THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE AND ITS ANALOGUES

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THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE AND ITS ANALOGUES

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CHAPTER I

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ACCUSED QUEEN FROM

FOLK-TALES TO ROMANCE

The heroine of medieval literature is often an innocent, persecuted queen, whose character and story arouse pity. Heroines of this type appear in narratives which center around the steadfastness of a tried virtue. The story of their undeserved suffering at the hands of a persecutor or a credulous and suspicious husband, frequently "evoke the best efforts and warmest sympathy of medieval poets." Of all the heroines in medieval literature who are falsely accused and vindicated, Chaucer's Constance is the most famous.

The problem of Chaucer's Constance is closely related to that of many other heroines in romance. The Constance legend includes all parallels of Chaucer's tale whether the opening action concerns an incestuous father or the wicked mother-in-law as first persecutor.

Margaret Schlauch, in her book *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, points out similar themes of story-telling about accused queens in many types of folk-tales, investigates primitive customs and beliefs, and traces the modifications of these themes in medieval romance. It is the purpose of

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1 Margaret Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, p. 3.
Chapter I to discuss the material in Schlauch's book. She states that two accusations were made against folk-tale queens. The first to be discussed is the accusation of child-murder. The infanticide accusations of queens in "märchen" is attributed to primitive conditions. In folk-tales and in scientific reports proof has been found that child-murder existed, and still exists among savage today. Customs indicate that child-murder was once a respectable act, not always a subject for accusation.

"In Queensland, among the aboriginal tribes, a woman's first child was nearly always exposed to die."² In Polynesia infanticide did, and still does, prevail widely. The early missionaries estimated that two-thirds of the children born were killed by their parents. Some tribes killed children to avoid rearing them. In time of famine, the children were eaten.

Parents in European "märchen" do not eat or expose their children on land or water, but European tradition reveals the survival of similar customs in tales told to frighten children who misbehaved. Human sacrifice to survive can be perceived in the surviving legends of the Germans.

In certain groups of folk-tales, the queen is falsely accused of killing, or killing and eating, her own children. The king's jealous mother is usually the accuser. Side by side with the stories in which the mother did not commit the

²A. W. Howitt, Native Tribes of South East Australia, p. 750.
crime of child-murder are tales in which the crime is actually committed or contemplated.

The second accusation brought against queens in fairy tales, and found in Chaucer's tale of Constance, is that the queen has given birth to monsters or animals instead of children. This accusation occurs in many tales from all parts of the world and is almost always believed by the husband. In both märchen and romance, the queen is often restored by the child himself.3 The stories in which the charge is made falsely are multifarious but are similar to one another. One group, "The Exchanged Letter," has a definite plot and a definite logic of sequent events, roughly the same in each story. The heroine who is exiled because of the false accusation that she has given birth to an animal is often the victim of forgery like that of Donegild in Chaucer's tale of Constance. An Italian story is similar to an incident in "Constance":

A king, departing for war, leaves his wife in the care of his mother, who is hostile to the young Queen. The wife bears a son and a daughter. The enraged mother-in-law writes a letter to her son about the event; but, instead of reporting the truth, she says that the Queen has borne puppies. The King is very sad when he receives this piece of news; but, thinking it is his blood as well as hers, he replies with a command to have his wife well cared for. Instead, the mother-in-law has her set adrift in a chest with the two children. A fisherman finds them on an island, and cares for them for six years. One day the King comes and sees his children. He finds his wife and hears the

3 Schlauch, op. cit., pp. 18-22.
tale of her wrongs; and the family is happily reunited. But the wicked mother-in-law is put to death.\textsuperscript{4}

In another tale from Italy, the king's mother hates her daughter-in-law because she is of peasant birth. The mother stirs up the war which calls the king away. She not only accuses the young mother by letter but also substitutes dogs for children and exposes the babies in the forest.\textsuperscript{5}

Both of these stories represent a reduced form of the plot. There is no introduction explaining why the king married the heroine, and the mother-in-law writes an original letter rather than forging an exchanged one.

The changing of the letter while the messenger sleeps is usually characteristic of these tales. In this respect, the plot bears a resemblance to legends such as the \textit{Dit de l' Empereur Constant} in which the young man is saved from death by a forged letter. The Turkish tale has a demon persecutor rather than the malevolent mother-in-law just as a witch or devil was used in her place as accuser in the infanticide stories. Further variations are found in Siberian folk literature. In one \textit{märchen}, the treason and false accusation of animal birth are the work of forty co-wives, aided by a witch. The mother and child are exposed although the letter has been changed to a command for death. No reason is given for the

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 25. \textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
more humane sentence. It should logically come from a friend of the heroine — like the constable in Chaucer's *The Man of Law's Tale*.  

The most significant variations can be illustrated by European examples. A German story substitutes the girl's mother for the mother-in-law as persecutor; other stories make the girl the victim of both her mother and mother-in-law. A popular story from Italy tells of the mother and mother-in-law working together as persecutors. Still another story attributes the treason, both the initial persecution and the letter reporting the birth of monsters, to the mother. A Sicilian story contrasts the cruelty of the girl's own mother with the tenderness of her mother-in-law. One detail of this last story deviates from the others in that the evil mother accuses her daughter of infidelity and not of animal birth; this accusation is almost unheard of in folk-tales.  

"The ingredients of the Exchanged Letter story exist separately" and show endless variations — thus making it impossible to trace the folk-tale to a definite original source.

The stepmother also has a part in some of the *märchen*. From Brittany comes the following tale:

A man remarries, and his daughter by his first wife is badly treated by her stepmother. During his absence the unfortunate Euphrosine

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6 Ibid., p. 26. 7 Ibid., pp. 27-29. 8 Ibid., p. 29.
is left in a tree in a forest, handless. A young gentleman finds her, takes her home, and marries her. The affection of his mother turns to hatred. While the husband of Euphrosins is absent, she bears twins. The mother-in-law sends word to him that they are a dog and a calf. He replies that the animals are to be killed, but his wife must be spared. Instead, she is forced to go into exile a second time with her children strapped to her back. Her hands are restored to her when she reaches into magic water after her babies. Years later, the husband finds wife and children while he is hunting in the forest. He imprisons his mother in punishment.  

Almost identical is the Italian story of fair Rosina: however, her second exile takes the form of floating across the sea in a chest with her two children. The mother-in-law is not in the castle when the children are born, but the messenger stays with her a night on each trip thus giving her an opportunity to change the letter. The brother of the king suggests that the queen be set afloot rather than being killed at the castle.  

A Greek story containing a stepmother is another of the few that substitute an act of infidelity for that of giving birth to animals. This fact makes one doubt the popular nature of the story.  

Another group of märchen has still another person as traitor and persecutor, the wife of the heroine's brother. A familiar trait of fairy-tale heroes is that they are usually devoted to their sisters and accompany them through trying

9Ibid., p. 30  10Ibid.  11Ibid.
adventures with witches and stepmothers. Sisters also reveal a desire to free their brothers from inhuman shapes and inhuman behests.12

These family hostilities turn clearly on the matriarchal arrangement of society which they imply. Many a princess is surrounded by her father with restrictions to prevent her marriage because her husband, and not her brother, is to be his successor and displaced on the throne. Many tabu marriages recall matriarchal exogamy. There was a time when a man supported his mother and sister, while his wife lived elsewhere and was supported, along with her children, by her own brothers. It is not difficult to understand the hostility of the mother-in-law to an arrangement which might shift her son's allegiance and support from her domicile to that of his wife's. In all probability the mother-in-law got her traditional role assigned to her during the time of transition from one phase of family life to the other. Not all human races went through this evolution of domestic loyalties, or in just the same order.13 Many anthropologists believe that the order is often reversed. Quite a number of folk-tales, both European and extra-European, "bear traces of an origin among people who were living in such a transitional stage, when filial allegiance was beginning to shift toward marital allegiance."14

12 Ibid., p. 31. 13 Ibid., pp. 30-34. 14 Ibid.
In all probability the mother-in-law is the most ancient persecutor; her wrath and jealousy are matters of tradition even after the transition is complete, for she is still wrathful and jealous in medieval literature.

Another persecutor is the incestuous father. The formula does not occur very frequently in folk-tales and is usually associated with the Cinderella heroine who wins a prince as husband by "a mysterious appearance at three successive balls in magically radiant gowns."\textsuperscript{15}

In the Cinderella-cycle, the king's desire to marry his daughter is often based on a request by his dying wife to remarry only if he can find a lady whom her ring or clothes will fit. The king discovers such a person in his daughter when she matures; she accidently proves her fitness for the honor by trying on the articles in question.

In a few stories the queen makes her husband promise to marry a woman who is fairer than she herself is, and the fairer one is his daughter.\textsuperscript{16}

In Germany there is a legend current even today concerning Henry the Fowler and his daughter. He wanted to marry her after his wife's death because she was more beautiful than her mother. She begged him to give up the idea; he replied that he would if she would work a marvelous cover on which all animals could be seen. With the help of the devil she accomplished the

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 36. \quad \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 39.
task; her father died of chagrin. Other fathers give no reason for their strange demand.  

The formula of the incestuous father is not exclusively associated with one definite type of story like the Exchange Letter or Cinderella; it sometimes exists quite alone or in other surroundings. In a group of folk-tales "to which Stefanovic' first called attention, the incestuous father not only causes his daughter's flight in the beginning, but pursues her later with persecution after she has married."  

The father, used as persecutor, adds unity.

A comparison of modern folk-tales with classical myths suggests the reasons for paternal persecution in fairy tales.

In countries where royal blood was traced through women only, and where consequently the king held office merely in virtue of his marriage with an hereditary princess, who was the real sovereign, it appears to have often happened that a prince married his own sister, the princess royal, in order to obtain with her hand the crown which otherwise would have gone to another man, perhaps a stranger.

The same rule of descent may have furnished a motive for incest with a daughter, for the king probably had to vacate the throne at the death of his wife since he occupied it only by virtue of his marriage with the queen. He could keep the throne by marrying the daughter who was next in line for the crown.

Matriarchy, the system of human society in which descent is decided through the mother, exists in several variations.

17 Ibid., p. 38. 18 Ibid., p. 39. 19 Ibid., p. 40.
In royal families, the king's successor is often the husband of his daughter. The woman may not be the actual sovereign, but she confers the title on her consort.

Matriarchy is the system used by the Khasis of Assam. Children inherit through the mother only; their fathers know of no kinship with them. The father belongs to his mother's clan as the children do to theirs. All earnings go to his own maternal stock. In Jowai, the man neither lives nor eats in his wife's house; "he visits it only after dark. In ancestor worship, only the primal ancestress and her brother are regarded. The institution of matriarchy goes back to the time when people were ignorant of the physical aspect of paternity."20 The social relations of primitive people were probably rather lax; this possibility is one cause tending to obscure the nature of paternity. Too, for the primitive mind it was difficult to span the lapse of almost a year between cause and effect of conception.

Matriarchy was practiced because a daughter's relationship with her father was not always recognized. Later, "when the prohibition of incestuous marriages is gaining ground among primitive people who are leaving matriarchy for patriarchy," it extends first to the maternal side; "while marriages with paternal relatives are long afterwards considered highly

20 Ibid., p. 42.
proper and respectable." Among the Karens of Tenasserim, marriages between father and daughter and brother and sister are still fairly common.

"A definite connection exists . . . between the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy and the extension of the degrees of forbidden marriage to the father's side as well as the mother's." Both changes reveal a growing consciousness of the place of the father in the family unit. Both are important for the understanding of the folk-tale formula used in the Exchanged Letter and Cinderella stories. The tale probably arose among people who were passing into a clearer state of patriarchy from one in which matrilineal succession held good and in which marriage with a paternal relative was still possible. The daughter's repugnance would be an index of the new point of view.

The reason for the dying queen's request that her husband marry someone who looked like her can be attributed to a distorted reminiscence of the time when she had constituted her husband's right and claim to the crown. In order for him to continue his rule after her death, he must marry someone who could be regarded as identical with her - through resemblance, daughterhood, or ability to wear some token that magically transferred her personality to its pre-ordained wearer.

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21 Ibid., p. 44. 22 Ibid., p. 44.
There are a few groups of folk-tales in which the queen is accused of crimes by a persecutor, who is usually the sister. Some tales of this type introduce the quest of the two brothers of the heroine for a talking bird, a singing tree, and dancing water; but they retain from another source the mother-in-law instead of the envious sister as the cause of evil.

The European versions of the tale allow the envious sisters to motivate the desire of the young princess for the three magical objects in contrast to a chance visitor telling of the three objects. In the European versions, the plot is usually constant and coherent; the action is fairly complicated. The envious sisters are the persecutors in nearly all of the tales, the source of which is probably Oriental. The numerous modifications of the story testify to its popularity and its closeness to the sources of the folk-tales with their many persecutors. 23

The next phase to be discussed is the accused queen in romance, survivals of the märchen. "The persecuted lady is still the victim of malice and false accusations; the husband is still credulous; and the vindication is often brought about by the grown children of the royal pair, as it was commonly in folk-tales." 24 Other elements in the plot change. In certain stories, the persecutor who disturbs the happiness of

23 Ibid., pp. 44-52.  
24 Ibid., p. 65.
the queen is a stepmother, a sorceress, or a mother-in-law just as the persecutor in märchen. The accusation is a fantastic charge and harmonizes perfectly with the folk-tale character who says it. Thus it can be seen that a certain number of medieval romances are built on a plot which would pass as the plot of a märchen.

In another group, there is a co-persecutor, a figure completely foreign in the folk-tale, who helps in the undoing of the queen because of a special hatred. Often the old mother-in-law dominates the co-persecutor, whose reasons for hating the queen are usually kept a secret. When the reasons are revealed, they usually hinge on rejected love.

In the next cycle of stories, the persecutor, a courtier-villain, replaces the mother-in-law. He works alone; his motive is ambition to advance at the expense of the queen or a desire for revenge for rejected love. His hostility is more readily explained than was that of the old mother-in-law; the accusation has been changed to fit in with his new surroundings. He attempts to ruin the queen by declaring that she has committed adultery or has been guilty of high treason.

Beginning with the first group of stories, in which there is no rejected lover or ambitious courtier, the reader finds a number of formulae for the märchen. The Incestuous Father is used as the means of getting the heroine into exile for the first time. Whereas this device is most often used in
folk-tales to introduce a Cinderella-story, the Incestuous Father formula in the literature of the Middle Ages is generally used to introduce an Exchanged Letter story and the accusation of bearing animals. No trace of the Cinderella - Conclusion can be found in any of the popular medieval representatives of the story. The opening of the story is quite similar to the folk-tales. The queen dies; the king is disconsolate for years, refusing to remarry. When his daughter becomes grown, he decides to remarry but only if he can find someone who resembles his first wife. Of course his daughter alone fulfills the requirement. A struggle of wills follows; the daughter is triumphant — but an exile. When she flees from her father's realm, she has often sacrificed one or both of her hands in an attempt to become unlike her mother. Later she finds refuge in the household of a king who determines to marry her, regardless of his mother's hostility.25 Thus far the prelude in all versions is constant, except in treatments like Chaucer's which reveal a deliberate deviation to avoid the incest motive.

Both Gough and Suchier believe26 that England has the strongest claim to the origin of the underlying folk-tale on the basis that the oldest version, *Vitae Dunorvm Offarum*, appears in England and that several other versions, *La Belle Helène de Constantinople* and those by Trivet, Büheler, and

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Chaucer, use England as the scene of action. Margaret Schlauch, however, contends that the tale probably existed elsewhere, as well as in England.\textsuperscript{27}

The Latin story attributed to Matthew of Paris, is the oldest in time; it does not observe too closely the plot which is typical and persistent in the Middle Ages. The story is found in the \textit{Vitae Duorum默契rum} and is usually dated in the later twelfth or early thirteenth century. The monarch about whom the tale is written probably reigned on the continent before the coming of the Anglo-Saxons to England. In this story the Incestuous Father appears as the cause of the heroine's exile in the Exchanged Letter tale. The father plays a double role; he takes over the writing of false messages and brings about an organic unity between the two portions of the tale.\textsuperscript{28} This romance is an "offshoot from the direct line of development of the legend in the Middle Ages;"\textsuperscript{29} it is neither direct ancestor nor direct descendant of any other known medieval version.

The later medieval tales are truer to type. Most of these French, English, Latin, German, and Spanish romances\textsuperscript{30} begin with the flight of the heroine from her father to avoid marriage with him and conclude with her adventures as a persecuted wife, the victim of a mother-in-law who intercepts the royal mail and forges accusations under the royal seal. The three

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.} \hfill \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 65. \hfill \textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 67. \hfill \textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 69.
closely related versions by Nicolas Trivet, John Gower, and Goeffery Chaucer substituted another formula to replace that of the incestuous Father.

These romances differ as did the märchen in explaining the father's conduct in the opening situation. Sometimes a reason is given, sometimes not. In some of the romances, difficulty arises from the attempts of the king or his barons to prevent the succession of the young princess and her future husband. The barons want the king to have a male heir, and the king will marry only someone who resembles his wife. The choice is narrowed down to the incestuous union of father and daughter as the escape from female succession.

Tradition is not uniform in accounting for the strange desire of the father to marry his daughter. The oldest medieval stories simply state the fact; others use the device employed in märchen, a promise to the dying queen, with or without the advice of the barons of the realm. Some of the versions state that it is the girl's resemblance to her deceased mother which suggests to the father the idea of marriage. In the last two groups, the motivation hinges on the question of succession to the throne. The difference between the märchen and romance is that the problem is presented from the patriarchal point of view rather than from the matriarchal - the king must have a male heir so that the daughter and her husband will not secure the throne.
Constance's unwillingness to reveal herself to her father when she returns to Rome in exile is probably due to the superceded versions in which the heroine is fleeing from her father because he wants to marry her.

In all of the romances the heroine marries the king in whose land she finds refuge. "When she is doomed to go forth once more, miserable and helpless, her persecutor is usually the old mother of her husband, and the machination against her is set in motion by the forging of an exchanged letter."31 The king goes to war; he is sent the message about the birth of a child. On the way the message is exchanged, for the messenger stays overnight at the castle of the mother-in-law. On the return of the messenger, the mother-in-law substitutes a command for the death of the girl. The heroine is allowed to go into exile, nevertheless, and remains there until her husband finds her. In this part of the story, the mother-in-law is as fierce and cruel as she is in the märchen.

If the queen does not lose her hands in the first adventure, she often loses them in the second. Sometimes she retains them throughout the story as in Chaucer. Trivet softens the rudest effects of the story; Donegild commands Constance's exile - not her death. She writes, in her son's name, that Constance must leave the land because her presence will cause misfortune in war. She goes, prompted by sympathy for the

31 Ibid., p. 76.
people. On the way to Rome, she escapes from a would-be seducer and finds shelter in Rome. It would seem logical for her to seek her father since she departed from him amicably. Probably she does not because her story has been told otherwise by a predecessor of Trivet.

The accusation contained in the forged letters is harmonious with the folk-tale nature of the plot. Although many modifications have crept into the story, the much-used plot has remained fairly constant.

The next phase to be discussed is the advent of the villain into romances. Here the reader finds the accusation of infidelity based on the birth of more than one child. Old accusations and explanations are being supplanted by new ones. For the first time there is a definite person to receive the blame for being the queen's lover. The mother-in-law usually persuades an innocent man to lie beside the queen as she sleeps; then the mother-in-law "proves" to the king that his wife is unfaithful. The mother-in-law is still persecutor, but new motives and accusations are springing up around her: "the accusation of illegitimacy of the children is used in place of the substitution of animals;"32 the belief that more than one child could not be born simultaneously and have the same father is brought up; the old queen's tool, the courtier, complicates the action by the addition of a supposed lover.

32Ibid., p. 88.
The hostility of the old queen passes unexplained more often than not; her traditional jealousy seems to be a heritage from forgotten times. It does not fit in with the accusations of infidelity which are becoming increasingly popular.

Another group of stories centers about the persecuting mother-in-law. This family of legends can be traced to a French original concerning two heroes, Valentine and Nameless.33 The main persecutor is the king's mother; the other persecutor is a wicked villain who has determined to destroy the queen for reasons of his own. The motives of the villain are not made clear; he is a duplication of the märchen persecutor.

Some of the tales of this group closely resemble the folk-tales; however, in Valentine and Qursson the motives are clearer. The mother-in-law is suppressed entirely; the villain persecutes because of unrequited love. These changes constitute an approach to the realm of courtly love and courtly literature. There is also a shift of interest from the parents to the exiled children as well as an increase in the number of irresponsible, irrelevant adventures.34

The complete disappearance of the primitive mother-in-law and her replacement by the wicked lover can be attributed to the influence of stories like Macaire. Macaire can be typed as the wicked man who tries to ruin the innocent heroine because his love has been scorned. He belongs to the Chansons

33 Ibid., p. 89. 34 Ibid., p. 92.
de geste rather than the romances based on folklore. Since the mother-in-law and her accusations, which must follow the birth of children, "have been disposed of, the way is left clear for" the favorite and frequently recurring scene of the birth of children in a forest, far away from help. The defeat of the villain and the vindication of the queen is accomplished by someone other than the queen's son.

The chivalric additions are "from a later age of story telling than those they supplant; primitive motives have been modified and withdrawn in favor of more modern" ones.

In the third group of romances are found the final stages in the process of evolution of the accused queen. These romances contain the more advanced types of motivation - that of the love-sick villain accusing the queen of treason or infidelity. The plot-machinery is thoroughly conventional and is used again and again in repetitions of which medieval audiences never tired.

The misadventures of the heroines are enlarged upon to arouse the tears and sympathy of the reader. The queen is no longer a mute victim of a mother-in-law's hatred; she is alive, eloquent, and full of dignity. Other versions attempt to realize the dramatic and human possibilities of the accused queen. Very rarely is her husband's repentance proportionate to the sympathy she has aroused. The number of traitors varies with each story.

35 Ibid., p. 93. 36 Ibid.
Another variation of romances presents not a second lover, but a dwarf. These romances emphasize the wickedness of the villain, the prominence given to the seneschal, and the birth of the queen's child in exile under distressing circumstances. Here the dwarf—tool of the villain—is almost always consciously bad like his master. The villain in Macaire orders his dwarf to incriminate the queen because she rejected him. The English romance Sir Tryamour varies from the other romances of this type in that the dwarf is completely suppressed. Often a faithful dog is the champion of virtue in this type of romance. 37

The conversion of the queen into a patient and long-suffering saint whose story is meant to convey religious edification is another deviation of the story. In these romances, the villain's part is conventional and romantic.

Another variation is the brother-in-law as accuser. He accuses the queen of infidelity because she cuts short his wooing during the absence of her husband. The heroine's exile is always characterized by many exciting adventures. In this type of romance, the queen does not have a child. The bloody dagger is used to convince the king that his wife has murdered her children. Chaucer, Gower, and Trivet also use the bloody dagger as a proof of murder. The brother-in-law is punished by disease and healed by the miraculous powers of her whom he has wronged. 38

37 Ibid., p. 104.  
38 Ibid., p. 110.
It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the accused queen had her beginning in literature long before Trivet, Gower, and Chaucer gave her life through their tales of Constance.
CHAPTER II

COMPARISON OF THE NARRATIVE TREATMENT OF CHAUCER’S, GOWER’S, AND TRIVET’S TALES OF CONSTANCE

The tale of Constance which appears in Chaucer’s The Man of Law’s Tale and in Gower’s second book of Confessio Amantis was derived by the two authors from the same source, Nicholas Trivet’s Anglo-Norman Chronicle.

Both Chaucer and Gower were writing for much the same reading public; therefore their friendship was probably seasoned with rivalry. The Man of Law commands Chaucer for not spoiling his pages with “swiche cursed stories” (line 80) as those of Canace and Apaleanius. Both of these tales are included in John Gower’s Confessio Amantis, and both are about incest. Robert Dudley French believes Chaucer’s reference to Gower is a “good-natured dig.”

According to French, the connection between The Man of Law’s Tale and the Confessio Amantis aids in dating Chaucer’s tale. Gower’s poem was finished in 1390; French states that the portion containing the tale of Constance could not have been written much before 1387. He goes on to say it is possible that Chaucer had access to Gower’s manuscript before the entire work was finished, but it is more likely that he wrote

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¹Robert Dudley French, A Chaucer Handbook, p. 221.
his own version of the tale after Gower's work had been published.

Just as French argues from certain minute resemblances in detail and forms of expression between Gower's tale and Chaucer's that the latter was acquainted with Gower's version of the story as well as Trivet's, so the same line of reasoning is employed by Skeat in his edition of Chaucer, Volume V, to prove Gower borrowed to some extent from Chaucer. Skeat states that in all probability Chaucer's tale was written earlier than Gower's.

Before comparing these versions, it seems expedient to relate briefly the tale of Constance. Since Chaucer's The Man of Law's Tale is more widely known than the tales of Gower and Trivet, his version will be related:

In Syria live rich merchants who export their spices, gold cloth, and rich-colored satins far and wide. These merchants go to Rome; here they learn of Constance, the emperor's daughter. The people of Rome think that there exists "neve swich another as is shee" and want her to be queen of all Europe. Constance possesses "beauty without pride, youth without ignorance or folly." Virtue guides her life; she is humble, courteous, holy, and generous.

When the merchants return to Syria, they tell the Sultan about Constance. He is so impressed with the report that "al his bisy cure Was for to love hire while his lyf may dure."
The Sultan sends for his council and tells them that he will die unless he can have Constance in the near future. He gives orders for them to work out a plan to save his life. Finally, after much debate, the council decided that marriage is the only solution. Aware that the Emperor would never consent to his daughter's marriage with a pagan, the Sultan and all his followers become Christians. The necessary arrangements for the wedding are made.

Constance "with sorwe overcome,
Ful pale aryst, and dresseth
hire to wende;
For wel she seeth ther is noon oother ende."

She asks Christ to give her strength to carry out His will.

The mother of the Sultan calls her advisors and promises them eternal safety if they will help her. She tells them that they are to pretend to accept Christianity.

"Coold water shal nat greve us but a litle!"

The Sultaness requests the honor of giving a banquet for Constance and goes to meet her when she arrives. At the feast, the Sultan and all of the Christians except Constance are slain. Constance, with her provisions, is set adrift in a rudderless boat. She sails the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the English Channel; at last she is cast upon the shore of Northumberland, where she is met by the warden of the castle. Hermengild, the warden's wife, comes to love Constance deeply; soon Constance converts her to Christianity. The warden accepts the faith also when he sees a blind man receive his
sight at the hands of Constance. The warden goes to see King Alla. While he is away, Constance is woed by a false knight. Out of spite he kills Hermangild and accuses Constance of the deed. At the trial, a hand from heaven smites Constance's accuser and his eyes fall out; a voice from heaven speaks. The king has the knight put to death.

King Alla is converted and later marries Constance. He goes to war in Scotland, and while he is away, she has a son. Donagild, the king's mother, intercepts the letters, while the messenger is drunk, to and from the king about the birth of his son. In the letter to the king, she accuses Constance of giving birth to a monster; she forges orders for the exile of Constance in the king's reply.

The people weep for Constance. As she leaves, she prays to the Virgin Mary.

King Alla returns home; learning what has happened, he kills his mother. In the meantime, Constance and her child are washed ashore near a heathen castle. The steward goes to the ship and attempts to seduce Constance, who wrestles so strongly that the renegade is thrown overboard and drowned.

Constance's ship sails on until it meets the vessels of the Roman senator who has returned from avenging the murder of the Christians in Syria. The senator takes Constance to Rome, where she lives with him and his wife (Constance's aunt).
King Alla goes to Rome to seek penance for the murder of his mother. Constance's son goes with the senator to a feast given by Alla, who inquires about the boy and learns of Constance. Alla goes to see her and explains that her exile was not ordered by him. After the reconciliation, Constance asks that her father be invited to dine with them. The Emperor accepts, and Constance is reunited with her father.

Maurice is later named emperor. Alla and Constance return to England. A year later Alla dies, and Constance returns to Rome to be with her father. They live together in virtue and holy works until death separates them.

The rudderless boat, the cruel mother-in-law, the alleged monstrous birth, and other less important elements in the story are to be found, over and over again, in ancient tales. The unaccountable reluctance which Constance shows about revealing her identity suggests the mystery which surrounds the fairy-lovers of folk tales, and the miracles by which the heroine is preserved against the elements and against her foes are part of the machinery.2

Trivet, Gower, and Chaucer all have different beginnings for their tales of Constance. Trivet begins his tale, which is found in the Original and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, by giving facts about Maurice, Constance's son. He goes on to tell about Constance, who was taught the

2Ibid., p. 224.
Christian faith and who was instructed in the seven sciences and in various languages by learned masters. At the age of thirteen, Constance converted the Saracen merchants.

Gower, however, begins his story by telling of the Roman Emperor "Tiberie Constantin" and his wife "Italie." Gower says that their only child, Constance, was so full of faith that she converted the merchants of "Barbarie" when they came to Rome to sell their wares. Gower, on the other hand, does not mention her knowledge of languages and sciences.

Chaucer omits the details about the emperor. He begins by telling of the merchants; he omits Trivet's statement about Constance's wide knowledge of science and language and omits the fact that she converted the merchants. Chaucer adds comments about her "beauty without pride, youth without ignorance or folly;" he tells of her virtue, her humility, her courtesy, and her generosity.

Both Chaucer and Gower make the Sultan send for the merchants, whereas in Trivet they are brought before him on accusation of having accepted Christianity. Gower agrees in essentials with Trivet--he questions them about accepting Christ. Chaucer, however, does not mention the conversion of the merchants. He states that it is the Sultan's practice to entertain the merchants in order that he might learn news of the various kingdoms--thus Chaucer's merchants were invited to be guests.
In Trivet, the Sultan accepts the Christian faith after being told by the Roman Emperor that his conversion is essential if a marriage alliance is to be made between him and Constance. Neither Gower nor Chaucer mentions that the requirement was made by the emperor; both, however, relate that the Sultan did accept Christianity.

Trivet explains in detail the arrangements that were made between the Christians and the Saracens, while Gower and Chaucer condense the description.

The Sultaness's reason for plotting against Constance is a religious one in Trivet and Chaucer, while Gower says that she fears loss of power and land; Chaucer later says that she wants to rule the whole land. Trivet relates that the Sultan's mother made a secret alliance with seven hundred Saracens; Gower does not mention the Saracens. Chaucer says that she called her advisors (but gives no number) and promised them eternal safety if they would help her.

Four stanzas are used by Chaucer, compared with Trivet's one sentence, to describe the splendor of Constance's arrival. Chaucer also enlarges upon Trivet's description of the banquet in order to provide a background that will contrast with the massacre.

Trivet alone allows three Christians to escape the massacre and tell the emperor of the supposed death of Constance. According to Trivet, Constance would not denounce her faith
for promise of honor or wealth or for any threat of punishment or death. Gower and Chaucer say nothing about the threats of the Sultaness.

Trivet discusses at length the Sultaness's preparations to exile Constance.

In Gower's tale, Constance lands in Northumberland in summer, while in Trivet, she lands on Christmas day. Chaucer omits the time entirely.

Gower allows both Elda and Hermangild to discover Constance; in the other two versions, Elda goes to Constance's boat alone. Only in Chaucer does Constance ask that he kill her in order to deliver her from her sorrows. Gower does not mention the language which Constance speaks; Trivet has her speak Saxon, Elda's language, so that she might be mistaken for a Saxon princess. Chaucer reports:

A maner Latyn corrupt was hir speche,  
But aligates therby was she understonde.  
(lines 519-520)

According to Block, Chaucer allows Constance to speak Latin rather than Saxon "because he wanted to make his tale at once consistent and credible."³ Even though Trivet states at the beginning of the story that Constance had been taught various languages, "he is not convincing when he makes her speak to Elda in Saxon, since it is highly improbable that these languages would have included Saxon."⁴

³Edward A. Block, "Originality, Controlling Purpose and Craftsmanship in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale," PMLA, LXVIII, 599.
⁴Ibid., p. 598.
Trivet's Constance gives more information about herself than do the other two Constances. The details of the talk between Hermangild and Constance, which lead to the conversion of the first, are abbreviated by the Middle English writers.

Gower and Chaucer do not mention that the blind Christian, after receiving his sight, is sent to Wales to get a British bishop, and returns with Lucius, who baptizes Elda and his household. Trivet's account of Elda's conversion is as follows:

I quant Elda auoit ecu veu, mout semmeruese ou sa femme auoit apris si bele mestrie. Et apres quil auoit demesne, ele lui resspondi qu' si il escotat souz conseil, tiele mesureisle freyt e plus graunde. Puis Hermangild e Constaunce ne cesserent [de precher] a Elda e a tote sa menue la fei Iesu Crist. E cil pouere Britoun receuent e sustindrent pur lamour Iesu Crist. Lors Elda trap ieiusement rescuet la doctrine de la fey. (p. 170)

Chaucer says:

The constable weex abasshed of that sight
And seide what amounteth al this fare
Costaunce answerde sire it is Cristes myght
That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare
And so ferforth she gan oure lay declare
That she the constable er that it was awe
Converteth and on Crist made hym bileve.
(lines 568-574)

Chaucer simplifies Trivet's account by omitting his reference to the "pouere Britoun" and at the same time emphasizing Constance's role by attributing the constable's conversion to her alone. The reader's attention is focused on Constance and her holiness.
Gower and Trivet relate that Elda, after his conversion, goes to Alla and praises Constance, thereby causing the king to go to see her a few days after Elda returns home. In Chaucer's version the king returns with Elda; however, Chaucer gives no reason for Elda's visit to the king or for the king's return.

Chaucer emphasizes Donegild's wickedness:

King Alla which that hadde his moder slayn
Upon a day fil in swich repentaunce
That if I shortly tellen shal and playn
To Rome he comth to receyuen his penaunce
And putte hym in the popes ordinaunce
In heigh and logh and Iesu Crist bisogne
Foryewe his wikked werkes that he wroughte.
(liens 988-994)

Trivet merely relates:

En cele mesme temps Alla le rey dengiletore,
par le conseil Lucius, evasque de Bangor, e
Elda, son seneschal e conestable, ala cue
gantz pur fere soun palerinage a Rome e
dauser absoluicioun del pope de la occisoun
sa mere. (p. 178)

According to Trivet and Gower, the knight who makes advances towards Constance is left in charge during Elda's absence. Trivet's knight plans the accusation of murder because he fears that Constance will report him to Elda. In Gower and Chaucer, the knight is avenging himself for being turned down. In all three versions, the knight swears falsely on the Bible, and, as a result, his eyes fall from his head. A voice from heaven speaks telling him to confess. In Gower, he confesses and dies, while in Chaucer and Trivet, he is put to death by the king.
Trivet says, "Puis le rey--pur le grant amour quil auoit a la puose, e pur les miracles par dieux moustrez -- le rey Alle se fist baptizer" (p. 712); while Chaucer's version reads:

And for this miracle in conclusioun
And by Constances media cioun
The kyng and many another in that place
Converted was thanked be Cristes grace

This false knygth was slayn for his vntrouthe
By inggement of Alle hastilly.
(liness 685-683)

Chaucer heightens the air of piety by allowing the king to be converted because of the miracle, and not because of his love for Constance. Both Gower and Chaucer relate that many others besides Alle were converted.

Trivet explains Donegild hates Constance because Alle gave up his heathen religion in order to become a Christian; she is jealous of Constance's goodness, holiness, and beauty. Gower gives no reason for Donegild's dislike of the heroine; Chaucer merely reports that the mother thought it a disgrace that Alle had taken "so strange a creature" for his wife.

According to Trivet, Donegild wrote that the queen had been transformed into the likeness of another creature and was an evil spirit in the form of a woman; Gower says "the wif, which is of faerie" is delivered of a child that is amiss by nature. Only in Trivet is Donegild aided by her clerk in the

\[5\]

Ibid., p. 610.
deception. Trivet’s messenger is given an "evil drink" by Donegild; Chaucer’s messenger gets drunk of his own accord; and Gower’s messenger just sleeps the first time, but gets drunk on the return trip. Both Trivet’s and Gower’s messengers receive gifts from Donegild, while Chaucer’s expresses a hope for gifts but does not receive any. Only in Trivet is the request made that the messenger return by way of Donegild’s castle; however, in all three versions, he stops overnight on his return. In Trivet, the messenger tells the king the true and joyful news about his son; however, the king believes the forged letter.

When Constance learns that she is to be exiled, she, in Trivet, says:

Never may the day that the land should be destroyed for me, and that ye, my dear friends, should have death or trouble for me! Since my banishment pleases God and my lord the king, I must that it is good will, in hope that God will bring a hard beginning to a good end, and that He will be able to save me on the sea, who, by sea and land is almighty.

Chaucer says:

Lord, ay welcome by thy soode!  
He that me kepte fro the false blame  
While I was on the land amonges yow,  
He kan me kepe from harm and esk from shame  
In saltz sea, althoogh I se noght how.  
In hym triste I, and in his moode deere,  
That is to me my seyl and eek my steere.  
(lines 826-833)

The only important addition made by Gower is Constance’s prayer and her care for her baby:
And thanne hire handes to the hevene
Sche strawte, and with a milde stevene
Kneleande upon hire bare kne
Sche seide, 'O hine mageste,
   Which sette the point of every trowthe,
Thi of the wofull womane rowtho
   And of this childe that I shall kepe.'
And with that word sche gan to wepe,
Swounende as ded, and ther sche lay;
Bot he which alle thinges may
Comforteth hire, and ate lase
Sche loketh and hire yhan caste
Upon hire child and seide this:
'Of me no menere charge it is
What sorwe I soffe, but of thee
Ne thankth it is a gret pite,
For if I sterwe thou schalt deis:
So mot I nedes be that wele
For Moderhed and for tendresse
With al myn hole businesse
Ordeigne me for thelke office,
   As sche which schal by thi Morrice.'
   Thus was sche strengtheed forto stonde;
   And the sche tok hire child in honde
And yaf it sowke, and evere among
Sche wepte, and otherwhyle song
To rocke with hire child aslepe:
   And thus hire ogene child to kepe
Sche hath under the goddes cure.
)lines 1055-1083).

In Trivet's tale, Constance lands at the heathen Admiral's castle, is entertained there, and returns to her ship for the night. The Admiral sends Thelous to protect her; he takes a great treasure of gold and precious stones to her. He acknowledges to Constance that he had been a Christian but has turned traitor to God; he requests that she aid him in renewing his faith and go with him to a Christian land. They, who are "put-off from land," come to the high sea. The "enemy" moves the renegade with temptation "to entice the lady to consent" to sin. She persuades him to look for land
with a promise of yielding to him; while he is intent on this occupation, she pushes him overboard.

Gower recounts that Thelous takes a boat to Constance's ship to see in what state it had come. When he sees that she is alone and that she is a worthy "wifte," he wants to possess her. Constance requests that he look out at port to see if anyone is watching. She prays and God miraculously throws the renegade out of the boat to meet his death by drowning.

In Chaucer's version, the steward is accidently thrown out of the boat as he wrestles with Constance. Chaucer then gives a discourse on the foul sin of lust.

The vengeance of King Alla on his mother is related by Trivet immediately after Constance's encounter with the knight; by Gower, after Constance's ship meets the Roman fleet; by Chaucer, after Constance's exile - thus omitting a break in thought and achieving a maximum of continuity. In Trivet, Alla himself cuts off Donagild's head and cuts her body to pieces. In Gower, a fire is built and, after her evil is told, she is cast into the fire by Alla's servants. Chaucer merely reports that Alla had his mother killed.

Chaucer says that the Roman senator took Constance to Rome; in Gower, she tells him that she will go to Rome with him; and in Trivet, she asks the senator to take her to Rome.

Gower and Chaucer omit the entry of Alla into Rome and the incident of his having been seen by Constance as he passed through the streets.
Maurice takes the invitation to the emperor in Gower and Trivet; in the version of the latter, the emperor notices the resemblance between Maurice and Constance; Gower says nothing about the emperor's recognizing the boy, while Chaucer's version reads:

Some men wolde seyn how that the child Maurice
Deyth this message unto this emperour;
But, as I gesse, Alia was nat so nyce
To hym that was of so soveren honour
As he that is of Cristen folk the flour,
Sante any chylde, but it is bet to deeme
He went himself, and so it may wel seeme.
(lines 1086-1092)

Chaucer reports that the emperor accepts the invitation immediately. In Trivet, the emperor is asked to come "for the love he bore the soul of his daughter Constance." Gower relates the fact that the emperor would do anything if asked to do it for the sake of his daughter.

Trivet and Gower tell of the incident in which Constance returns to Rome because of the illness of her father; in the Confessio Amantis and in The Man of Law's Tale, Constance returns to her homeland after the death of Alia.

Trivet and Gower report the death of the emperor and, a year later, the death of Constance, while Chaucer relates that Constance and her father lived together in virtue and holy works until death separated them. Elda also dies in Trivet's version.

It is evident that both Gower and Chaucer followed Trivet's account closely. It is interesting to note the parallels in
Gower's and Chaucer's versions. Some of the outstanding similarities are as follows:

**Gower**

"Let take anon this Constantine" (line 706)

"lich hir oghne lif Con-
stance loveth" (line 750)

"yif me my sihte"
(line 765)

"The king with many an-
other mo Hath." christened" (lines 907-8)

"to keep his wif"
(line 925)

"goth to seke
Again the Scottes
forts fonde
The warre" (lines 928-30)

"The time set of kinde
is come,
This lady hath hir cham-
bre nome" (lines 931-32)

**Chaucer**

"And Custance have they take anon" (line 458)

"loved hire right as his life" (line 555)

"yif me my sighte again" (line 562)

"The king and many in that place converted was" (lines 685-86)

"his wyf to kepe" (line 717)

"...whom he is gon
To Scottland-ward his wemen for to seke"
(line 718)

"She holt hire chambre
abiding Cristes wille.
The time is come"
(lines 720-22)

Both Gower and Chaucer condensed the story, but omitted nothing of importance. Approximately one-third of Chaucer's tale is original -- three hundred fifty of the one thousand twenty-nine lines comprising the tale are not found in Trivet. Four of the added stanzas -- lines 421-427, 771-777, 925-931, 1134-1141 - are translated from the De Contemptu Mundi of Pope Innocent III, a work of which Chaucer states in the Pro-
logue to the Legend of Good Women that he has made a translation.  

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Chaucer's additions result in "greater credibility, vividness, and realism." They are as follows:

1. Two stanzas on the great book of heaven (lines 190-203)

Paraventure in thilke large book
Which that men cles he hene
written was
With sterres, when he his birthed took,
That he for love sholde han
his deeth, alas!
For in the sterres, clerer than
is glas,
Is written, God woot, whose
koude it rede,
The deeth of every man, withouten
drede.

In sterres, many a wynter
therbiforn,
Was written the deeth of Ector, Achilles,
Of Pompei, Julius, er they were
born;
The stri of Thebes; and of
Ercules;
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of
Socrates
The deeth; but mennes wittes ben
so dulle
That no might kan wel rede
it atte fulle.

2. A passage about the merits of husbands; Constance's farwell to her parents (lines 272-287)

Housbands been alle goode, and
ham ben yoore;
That knownen wyves; I dar sey
yow na moore.

'Fader,' she seyde, 'thy wrecched
child Custance,

8Block, op. cit., p. 598.
Thy yonge doghter fostred up so softs,
And ye, my moorder, my soverayn plesance
Over alle thyng, out-taken Crist on-lofte,
Custance youre child hire recommandeth ofte
Unto youre grace, for I shal to Surrye,
Ne shal I nevere seen yow morre with ye.

Alass! unto the Barbre nacion
I mooste anoon, syn that it is youre wilie;
But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun
So yeve me grace his heestes to fulfille!
I, wrecche womman, no fors though I spille!
Wommen are born to thraldom and pennance,
And to been under mannes governance.

3. Three astrological stanzas (lines 295-315)

O firste moeyving! cruel firmanent,
With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdest ay
And hurlest al from est til occident
That naturally wolde holde another way,
Thy crowdyng set the hevene in swich array
At the bigynnyng of this fiers viage,
That cruel Mars hath slayn this mariag.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helpeles falle, alass,
Out of his angle into the derkeste hous!
O Mars, o ataxir, as in this cas!
O fieble moone, unhappy been thy paaes!
Thou knytttest thee ther thou art nat receyved;
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.

Imprudent emperour of Rome, alass!
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toom?
Is no tympe bet than other in swich cas?
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun?
Noght what a roote is of a burthe yknowe?
Alass, we been to lawed or to slowe?
4. Sultaness's speech to the Saracen conspirators
(lines 330-343)

'Lordes' quod she, 'ye knowen everichon,
How that my sone in point is for to late
The hooly lawes of oure Alkaron,
Yeven by Goddes message Makomete,
But con avow to grete God I heete,
The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte
Or Makomete lawe out of myn heete!

What sholde us tyden of this newe lawe
But thraldom to oure bodies and penance,
And afterward in helle to be drawe,
For we reneged Mahoun oure creance?
But, lordes, wol ye maken assurance,
As I shal seyn, assentynge to my loore,
And I shal make us sauf for everemoore?'

5. Another speech by the Sultaness (lines 351-357)

We shal first feyne us cristendom to take,
Cooold water shal nat greve us but a lite!
And I shal swich a feeste and revel make
Than, as I trowe, I shal the sowden quite
For thogh his wyf be cristned never so white,
She shal have nede to washe away the rede,
Thogh she a font-ful water with hire lede.

6. Apostrophizing the Sultaness and Satan (lines 358-371)

0 sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee!
Virago, thou Semyrame the seconde!
0 serpent under femynymyte,
Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!
0 feynd woman, al that may confounde
Vertu and innocence, throug thy malice,
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!

0 Satan, envious syn thilke day
That thou were chaced from oure heritage,
Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!
Thou madest Eva brynge us in servage;
Thou wolt fordoon this Cristen mariage,
Thyn instrument so, weylawey the while!
Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigiie.
7. The splendor of Constance's reception in the Saracen city (lines 400-410)

Nught trowe I the trimpe of Julius,  
Of which that Lucan maketh swich a boost,  
Was roiellre ne moore curius  
Than was the 'assemblye of this blissful boost.  
But this scorpion, this wicked goost,  
The scowednesse, for al hire flatteryng,  
Caste under this ful mortally to styng.

The scowdane comth hymself soone after this  
So roially, that wonder is to telle,  
And welcometh hire with alle joye and blis.  
And thus in murrthe and joye I lote hire dwelle;  
The fruyte of this matiere is that I telle.

8. The shortness of worldly joy (lines 421-427)

O sodeyn wo, that evre art successour  
To worldly blisse, spreyne with bitternessse!  
The ende of the joye of our worldly labour!  
We occupieth the fyn of our gladesse.  
Harke this conseil for thy sikernesse;  
Upon thy glade day have in thy mynde  
The unwar wo or harm that comth bihynde.

9. Constance's prayer (lines 449-462)

She klageth hire, and with ful pitous voy  
Unto the croys of Crist thus seyde she:  
'O cleere, o weilful auter, hooly croys,  
Reed of the Lambes blood ful of pites,  
That wesh the world from the olde iniquites,  
Me fro the feend and fro his clawes kepe,  
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe.

Victorious tree proteccioun of trewe,  
That onely worthy were for to bere  
The kyng of Hevene with is woundes newe,  
The white lamb, that hurt was with a spere,  
Flamere of feendes out of hym and here  
On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,  
Me kepe, and yf me myght my lyf t'amenden.'

10. God's power to deliver one from serious dangers

(lines 470-504)

Men myghten asken why she was nat slayn  
Eek at the feeste? who myghte hir body save?
And I answere to that demande agayn,
Who saved Danyel in the horrible cave
Ther every wight save he, maister and knave,
Was with the leon frate or he asterte?
No wight but God, that he bar in his herte.

God listeth to shewe his wonderful myracle
In hire, for we sholde seen his myghty werkis;
Crist, which that is to every harm trisle,
By certein meenes ofte, as knowned clerkis,
Dooth thyng for certain ende that full derk is
To mannes wit, that for our ignorance
Ne konne noght knowe his prudent purveiance.

Now sithe she was not at the feeste yslawe,
Who kepte hire fro the drenching in the see?
Who kepte Jochas in the fisshed mawe
Til he was spouted up at Ny nyvye?
Wel may men knowe it was no wight but he
That kepte peple Ebrayk from hir drenchynge,
With drys feet thurghout the see passynge.

Who bad the foure spirites of tempest
That power han t'ancoyen land and see,
Bothe north and south, and also west and est.
'Ancoyeth neither see, ne land, ne tree'?
Sooth, the commandour of that was he
That fro the tempest ay this woman kepte
As wel when she wook as when she slepte.

Where myghte this woman mete and drynke have
Thre yeer and moore? how lasteth hire vitaille?
Who fede the Egiopian Marie in the cave,
Or in desert? No wight but Crist, sanz faille.
Fyte thousand folk it was as greet mervaille
With loves and fisshed two to feede.
God sente his joyson at hir grete neede.

11. Description of Constance's defenseless condition

(lines 631-658)

Alas! Custance, thou hast no champioune,
Ne fighte kanstow noght, so weylaway!
But he that staf for our redempcion,
And boond Sathan (and yet lith ther he lay),
So be thy stronge champioune this day!
For but if Crist open myracle kithe,
Withouten gilt thou shalt be slayn as swithe.
She sette her down on knees, and thus she sayde,
'Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
Pro false blame, and thou, merciful mayde,
Marie I meene, dochter to Seint Anne,
Bifore whos child angeles synge Osamne,
If I be giltees of this felonye,
My socour be, for ellis shal I dye.

Have ye nat seyn somtyne a pale face,
Among a prees, of hym that hath be lad
Toward his death, wher as hym gat no grace,
And swich a colour in his face hath had
Men myghte knowe his face that was bistad,
Amonges alle the faces in that route?
So stant Custance, and looketh hire aboute.

0 queenes, lyvyng in prosperitee,
Duchesses, and ye ladyes everichone,
Haveth som routhe on hire aduersitee!
An emperours doghter stant allone;
She hath no with to whom to make hir mone.
0 blood roial, that stonest in this drede,
Fer been thy freendes at thy grete node.

12. The wedding (lines 701-714)

Me list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree,
Maken so long a tale as of the corn,
What scholde I tellen of the roialte
A mariage, or which cours goth biforn;:
Who bloweth in a trumpe or in a horn?
The fruyt of every tale is for to seye:
They eate, and drynke, and daunce, and syng, and plete.

They goon to bedde, as it was skile and right;
For thogh that wyves be ful hooly thynge,
They moste take in paciense at nyght
Swiche manere necessaries as been plesynes
To folk that han yweded hem with rynges,
And leyde a lite hir hoolynesse aside,
As for the tyme, --it may no bet bitide.

15. Apostrophizing the drunken messenger and the treach-

erous Donegild (lines 771-784)

0 messager, fulfilld of dronenesse,
Strong is thy breeth, thy lymes falten ay,
And thou biwreyest alle seacreannesse.
Thy mynde is lorn, thou janglest as a jay,
Thy face is turned in a newe array.
Ther dronkenesse regnath in any route,
Ther is no conseil hyd, withouten doute.

O Donegild, I ne have noon English digne
Unto thy malice and thy tyrannie!
And therefore to the feend I thee resigne;
Lat hym enditen of thy traitorie!
Fy mannysh, fy! -- o nay, by God, I lye --
Fy, feendlych spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Thogh thou haue walkes, thy spirit is in helle!

14. The constable’s lament on receiving the counterfeit letter (lines 311-319)

'Lord Crist,' quod he, 'how may this world endure,
So ful of sainne is many a creature?

'O myghty God, if that it be thy wille,
Sith thou art rightfule juge, how may it be
That thou wolt suffern innocentz to spille,
And wikked folk regne in prosperitee?
A goode Custance, alias! so wo is me
That I moot be thy tormentour, or deye
On shames deeth; ther is noon oother weye.'

15. Constance’s prayer before going to the ship, her attentions to her child, her prayer to Mary, the words of pity for her innocent babe, and her leave taking (lines 826-868)

'He that kepeth me from the false blame
While I was on the lond amonges yow,
He kan me kepe from harm and seek fro shame
In saltie se, although I se noght how.
As strong as evere he was, he is yet now.
In hym triste I, and in his moeder dese,
That is to me my seyel and seek my steere.'

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
And knelynge, pitously to hym she sayde,
'Peese, litel sone, I wol do thee noon harm.'
With that her cowarchef of hir heed she breyde,
And over his litel eyen she it leyde,
And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,
And into heveme hire eyen up she caste.

'Moorder,' quod she, 'and maybe bright, Marie,
Sooth is that thurgh wommanes eggenment
Mankynde was lorn, and damned ay to dye,
For which thy child was on a croys yrent.
Thy blissful eyen sawe al his torment;
Thanne is ther no comparison bitwene
Thy wo and any wo man may sustene.

Thow sawe thy child yslayn biforn thyne yen,
And yet lyveth my litel child, parfay!
Now, lady bright, to whom elles woeful cryn.
Thow glorie of womanhede, thow gaire may,
Thow haven of refut, brighte sterre of day,
Rewe on my child, that of thy gentillesse,
Rewest on every roweful in distresse.

'O litel child, allass! what is thy gilt,
That neveer wronghest synne as yet, pardee?
Why wil thyn herde fader han thee spilt?
0 mercy, deere constable,' quod she,
'As lat my litel child dwelle heer with thee;
And if thou darst nat savyn hym, for blame,
So kys hym ones his fadres names.'

Therwith she looked bakward to the londe,
And seyde, 'Farewel, housbonde routhelesse,'
And up she rist, and walketh doun the strounde
Toward the ship, --hir folweth al the trees,--
And evere she preyeth hire child to holde his pees;
And taketh hire leve, and with an hooily entente
She bilseeth hire, and into ship she wante.

16. "Lust of luxurie"; Constance's strength against the renegade (lines 925-945)

O foule lust of luxurie, lo, thyne ende!
Nat onely that thou feynest mannes mynde,
But, varraily thou wolt his body shende.
Th'ende of thy werk, or if thy lustes blynde,
Is compleymyg. Hou many oon may men fynde
That noght for werk somtymo, but for th'entende
To doon this synne, been outhre slayn or shente!

How may this wayke han this strengthe
Hire to defende agayn this renegat?
0 Goliass, unmeasurable of lengthe,
Hou myghtes David make thee so maat,
So yong and of armure so desolat?
Hou dorate he looke upon thy dreadful face?
Wel may men seen, it has but Goddes grace.
Who yaf Judith corage or hardynesse
To sleen hym Olofermus in his tente,
And to delivern out of wrecchednesse
The people of God, I saye, for this entente,
That right as God spirit of vigour sente
To hem, and saved hem out of meschance,
So sent he myght and vigour to Custance.

17. Alla's thoughts after seeing Maurice (lines 1037-1043)

'Purfay,' thought he, 'fantome is in myn heed!
I oghte deme, of skilful juggement,
That in the salte see my wif is deed.'
And afterward he made his argument.
'What woot I if that Crist have hyder ysent
My wyf by see, as wel as he hire sente
To my contree from thynnes that she wente?'

18. The pain and joy of Alla's meeting with Constance
(lines 1052-1078)

For at the first look he on her sette,
He knew wel verrailly that it was she.
And she, for sorwe, as doumb stant as a tree,
So was hir herte shut in hir distresse,
Whar she remembered his unkyndenesse.

Twyes she swooned in his oene sichte;
He weep, and hym excuseth pitously.
'Now God,' quod he, 'and elle his halwes brighte
So wisly on my soule as have mercy,
That of youre harm as glitezles am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face;
Elles the fend me fecche out of this place.'

Long was the sobbyng and the bitter payne,
Er that hir woful hertes myghte cesse;
Greet was the pitee to heere hem pleyne,
Thurgh whiche gan hir wo encresse.
I pray you alle my labour to relese:
I may not telle hir wo until to-morwe,
I am so very for to speke of sorwe.

But finally, when that the sothe is wist
That Alla gilteless was of hir wo,
I trowe an hundred tymes been they kist,
And swich a blisse is ther betwix hem two
That, save the joye that lasteth everemo,
Ther is noon lyk that any creature
Hath seyn or shal, whil that the world may dure.

19. The fleeing quality of all human joy (lines 1132-1141)

But litel while it lasteth, I yow heete,
Joye of this world, for tyme wol nat abyde;
Fro day to nyght it changeth as the tyde.

Who lyved euere in swich delit o day
That hym ne mooved outhere conscience
0 ire, or talent, or som kynnes affray,
Envye, or pride, or passion, or offence?
I ne seye but for this ende this sentence,
That litel while in joye or in pleasance
Lasteth the bliss of Alla with Custance.

Chaucer's tale is superior to both Gower's and Trivet's.

He omits incidents and details which do not directly concern
the "fortunes of Constance;" he avoids "Trivet's tendency to
clutter up his story with irrelevant and distracting details,"
he omits "Trivet's sanguinary elaboration" and "a whole mass
of pseudo-accurate circumstantial details regarding people's
names, and duration of time." Chaucer so transformed his
original source that not one line in The Man of Law's Tale is
directly quoted from Trivet; very few of the lines do not re-
fect the "shaping power of Chaucer's creative imagination."

Chaucer's omissions and condensations con-
cern action and incidents not essential to the
main plot, while his additions are directed at
character development, at elaborating upon certain
critical events in the life of Constance, or at
making his story either more vivid or more for-
mally poetic. These additions ... contain the

9 Ibid., p. 612.          10 Ibid., p. 614.
Most vivid imaginative, and emotional passages in the Man of Law's Tale is a work of superb literary craftsmanship which reflects the economy, the originality, the imaginative power, and the conscious artistry of the shaping hand that created it.\footnote{Ibid., p. 615.}
CHAPTER III

CHAUCER'S SUPERIOR CHARACTERIZATION

The one thing that raises The Man Of Law's Tale into the "realm of true art, and even gives it a high degree of spiritual unity, is the beautiful personality of Constance."\(^1\) Little can be said of the character by way of analysis; there is "no baffling problem of motives nor complexity of warring qualities to fascinate the intellect, no development of character under stress of circumstances;"\(^2\) from the beginning of the tale Constance is completely transparent -- she is perfect. (lines 156-159)

Oure Emperour of Rome -- God hym see! --
A doghter hath that, syn the world bigan,
To rekene as wel hir goodnesse as beaute,
Nas nevere swich another as is shee

Constance is portrayed in prosperity as she is met by the sultan's mother and again as she marries Alla and becomes a queen. Constance meets adversity when she is put out to sea in a rudderless boat and later when the false steward goes to her ship. Constance is portrayed in what she believes to be her final hour -- the knight has accused her of killing Hermengild and all evidence seems to point to her guilt. She is always the same -- unmoved, unshaken. Her nature is characteristic of the virtues of humility - faith, hope, and love.

\(^{1}\) Root, op. cit., p. 188.  \(^{2}\) Ibid.
By these, she steers her rudderless boat and by these she lives in the court of both emperor and king.

Outward circumstances move Constance so little that the events of the story seem to be insignificant; their improbability is forgotten or perhaps in the presence of such superhuman perfection, the supernatural appears natural.

The heroine seems to be a personification of Christianity itself as it comes to heathen nations, is maligned and persecuted, yet "in the strength of its Founder, endures in patience and finally remains victorious."3

To depict a character such as Constance requires genius. The difficulty of the "portrayal lies in the simplicity, the absence of all complexity."4

Christianity bids man to pattern his imperfect nature after the perfect nature; man's personality distinguishes him from his pattern. The Christian ideal would entail man's giving up the traits which distinguish him as an individual.5 Constance has attained the ideal; she is perfect. Her perfection makes her character seem unreal, for in a sense she has no character.

To depict such a nature in its ideal perfection and yet to make the reader feel the force of such a personality is greater artistic triumph than to create a Crisneyde. In The Man of Law's Tale, Chaucer is working in the spirit of the

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3Ibid., p. 187. 4Ibid. 5Ibid.
Christian Middle Ages, which loved the perfect and the universal.

In Trivet's and Gower's versions of Constance the heroine is only a lay figure who illustrates the power of Christianity and the evil fate which befalls her opponents. In Chaucer, however, Constance is an individual, one of Chaucer's more mature characters, she is a woman, not a girl. She has lived and suffered and is characterized by frankness, directness, and honesty. With grave serenity and simple courage, Constance meets her fate. When confronted by danger, she is ready to defend her honor. Constance is "a great-hearted woman, before whose innate nobility the persecutions and unjust accusations to which" she is "subjected drop into nothingness."  

Chaucer's description of Constance is characterized by pathos (lines 645-651):

Have ye nat seyn somtyme a pale face,  
Among a prees, of hym that hath be lad  
Toward his deeth, wher as hym gat no grace,  
And swich a colour in his face hath had,  
Men myghte knowe his face that was bisted,  
Amonges alle the faces in that route?  
So stant Constance, and lokesth hire aboute.

A branch of Fortitude that represents Cecilia in theory,  
Constance (lines 824-839) with a deeply pale face  
The ferthe day toward hir ship she wente  
But natheless she taketh in good entente

6Grace Hadow, Chaucer and His Times, p. 91.  
7Ibid., p. 133.  
8Ibid.  
The wyl of Crist, and knelynge on the stronde,  
She seyde 'Lord, ay welcome be thy sonde!'

'He that me kepte from the false blame  
While I was on the lond amonges yow,  
He kan me kepe from harm and eek fro shame  
In salte see, althogh I se noght hou.  
As strong as evere he was, he is yet now.  
In hym triste I, and in his mooder deere,  
That is to me my seyl and eek my steere.'

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,  
And knelyng, pitously to hym she seyde,  
'Pees, litel sone, I wol do thes noon harm.'  
With that hir coverchif of hir heir she breyde,  
And over his litel eyn she it leyde,  
And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,  
And into hevene hire eyen up she caste.

The preceding passages are far more moving in their simplicity than the most harrowing description could be. Trivet's and Gower's tales lack the "breathing, human passion" which characterizes Chaucer's tale. No poet surpasses Chaucer in the expression of tender feelings. "Chaucer excels in painting the sorrows of a woman's heart, and in finding touching words to render that peculiar yet real logic which underlies a woman's lamentations." As can be seen by the foregoing passages, Chaucer's heroine is human and intelligible. Chaucer's additions about Constance make her even more religious and pious than she is in Trivet and Gower. For example, in her farewell speech to her parents, Constance says to her mother:

(lines 276-280)

10 Hadow, op. cit., p. 96.

11 Emile Legouis, Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 191.
And ye, my moother, my soverayn pleasance
Over alle thyng, out-taken Crist on-lofte,
Custance youre child hire recomandeth ofte
Unto youre grace, for I shal to Surrye,
Ne shal I nevrie seene yow moore with ye.

She calls on Christ: (lines 283-284)

But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun
So yeve me grace his heestes to fülfille!

"With intense piety she prays to the Cross after she has
been exiled by the sultaness; to God in the judgement-hall
scene, ... and again to God as well as to the Virgin Mary
when she is exiled from Northumberland. Earlier, when she ar-
rives in Northumberland, "12 (line 523) "She knelyth doun and
thanketh Goddes sonde."

Chaucer's heroine "is a flesh and blood woman;"13 after
Constance and Alla are married, Chaucer says: (line 708) "They
going to bedde, as it was skile and right." She is not a "cold,
aaloof, untouchable allegorical figure;" she is a "sentient
personality who ... runs practically the gamut of human emo-
tions."14 As a daughter, she dislikes leaving her parents;
as a mother, she fears that she cannot care for her son pro-
perly when she is exiled; as a wife, "she swoons twice from
emotional strain, is racked by tears, and ultimately surrenders
herself to a veritable tempest of kisses in the recognition
scene."15 Again as a daughter, she is triumphantly feminine
when she reveals herself to her father; ... in the judgement-

hall scene, she is lovely and terrified being human."\textsuperscript{16} "A high visibility"\textsuperscript{17} characterizes Constance. The reader is made aware of her pale face in the various crises which confront her; of her lovely figure as she prays on the coast of Northumberland, casts one last look at the shore, and walks down to her ship; of her loneliness and fright as she is tried for Hermengild's murder and as she is upon the "salte see" for years and years. Block states that there is something "almost Wordsworthian about Constance, this lovely and solitary figure who is so constantly projected against a desolate and hostile background."\textsuperscript{18}

The next characterization to be discussed is that of Alla. Chaucer's Alla, unlike Gower's and Trivet's, returns with Elda to the castle. This change is not accidental; it "reflects Chaucer's awareness of the shifting importance of his characters."\textsuperscript{19} At this point Elda becomes a minor character, while Alla is rising in importance, for he is later to marry Constance. Chaucer's change focuses the attention on Alla; he describes Alla's emotions, while Gower and Trivet talk about Elda's feeling for Constance. When the knight accuses Constance, Chaucer's version reads: (lines-659-661)

\begin{quote}
This Alla kyng hath swich compassioun,
As gentil herte is fullfd of pitee,
That from his eyen ren the water doun.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{17}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{18}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 582.
Chaucer humanizes Alla by making him emotional and compassionate and by stressing his attraction to Constance, thus preparing him for his marriage to her.

Alla is a positive figure. Gower's and Trivet's knight swears on the Bible of his own accord; however, in Chaucer, Alla makes the knight swear that Constance is guilty after he becomes suspicious of the knight.20

Immediately after Alla kills his mother, he is portrayed as lamenting day and night for his exiled wife and child. After he sees Maurice for the first time and notices his resemblance to his long-lost wife he says: (lines 1037-1043)

"Parfay," thought he, "fantome is in myn heed! I oghte deme, of skilful juggement, That in the saltë see my wyf is deed." And afterward he made his argument: "What woot I if that Crist have hyder ysent My wyf by see, as wel as he hir sente To my countree fro thennes that she wente?"

The life-like Alla, upon recognizing his wife, weeps so copiously (line 1052) "that it was routhe for to se;" then he convinces her that he had nothing to do with her exile.

Chaucer also made additions which stress Alla's piety. Alla's letter to the constable, written after receiving Donesgild's forged letter, reads: (lines 759-765)

Welcome the sonde of Crist for everemoore To me that am now lerned in his loore! Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy plesaunce; My lust I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.

Kepeth this child al be it foul or fair, And eek my wyf, unto myn hoom-comynge.

20Ibid.
The constable's piety is revealed as he prays to God after receiving orders to set Constance and child adrift. He voices his submission to God's will, even though he abhors the task confronting him and is confused by seeing the innocent suffer at the hands of God.\textsuperscript{21}

"Maurice's virtue and piety after he becomes emperor are . . . brought out when he is described as living 'cristenly' and doing great honor to Christ's church."\textsuperscript{22}

Chaucer adds little to his version that develops the character of Donegild. In lines 778-784, she is portrayed as being a fiend whose spirit is in hell. Her wickedness is more pronounced than it is in Gower and Trivet; however, she in not more human in the Man of Law's Tale.

Chaucer's messenger is distinctly more human than Trivet's or Gower's. He goes to Donegild's castle in order to (line 729) "doon his advantage," he places himself at her disposal and drinks heavily of wine and ale. "An effective human touch is also added when he returns to Donegild bearing Alla's letter to the constable and is described as drinking so heavily again that he (line 789) 'wel his girdel wnderpighte' and snoring all night in his sleep."\textsuperscript{23} Lines 771-777 draw attention to his drunkenness and his lack of discretion.

The stanzas which describe the sultan's conference with his council (lines 204-231) stress the conflict between the

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 588. \textsuperscript{22} Ibid. \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 594.
claims of his religion and his love for Constance; these lines dramatize "the predicament in which he finds himself." Love is triumphant as he decides to take the Christian faith. In like manner, the passage describing the sultaness's conference with her council imparts her religious fanaticism, her determination to keep her religion, and her initiative in promising those who help her eternal safety. "Her cunning, bloodthirsty ruthlessness, and callous sense of humor" is vividly described in lines 351-357 when she unfolds her plot to the Saracens and jests about the baptismal water. Her wickedness is emphasized in lines 358-371.

Chaucer's characterization of the Syrian merchants is much more detailed than that of the other two writers. Chaucer expands Trivet's one sentence into three stanzas (lines 134-154) which describe the excellence of their merchandise and which go into detail regarding the selection of lodging and the manner in which they hear of Constance.

The characters in Chaucer talk far more than those in Trivet and Gower. The Man of Law's Tale contains approximately 850 words of dialogue and 350 of prayer. Chaucer's greater use of dialogue is related to the humanizing additions and reflects "his attempt to dramatize his characters and to transform them into human beings who ... display ... emotions."
CHAPTER IV

CHAUCER'S SUPERIOR STYLISTIC QUALITIES

In The Man Of Law's Tale, "Chaucer shows all of the qualities which, in modern authors, are accounted 'regular' or 'classical' or whatever the fashionable epithet may be."1 The verse in The Man Of Law's Tale, "written by a finished metrician,"2 is full of variety and is "in exquisite tune."3 The seven-line isometrical stanzas are in heroic verse. The rhyme-scheme is ab ab bcc; the stanza is clearly tripartite, the first two parts equal to each other, but unequal to the third.4 "Although not its creator, Chaucer may claim the stanza as his own. The skill with which he constructs it and the extent to which he uses it have given it far greater significance than it originally possessed."5 Chaucer has set his own peculiar seal upon the system, especially by the regularity with which he uses a new rhyme for the last couplet.6

Kittridge believes that Chaucer's sense of rhythm is extraordinary even for a poet; his diction has an elegant simplicity7 and purity8 which produce

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1George Lyman Kittridge, Chaucer and His Poetry, p. 17.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Bernard Ten Brink, The Language and Metre of Chaucer, p. 255.
5Ibid., p. 256.
6Ibid.  7Kittridge, op. cit., p. 17.
8John Matthew Manly, Some New Light on Chaucer, p. 266.
in its consummate art, the deceptive effort of artlessness. It achieves decorum without apparent effort and with no suggestion of formality. Its freedom from puns, conceits, jingles, and antithetic affectations moved the admiration of Dryden, who found in Chaucer a 'continuance which is practised by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients excepting Virgil and Horace'.

The excellence of Chaucer's style - its force, its finished ease, its simplicity, its purity of idiom, its mastery of a genuine and unforced pathos, its delicacy for characteristic detail, its subtlety and accuracy of psychology, its sureness of dramatic instinct - make his tale of Constance far superior to Gower's and Trivet's versions.

Both Gower's and Trivet's tales are almost free from digression; they have easy narrative styles that carry the plots on steady currents; their dullness arises, not from the narratives, but from the empty discourses that surround them. In Gower (and Trivet), there are no emotional outbursts; "no comments clog" the tales. Gower's style is "as unimpeded and as lucid as that of the French, whose tongue was as familiar to him as his own." His verse is a "flowing, well-ordered narrative; never as vivid as Chaucer's, the descriptions are adequate and effective."

\footnote{Kittridge, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 18.} \footnote{Ibid., p. 19.} \footnote{Manly, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 267.} \footnote{Henry Seidel Canby, \textit{The Short Story in English}, pp., 58-61.} \footnote{Ibid., p. 61.} \footnote{Ibid., p. 62.} \footnote{Ibid., p. 63.}
Canby states that Gower's introduction to the tale of Constance is "more lucid and better proportioned than that of the Lawyer in Chaucer's tale; his verse, though infinitely less rich, is adequate; his descriptions, not nearly so vivid, are suggestive."\(^{15}\)

Chaucer's story-telling art is attributed to "his enrichment of narration, which Gower [and Trivet] caused to flow, but could not make luminous with ... pathos. Neither character, nor the vivid reality of the visible world ... were possible for Gower's\(^{16}\) or Trivet's achievement."

Trivet's version, unlike Gower's and Chaucer's, is in prose. Trivet's story is more detailed than either Chaucer's or Gower's. Trivet begins his story undramatically by speaking of the virtue and prosperity of Maurice; he relates that "he [Maurice] was the son of Constance, the daughter of Tiberius -- thus destroying all suspense as to Constance's fate and revealing at the beginning that the tale is to have a happy ending."\(^{17}\)

As compared with Gower [and Trivet], Chaucer's work reveals a greater ease and clearness of phrasing;\(^{18}\) "his language is that of prose, from which it only differs in the use of inversions necessitated by rhyme."\(^{19}\) Chaucer does not violate syntax; in the tale of Constance he uses few metaphors;

\(^{16}\)Ibid. \(^{17}\)Ibid. \(^{18}\)Manly, op. cit., p. 284. \(^{19}\)Legouis, op. cit., p. 191.
these metaphors do not enrich nor disturb the meaning of words: 20

She is mirour of alle curtseys;
Hir herte is verrry chamber of hoolynesse,
Hir hand, ministre to freedom for almesse.
(lines 166-168)

Alliteration contributes to the elevation of Chaucer's poetic diction. Outstanding examples in The Man of Law's Tale are as follows:

"That shal be sent to strange nacioun" (line 268)
"I wreece woman no fors though I spille!" (line 285)
"Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigile." (line 371)
"And hastifliche this sowdan sente his sond" (line 363)
"And forth she sailleth in the salte see." (line 445)
"And in the sond hir ship stiked so faste," (line 509)
"Withouten gift than shalt be s Cyan as swithe." (line 637)
"Foryeve his wikked werkés that he wroghte." (line 994)

"Imagery, as Chaucer used it, is a form of diction." 21

His images are not only decorative, but they convey to the reader the idea that lay in Chaucer's mind "in the exact form in which he conceived and felt it." 22 This amazing skill in the use of imagery lies at the basis of his brilliant portrayal of Constance. Chaucer uses direct description and statement with a skill that has not been surpassed; he characterizes by speech, action, and manner. 23

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20 Ibid.  
21 Manly, op. cit., p. 284.  
22 Ibid.  
23 Ibid., p. 291.
description, Chaucer does not follow the conventions of the day; he does not use description merely for its own sake, but tends to reduce the passages to a minimum and to condense the actual narrative so that it moves quickly and straightforwardly. At the same time, he expands any situation which affords opportunity for the display of character, adds dialogue and intensifies emotion, and shows a disposition to comment on what he is describing.  

24 The messenger's mishap causes Chaucer to issue an invective against drunkenness. Later Chaucer tells of the instability of happiness. These lyrical outbursts, these "philosophical interpolations," relieve the poet's heart that is burdened by accumulating sympathy with the men and women in the tale. "O sowdannes, roote of iniquitee!" he says, while Gower holds his peace calling no names.  

25

Gower and Trivet merely relate the false accusation brought against Constance by the knight, while Chaucer paints a dramatic situation in a few words: (line 617-625)

For as the lomb toward his deeth is broght,  
So stant this innocent biffore the kyng.  
This false knyght, that hath this tresoun wroght,  
Bertie hire at hand that she hath deon thys thyng.  
But nathelss, ther was greet moormyg  
Among the peple, and seyn they kan nat geasse  
That she had deon so greet a wikkednesse;  

For they han seyn hire evere so vertuous,  
And lovynge Hermengyld right as hir lyf.

26

Mary Edith Thomas, Medieval Skepticism and Chaucer, p. 96.

Ibid.
Trivet and Gower give the reader lurid details concerning the vengeance of Alla on his mother, but Chaucer, who never takes pleasure in horrors, omits the details and hastens to tell of Constance's adventure off the coast of Spain. Here again Chaucer pauses to comment on the evil of self-indulgence; he discusses how God sends weak women the "spirit of vigour" that they may save themselves in time of need.27

The most astonishing characteristic of Chaucer's art, according to Manly, is his dramatic method. It "appears not only in his presentation of character and his technique of narration, but it is the very basis of his success as a satirist."28 The only outstanding satire in The Man of Law's Tale is the "Sowdanesse's statement about accepting Christianity: (line 352) "Coold water shal nat greve us but a litle!"

According to Dryden, "the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction."29 Chaucer is conscious of vice as vice; however, he has no desire to make people over by his ridicule.

According to Dempster,30 Chaucer consistently suppresses dramatic irony in his source, Trivet's Life of Constance. Three passages are worth noting. In Trivet, the Roman senator Arsenius, to whom Constance has been brought, fails to recognize her, and not only tells her about her own life but

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27 Hadow, op. cit., p. 94.  
28 Manly, op. cit., p. 294.  
30 Germaine Dempster, Dramatic Irony in Chaucer, p. 93
about her death. Chaucer keeps the same meeting, but all contrasts not strictly necessary are suppressed. Gower passes lightly over this episode but keeps some of the irony of Trivet's account.

When Alla arrives in Rome, Trivet lodges him in the castle of Arsenius where Constance is living. Unaware of any relationship between the two, Arsenius announces the visitor, and Constance swoons for joy. In Gower, Alla is not lodged at the castle, but the incident of the swooning is kept much the same. Chaucer, however, omits everything except the meeting of Arsenius and Alla.

When the Roman emperor is requested to attend the dinner, Trivet has him first answer that he is still mourning the death of his daughter, and cannot attend, but accepts the invitation because entertained "pur lamur qil auoit al alme sa fille Constance." The passage in Gower is primarily the same, while in Chaucer, the emperor grants the request immediately. "Chaucer's abstention from dramatic irony is one of many illustrations of his keen power of distinguishing among literary genres."31

It is interesting to note that Patch sees two instances of dramatic irony in Chaucer's tale.

Pathos is found in the irony of the scene . . . where Kyng Alla in ignorance asks with approval about his own child: here to things are better

31. Ibid.
than he can suppose. Of the same type is that where the senator praises Constance to Alla unaware of the fact that she is the king's wife.\footnote{32}

Another characteristic of \textit{The Man of Law's Tale} is that it has no proverbs. The story does contain, however, "eight sententious remarks."\footnote{33} The sultan's privy council was discussing Constance and (line 211) "Diverse men diverse thynges seyden."

"The mutability of human fortunes, changing for the worse, is the subject of three sayings."\footnote{34} Two occur in the passage telling of the sultaness's murder of her son: (lines 421-424 and lines 426-427)

\begin{quote}
0 sodeyn wo, that euer art successor
To worldly bliss, apsaynd with bitterness:
The ende of the joye of oure worldly labouyr.
Wo occupieth the fynd of oure gladnesse.
\end{quote}

Upon thy glade day have in thy mynde
The unwar wo or harm that cometh bithynde.

The third passage reveals that even after their reunion Alla and Constance cannot be happy long: (lines 1133-1134)

Joye of this world, for tyme wol not abyde;
Fro day to nyght it changeth as the tyde.

\textit{Alla} first meets Constance when she is accused of murder: (line 660) "As gentil herte is fulfild of pites." After her innocence has been established, Constance marries Alla. The \textit{Man of Law} does not tell all of the details of the wedding for

\footnote{32}{\textit{Patch}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 229.}
\footnote{33}{\textit{Bertlett Jere Whiting, Chaucer's Use of Proverbs}, p. 90.}
\footnote{34}{\textit{Ibid.}}
Me list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree,
Maken so long a tale as of the corn.
(lines 701-702)

When the messenger is drunk, the Man of Law says: (lines 776-777)

Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,
Ther is no conseil hyd, withouten doute.

Alla dies, despite his rank: (lines 1142-1144)\(^{35}\)

For deeth, that taketh of heigh and logh his rente,
When passed was a yeer, evene as I gesse,
Out of this world kyng Alla he hente.

The next characteristic of Chaucer's tale to be discussed
is the "motivating power of the stars,"\(^{36}\) which is not present
in either Trivet or Gower. Chaucer attempts to rationalize
the characters "by the process of referring them to astral in-
fluence, by interpolating nativities which seem to govern and
direct the prescribed action."\(^{37}\) When the Christian Constance
is about to marry a pagan sultan, Chaucer says: (lines 295-308)

0 firste moeuyng! cruel firmament,
With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdest ay
And hurlest al from est till occident
That naturallywolde holde another way,
Thy crowdyng set the hevenes in swich array
At the bigymnyng of this fiers viage,
That cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord id halplees falls, alas,
Out of his angle into the derkest hous!
0 Mars, o atazir, as in this cas!
0 fieble moone, unhappy been thy paas!
Thou knyttest thee ther thou art nat receyved;
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 91.

\(^{36}\) Walter Clyde Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences, p. 164.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
observes that the ascendant, tortuous sign - i.e., the sign just rising above the horizon - is Aries, one of the mansions of Mars. The lord of this sign, Mars, has just passed from an angle into a succeedant house, in this case from Libra into Scorpio, which is his other, darker mansion. Luna, also falling from an angle into a succeedant, is found to be in corporal conjunction with Mars without reception in Scorpio. What . . . Skeat does not observe is that when the horoscope is in Aries - for horoscopes in all other signs the situation would be different - the sign Libra happens to correspond with the seventh house of the horoscope and Scorpio with the eighth. This is a conjunction of Mars and Luna not only in the sign Scorpio but also in the eighth house of the horoscope. In order, then, to understand the full power of such a nativity upon the life and fortunes of Constance, the following data must be interpreted: the horoscope is in Aries; Mars, Casus ab angulo, is discovered in Scorpio, which occupies the eighth house of the figure; Luna is also cadent, having passed from a favorable sign - angle, Libra - seventh, into an unfavorable sign - succeedant, Scorpio - eighth, where she is in conjunction with Mars.

Curry's explanation of ancient astrology is as follows:] In ancient astrology a figure of the heavens takes the form of a circle with a diameter drawn from left to right, representing the eastern and western horizons, and with another diameter drawn at right angles, representing the meridian. The quadrants thus made are further divided each into three equal parts, forming what is called the 'twelve houses of the figure.' Of these the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth are called 'angles'; the four succeeding these - second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh - are called 'succeedants;' and the four after these - third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth - are called 'cadents.' Thus every quadrant (beginning from the cardinal points and progressing counter clockwise) has its angle, succeedant, and cadent house. Supposing this figure to be stationary, . . . [it is found] that the twelve signs of the Zodiac pass in succession through all these houses. If, at a given moment, the sign Aries is just rising in the East, it occupies the first house of the figure, Taurus the second, and so on, until . . . [it] comes to Libra, which occupies the seventh house, and to Scorpio,
which occupies the eighth. Now ... the seventh house is an angle and the eighth succedent. Of the twelve signs of the Zodiac each planet (except Luna) has two called its mansions, in which it is particularly powerful, or dignified. For example, Saturn's night mansion is Capricorn and his day mansion is Aquarius; Mars's two mansions are Aries and Scorpio, of which the darker is Scorpio. These signs in which the planets are said to be dignified are sometimes referred to as 'house' - as in Chaucer; but in order to distinguish them from the houses of the figure ... [they are called] 'mansions'. Both Mars and Luna have passed - i.e., they are 'cadent' - from the seventh to the eighth house, and so from the sign Libra into Scorpio, the night mansion of Mars. 38

It is not clear whether Chaucer considers the horoscope in *The Man of Law's Tale* a nativity or an election; the science of the latter

much cultivated among the ancient and mediaeval astrologers, exercises itself with nothing more than a careful observation of 'days' and 'hours' and the motion of stars and planets by which times are known to be either lucky or unlucky, as they agree or disagree with the natures of persons desiring success in the business they are about to undertake. 39

A nativity is a certain configuration of stars at a person's birth; this configuration determines the course of his future life. When a child is born, the prognostic success or failure in business, the happiness or unhappiness in life, the things in which the person will be fortunate or unfortunate may be foretold. An election to determine the proper time for beginning a journey is useless "unless the root of the nativity

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is known and unless the figure erected for the election cor-
responds approximately with the horoscope of birth." 40 If
the nativity reveals that the person will be unhappy in mar-
riage, it would be to no avail to look for an election which
might tell the proper time for a marriage, for in such an in-
stance, any time would be the wrong time.

It is reasonable to suppose that the "horoscope in ques-
tion represents the conjunction of stars at Constance's birth." 41
At the beginning of Constance's life, any astrologer could have
foretold that Mars had doomed her marriage or marriages.
Chaucer laments"... the fact that no election was made in
preparation for the journey to the sultan's country, pointing
out that the root of the nativity is known." 42(lines 312-315)

Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,
Namely to folk of heigh condiicioun?
Noght when a roote is of a borne yknowe?
Alas, we been to lewed or to slowe!

"Mediaeval astrologers" 43 are agreed that a nativity in
Aries predestines the person to a precarious life. According
to the stars, Constance's life is characterized by a knowledge
of the mysteries of religion, subtlety of mind, courtly man-
ers and life which will be insecure, great advantages, fol-
lowed by great disadvantages, death, murder, infirmity, fear,
dread, anxiety, human miseries, false rumors, lying reports,

40 Ibid., p. 174.  
41 Ibid., p. 175.  
42 Ibid., p. 176.  
43 Ibid., p. 176.
effusion of blood, "journeys unfortunate and dangerous for the stranger wandering out of his native place," and subjection to death unless miraculously protected. 44

When the horoscope of Constance is interpreted according to the knowledge of "mediaeval astrology," the incidents of her life, as found in Trivet, are fully explained. The addition Chaucer has made to the story is organic, for he notifies the reader at the beginning that every man's death is written in the heavens: (lines 194-196)

For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,
Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede,
The death of every man, withouten drede.

The marriages of Constance are doomed in advance, by the inexorable laws of the stars having power at her birth, to be accompanied by unhappiness; her journeys must be attended by suffering; and the baleful influence of Mars directed against Luna, the hyleg, quite clearly make her death inevitable. 45

Constance escapes her pre-ordained fate only because God intervenes. At the birth of Constance, Aries was rising in the East; this fact supposedly assures the person of "dangers which, in the ordinary course of human events, would prove fatal." Constance "is continually being raised to positions of eminence and honor and as often cast down." 46 Her marriage with the Sultan is heralded with pomp, but when she arrives in the pagan land, the Sultan's mother is already plotting

against her happiness and even her life. Constance, alone, escapes the vengeance of the Sultaness; all other Christians are murdered at a feast supposedly given in Constance's honor. The heroine is, with provisions, set adrift in a rudderless boat. After terrible hardships, she arrives at the shore of England, and this time escapes the decree of the stars. The constable meets her and takes her to his house where his wife Hermengild becomes very fond of her. The decree of the stars is supreme again, for a knight, "having conceived an unholy passion for her and having been repulsed," avenges himself by murdering Hermengild and accusing Constance of the deed. Again, however, the death foretold by the stars is averted by a sign from heaven.

Marriage with King Alla is the new honor belonging to Constance. A son is born to her. "Mars, cadent from an angle, powerful in Scorpio, and ruling in oppression over Luna, proves malignant to this marriage also." Donagild, the jealous mother-in-law, skillfully interchanges the letters to and from King Alla concerning the birth of his son. As a result, both mother and child are set adrift on the sea again. In her course of wanderings, she is beset by hunger, "threatened with the lust of men," and broken with grief. "Her marriages are accompanied not only by her personal sorrows but also by war and the struggles of men in arms, by murders and

47 Ibid. 48 Ibid., p. 188. 49 Ibid.
assassinations, and by the misfortunes of whole peoples." 50
The toll of affliction has been taken by Scorpio and the
eighth house working with Mars.

Chaucer is not "an out-and-out fatalist;" 51 he was
familiar with the astrological thought of his day and could
scarcely have escaped thinking about the problem of God's re-
lation to the influence of the stars upon the lives of men.
What part does God play in the universe if the laws of astrology
are valid and effective? "The violent controversy which raged
over Europe for centuries during the Middle Ages must have
attracted Chaucer's attention to the subject." 52 Chaucer was,
no doubt, acquainted with the arguments on both sides of the
intellectual conflict. Man believed in God; yet he also be-
lieved in astrology. Curry states that Chaucer makes his
position clear: the stars are powerful in directing man's life,
but they are "subject ultimately to the will of God." 53
Chaucer does not slight the tragedy of his source, but he has
"apparently attempted to soften it by insisting upon the power
of Christian faith." 54 Constance was at the point of death
several times, and according to the stars, her death, unless
God intervened, was certain. Chaucer allows the stars to
"afflict her in many ways, in almost any way -- short of death;
she must escape death," 55 for she escapes death in the original

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50 Ibid.  
51 Ibid.  
52 Ibid., p. 189.  
53 Ibid.  
54 Ibid.  
55 Ibid.
version of the story—"which he does not feel inclined to change—and so it may be in real life when God stretches forth His hand among the stars."56

Chaucer not only introduces a horoscope for the purpose of explaining the main incidents of the story, but he also creates other independent passages in order "to prove the supremacy of a Divine Power over astral influence."57 Because the sign of Libra was in the East at the birth of Constance, she was endowed with a religious nature and with an insight into religious mysteries. Constance lives and moves by faith. Chaucer says that it is a miracle that Constance alone escapes death at the hand of the Sultaness, a miracle such as one finds common in the Bible and in the legendary lives of the saints. As she is sent out to sea the first time, Constance submits herself into the hands of Christ; it is His power that directs her ship safely into a port. When she is being tried for murder before the court of Alla, "alone and without a champion, she remembers that two of God's saints were once similarly oppressed and that by His grace they were rescued."58 She, too, "is vindicated by the mysterious appearance of an arm from heaven which smites to death her false accuser."59 The Divine Power preserves her chastity when she is tempted by the steward of the castle. The wicked man falls overboard

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56 Ibid. 57 Ibid. 58 Ibid., p. 190. 59 Ibid.
and drowns. Chaucer says it is not surprising, for God gave courage, strength, and protection to David when he went against Goliath; God also protected Judith when she was led to the couch of Holofernes. The final happiness of Constance is presented as a free gift of Christ. Chaucer "stands with the best mediaeval astrologers who... [recognize] the fact that certain combinations of stars which seem to foretell inevitable death are subject to the intervening and arbitrary hand of God."60 By emphasizing this belief Chaucer "has made reasonable"61 the events in the life of Constance. The reason for every incident is clearly revealed in Chaucer's independent passages. Without "a horoscope showing the influence of the stars and without the recognition of Divine Power, the life of Constance would possess little more unity than Trivet's version."62

The next stylistic quality to be discussed is Chaucer's use of the apostrophe. In lines 803-805, he tells of the dangers which are to confront Constance after Donegild's forged letters are written. Several apostrophic stanzas have a denunciatory tone. The first lines of the stanzas are lines 358, 365, 771, 778, 925:

0 sowdanesse roote of iniquitee
0 Sathan, envious syn thilke day
0 messager, fulfild of dronkenesse
0 fowle lust of luxurie lo thyn ende

60 Ibid., pp. 190-191. 61 Ibid. 62 Ibid.
The stanza beginning with line 421 is devoted to "pious moralizing." 63

O sodeyn wo that evere art successour
To wordly blisse, spreyd with bitterness.

There is a stanza of "admonitory apostrophe" 64 which begins (line 652):

O queenes lyuynge in posteritee.

Another stylistic trait employed by Chaucer is the frequent use of classical and biblical allusions. One stanza (lines 197-203) refers to Hector, Achilles, Pompey, Caesar, Thebes, Hercules, Turnus, and Socrates. Line 288-294 name Troy, Pyrrhus, Ilion, Thebes, Rome, and Hannibal. Lines 400-401 refer to Caesar again and to Lucan. The biblical allusions are less frequent. Five stanzas, lines 470-504, name Daniel, Jonah, the Hebrew people, Saint Mary, Mary the Egyptian; Constance, in lines 639-644, mentions Susannah and the Virgin Mary. Two stanzas, lines 932-945, tell of Goliath, David, Judith, and Holofernes.

According to Block, the classical allusions give the tale "a tone of literary learning and formal elegance and constitute a series of secular decorations;" by contrast, the biblical allusions give the tale "a tone of piety and devoutness and constitute a series of religious decorations." 65

63 Block, op. cit., p. 585. 64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., pp. 585-586.
The result is unity, for the allusions have the common effect of adding a "rich and formal . . . ornamentation." 66

Another stylistic quality belonging to Chaucer's tale is the vivid phraseology which is so lacking in Gower's and Trivet's versions. Trivet says that the sultaness had all of the Christians, the sultan, the admiral, and other converts killed; Chaucer describes the Christians and the sultan as having (line 430) "Been al to hewe and stiked;" he adds that there was not a Syrian convert (line 437) "That he nas al to stowe: er he asterted." While Trivet's British Christian is merely poor and blind, Chaucer's is (line 560) "Croked and cold, with eyn faste yslette." He sees only (lines 552-553) "with thilke eyn of his mynde With which men seen, after that they ben blynde."

The attempt to add local color is another stylistic trait of Chaucer's. He mentions both Mahomet (four times) and the Koran (one time).

"The cumulating effect of the various traits of style . . . is a magnificently rhetorical poem," which is "as emotional and solemn as it is dignified and exalted;" it is "so richly decorated that it suggests a brilliantly colored tapestry." 67 The Man of Law's Tale seems "to be a whole complete within itself, compact in spite of its apparently struggling and unconnected incidents, excellently motivated, possessed

of unusual . . . unity of character, and therefore a piece of artistic workmanship. 68

68 Ibid.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Chaucer was not the first to write about an accused queen, for she appeared first in märchen. In folk-tales, the queen is accused by her father or mother-in-law of infanticide and of animal birth. In romance, she is still the victim of malice and false accusations, but the persecutor is often the stepmother; a co-persecutor may also be present. Sometimes the mother-in-law is replaced by a courtier—villain who accuses the queen of adultery or of high treason. There is a definite evolution of the accused queen from märchen to romance, and Chaucer's Constance is a product of all the accused queens.

Chaucer's Constance is perfect; she is the personification of Christianity itself. Only a genius could depict a character such as the heroine of The Man of Law's Tale. She is seen in prosperity, in adversity, in what she believes to be the hour of her death; her nature is always characteristic of the virtues of humility—faith, hope, and love. The reader sees Constance, the mother, protecting her child; Constance, the wife, rejoicing when she is reunited with her husband; and Constance, the daughter, beset with fears when she is about to leave her parents.
In Trivet's and Gower's stories, Constance is merely the means of illustrating the strength of Christianity and the evils which befall those opposed to it. In *The Man of Law's Tale*, however, the heroine is an individual who walks, talks, and breathes with human passions. It is Chaucer's sense of pity for the helpless Constance that motivates the entire story. Unlike Gower and Trivet, who merely relate the tale of Constance, Chaucer allows his tale of Constance to live; for he displays life with all of the color of reality. His ability to paint a true portrait of his characters elevates his version to the realm of superior reading.

Chaucer's tale of Constance is far superior to the tales written by Gower and Trivet. Chaucer skillfully condenses his sources; yet he does not alter a single point of any importance. He never attempts to explain the miracles; he accepts them frankly. The three hundred fifty lines which are original contain the most beautiful passages in *The Man of Law's Tale*. Greater ease and clearness of phrasing cannot be found in any other piece of medieval literature. Chaucer's images convey to the reader the exact idea that lay in his mind in the exact manner which he conceived and felt it.

Chaucer's dramatic method, his use of satire, and the absence of proverbs and irony add a new height to *The Man of Law's Tale*. Medieval reality finds its place in Chaucer's version when he allows the power of the stars to explain the
nature of the characters as well as their fates. When the horoscope of Constance is interpreted according to medieval astrology, the incidents of her life are fully explained.

Gower and Trivet make no attempt to explain her life through astrology.

Another stylistic trait which enriches Chaucer's version is his use of the apostrophe. He denounces the Sultan's mother, Satan, the messenger, and the "lust of luxury." His apostrophes include "pious moralizing" and admonitions.

Chaucer's version is also characterized by classical and biblical allusions. Among the characters to which he refers are Hector, Achilles, Pompey, Caesar, Socrates, Daniel, Jonah, David, Judith, Goliath, and the Virgin Mary. Among the classical and biblical places to which he refers are Rome and Troy.

Vivid phraseology, which is lacking in Gower's and Trivet's tales, permeates The Man of Law's Tale. While Trivet's British Christian is just peer and blind, Chaucer's is (line 560) "Croked and oold, with eyen faste yshette."

Chaucer's The Man of Law's Tale is a work of art; it is the work of a master craftsman who excels in the creation of tone and atmosphere and in the portrayal of character.
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**Articles**
