is the act of the other in its otherness "entering into dialogue" with the Same (Martin 20). In the context of the medieval romances, reading as the other maps out the royal woman's silences and her absorbed speech. For instance, as I have explained in Chapter III, dialogs are a new feature of the new genre,

romance, in the Middle Ages. Unlike the Old English mute female figures of the East in Wonders of the East and Alexander's Letter to Aristotle, the Muslim princess of the East is engaged in dialogs. However, her voice is distorted or assimilated. But woman as a subject in the newly assumed reverse position establishes a dialog. "I" and "you" are engaged, not in a monolingual inscription, but in a dialogic relationship. The "I" resists being integrated into male subjectivity, and at the same time does not treat the latter as the "other." It is a dialog where more than two speaking positions and voices emerge. Martin calls it a "dialogue with the Symbolic and social order without being integrated into it," a refusal to be the "Other of male discourse" (20). A reading act which sees otherness, instead of the other, sees the text as double-voiced, or even multi-phonial with the voices constantly being engaged in dialogs with each other. In the heavily loaded expression of Bakhtin, the reading imperative of otherness is to dialogize, to see the self's voice along with the other's.

To place the two stories side by side is to see the phallic narration along with the clitoral. The dark continent, referred to in the beginning of this study, can symbolically represent, at another level, the woman's body. Feminists refer to it as the "dark continent" because women have been led to think that it is unexplorable (Suleiman 7, Cixous, "Laugh"

97). The voice of the other which is reinstated helps us see the continent from inside.

The "I" of medieval texts, enmeshed in linguistic and discursive practices, knows very little about the inner discourse of this colonized land, woman. Giving voice to this female subjectivity in the reading act may be an apparently demanding act. Medieval readership, however, is familiar with seeing signs beyond mere linear reading. The clerical author suggests an allegorical and moralizing vision of reading in the beginning of The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras. The fall of Rome and the winning back of the relics from the Sowdan are the reenactment of the sin and the redemption of humankind. Recovering salvific meaning through the physical reclaiming of the relics in the texts is the medieval reader's responsibility. The regaining of the female body is also an analogical modern reading act.<sup>188</sup> Usually, the relics were seen obliquely through "carved" grilles, "golden casings," and at a later period, through "crystal vials."<sup>189</sup> Due to their hiddenness from naked eyes, they are once removed from common sight. With reference to The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras, the relics are doubly removed since the Sowdone

---

<sup>188</sup>I thank Prof. Karma Lochrie for drawing my attention to the possible analogy between the recovery of the relics and the reclaiming of the Eastern female body.

<sup>189</sup>See Camille for a discussion of the relics (73).

plunders them. The readers see them as objects doubly alienated--once through their "oblique" covers and twice through the Eastern appropriation. In this, the relics are analogous to the body of the Eastern female once again. She is twice alienated--once through the linguistic hiddenness which projects her as position not as otherness, twice through the Western romance writer's vision as a sensual object. Both the relics and the female body are in exile; both involve distance and alienation. Giving back her body to the Eastern female is a present day enactment of rescuing the relics from Babylon: a feminist enterprise, equal in its ethical implications, to the medieval knightly undertaking of saving a lady in distress.

Finally, reading otherness is seeing the other in its irreducibility and unassimilability in a profound ethical undertaking. Making the other a questioning subject should lead to the questioning of the epistemology which builds the other in relation to the same. The "I" does not have to take on the self-imposed responsibility of speaking for the other or about the other. The "I" needs to talk to the other. In his analysis of the notion of "I" talking to the other, Immanuel Levinas interrogates the knowledge of the other based on the self. His concept of episteme presupposes foundations of "justice" and ethics in its quest for knowledge (Cohen, Levinas 7). Levinas redefines the self and the other

in a new relationship where the subject does not exercise sovereignty over the other. It is a relationship of equality. Until the component of justice is at the core of one's search for knowledge, the result can only produce a disproportionate quest of the self for the other. In a newly envisioned relationship, a self does not speak "of" or "for" the other, but "to the Other," the one who has "no speech" (Blanchot; Cohen, Levinas 45; emphasis mine). In other words, if the core of knowledge itself, which revolves around the self, could incorporate an ethical value of equality, the act of othering could be minimized. Ethics remains toothless unless justice reinforces it. This relationship between self and other which is founded on equality and justice is a "face-to-face relation" in Levinas Boer, Cohen Levinas 91). It is not a one in which the vision is imperialistic or voyeuristic.

Until the Eastern female's otherness is released, whether through linguistic, narratological, or discursive means, she remains a dark continent where the hunter writes his-story; herstory, the story of the linguistically, narratologically, and discursively hunted will remain unwritten.

## CHAPTER VIII

### READING THE EASTERN FEMININE: A STUDY IN THE PROBLEMATICS OF REPRESENTATION

Male subjectivity is subverted through theoretical and discursive means, as was demonstrated in Chapter VII. Eastern female subjectivity is enmeshed, however, in a far more complex philosophical network beyond the male/female dichotomy in the West. There is no ordered subjectivity because religious and philosophical systems in her own cultural meanings are not distinguishable, and collective Eastern womanhood has undergone the distinct experience of political colonization. The Eastern female in the hegemonic phase of Orientalism is the focus of this chapter. She has internalized not only the values of her political oppressors but also those of her cultural oppressors.

My study of the Eastern female has dealt with two phases of Orientalism--the dormant and the dominant stages--pertaining to the Middle Ages and nineteenth century respectively. In Chapters II to V, I have examined the dormant phase, and in Chapter VI, I have explored the dominant phase. Chapter VII analyzes the "why" of the distorted representation of the Eastern female. The investigation I have

undertaken in this dissertation is characterized by a two-part approach. In Chapters II to VII, my focus has been primarily on pre-modern texts. I have included Burton's nineteenth-century translation of the medieval work, The Arabian Nights in Chapter VI. In order to orient the dissertation towards my time, I will discuss in this chapter the hegemonic phase of Orientalism. While medieval knighthood encounters villainy, seduction, and violence through the romance writers' neat narrative configurations of binarism, modern-day feminism confronts a far more multiplex villainy in the Eastern landscape because of the Eastern female's existential miscellany based on culture and empire.

Using modern Indo-Anglian narratives to examine the doubly hegemonized figure of the Eastern female, I want to argue in this chapter that the Eastern woman's differences are palimpsestic. Beyond the narrative lines of race, gender, and class, triple magic words launched into discourses in academies, there are cultural modes of existence for the Eastern female that effect a state of living which can be called palimpsestic. Difference, then, needs to be looked at not only from the point of view of race, class, and gender--horizontally placed entities--but also from the subterranean, palimpsestic existences of the Eastern female--her unarticulated depths which intersect and differentiate female from female.

Envisioning the Eastern female in terms of a medieval Eastern manuscript, I intend to focus on three physical features in its writing mode--horizontality, verticality, and spiral curves--and relate them to the Eastern female's palimpsestic existence. In this analysis, I aim to examine the problem of her representability. Horizontal lines of the calligraphed inscription can represent the manifest voice. Spiralling forms which recede from and approach the horizontal lines can stand for the dormant layers of the Eastern female's existence where she exists as a process maneuvering between the dormant and subordinate layers. The horizontal achieves its whole by the vertical portions of the letters. These vertical strokes can represent the Eastern female's faith situation. Reading the Eastern female, then, is a modern day paleographic task; reading palimpsests and bringing to possible light partially or completely erased texts; determining the multi-epochal, intertextual presences in the text; deciphering the calligraphic spirals, horizontal lines, and vertical strokes; deciding the interdependence of the symbols and letters. Culture, like manuscript, requires paleographic scrutiny. Context, like text, demands rigorous analysis. The representability of the Eastern feminine is effected both in and out of text: through context.

In my analysis of the Eastern female as a process, I



want to discuss briefly the concepts of "woman's time" and "space" in American and French feminist theories respectively. I propose to use Elaine Showalter's and Alice Jardine's interpretations of these notions briefly. I intend to argue that an Eastern model should, while benefitting from these notions, incorporate process because of the Eastern female's position within the culturally and religiously defined structures. Further, the notion of process opposes the fossilized, essentialist stereotyped image of the Eastern woman in the popular and cultural understanding of the West. Participating, however, in the Utopian vision of internationalization of womanhood, I want to argue against the textual act of "homogenizing," and ascribing group-anonymity to Eastern femaleness in feminist writings, and posit the notions of dialogizing "contextualizing," and "pluralizing" within her multilayered existence. I intend to posit the pluralizing act as a counter-concept to the ontological violence of disembodiment of the Eastern female from her spirit and rendering her only as the "physical" in its collectivity. Her difference, in short, is not only related to mere male hegemony, but also to the collective experience of colonization as an experience, empire as a psychic seal, her multi-layered religio-cultural existence as an inevitability, dialogizing as a way of life, and process as a finality of sequence.

## A: THE NEED FOR PROBLEMATIZING:

While American and French feminists have founded new concepts by reclaiming woman's time, and space, the Third World feminine is found as a maneuvering self among highly structured and orchestrated cultural forces, at once this worldly and other worldly. At the elementary level, feminists on both sides of the Atlantic have focussed their attention on the most commonly used of all signifying practices: language. The system of language, according to both groups, is complicitous with phallogocentrism: the notion that language is organized around gender and regulated by the male-identified subject. The initial American feminist response to the phallogocentric nature of language is an attack on what Showalter calls the "linguistic oppression" ("Feminist Criticism" 253). This is an endeavor to oppose sexist language and its male gendered privilege. The American emphasis is to bring in changes in the usages within the existing language without substituting another for it.

The French feminists focus their attention on "linguistic repression" and attempt to create "écriture féminine": a female language. Showalter calls this effort at "a revolutionary linguism" "an oral break from the dictatorship of patriarchal speech" ("Feminist Criticism" 253). Language's failure to inscribe female experience is demonstrated in the desire to effect a radical disconnection with the

patriarchal language in France. While French feminists advocate the invention of a new language, the American feminists direct their attack against phallographic signs in language by the use of new vocabulary, gynocriticism, and feminist dictionaries.

Going beyond these feminist undertakings, the American and French feminists have founded new concepts through the ideas of woman's time and space. For instance, American feminists have taken the route of gynocritics. French feminists have explored what Jardine calls "gynesis" (Showalter, "Women's Time" 36). Gynocriticism, according to Showalter, is a "specialized critical discourse" which deals with the "study of women as writers." It is related to "the psychodynamics of female creativity" ("Feminist Criticism" 248). Gynocritics seek to challenge the male temporal classification of history and attempts to situate history of feminist criticism in what Showalter calls woman's time. That is, narration is to be done not according to male periodization and linear conceptualization which leave out woman's mode of arranging narration in terms of relationships, bondings, and continuities ("Woman's Time 30).

French feminists see woman's experience in terms of space rather than time. They seek to situate themselves in the gaps, negations, and silence which are relegated to the female as the other in male discourses. They have coded this

space as feminine, a void which has eluded the control of the master narratives and which could be termed, in Jardine's words, as "female space." A gynemic "movement into alterity" attempts to retrieve these voids as female spaces ("Gynesis" 58-60). This is a metaphysical search and undertaking which undermines the very notion of phallogocentric mode of representation with man as the epistemic center. While French theoretical inquiry relates to the retrieval of woman's space, the Other, the American search is oriented towards reclaiming woman's time from male-ordered temporality and linearity of history. Both these feminist enterprises seek to subvert phallogocratic signs by bringing in a revolution within the male ordered language. However, the American feminists' is a historical leap into woman's time in male history, the French feminists' is a metaphysical launching into woman's space. Their divergent approaches are an existential complementarity in the global feminist landscape.

The Eastern female, on the other hand, because of the closely intertwined religio-cultural matrix, requires an analysis which takes into account the "presentness" of her past. While arguing for the cultural epochs at work in her according to the different levels of industrialization which has affected her societies, I am aware of the difficulty of defining "the Eastern woman." On the Western front, Lacan

argues that there can be "no such thing as The woman." He says that a woman exists in relation to what the phallic function designates of *jouissance*.<sup>190</sup> That is, woman is mediated by phallic organization of *jouissance*. According to Lacan, the sexual relation to *jouissance* through the male can be explained only through language. However, discourse and language are organized around the principle of phallus. Hence, woman as an essence cannot be defined ("God and the *Jouissance*" 133-144). Kristeva also argues for a similar non-essentialist view of woman. She sees in woman something which cannot be represented. Woman is the repressed in discourse (Marks and Courtivron, New French Feminisms 137-141). Kristeva's non-essentialist position here is related to her concept of the politics of marginality. I have referred to this central/marginal opposition in Chapter I. She also says that "if the feminine exists, it exists only in the order of significance or signifying process" (Moi, Kristeva Reader 11). Kristeva's semiotic position assigns a non-essentialist status to woman here.

While sharing the non-essentialist view of Lacan and Kristeva regarding the question of woman, I take a different

---

<sup>190</sup> *Jouissance* means ecstasy or intense bliss. Lacan talks about sexual *jouissance* and phallic *jouissance*. In this context, he refers to "the moment of sexuality which is always in excess, something over and above the phallic term which is the mark of sexual identity." See editor's note ("God and *Jouissance*" 137). See also Kristeva's Desire for her use of the word and Lacan's ("Introduction" 16).

route to analyze the non-definable nature of woman. The Eastern female cannot be defined not because male-mediated function relates her to jouissance but because she exists in relation to another kind of mediation: religion and culture. Agreeing with Kristeva on her notion of the marginal which can stand for the repressed, I differ from her concept of subversion which includes the female, the disruptive, as it stands in relation to the symbolic. Lacan and Kristeva work within the materiality of an industrialized society. An Eastern analyst has to take into consideration the "presentness" of the past which has a powerful influence on the pschye of the female. Religion and culture inscribe this continuity of the past. The Eastern female takes her position within these dominant forces. Because the Eastern female is inseparable from, and mediated by these, she cannot be defined in terms of an essentialist paradigm. Empire as an experience compounds this problem of definition on the level of essentiality.

The Eastern female acts under the surveillance of her colonizers and within the dominant religio-cultural roles imposed on her. Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Christian, she comes from a wide range of cultural spectrum. She unfurls the flag of triumphant heterogeneity in the face of a puny attempt to homogenize her. If she is to speak the Third World feminine, she has to enunciate it in several tongues. However, within

this cultural diversity, she lives in constraints. Speech and silence are alternate modes of signification in her existence. Philomel-like tonguelessness coexists with her voiced speech. Her sexuality collapses signification as a neat division, as I have shown in Chapter VII with regard to the binarism, pagan/Christian, set up in the romances. Here the male/female dichotomy is undermined, and this, I will demonstrate through the instance of marriage as a paradigm, makes an essentialist feminist inquiry impossible.

Marriage is related to gift and exchange of female in the Indo-European continuum. Variouslly denoted as "bride-price," "bride-wealth," and "morning gift" in the Germanic languages, the same is called "dann," gift, or "kanyadann," "gift of the virgin" in Sanskrit.<sup>191</sup> Marriage as a social arrangement, as distinct from personal choice of partners, requires gift-giving, while both the forms of marriages have existed from ancient times. Manu-smriti, the Institutes of the sacred laws by Manu (ca 3 B.C.-100 AD), which records the arranged and personal forms of marriages, lists the gift-giving related to the exchange of female among various castes within the kinship system of ancient India. The

---

<sup>191</sup> See the usage of the word, gift, in Old English in Toller's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary (475). Benveniste analyzes the notion of gift and exchange in the Indo-European languages (General Linguistics 272-280). Mauss examines the concept of gift in Hindu classical period (53-59) and Germanic societies (59-62). Gonda discusses the idea of gift in Indian Religion (198-227).

society has preserved mostly its ancient culture in terms of close-knit extended family system and caste structure.

The Indian female exists in a neatly organized caste and kinship system which is being changed by Western values in the major urban centers, but which is a reality in the more than 80% of lives lived out in the rural areas. India, like most of the Eastern countries, is a highly stratified society. A hierarchized system, it codifies people according to caste, occupation, and status. Languages, often case-linked, manuevere male and female, and young, old, and caste-related identities, and retain them in their variously defined roles. Marriage and gift-giving take place mostly within the neatly defined social groups. The basic pattern of the father giving away the bride as a gift, while the bridegroom gives "as much wealth as he can afford to the kinsmen and to the bride herself" (The Laws of Manu, III. 31), takes place today only in a few organized groups, matriarchal by nature.<sup>192</sup> Though the Hindu scriptures say that the girl is the most precious of gifts given to her husband by her father, the prevalent social practice is that the female is given as a gift along with a bride-price by her father.

The exchange of female by the males is lopsided in the Indian context. It defies anthropological notions of the

---

<sup>192</sup>All citations from Bühler's edition.



male giving gift to the female in exchange for of her reproductive values. Placed in this kinship pattern, woman is a sign and value. As a sign, she effects the exchange in the extended family or kinship affinity; as a value, she embodies the biological relevancy to the continuity of the system.<sup>193</sup> The Indian woman exists as a devalued sign. But, she is part of the signification, for she is subject to subordination discursively through generations. Tracing the Indian female's position back to the ancient precepts of The Laws of Manu, which are responsible for the religio-cultural subordination of woman in India, a reader can locate her as a negative sign:

In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent. (V.148)

This fatefully powerful production of female as a sign interpreted solely by the male members of her family has survived with astonishing persistence even to twentieth-century India. Dowry is the most degrading and tragic symbol of phallic supremacy in this context. Neither female education nor an independent career for woman has diminished the amount of money a woman has to pay to get married.<sup>194</sup> The

---

<sup>193</sup> See Lévi-Strauss who treats woman as a sign and value in the kinship exchange system, Elementary Structure (496).

<sup>194</sup> Vohra and Sen explore the problem of women in India, and the working women's position in Status.

dowries given for educated and earning women are far more than those given for less educated or illiterate women. That is, a more educated man gets a greater dowry. This inversely proportioned value attached to both woman's and man's academic skills places the university men and women respectively as investment of and liabilities to parents.

This gift-giving related to her dependence, however, has voiced silences. The female is a sign and value only in her childbearing age. Her devaluation is related to her womb-value as a producer of male children. She is a sign only as long as she is a daughter and a young wife. She becomes a signifier by becoming an exchanger along with her male members in extracting dowry for her sons. Hence there are unsuspected dimensions to the gift of the daughters. There are silences which defy the characterological constant of the binarily divided essentialist female-against-male feminist approach. The woman who acts as a sign in the language called kinship, and embodies value as a procreator, becomes an exchanger, as distinct from the woman who has given birth to girls only. The family's anxiety to provide for the future of the female child starts in her infancy. R.K. Narayan's novel, The English Teacher, a book about the celebration of married love beyond the grave, makes allusions to the protagonist's infant daughter, Leela, who receives an "endowment" from her maternal grandfather which

could "benefit her when she comes of a marriageable age" (174). Similarly, the protagonist's mother expresses her anxiety that even if Leela is likely to lose her mother, the child should "at least have a well-provided future" (175) meaning a matrimonial alliance with the help of a large amount of money. The parents of girls live an unspoken anxiety-ridden secondary existence compared to those of boys. Hence male domination of woman, in spite of the official inscriptions, is only a partial, understated conclusion. The silences and speech of the female are orchestrated patterns according to the commercial investments she could make out of her male children. Therefore, any feminist strategy has to take into account the gendered process which a female undergoes, and the differences which womb-value encodes on her body in the Eastern context. In short, woman entering new social contracts in the status of woman as a process engendered by her reproductive value should be represented in a model of gender construction.

Mothering plays an important role in fragmentizing the female body further. An average Indian girl is often raised with the expectation that giving birth to a male child will complete her existence. In the largely agrarian segments, male children are a necessity as they have to work on the farm. Moreover, they are a financial security in the old age, since most of the women are not in the work force to

earn the governmental old age benefits. The government itself is not able to come up with a workable scheme; overpopulation staggers any worthwhile plan. Because of the circular ineffectiveness built into the very existence of womanhood, a male child is often the only mainstay a family could possibly have. In most cases, he is the dowry-fetcher, the social security, and the filler of the "lack" the mother feels as a woman.

An oppressionist, rural reaction to the birth of a girl as the firstborn is recorded in Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve. Markandaya explores the life of Rukmani, a South Indian rural woman, whose hopeless misery is due to the lack of a large amount of dowry which her parents are unable to give in order to find a provider for her. Hence she is married to a tenant farmer, unlike her older sisters who are well off, because of the low amount of gift money she is able to carry with her. Her life is more devalued when she gives birth to a female child. Markandaya presents her heroine-narrator as a figure of abjection on giving birth to a girl baby. Rukmani sheds "tears of weakness and disappointment." In a half narrational and half authorial tone, the rhetorical question is asked, "...what woman wants a girl for her first-born?" (25). On Rukmani's visit to her dying mother, the latter gives the former "a small stone lingam, symbol of fertility" and the mother

tells her daughter, "Wear it...You will yet bear many sons" (31). The "lingam" being a phallic symbol and a feature of the fertility cults of popular Hinduism, this maternal gift is worn by Rukmani with "faith." The Indian female's inability to eliminate the "maternal superstitious," however, co-exists with the daughter's regular visit to the English physician in her village whose medical treatment makes her a mother of many male children.

While rural solicitude for male children is evident in texts such as this, an exposure to urban fondness for male children can easily be demonstrated. Latest medical advancement is used against the birth of female children. Here is an excerpt from a 1989 news story by Stan Grosfel in The Columbus Dispatch (Ohio):

In a study of 8,000 abortions after amniocentesis in Bombay, it was reported 7,999 of the aborted fetuses were female. (5 A, December 28, 1989)

Gendered abortions place the woman as a problematic biological category. Reproductive practices are aligned along gender lines; the mother-daughter relationship is terminated even before it is formed. A mother consents to kill the female fetus, most often, encouraged by the vision of a girl as a heavy drain on the family finances and sometimes even as a "hostage" (Kishwar 29) in her husband's family to extract money from her parents. While Hindu and Christian female infants of the dowry-giving communities are most

likely to produce such adverse reaction in the parents, Muslim infants are not greatly exempted. If a Muslim woman gives birth to only daughters, she is likely to undergo humiliation and even divorce.<sup>195</sup>

A feminist methodology has to take into account the societal intervention of not only material gift but also gendered murder where female complicity is evident. Such murders comprise young brides as victims by their in-laws, both male and female, to some extent. The tyranny of in-laws finds casual references in Indo-Anglian novels. Narayan's novel, The English Teacher, in a matter-of-fact allusion, points out the sad reality of an average Indian woman in her patriarchal extended family. The physician who comes to treat Susila, the protagonist's wife, on her death bed narrates to her how a husband requested the doctor to keep his wife in bed for medical reasons so that she can be "free from the harassment of the mother-in-law" (76). Male/female opposition has to be seen, along with female/female opposition in the Eastern context because some of the Eastern women, while functioning within the horizontality of marriage-market paradigm, have to maneuver through subterranean layers.

While the Hindu and Christian women stand in relation to the gift within the family locus in a male versus female

---

<sup>195</sup>See Hassan's "Muslim Communities" 100.

paradigm, the Muslim woman and gift undergo an additional complexity. The gift marks either familial continuation or severance. The Muslim woman negotiates between being a woman and a Muslim. The female is given a bride-price, "Meher," by the bridegroom. This price varies according to the social parties. As a rule, only part of her "Meher" is paid before the wedding. The remainder, "Saddaq," is paid, if the marriage is dissolved, that is during the time of divorce. In the event of maintenance after divorce, a Muslim woman in India faces a hard choice. Under the Muslim personal law, "Sharia," a woman gets the remainder of her bride-price when she is divorced, and she also gets financial support for approximately three months, a period called "iddat." On the other hand, the Criminal Procedure Code which is followed in secular India offers provisions for permanent monthly settlements to divorcees irrespective of religious persuasions. A classic instance of the dichotomy in which a Muslim woman is placed is seen in the case of one Shah Banu, a seventy-three-year-old illiterate woman who sued her ex-lawyer husband for maintenance according to the Criminal Procedure Code.<sup>196</sup> The Supreme Court of India issued a judgment in favor of the woman, allowing her a monthly settlement in 1985. The husband invoked the Muslim personal law. Because of powerful conservative Muslim opinion, the

---

<sup>196</sup>See for a detailed discussion, Minault (814-820).

Indian government gave in, saying that Muslims were to be tried according to their personal law. The choice placed, then, before a Muslim female in India is either to be a woman or a Muslim.<sup>197</sup> This is an ontological violence of separating the feminine from faith. Woman and gift are constrained to stand in oppositional role to faith. Because of gift's complicity with faith, any feminist strategy has to take into account the feminine maneuvering through life and faith situations.

Another aspect of oppression is found in the joint family where three generations of the family members including the in-laws live in the same household. Several epochs are represented in the existential realities of such a household. For instance, Mahasweta Devi's "Breast-Giver" graphically places the female protagonist of the story, a wet nurse by the name of Jashoda, in a rich feudal household where she has to live out her banal existence by nurturing the babies there while maneuvering among people living in several epochs.<sup>198</sup> The narrator tells the reader that the house where Jashoda works as a "professional mother" is a symbol of an ancient bygone age; "...you enter the sixteenth century as you enter the gates of this house" (221); "It was

---

<sup>197</sup>Minault refers to Kishwar's article, "Pro-Women or Anti-Muslim" (817).

<sup>198</sup>All citations are from Spivak's translation in Other Worlds.



always the sixteenth century in the...household" (230). This "pastness" which is very much present even today is due to the superstitious yet modern practice of relating selection of mates, their sexuality, and reproductivity to the predictions of some much revered almanacs in some Indian households. The narrator says, "To this day you take your wife by the astronomical almanac" (221), and "the almanac approves of the taking of a wife almost every month of the year" (226). The Haldars of Harisal, the employers of Jashoda, who follow these predictions wonder why their youngest son indulges in untoward activities in the afternoon, though his father "created him in the deepest night by the astrological almanac" (221). While part of the collective life of the household is determined by the almanac, part of it is shaped by the patriarch's "mentality" which was "constructed" by the British empire's policy of "Divide and Rule" (224).

This colonialist mentality of offering a unified administrative front while dividing and ruling the colonized people is transferred to patriarchy on the homefront in a different fashion. The educated sons who form the second generation in the narrative demonstrate this. They reflect the general expectation of the well educated Indian men towards their women that the latter be "revolutionary ladies" outside and "the Divine Mother," inside their homes (226). The third generation breaks away from the joint

family, and women follow their husbands to their work place in far away homes. In Jashoda's thirty years of reproductive life, she is closely linked to the members of her employer's family who represent the superstition of the sixteenth century, "darkness" of the eighteenth century, "pre-Bengal-Renaissance nineteenth century," and twentieth century exposure to modernity (239). She lives out her subaltern existence without the economic sustenance to outgrow each century as it pins her down to a servitude--hallowed and harrowing--as the mother of twenty children and "professional mother" of thirty children.

Transformed into another level of reading, Jashoda is India itself feeding her exploitative children--stagnant and parasitic--at different levels of industrialization and economic and scientific growth. Individual Jashodas still produce, process, and market food, and spend more than eight hours a day at transporting water, fuel, and produce from the market to their homes. But all of them have gone through phases of agrarian India, colonization, and traditional family life. A growing number has gone through education, immigration, and reverse transplantation to India again. These have assimilated experiences in thirty years what the West has taken ten times the number of years to

produce.<sup>199</sup> The feminine, then, exists in several epochs and manuevers through unhomogenized segments of culture temporarily and psychically.

In addition, in her chequered existence, the Eastern female has incorporated the legacy of another intervention-political--the Empire and colonization. Just as the concept of gift has alienated her body from herself, the twin notion of empire and colonization has disaffiliated her from her female self and projected her image in the service of imperialism. The Indian female's self-immolation on her husband's death, known as "sati," the pronounced child-marriage, and the Islamic female's veil in a different subject soil have been used as objects of colonial referents by the imperial servants, whether British or French, to project the Eastern female as an object of oppression by her backward, oppressive, and non-progressive male.<sup>200</sup> This representation is an ideologically loaded enterprise to justify the liberating presence and the civilizing influence of the colonial rule. In this act of representation, both the colonialist male and female have had their share.

For instance, the British feminists of the nineteenth century rendered the Eastern female as a silent sufferer who

---

<sup>199</sup> See Bharati Mukherjee quoted in Brennen "Cosmopolitans" (3)

<sup>200</sup> Spivak discusses "Sati" in relation to the Rani of Sirmur under colonialism ("Rani" 247-272).

needed the imperialist intervention. They were willing to throw themselves into this noble political cause in the far flung British empire, if only they could get suffrage at home.<sup>201</sup> Male imperial intentions and female solidarity for the "heathen" Eastern female--a combined colonialist burden -- form the epic panorama of divisive male/female projections etched on to the native soil.

The child marriage of the Indian female so popularized in the Western mind is, no doubt, a despicable matrimonial practice. Nevertheless, it was resorted to as the last desperate means by the Indian male as a citizen of a subject nation under repeated foreign invasions, to preserve the honor of the Indian female. The proprietary male instinct to keep the hearth unsullied is a defensive act but it is one of the few free acts he could afford to indulge in.<sup>202</sup>

In a similar fashion, the Algerian woman's veil was used as one of the means to perpetuate colonialism by the French rulers in the twentieth century. If the veiled woman could be won over from her cultural thralldom and introduced to Western values, her transformation could not only aid in the reevaluation of the indigenous culture but also in the

---

<sup>201</sup> See Burton's dissertation (22-24).

<sup>202</sup> Vina Mazumdar thinks differently. She says that higher caste parents practised child marriage in order to avoid their daughters from getting married to low caste men with more wealth. Male children of high caste could be arranged for a less amount of money. See Jayawardena (83).

redefinition of the native man's power over his female. Hence the colonial government took upon itself the burden of presenting this woman as a "humiliated, sequestered, cloistered..." figure in the native culture (Fanon, A Dying Colonialism 38).<sup>203</sup> This is also a gendered representational strategy to create a perfect native, one who is in need of help by the Western colonialist.

The search for this native female figure and the production and sustaining of this image in the colonialist axiomatics is analogous to the nineteenth-century Germanic quest for the "purist" language in the laps of Persia or in the remote Vedic Sanskrit belt of India. The Eastern female, like the Eastern language, in a different sense, offered a purist version of a heathen in need of colonialist appropriation. The saree-clad Indian woman or the veiled Algerian woman is a perfect native both for the Western colonialist or Christian missionary travelling to the East. What sustained these two, the knight and the missionary, was the fact that these people were there to defend the colonialist flag in the far flung outposts of the rulers, or establish the roots of Christendom in the heathen heartland of darkness: cutting out earthly and heavenly fiefdoms under an imperialist banner. The Eastern female cannot be separ-

---

<sup>203</sup>Fanon treats the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized also in Wretched of the Earth.

ated from her past, the empire, and colonialism. They have intervened herstory and interrupted history.

Empire's indelible traces can be seen in the Indian psyche. Writing in the postcolonial world, Anita Desai creates Indian characters in her bicultural novels where the Eastern psyche reacts to Empire and colonialism in a half humorous and half bathetic mood. Her Bye Bye Blackbird is the story of Adit Sen, an immigrant from Bengal, India, to England. Married to Sarah, an English girl, he is partially assimilated into the English culture. His structural opposite is Dev from India who comes to study at the London School of Economics. Dev's obvious resistance to the English culture is placed against the subtle surrender of Adit Sen to the beauty of his adopted home. But during the course of the novel, as in Henry James' The Ambassadors, the characters switch places. Adit Sen decides to go to India--his land of Sanskrit and prayers--with his pregnant wife, but Dev, on the other hand, stays in England. In a moment of extraordinary perception of the synthesis of the two cultures in the Indian psyche--English and Eastern--Dev asks whether Adit Sen is not a hybrid created by Macaulay in India, "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (179). Partially assimilated because of the graceful spell of England--reminiscent of Lambert Strether's feel for the

seductive appeal of Paris in The Ambassadors--Adit wonders whether Dev's presence in a garden in Hampshire is not prepared far in advance by the "remarkable history of the Elizabethan ships setting sail for the coral strands of an unknown land" and a "less heroic but equally adventurous East India Company" and also the march of the missionaries "who bore the Bible and Palgrave's Golden Treasury under one arm and a bottle of whiskey under the other..." (180). The trader and the missionary travelling across the colonial landscape are images handed down to the Indian mind which reminisces over the travel paradigm, now reversed,--East to West. London itself--the terrain--elicits hegemonic "courtship" from the former subject, Dev, who wonders at the charm it casts over him. While surrendering to this subtle fascination, Dev calls up the thought that London will not be "conquered"; it never invites "conquest" (138). The great paradigm of travel--now in reversal from the East to West--exemplified by the presence of Dev and Adit Sen in England, is marked by a recollection of the empire along with the presence of the trader and the missionary, a psychic terrain established by the former colonialist over the colonized. Anita Desai herself caught in the bicultural and trans-colonial experience creates characters as in-betweens poised unwittingly across imperial and colonial actualities.

The interruption of the bicultural existence imposed by

the empire is further seen in a more striking way in the use of English in India. "Empire and Space" are two significant factors which place the Eastern female in her "worldliness."<sup>204</sup> Language and empire stand in a curious relationship in the nineteenth-century imperialist concepts which has its impact on even today's India. English and Sanskrit, the rising international language and the dying Hindu scriptural language, are pitted against each other in the colonialist consciousness as a last psychic victory over the Indian mind.<sup>205</sup> Even in the eighteenth century, the leading defendent of the study of Sanskrit in India, Sir William Jones, helped translate Sanskrit literary and legal documents into English to facilitate the British colonial administration in India according to the Indian legal system. Such linguistic contributions are hailed as late as the 1980s as a means to defend a suppressed people. In his article, "A Construction of the European image of the Orient: a bicentenary reappraisal of Sir William Jones as poet and translator," Garland Cannon says that Jones's

---

<sup>204</sup>Said's talk on "Geography, Imperialism, and Methodology" at the University of Chicago on November 28, 1990. Said said that texts should be analyzed in the context of empire and space bringing out the opposite voices. This principle, based on his Orientalism, has been my inquiry throughout the dissertation.

<sup>205</sup>Laird discusses Wilson's and Duff's differing notions about vernacular and English education in nineteenth-century India (339-346).



linguistic skills and his "judicial scholarship" enabled him to "protect" "the oppressed Indians" (177) through his translations of Sanskrit materials. The empire is etched into criticism, and critical articles dealing with the East also have to be read in their dual voices, namely the deleting voice of the dominant and the deleted voice of the oppressed. Such a palimpsestic reading, as the one I have been using as a methodology for reading texts with the East-West elements help situate the voices in relation to the study of language in India in a different perspective.

When English was introduced as a medium of instruction by the Macaulay Act of 1835, the empire exiled the Indians from their own past, their country, and their cultural selves. Westernization of education did not only make the British administration smooth but also helped produce a subject nation of clerks in the imperial service. The protagonist in Narayan' The English Teacher, a teacher expected to "stuff Shakespeare and Elizabethan metre and Romantic Poetry for the hundredth time into young minds" in a college in India, in a moment of exasperation spills out his sad commentary on English education in India. He writes a letter of resignation to his English principal which says:

This education had reduced us to a nation of morons; we were strangers to our own culture, feeding on leavings and garbage...I am up against the system, the whole method and approach of a system of education which makes us morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative

officers. (178-79)

Reduced to its essentials, the passage pinpoints the core problem of Macaulay's Act--the appalling split between the Indian intellectual self and the cultural self. But the inability to solve this problem is best shown in the case of the protagonist of the same novel when he decides to write another letter of resignation saying that he would like to quit his job due to "personal reasons" (179).

While the colonized self finds itself existing in an unliveable contrareity, in most cases, and in a half-understood contradiction in some cases, the colonialist's engagement with the native language is seen in an altogether different light. The colonialist wife and the English language, especially seen in the nineteenth-century records, stand in a maternally nurturant stance. The colonialist children are protected from the supposedly enervating native languages. For instance, Julia Thomas Maitland, wife of James Thomas, a district judge in Madras, India, writing on January 9, 1839, expressed her uncomfortable feeling that her daughter might pick up the native language. The anxious mother writes about her little daughter:

I intend as much as possible, to prevent her learning the native language though it is rather difficult...most English children do learn them (native languages) and all sorts of mischief with them, and grow like little Hindoos...I hope to bring her home before it becomes of any consequence and meanwhile I keep her as much as possible with

me.<sup>206</sup>

Unlike the native who is placed in a contradiction, the colonialist female is seen in a tension. A resolution is available in the latter's case, that is, to keep the actuality of the native language at a remove. The native internalizes the colonialist language psychologically. The latter externalizes it by a mere physical remove. This is seen in the present-day Indian curriculum which incorporates a triple-language formula, with English being one of the two official languages along with Hindi. English literary texts are a core study in the Indian Universities. Non-European texts in the Western Universities, however, stand in a different kind of relationship to the canonized European texts. English itself becomes a hierarchizing experience, a polemical effect, yet the epistemological center to render colonization in terms of a deeply internalized or a merely external experience. The story of English itself reaches its triumphant finale in its tripartite movement through history. Emerging from its colonized status as a national language in Chaucer's England, reaching its imperial position in the nineteenth-century British empire, the language holds its

---

<sup>206</sup>Quoted by Chaudhuri, 531. See also the letter written by Major General Richard Strachey, the father of Lytton Strachey, the author of Eminent Victorians, to the former's wife saying that their "kittens" should be "kept well to their mother tongue" unlike his friend's son who "jabbers away in Hindostani" (531).

hegemonic sway still over the bilingual and trilingual consciousness of the Commonwealth countries today. The choice of English over vernacular, in most cases, in writing books is a proof of this.

#### B: HORIZONTALITY AND PALIMPSEST READINGS:

Reading the Third World feminine, then, without taking into account the problem of the Eastern female's representability, and without incorporating her multipronged existence is a limiting academic exercise, and it demonstrates the lack of cultural competence on the part of an analyst. Culture, like a text, requires competence in the act of analysis. A naked appropriation of information from the Third World cultures deprives the material of its context. Such a method of collecting material is merely what Spivak rightly calls an "information-retrieval approach" ("Three Women's Text" 262).<sup>207</sup> Without the necessary shifts which a strategy offers which brings to view the palimpsestic existence of the female, raw material from the East distorts the Eastern female's context, her silence, and even her negation. What the analyst needs is a medievalist's investigative competence into the palimpsestic mode of writings: a palimscopic examination.

---

<sup>207</sup> Spivak examines the effacement of the investigator who deals with Third World material ("Imperialism" 229).

The Eastern female works within a shiting stance in the dominant/subordinate situation.<sup>208</sup> Dominance can be, as seen in this chapter, related to male, colonization, empire, language, or another female. Mostly, dominance is a synchronic presence of all these elements exercising a hold over her subordinate situation. Her relationship to each of her dominant situation is in constant change. For instance, she is seen standing side by side with her male counterparts in the national struggles of independence. When political colonization is the dominant factor, with particular reference to the Indian subcontinent and the British empire, the Indian female occupies the subordinate position along with her male. But in the post-Independence period, she becomes the muted group in relation to her male.

A further shift in the dominant/subordinate paradigm can be seen in the working of the caste system. A supposedly higher caste female occupies the center in relation to the so called low caste male. The commonly held American academic notion of assigning minority status along gender and race lines works along a different axiom in this respect in the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, languages offer further shift in the dominant/subordinate context. Rewriting the patriarchal language or writing *écriture féminine* has

---

<sup>208</sup>See Kristeva's notion of center and margin (Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics 166). According to Kristeva, the marginal need not be a permanent factor.

not taken into account the non-written language, the oral culture, of millions of Third World societies. By the privileged status of the written culture over the oral culture because of the rapid globalization of mass media, resistance to orally written patriarchy has not been given much importance. Hence the female of the written culture stands above the male and female of the oral culture. Further, in the rewriting of the Western discourse about the East, the Eastern female stands with her male counterpart in the indigenized society. In rewriting her own patriarchy, she reverses her position and offers an oppositional voice to the native male. In all these dominant/subordinate relationships, that which is suppressed is not completely excluded. It stands in a colonized angle, subdued and subordinate.

Woman as the marginalized voice is substitutable by the so called low castes, men and women of the oral culture and minority religious groups. Woman is defined by that which is suppressed and subordinated; that which is exiled by body, caste, culture, and empire. Man as a category of dominance includes the older women who become exchangers, the upper class as well as higher caste women, and dominant religious structures. Because of the difficulty of consolidating the subordinate and the dominant, there can be only a syncretic subordinate and dominant at a given situa-

tion. This demonstrates the problematics of constructing sites of dialogization, defining in precise terms the subordinate or muted group's relation to the dominant in language.<sup>209</sup> The various selves and others are brought to visibility in this feminist model, along with their constant making and unmaking. There is a sliding of one site into the other, and there is no strict antithetical balance between the two zones. Hence the dialogic which involves the muted group's relation to language in Bakhtin has limited yet complex dialogic possibilities in the case of the Indian feminine. The dialogic effect is contested by complicity, interruption and intervention. This is due to the sites being occupied by family, culture and empire as the loci of power.

The feminine is the sum of the forces in which the subordinate represents its voice in relation to the dominant. The subject emerges from these mutable zones and is not related to race, class, gender considerations alone. The "I" is mediated by the voices of the others--the male, colonizing other, Empire, and the caste other-- often contradictorily placed. The engagement with these others acknowledges the basic break with the monologic, a single and absolute voice according to Bakhtin. At the same time, because of the pluralized stance of the "I" which situates it-

---

<sup>209</sup>I have borrowed this basic concept from Bakhtin.

self in the category of woman, the subjectivity is a highly problematized one. The complex subordination of the Eastern feminine as it maneuvers in gaps and interstices cannot be wholly theorizable by a model of dialogization, though it could incorporate a pluralized and complex subordination as its muted yet subversive voice.

That which is capable of speech, however muted it may be, is representable in the model of dialogization.<sup>210</sup> The silences that surround and the gaps where speech is stilled have to look for an additional model besides this. The representability of the feminine does not stop at the level of Dialogization. Dialogization, at its best, brings exemplary differences within its theoretical control as far as "this

---

<sup>210</sup>Bakhtin expounds theoretically the subordinate group's different relationship to language by positing two voices in an utterance, namely the absorption of the possible response of the listener in the speaker's words. My paper on "Beowulf and Bakhtin: A Study in the Interplay of Voices" in the 23rd International Conference on Medieval Studies in May, 1988, investigates the pagan-Christian problem of the text from the perspective of Bakhtin's notions of dialogue and monologue. Exemplaria 1.2 (1989) has articles on Bakhtin's concept of dialogization being applied to Chaucer. McClellan's "Bakhtin's Theory" applies dialogism to Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale" (462-488). Irvine's "Medieval Textuality and the Archaeology of Textual Culture" is a brilliant examination of the linguistic and cultural systems of the Anglo-Saxon period through the theoretical notions of Bakhtin's dialogization and Foucault's archaeology. See Two Languages (181-210). My application of Bakhtin in this chapter is limited. I have used the muted group's subordinate relation to the dominant group as a colonized, and palimpsestic relationship. I have utilized Kristeva's notion of positionality, namely, the shifting of center/margin paradigm, for the undecidable nature of Eastern female as an essentialist subordinate in my treatment of the dominant and muted zones in the culture under study.



worldly" is concerned. While the fluidity of the sites maximize the components of dialog, the silences need to be given extra attention. For instance, the "I" is an ongoing movement reaching towards an appropriation of a religious faith beyond the cultural contexts which are rendered in terms of the dominant and subordinate sites interacting with each other. Often feminist strategies, in relation to the Third World feminine exercise a radical disjunction with the Eastern female's spiritual dimension. This is akin to the medieval knight's relation to the Eastern female; seeing a severance of body and spirit in the feminine. Her faith is absorbed by the knight's terrain. Modern day Western feminism which does not analyze the Eastern female's predicament in the latter's faith situation and sees her only from a secular perspective effects the same kind of radical disjuncture: the violence of disembodiment of the woman from the spirit and seeing her only as a body.<sup>211</sup> To see her only in relation to her body is an analytical trap. Hence, graphically rendered, horizontality of an Eastern medieval inscription can represent the manifest and muted sites, whereas the spiralling forms underneath the horizontal strokes can stand for the process through which the

---

<sup>211</sup>Spivak stands in a curious relationship to Western feminism. She lives in "other worlds" besides her base in the United States. See MacCabe's "Foreword" (Spivak, Other Worlds xvi).

Eastern feminine maneuvers between the altering sites.

C: PLURALIZATION THROUGH VERTICALITY AND SYMBOLS:

Such an order of writing which combines horizontality and spiralling can relate to the Eastern female's subterranean existences which could be brought to visibility by a palimpsest reading. In addition, the faith component of the Eastern female could be represented by the vertical strokes in the inscription. The Eastern feminine is an upward movement--an ongoing process from a dialogized life situation to a revisionary appropriation of faith. Positing the feminine as a process moves her beyond the zone of subjugation which the dominant /subordinate paradigm predicates. The other world is a powerful force in the psyche of the Indian female. That which makes life possible for millions of Third World women is the powerful hold of faith on their lives. Writing the body--a task undertaken by the French feminist context--is an impossible endeavor in the Eastern culture for body and spirit are related in an intrinsic fashion, as I will demonstrate shortly.

Faith and sexuality are interlinked concepts in the Eastern feminine consciousness. The sexuality of the Eastern female which is often related to the body in Western writings functions in a different way in the East. With particular reference to India, female chastity is synonymous

with female spirituality. This cultural signification is evident at the popular level in the deification of the religious and mythological heroines like Sita, Savitri, and Kannagi whose chastity is upheld as a model for the women to emulate. Sita is the heroine of the Indian epic Ramayana. A princess married to the epic prince, Rama, she evinces purity of soul and body even though she is abducted by Ravana, the villain of the epic, in an attempt to marry her, and carried to Ceylon and imprisoned there for fourteen years. In a similar yet more heroic fashion, the mythic heroine, Savitri, demonstrates her loyalty to her spouse. She comes to realize that her husband, Satyavan, is predestined to die within a year of marriage according to the royal horoscope. The dauntless yet pathetic figure of Savitri, a princess herself, following and pleading with Yama, the god of death, for the life of her husband even to the portals of the other world is a symbol of graceful negotiation of life with death. Her ultimate victory in gaining her husband back to life is female chastity's triumph over cosmic odds. Kannagi, another mythological figure in Silapatikaram, "the epic of the Ankle Bracelet," proves her sacred and superhuman power of chastity by an articulated curse over the city of Madurai in South India when her husband is suspected and killed by the ruling king of the land in an act of perverted justice by false witnessess. The city

is burnt to ashes by the defensesless cry of the alien woman to the heavens in the unknown city. These princely and aristocratic women, protectionless and exiles in other terrains, evoke spiritual support through their purity of body. These female figures, mythic, and spiritual, are internalized symbols for the spiritualized power of chastity in the Indian mind.

Further, in the chequered religious history of India, which has been invaded by outside powers like Islam and Christianity, one of the powerful indigenized religious themes has remained the same: woman's sexual sanctity as her core concept of spirituality. For more than two thousand years or more, the concept of female chastity has been an ontological imperative for spirituality.<sup>212</sup> Hindu, Muslim, and Christian interpretation of female spirituality in the Indian context derives from the cultural center, the indigenized space of chastity in which a female exists as a virgin, wife, mother, and widow. In short, the female body is an interpreted spiritual modality.

Feminist revision has to grapple with these deeply internalized feminine ideals. In fact, Madhu Kishwar, a leading feminist from India, notes that those who reject these ideals tend to do so from a Western point of view, and hence

---

<sup>212</sup>Pandian analyses female spirituality and chastity in the context of South India in "Goddess Kannagi" (177-191).

such a move is "ineffective" (46). The option she offers is the recreation of these feminine ideals for feminist purposes. She refers to Gandhi's use of the feminine symbols for the Indian Stuggle for Independence against the British empire. She mentions Sita being used as a symbol of "Swadeshi" Movement (47). That is, Sita's refusal to dress herself in finery in her imprisonment in Ceylon to be an object of attraction to Ravana is made analogous to the Indian people's Movement to wear "Khadi," homespun clothes, in defiance of the Manchester made clothes made out of Indian raw cotton and sold back to the colonized.

Further, Kishwar refers to Gandhi's use of Mirabai (47), a medieval female saint, as a resistant figure to prevailing patriarchal oppression, in the Independence movement. A princess herself, she leaves her arranged marriage situation and becomes a devotee in a temple. A feminist model must take into consideration Kishwar's observation of this historically proven use of images and symbols. In a religious society like India, reinterpretation and not removal of the powerful images, myths, and ideals could liberate the feminine. "Bakhti," devotion or spirituality, is a powerful means of liberation. Revision of symbols could be an access to woman's spirit. Reinterpretation of patriarchal signification ascribed to female characters in the myth and also in sacred scriptures could be a liberating faith

experience. The concept of feminine and mother should be pressed into this service of liberation.

The Hindu concept of god does not exclude the feminine principle. Power is conceived of in the feminine figure of "Shakti" who represents one half of the Hindu god, Shiva. That which is feminine is not exiled from the principle of divinity in the Hindu mind. Harendranath Maitra observes that the "Hindus worship God in every relation, but most of all as Mother and Beloved One" (Pinkam 98). What the popular Hindu feminine needs is an affiliative modality of experience with this unsuppressed feminine at the level of divinity. "Bakhti" or devotion which makes the faith situation possible can enable the female to see the co-presence of her male god and his female counterpart as an unalienated presence. Dynamic interrelation in "Bakhti" with the image of the powerfully feminine can create a nascent awareness in the suppressed depths of a female.

One of the central images of Christianity itself, the lamb taken to the slaughter, is a symbol of all that is sacrificed for the salvation of the rest. That which is silenced and marched to metaphorical and even physical death may be feminine. Resurrection--the symbol of power incarnate -- could be interrelated to the triumph of the suppressed. The figure of Virgin Mary itself could be seen as that of a colonized woman under an imperial Roman regime who by the

aspiration of faith transcends that which is this-worldly. Her body is faith and flesh simultaneously. She is the ultimate symbol of the colonized woman everywhere. Race, class, gender, and Eastern culture subordinate her body, while faith triumphs above, reaching its hands heavenward.

Faith situation of the Eastern feminine is rooted in the body and evolves out of it. Yet the body is contested and dialogized situation as we see in the graphically rendered structure of horizontality. However, the body holds within, at the same time, an upward movement. "Bakhti," or devotion to God--female spirituality--is a dimension which cannot be dissociated from an average Indian female. Faith situation of the Eastern feminine, then, could be represented by vertical strokes in a manuscript reading. The reinterpreted signs and symbols could represent the sacred or cosmological spheres in the manuscript inscription. To read the Eastern female is to read a calligraphed Eastern manuscript. It requires not only competence in the culture under study but also the ability to decipher palimpsestic writings, the manifest and muted voices and their constant engagement in dialogization. This reading takes into account not only the horizontal forces in which the feminine is predicated in life situation but also the faith situation--a verticality which raises her above her mere body and makes it a hallowed space in her flesh-and-blood existence.

## WORKS CITED

- Aarne, Antti and Stith Thompson. The Types of Folk Tale: A Classification and Bibliography. Trans. Stith Thompson. 2nd rev. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1964.
- Aerts W.J., et al. Vincent of Beauvais and Alexander the Great: Studies on the Speculum maius and its translations into medieval vernaculars. Groningen: E. Forsten, 1986.
- Ahmed, Leila. Edward W. Lane: A Study of his life and works and of British ideas of the Middle East in the nineteenth century. London and New York: Longman, 1978.
- Ali, Mushsin Jassin. Scheherazade in England: A Study of Nineteenth-Century English Criticism of the "Arabian Nights." Washington D.C.: Three Continents P, 1981.
- Alloula, Malek. The Colonial Harem. Trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich. Theory and Literature. vol. 21. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Altman, Charles. "Medieval Narrative vs. Modern Assumptions: Revising Inadequate Typology." Diacritics 4 (1974): 12-19.
- Andermatt, Conley Verena. Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1984.
- Appadurai, Arjun. ed. The Social Life of Things: Commodities in cultural perspective. London, New York, New Rochelle, and Sydney: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Aquinas, Saint Thomas. On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles. Trans. Anton C. Pegis. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1955.



- Ascoli, Albert Russell. "The Vowels of Authority." Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Eds. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens. Hanover and London: UP of New England, 1989.
- Auerbach, Eric. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Trans. Willard Trask. New Jersey, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953.
- Augustine, Aurelius Saint. De Civitate Dei. vol 2. New York: Hefner, 1945.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Rabelais and His World. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. P, 1968.
- Barron, W.R.J. English Medieval Romance. London and New York: Longman, 1987.
- Bately, Janet, ed. Old English Orosius. EETS 6. New York: Oxford UP, 1980.
- Barthes, Roland. Elements of Semiology. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968, 1984.
- Baugh, Albert C, ed. Chaucer's Major Poetry. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963.
- Bedier, Joseph. "La composition De La Chanson De Fierabras." Romania 17 (1889): 22-51.
- Beichner, Paul E. "Chaucer's Man of Law and Disparitus Cultus." Speculum 23 (1948): 70-75.
- Benkov, Edith Joyce. "Language and Women: From Silence to Speech." Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature. Eds. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney. New York: Syracuse UP, 1989.
- Benson, Larry. "Courtly Love and chivalry in Later Middle Ages." Fifteenth-Century Studies. Ed. Robert F. Yeager. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1984.

- Benveniste, Emile. "Subjectivity in Language." Problems in General Linguistics. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek, Coral Gable, Florida: U of Miami P, 1971.
- Benvenuto, Bice and Roger Kennedy. The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction. New York: St. Martin's P, 1986.
- Besserman, Lawrence. Chaucer and the Bible: A Critical Review of Research, Indexes, and Bibliography. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988.
- Bhabha, Homi, ed. Nation and Narration. London and New York: Routledge, 1990
- Billings, Anna Hunt. A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances. New York: Russell & Russell, 1901. Rpt. 1967.
- Blair, Peter Hunter. An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977.
- Bloch, Howard R. "Medieval Misogyny." Representations 20 (1987): 1-24.
- Block, Edward. "Originality, Controlling Purpose, and Craftsmanship in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale." PMLA 63 (1953): 572-616.
- Boer Walther W. Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotlem. Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1973.
- Boitani, Piero. English Medieval Narrative in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. Trans. Joan Krakover Hall. London and New York: Cambridge UP, 1982.
- Bové, Paul A. Intellectuals in Power: Genealogy of Critical Humanism. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
- Braddy, Haldeen. "The genre of Chaucer's Squire's Tale." JEGP 41 (1942): 279-290.
- . "The Oriental Origin of Chaucer's Canacee-Falcon Episode." PMLA 31 (1936): 11-19.
- Brennan, Tim. "Cosmopolitans and Celebrities." Race & Class 31.1 (1989): 1-19.

- Brewer, Derek, ed. Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature. Alabama: Alabama UP, 1966.
- , ed. Studies in Medieval English Romances: Some New Approaches. Suffolk, Great Britain: St Edmundsbury P, 1988.
- Brodie, Fawn. The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967.
- Brody, Saul Nathaniel. "Chaucer's Rhyme Royal Tales and the Secularization of the Saint." Chaucer Review 20.2 (1985): 113-131.
- Brown, Beverley and Parveen and Adams. "The Feminine Body and Feminist Politics." m/f (1979): 35-50.
- Brownfoot, Janice N. "Memsahibs in Colonial Malaya: A Study of European Wives in a British Colony and Protectorate 1900-1940." The Incorporated Wife. Eds. Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardner. London, Sydney, Dover, and New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1984.
- Bryan W.F. and Germaine Dempster. Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1940.
- Bugge, John. Virginitas An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975.
- Burton, Antoinette M. "British Feminists and "The Indian Woman," 1865-1915: Race, Nation, and Empire in the Age of Female Emancipation." Diss. U of Chicago, 1990.
- Burton, Isabel. The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton. vol. 1. London: Chapman & Hall, LD. 1893.
- Burton, Richard. The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night. vol. 1 Burton Club for Private Subscribers, N.D.
- . The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night. vol. 10. London: Burton Club for Private Subscribers, 1886.
- Butturff, Douglas R. "Style as clue to meaning: A Note on the Old English Translation of the Epistola Alexandri Ad Aristotlem." ELN 8.2 (December 1970):

81-86.

- Bynum, Carolyn Walker. Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: U of California P, 1987.
- Cannon, Garland. "A Construction of the European image of the Orient: a bicentary reappraisal of Sir William Jones as poet and translator." Comparative Criticism 8 (1986): 167-188.
- Camille, Michael. "The Très Riches Heures': An Illuminated manuscript in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Critical Inquiry 17.1 (1990): 72-107.
- Chambers, R.W. Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1959.
- Chaudhuri, Nupur. "Memsahibs and Motherhood in Nineteenth-Century Colonial India" Victorian Studies 31.4 (1988): 517-535.
- Chenu M.D. "Auctor, Actor, Autor." Bulletin du Cange: Archivium Latinitatis Medii Aevi 3 (1927): 81-86.
- Cixous, Hélène. "Utopias." New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. New York: Schocken, 1981.
- . "The Laugh of the Medusa." New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Eds. Elaine Marks and Isabella Courtivron. Amherst: U of Massachusetts, 1980.
- . "Sorties." The Newly Born Woman. Eds. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Clein, Wendy. Concepts of Chivalry in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1987.
- Clément, Catherine. "Sorceress and Hysteric." The Newly Born Woman. Eds. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1986.
- Clinton, Jerome W. "Madness and Cure in the Thousand and One Nights." Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion,

- Allusion, and Paradigm. Ed. Ruth B. Bottigheimer. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1986.
- Cohan, Steven and Linda M. Shires. Telling Stories. New York and London: Routledge, 1988.
- Cohen, Richard, ed. Face to Face with Levinas. Albany: State U of New York P, 1986.
- Colish, Marcia L. The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge. Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1983.
- Colmer, Dorothy. "The Franklin's Tale: A Palimpsest Reading." Essays in Criticism 20 (1970): 375-380.
- Comfort, Wister W. "The Literary Role of the Saracens in the French Epic." PMLA 55 (1940): 629-59.
- Cook, Albert Stanburrough. The Historical Background of Chaucer's Knight. New York: Haskell House, 1966.
- Cross, J.E. "Cynewulf's traditions about apostles." Anglo-Saxon England 8 (1979): 163-175.
- Damico, Helen. Beowulf's Wealtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition. Madison, Wisconsin: U of Wisconsin P, 1984.
- Daniel, Norman. Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of "Chansons de Geste". Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1984.
- Dante, Alighieri. Divine Comedy. Trans. Henry Johnson. New Haven: Yale UP, 1915.
- David, Alfred. "The Man of Law vs Chaucer: A Case in Poetics." PMLA 82.2 (1967): 217-225.
- Davidson, Donald and A.P. Campell. "The Letter of Alexander the Great to Aristotle." The Humanities Association Bulletin 23.3 (1972): 3-16.
- Dawson, Christopher, ed. The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955.
- Delany, Sheila. "Womanliness in the Man of Law's Tale." Chaucer Review 9.1 (1974): 63-71.

- Derrida, Jacques. Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1973.
- Desai, Anita. Bye Bye Blackbird. New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books PVT. Ltd. 1971.
- Dharmaraj, Glory. "Beowulf and Bakhtin: A Study in the Interplay of Voices." 23rd International Conference on Medieval Studies. Kalamazoo, 7 May, 1988.
- Dinshaw, Carolyn. Chaucer's Sexual Poetics. Madison, Wisconsin: U of Wisconsin P, 1989.
- . "the Law of Man and its 'abhomynacions.'" Exemplaria 1.1 (1989):117-148.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L., and Paul Rabinow. Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. 2nd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983.
- Duffey, Bernard I. "The Intention and Art of 'the Man of Law's Tale" ELH 14 (1947): 181-193.
- Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983.
- Fanon, Frantz. A Dying Colonialism. Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove P, Inc., 1967.
- . The Wretched of the Earth. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove P, Inc., 1966.
- Fell, Christine. Women in Anglo-Saxon England. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- Feral, Josette. "The Powers of Difference." The Future of Difference. Eds. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1985.
- Fetterley, Judith. The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.
- Finnegan, Robert Emmett. "The Man of Law, His Tale, and the Pilgrims. Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 77 (1976): 227-240.
- Finlayson, John. "Definitions of Middle English Romance."

Chaucer Review 15.1 (1980): 44-62.

- Foucault, Michel. The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. Great Britain: Travistock Publications, 1972.
- . The History of Sexuality. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- . "What is an Author? Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism. Ed. Josue Harac. Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1979.
- . Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Fowler, David C. "An Accused Queen in "The Lass of Roch Royal (Child 76)" Journal of American Folklore 71 (1958): 553-563.
- Fox, Samuel, ed. King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon version of Boethius de consolatione Philosophiae. London: H.G. Bohn, 1864.
- Fyler, John M. "Domesticating the Exotic in the Squire's Tale." ELH 55.1 (1988): 1-26.
- Frantzen, Allen J. Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1990.
- Friedman, John Block. "The Marvels-of-the-East tradition in Anglo-Saxon Art." Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture. Ed. Paul E. Szarmach. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan U, 1986.
- . The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1981.
- Friedman, Jonathan. "Beyond Otherness or: The Spectacularization of Anthropology." Telos 71 (1987): 161-70.
- Friend, Albert. "The Tale of the Captive Bird and the Traveler: Nequam, Berechiah, and Chaucer's Squire's Tale." Medievalia Et Humanistica 1 (1970): 57-65.
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

- The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1976.
- Fyler, John M. "Domesticating the Exotic in the Squire's Tale." ELH 55.1 (1988): 1-26.
- Gartrell, Beverley. "Colonial Wives: Villains or Victims?" The Incorporated Wife. Eds. Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardener. London, Sydney, Dover, and New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1984.
- Genette, Gerard. Figures of Literary Discourse. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.
- Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method. Trans. Jane Lewin. Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1972.
- Genep van Arnold. The Rites of Passage. Trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960.
- Gerhardt, Mia Irene. The Art of Story-Telling. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963.
- Gibb, H.A.R., et al. The Encyclopaedia of Islam. vol. 1. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960.
- Gibb, Paul Allen. Wonders of the East: A Critical Edition and Commentary. Diss. Duke U, 1977. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1984. 77-21,871.
- Gist, Margaret Adlum. Love and war in the Middle English Romance. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1947.
- Gledhill, Christine. "Developments in Feminist Film Criticism." Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism. Eds. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams. Federick, Maryland: U Publications of America, Inc., 1984.
- Gonda, Jan. Change and Continuity in Indian Religion. London: Mouton & Co., 1965.
- Gough A.B. Palaestra XXII The Constance Saga. Berlin: Mayer & Muller, 1902.
- Gower, John. The English Works of John Gower. Ed. G.C. Macaulay. London: Kegan Paul, Trench,



Trubner & Co., Ltd. 1900.

Grant, Jacquelyn. "Prophetic Theology." The Kairos Covenant: Standing with South African Christians. Ed. Willis H. Logan. New York: Friendship P, 1988.

Greenfield, Stanley. A Critical History of Old English Literature. New York: New York UP, 1974.

-----, and Daniel Calder. The New Critical History of Old English Literature. New York and London: New York UP, 1986.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien. Structural Semantics: An Attempt at Method. Trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer and Alan Velie. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983.

Grosfeld, Stan. "India's young swallowed up in epicenter of misery." Columbus Dispatch 28 Dec. 1989: 5A.

Gunderson, Lloyd L. Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India. Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1980.

Hahn, Thomas. "Indian Tradition in Western History." Viator 9 (1978): 213-234.

----- . "The Middle English Letter of Alexander to Aristotle: Introduction, Text, Sources, and commentary." Medieval Studies 41 (1979): 106-160.

Haidu, Peter. "Repetition: Modern Reflections on Medieval Aesthetics." MLN 92 (1977): 875-887.

----- . "Romance: Idealistic Genre or Historical text?" The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics. Ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon. Rochester, Michigan: Solaris P, Inc., 1984.

----- . "Narrativity and Language in Some XIIth Century Romances." Yale French Studies 51 (1974): 133-146.

----- . "Introduction." Yale French Studies 51 (1974): 3-11.

Halbfass, Wilhelm. India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding. Albany, New York: State U of New York, 1988.

- Haller, Robert A. "Chaucer's Squire's Tale and the Uses of Rhetoric." Modern Philology. 62.4 (1965): 285-295.
- Harasym, Sarah, ed. The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies and Dialogues. London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1990.
- Harty, Kevin J. "The Tale and its Teller: the Case of Chaucer's Man of Law." American Benedictine Review 34.1 (1983): 361-371.
- Hassan, Riffat. "Women in the Context of Change and Confrontation within Muslim Communities." Women of Faith in Dialogue. Ed. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. New York: Cross Road, 1987.
- Heath, Stephen. "Notes on Suture." Screen 18.4 (1977-78): 48-76.
- Hibbard, Laura. Medieval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances. New York: Burt Franklin, 1963.
- Hisco, David. "Heavenly Sign and Comic Design in Gower's Confessio Amantis." Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in medieval thought and Literature. Ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney. New York: Syracuse UP, 1989.
- Hitti, Philip Khuri. Trans. An Arab-Syrian Gentleman And Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah Ibn-Munqidh. New York: Columbia UP, 1929.
- Houstsma, Martyn Th., et al. E.J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam. vol. 9. Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1987.
- Hult, David F. "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chretien's Charrete." Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens. Hanover and London: UP of New England, 1989.
- Hume, Kathryn. "Romance: A Perdurable Pattern." College English 36.2 (1974): 129-146.
- "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance." Philological Quarterly 53.2 (1974): 158-180.

- Inden, Ronald. Imagining India. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Irigaray, Luce. This Sex Which is Not One. Trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- . Speculum of the Other Woman. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- . "Women's Exile." Ideology and Consciousness 1 (1977): 62-76.
- Irvine, Martin. "Medieval Textuality and the Archaeology of Textual Culture." Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies. Ed. Allen J. Frantzen. Albany: State U of New York P, 1991.
- Isidore S. "Etymologiarum." Patrologia Latina. Ed. J. P. Migne. vol 82.
- Jackson, W.T.H. "The Nature of Romance." Yale French Studies 51 (1974): 12-25.
- Jacobus, Mary. Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
- James, Furnivall, ed. Originals and Analogues of some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. London: Oxford UP, 1872. Rept. 1928.
- James, Henry. The Ambassadors. Ed. Leon Edel. 3rd ed. London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1970.
- James, Montague Rhodes. The Marvels of the East. Oxford: UP, 1929.
- Jameson, Frederic. The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.
- JanMohamed, Abdul R. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." "Race," Writing, And Difference. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1986.
- Jardine, Alice. "Gynesis." Diacritics 12 (1982): 54-65.

- Jayawardena, Kumari. Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World. UK: Zed Books Ltd., 1986.
- Johnson, Barbara. "Female to Male as Ground is to Figure?" Feminism and Psychoanalysis. Eds. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof. Ithaca and London, Cornell UP, 1989.
- Jones, H.S.V. "The Squire's Tale." Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Eds. W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1940.
- , "The Cléomadès, The Méliacin, and the Arabian Tale of the "Enchanted Horse." JEGP 6 (1906): 221-243.
- Jones, Terry. Chaucer's Knight, the Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary. London, Eyre Methuen, 1982.
- Kabbani, Rana. Europe's Myths of Orient. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.
- Kelly, Douglas. "'Matiere' and 'genera dicendi' in Medieval Romance." Yale French Studies 51 (1974): 147-159.
- Kiernan, Kevin S. Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1981.
- Kishwar, Madhu and Ruth Vanita, eds. In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices from Manushi. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1984.
- Klingender, Francis. Animals in art and thought to the end of the Middle Ages. Ed. Evelyn Antal and John Harthan. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Knowlton, Edgar C. "Chaucer's Man of Law." JEGP 23 (1924): 83-93.
- Kofman, Sarah. The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud's Writings. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1980.
- Kolbing, Eugen, ed. The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamptoun EETS 46. London: N. Trubner & Co., 1885.
- , ed. The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamptoun EETS 48. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1886. Rpt. 1893.

- , ed. The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamptoun  
EETS 65. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.,  
1894.
- Krappe, Alexander Haggerty. "The Offa-Constance legend."  
Anglia 61 (1937): 361-369.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Stabat Mater." The Kristeva Reader.  
Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.
- . "The New Type of Intellectual: The  
Dissident." The Kristeva Reader. Ed. Toril Moi.  
New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
- . Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach  
to Literature and Art. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans.  
Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez.  
New York: Columbia UP, 1980.
- Lacan, Jacques. "God and the Jouissance of The Woman.  
A Love Letter." Feminine Sexuality. Ed. Juliet  
Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose. Trans. Jacqueline  
Rose. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
- Lach, Donald F. Asia in the Making of Europe. vol.1.  
Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1965.
- . Asia in the Eyes of Europe: Sixteenth  
through Eighteenth Centuries. Chicago: U of Chicago  
Library, 1991.
- Laird, Michael A. "John Wilson: Aspects of His  
Educational Work." Asie Du Sud: Traditions et  
Changements 582 (1978): 339-346.
- Lamb, Harold. Genghis Khan: The Emperor of All Men.  
New York: Robert McBride & Company, 1927.
- Lane, Edward. The Thousand and One Nights. New York:  
Harper & Brothers, 1856.
- Langland, William. Piers Plowman. Ed. Derek Pearsall.  
Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1979.
- Lomperis, Linda. "Feminization of Custance." 24th  
International Congress on Medieval Studies.  
Kalamazoo, 5 May, 1989.
- Larson, Charles. "The Squire;s Tale: Chaucer's Evolution  
from the Dream vision." Revue des Langues Vivantes

43 (1977): 598-607.

Lauretis, Teresa de. Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1987.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. The Elementary Structure of Kinship. Boston: Beacon, 1969.

----- Structural Anthropology. Trans. Monique Layton. vol. 2. New York: Basic Books, 1976.

Luttrell, Claude. "The folk-tale Element in Sir Gawain and Green knight." Studies in Medieval English Romances: Some New Approaches. Ed. Derek Brewer. Suffolk, Great Britain: St Edmundsbury P, 1988.

Macdonald, Duncan Black. "A Bibliographical and literary study of the first appearance of the Arabian Nights in Europe." The Literary Quarterly 2.4 (1932): 387-420.

McCall, John P. "The Squire in Wonderland." The Chaucer Review. 1.2 (1966): 103-109.

McClellan, William. "Bakhtin's theory of dialogic discourse, Medieval Rhetorical Theory, and the Multi-Voiced Structure of the Clerk's tale." Exemplaria 1.2 (1989): 462-488.

McCrinkle, John W. Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature. Rpt. Amsterdam: Philo P, 1975.

Mahasweta Devi. "Breast-Giver." In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics. Ed. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Malone, Kemp, ed. Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile. British Museum Cotton Vitellius. A. xv. second Ms. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1963.

Manly, John Matthews. "Marco Polo and the Squire's Tale." PMLA: 11 (1896): 349-362.

Manu. The Laws of Manu. Trans. Georg Bühler. New York: Dover Publications Inc. 1886. Rept. 1969.

Marcus, Jane. "Still Practice, A/Wrested Alphabet: Toward a Feminist Aesthetic." Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship. Ed. Shari Benstock. Bloomington:

Indiana UP, 1987.

Marie de France. French Mediaeval Romances. Trans. Eugene Mason. New York: AMS P, 1924. Rpt. 1976.

Markandaya, Kamala. Nectar in the Sieve. New York: The John Day Company, 1955.

Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. New French Feminisms. Amherst, U of Massachusetts P, 1980.

Martin, Biddy. "Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault." New German Critique 27 (1982): 3-30.

Matzke, John E. "The Older Form of the Beves Legend." Modern Philology 10 (1912-13): 1-36.

Mauss, Marcel. The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies. Trans. Ian Cunnison. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967.

Metlitzki, Dorothee. The Matter of Araby in Medieval England. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1977.

Middleton, Anne. "Chaucer's 'New Men' and the Good of Literature in the Canterbury Tales." Literature and Society. Ed. Edward Said. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.

Miles, Margaret R. Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meanings in the Christian West. Boston: Beacon P, 1989.

Minault, Gail. "Legal and Scholarly Activism: Recent Women's Studies on India-A Review Article." Journal of Asian Studies 47.4 (1988):814-820.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. Woman, Native, Other: Writing Post-coloniality and Feminism. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989.

Minnis, A. J. Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic and literary attitudes in the later Middle Ages. London: Scolar P, 1984.

Mitchell, Juliet. Psychoanalysis and Feminism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

Moi, Toril, ed. The Kristeva Reader. New York: Columbia

UP, 1986.

----- . Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory. London and New York: Methuen, 1985.

Moorman, Charles. A Knyght There Was: The Evolution of the Knight in Literature. Lexington, U of Kentucky, 1967.

Narayan, R.K. The English Teacher. William Heinemann Ltd., Chicago, 1945. Rept. U of Chicago P, 1980.

Nerlich, Michael. Ideology of Adventure: Studies in Modern Consciousness 1100-1750. vol. 1. Theory and History of Literature. Trans. Ruth Crowley. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1987.

Nicol, William. Printer. The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babyloyne and of Ferumbras his Sone who Conquered Rome. London: The Shakespeare P, 1854.

Oberman, Heiko A. and James A. Weisheipl. "The Sermo Epinicius Ascribed to Thomas Bradwardine (1346)." Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Litterarie du Moyen Age 33 (1958): 295-329.

Overing, Gillian R. Language, Sign, and Gender in Beowulf. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1990.

Ovidus, Naso Publius. Heroides. Trans. Marcel Prevost. Paris: Societe D'Edition, 1961.

Pandian, Jacob. "The Goddess Kannagi: A Dominant South Indian Tamil Society." Mother Worship: Theme and Variations. Ed. James J. Preston. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1982.

Paris, Matthaei. Historia Major. Ed. Willielmo Wats. Londini: C. Bee of L. Sadler, 1640.

Paull, Michael R. "The Influence of the Saint's Legend Genre in the Man of Law's Tale." Chaucer Review 5.3 (1971): 179-194.

Pearsall, Derek A. "The Squire as Story Teller." University of Toronto Quarterly 34 (1964):82-92.

----- . "The Development of Middle English Romance." Medieval Studies 27 (1965): 91-116.



- Pinkham, Caroline Mildreth. The Status of Woman in Hinduism as Reflected in the Puranas, The Mahabharata and the Ramayana. New York: Columbia UP, 1941.
- Pliny, the Elder. Naturalis historia. Pisa: Giardini, 1985.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Scratches on the Face of the Country: Or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen." Critical Inquiry 12.1 (1985): 119-43.
- Propp, Vladimir. Morphology of the Folktale. Trans. Laurence Scott. Ed. Louis A. Wagner. Austin: U of Texas P, 1975.
- Reiss, Edmund. "Chaucer And His Audience." Chaucer Review 14.4 (1980): 390-402.
- Rowe, Karen E. "Feminism and fairy Tales." Women's Studies 6 (1979): 237-257.
- Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: The Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." Toward an Anthropology of Women. Ed. Rayna R. Reiter. New York and London: Monthly Review P, 1975.
- Rypins, Stanley, ed. Three Old English Prose Texts in M.S. Cotton Vitellius A xv. EETS 161. London: Oxford UP, 1924.
- Saadawi, El Nawal. The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World. Trans. Sherif Hetata. London: Zed P, 1980.
- Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- . "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors." Critical Inquiry 15 (Winter 1989): 205-225.
- . "Figures, configurations, transfigurations." Race & Class 32.1 (1990):1-16.
- . "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community." The Anti-Aesthetic Essays of Postmodern Culture. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle, Washington: Bay P, 1983.
- . "Geography, Imperialism, and Methodology."

Critical Inquiry lecture. U of Chicago, 28 Nov. 1990.

----- "Orientalism Reconsidered." Cultural Critique 1: (1985): 89-107.

----- The World, The Text, and the Critic. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1983.

Sandberg, Karl and John R. Wendal. German for Reading. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973.

Scattergood V.J. and J.W. Sherborne, eds. English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages. New York: St. Martin's P, 1983.

Schaub, Uta Liebmann. "Foucault's Oriental Subtext." PMLA 104.3 (1989): 306-316.

Schlauch, Margaret. Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens. New York: New York UP, 1927.

Schleich, Gustav, ed. Guy of Warwick Leipzig: Mayer and Muller, 1923.

Scholes, Robert. Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1974.

Schwab, Raymond. The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880. Trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.

Severs, Burke J. A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1967.

Seymour M.C., ed. Mandeville's Travels: Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.

Shakambari, Jayal. The Status of Women in Epics. Delhi, Varnasi, and Patna: Motilal Banarsidass.

Showalter, Elaine. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness." The Future of Difference Ed. Hester Eisentein and Alice Jardine. New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1985.

----- "Women's Time, Women's Space: Writing the

- History of Feminist Criticism." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature. 3 (1984): 29-43.
- , ed. The New Feminist Criticism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Siddique, Abdul Hamid, ed. Selections from Hadith. 3rd ed. Safat, Kuwait: Islamic Book Publishers, 1987.
- Silversetain, Theodore, ed. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.
- Sisam, Kenneth. Studies in the History of Old English Literature. Oxford: Clarendon, 1953.
- Skeat, Walter. The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. vol. 5. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1894.
- Smyser H.M. "The Sowdan of Babylon and its Author." Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature 13 (1931): 185-218.
- Solinus, Julius. Colletanea rerum memorabilium. 2nd ed. Berloini: Weidmann, 1958.
- Spector, Norman B. Trans. The Romance of Tristan and Isolt. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics. New York and London: Methuen, 1987.
- . "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman." Displacement: Derrida and After. Ed. Mark Krupnick. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1983.
- . "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." "Race," Writing, and Difference. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1986.
- . "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives." History and Theory 24 (1985): 247-272.
- . "Imperialism and Sexual Difference." The Oxford Review 8. 1-2 (1986): 225-240.
- Stanley, Eric Gerald. Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature. Great Britain:

Thomas Nelson printers Ltd., 1966.

Stevens, John. Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches.  
London: Hutchinson U Library, 1973.

Strohm, Paul. "The social and literary scene in England."  
The Cambridge Chaucer Companion. Ed. Piero Boitani  
and Jill Mann. Cambridge, London: Cambridge UP,  
1986.

----- . Social Chaucer. Cambridge, Massachusetts:  
Harvard UP, 1989.

Suleiman, Susan Rubin, ed. The Female Body in Western  
Culture: Contemporary Perspectives. Cambridge,  
Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard UP, 1986.

Toller, Northcote T., ed. An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary.  
London: Oxford UP, 1972.

Trevelyan G. M. English Social History: A Survey of Six  
Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria. London, New  
York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1945.

Turnbull, William B.D.D., ed. Sir Beves of Hamptoun:  
A Metrical Romance. Edinburgh Printing Company,  
1838.

Tyerman, Christopher. England and the Crusades 1095-1588.  
Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1988.

Vance, Eugene. From Topic to Tale: Logic and Narrativity  
in the Middle Ages Theory and History of Literature.  
vol. 47. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.

Vitalis, Ordericus. The Ecclesiastical History of England  
and Normandy. Trans. Thomas Forester. vol.3. London:  
Henry G. Bohn, 1854.

Vohra, Roopa and Arun K. Sen. Status, Education and  
Problem of Indian Women. 2nd ed. Delhi: Akshat  
Publications, 1986.

Wallace, David. "Chaucer's Continental inheritance:  
The early poems and Troilus and Criseyde."  
The Cambridge Chaucer Companion. Ed. Piero Boitani  
and Jill Mann. Cambridge, London: Cambridge UP,  
1986.

Warren, F.M. "The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Orderic

- Vital and the French Epic." PMLA 29 (1914): 341-58.
- Weever, Jacqueline de. Chaucer Name Dictionary: A Guide to Astrological, Biblical, Historical, Literary, and Mythological Names in the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1987.
- Whitford, Margaret. "Luce Irigaray and the Female Imaginary: Speaking as a Woman." Radical Philosophy 43 (1986): 3-8.
- Willemen, Paul. "Notes on Subjectivity." Screen 19.1 (1978): 41-69.
- Williams, Raymond. Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Wittig, Susan. Stylistic and narrative structures in the Middle English Romances. Austin and London: U of Texas P, 1978.
- Wittkower, Rudolf. "Marvels of the East." Journal of the Warburg Institutes 5 (1942): 159-197.
- Yunck, John. "Religious Elements in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale." ELH 27.4. (1960): 249-261.
- Zhang, Longxi. "The Myth of the Other." Critical Inquiry 14 (1988): 108-131.
- Zumthor, Paul. "Autobiography in the Middle Ages?" Genre 6.1 (1973): 29-47.

## VITA

The author, Glory E. Dharmaraj, is the daughter of Dibb and Ranjitham Paul. She was born October 19, 1945, in Palayamkotttai, Tamil Nadu, India. She spent her childhood on a tea estate at Scarborough, Upcot, Sri Lanka, where she received private tutoring in her early elementary education. She completed her secondary education at St. John's Girl's High school, Nazareth, Tamil Nadu, India. She received her Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Madras in May, 1965. She was awarded First Prizes in proficiency in English literature, Tamil literature, Ethical Studies, and Scripture in Sarah Tucker College. She received her Bachelor of Education degree in English and History from the Madurai University, India, in 1967 and Master of Arts degree in English in 1974 from the same university. She was offered the Madras State Government Merit Scholarship for the years 1972-1974.

She worked as Tutor in English at Sarah Tucker College from 1965-1966 and 1967-1971 and Assistant Professor of English in the same institution from 1974-1977. She worked as a Senior Teacher and Assistant Head of the Department of English at the Queen Mary School, Bombay from 1978-1982. She entered the Loyola University Ph.D. program in 1985. The University gave her a tuition award for the years 1986-1988.

She was also awarded a Loyola University Dissertation Fellowship for the year 1989-1990. She won the First and Second Prizes in the Loyola University English Department's Stanley Clayer Essay Competition in 1988. In the same year, she also won the Medieval Association of the Midwest Prize in Medieval Culture at Cleveland University, Cleveland, Ohio. She has read several papers at professional conferences in Medieval Studies, Women's Studies, and Religion.

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Glory E. Dharmaraj has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Allen J. Frantzen, Director  
Professor, English  
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. Karma D. Lochrie  
Assistant Professor, English  
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. Pamela L. Caughie  
Assistant Professor, English  
Loyola University of Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

June 4, 1991

Director's Signature

