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Monstrous East, Hybrid, and Border in Three Constance Romances

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摘要

本論文旨在探討《塔斯國王》、《律師的故事》以及《艾瑪蕾》三部中世紀傳奇中的東方主題，以及自我和他者之間互為表裡的複雜關係。這些故事同屬中世紀晚期的《康斯坦傳奇》，它們既反映了身處動盪世界並與具威脅性的他者接觸所產生的內在不安，同時亦試圖處理混種與疆界等問題。潔若汀・恆在研究中，將傳奇文類詮釋為一種處理機制，意圖發掘及製造文化論述的話語。沿用潔若汀・恆的理論，本文致力於挖掘隱藏在聖徒故事表層之下難以言說的身分焦慮。論文第一章將追溯希臘羅馬時代以降「東方異談」的文學傳統，並爬梳十字軍背景下的歷史及文化脈絡。第二章探討《塔斯國王》故事中對薩拉遜人的刻劃、疆界的建構，以及（去）混種化的過程。第三章著重分析《律師的故事》裡，康斯坦行至「東方」的旅程，以及故事中的多重鏡像關係。第四章細閱《艾瑪蕾》中多層次的「遮蓋（物）」，以及東方與西方間糾結難分的關係。雖然上述故事狀似以宗教力量做為主角在遭遇危機時適時介入有效處方，康斯坦傳奇實際揭露的，卻是面對外在他者以及不再穩固的自我認知時，隨之而來的不安和焦慮。本文意欲深入探討康斯坦傳奇在呈現伊斯蘭他者時（刻意）模糊的刻畫、不同型式的掩蓋、以及戀物及戀物性，以檢視過程中對他者的描繪如何倒轉成為自身問題及西方焦慮的反思。

關鍵字：康斯坦傳奇，疆界，身分，混種，妖異東方，戀物，掩蓋（物）

Abstract

This thesis investigates the Eastern motifs and the complex interplay between self and other in the *King of Tars*, the *Man of Law's Tale*, and *Emaré*. These Constance analogues mirror the internal instability born from a world full of movement and intimate contact with the threatening others on one hand, and struggle to handle the problems concerning hybrids and border on the other hand. Following Geraldine Heng's research by interpreting romance as a coping mechanism that discovers and makes a safe language of cultural discussion, I aim to investigate the ineffable anxiety over identity underlying the seemingly ideal presentment of hagiographical tales. The first chapter traces the literary tradition of the "Marvels of the East" and offers a closer look into the historical and cultural conditions during and after the Crusades era. The second chapter explores the characterization of Saracens, the construction of border, and the process of (de-)hybridization in the *King of Tars*. The third chapter analyzes Constance's journey to "the East" and the multifaceted doubles in the *Man of Law's Tale*. The fourth chapter scrutinizes the layers of "clothing" and the intermingled relationship between the East and the West in the romance of *Emaré*. Though presenting religion as the simple, superficial solutions to the crises encountered by the heroines, the Constance stories reveal in fact the insecurity and unease caused by both external strangers and the no longer stable perception of selfhood. This thesis endeavors to bring critical insight into the space of ambivalence, the various forms of cover, and the fetish and fetishization in the (re-)presentation of the Islamic others in order to examine how the delineations of the others retrospectively comment on the identity problems and the anxiety of the West.

Keywords: Constance Saga, border, identity, hybrid, monstrous East, fetish, cover

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Chapter I: Introduction

Late medieval romances, though commonly identified as the embodiment of Western values and European cultural heritage, carry a wide range of Eastern motifs and reveal Western fantasy of religious, racial and cultural "Otherness." During the late Middle Ages, East/West contacts became more frequent and noticeable through various activities and events, such as trading, pilgrimages, and the Crusades. Romances not only mirror these interactions, drawing materials from the intercultural or interreligious contacts, but reflect, and even reshape, the ways in which contemporary people located themselves in the world. Three borderland romances, the *King of Tars*, the *Man of Law's Tale* and *Emaré*, display both the East/West confrontation and the fantastic monsterization of the East. Belonging to the "Constance Group," they tell the story of a Christian princess who, though forced to leave her original culture and religion for the pagan East, is finally brought back to her own patriarchal system and reunites with the Christian tradition. On one hand, the Constance saga exhibits the collision of Western and Eastern cultures, portraying an Eastern world to be conquered and tamed, however strange and unfamiliar it may appear; on the other hand, it subtly resists existing hybrid and miscegenation, showing both the desire for purity and its very impossibility. As stories told by Western writers, the three tales under consideration disclose how the medieval West looks upon and deals with the East; meanwhile, the perception of Self is also affected and disclosed through the depiction of Other.

The depictions of "the East" in medieval English romances are not original; they can be traced back to a long tradition of the "Marvels of the East" from the Greco-Roman culture. The earliest descriptions were filled with exotic attraction and potential threat. In "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," Rudolf Wittkower explains that in the ancient time, "Eastern marvels" indicated those people or

races living outside of, or at the periphery of, Western civilization, but more particularly, they pointed to the inhabitants of India and Africa. Greco-Roman writers, historians, and compilers like Ktesias, Megasthenes, Pliny and Solinus recorded in their works the prototypes of marvelous races and monsters and drew inspiration from Eastern literary tradition and epic elements. Their statements about the Eastern races remained unchallenged for almost 1,500 years and influenced medieval writers like Isidore and St. Augustine, who passed on precious descriptions but at the same time reconciled them with Christian doctrines (cf. Wittkower 166-69).

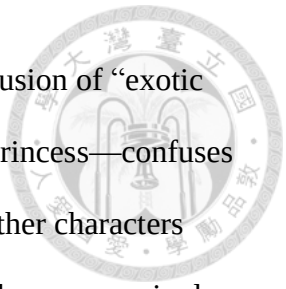
However, the meaning of "the East" after the seventh and eighth centuries had come to refer primarily to the Islamic others, the Saracens, in most cases. In *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, Dorothee Metlitzki notes that the sudden rise and expansion of the Arab Empire brought to the West not only "the comforts and luxuries of Oriental life" (5), but military and religious threats; these threats became even more intimidating after the first Crusade in the eleventh century, when the Turks expanded and seized control of the Near East, making the lives of Eastern Christians more difficult and pilgrimages to Jerusalem more arduous. Wittkower explains that the historical records of the Crusade drew on Pliny and Solinus for the description of monsters, including "griffins, dragons, and the martikhora" (180); the delineation of Saracen enemies also drew materials from conventional portrayals of giants, cynocephali, or other non-human creatures. The written and visual records of the "Eastern marvels" still fascinated Western people, but the depictions of the Islamic East correspond particularly to the negative and monstrous aspect. The terrible massacres done by Muslim armies to Christian inhabitants in the Crusader States, the military failures of the Crusaders, the loss of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other great Christian cities, including Edessa, Acre and Antioch, as well as the ferocity practiced by the Crusaders themselves not only caused terrible damages to Western countries but

shattered the authority of Christianity. Since then, Islam had become a "lasting trauma" for Europe, and a symbol of "terror, devastation, the demonic" (Said 1979: 59). Metlitzki states that "the Middle English Saracen romances . . . are primarily concerned with one basic theme: the war of Christianity against Islam" (160). Under this unstable historical situation, the depiction of Saracens in medieval romances, as a treatment of Eastern problems, thus enabled the Western viewers or readers to interpret, reform, or demonize the cultural and religious others in correspondence with their own values and needs. Saracens were presented both as the embodiment of threats and as the degraded antagonists to be defeated in the end. The victory over Saracens in the tales became a literary compensation for historical losses in battles and the loss of the Holy land, reshaping the public opinion on the religious and cultural others.

Although after the ages of Crusades, East/West conflicts and actual exchanges between traders, travelers and crusaders became much more frequent, the imaginary and marvelous features remained eminent in the characterization of Eastern races. Far from being challenged and questioned, the conventional depiction of the East—which may be seen as imagination under modern lens—had remained popular, and even been enriched by medieval arts, illustrations, encyclopedic compilations, and literary works (cf. Wittkower 176-88). Saracens continued to be portrayed as cynocephali or hybrids that bore obvious animal traits, and their behaviors fit well into the stereotypical antichristian evil. The Eastern characters in the Constance romances correspond to the conventional impression of the Orient, but at the same time the stories present close interplay and even disturbing similarities between the "monstrous" non-Christians and characters representing the Latin West—as shown in the decapitation of Muslim warriors enforced by Christians in the final battle in the *King of Tars*, in the Roman Emperor's slaughter of the Syrians in the *Man of Law's Tale*, and in the incestuous desire of the Christian King in *Emaré*. These depictions perplex the narrative intent and

render the single-track interpretation impossible. Questions arise from the ambiguous delineations in the Constance stories: First, what may be the reason that the doubtful and derogatory delineations of the monstrous East continued to exist or be adapted to the romances composed in an age when the knowledge of the "other" had been gradually improved by more detailed, accurate descriptions and more specific acknowledgement of the Eastern world (Menache 73)? Second, to what extent does the delineation of Saracens and related Eastern images in Constance romances correspond to the Western perception of Otherness? And finally, if the negative portrayals of the cultural and religious others are intentionally utilized to demonize the unfamiliar counterparts or to mark the differences between Christian and non-Christian, why should the romance tales simultaneously obscure the boundaries between self and other and create an intriguing space of ambivalence?

The three Constance romances are chosen as the research focus in this thesis for they conjure up the complicated interplay between the Christian West and heathen East as well as the disquieting identity issue in distinct ways. The *King of Tars* interrogates the efficacy of boundary by realizing the marriage between the Christian Princess and the Muslim Sultan—which only appears as an unfulfilled event in other tales; furthermore, the hybrid child of the interreligious union is characterized as an unrecognizable lump of flesh. The anxiety over the unfamiliar other is crystallized in the terrifying spectacle. The *Man of Law's Tale,* on the other hand, mediates the desire for expansion and the longing for separation through transforming the East/West binary opposition into the Rome-Syria-Northumberland triangle. The tale further complicates the self/other relationship by presenting layers of "doubles," which refer not only to the similar scenarios in Islamic Syria and pagan Northumberland—as discussed by previous studies—but also the intriguing double of Byzantine Rome and Syria and the double of Northumberland and Ancient Rome. *Emaré* also addresses related issues; however, the



story concerns not merely the threats of the Eastern races, but the intrusion of "exotic things." The splendid robe covering up Emaré—the pious Christian princess—confuses Emaré's identity and at the same time influences the ways in which other characters interpret and judge her. While the troubles and chaos in these three tales are seemingly settled through religious forces or steady faith in Christianity, the messages underlying the stories may not be as straightforward as they seem to be.

Instead of assigning the descriptions in the romances to a unilateral purpose, Geraldine Heng indeed recognizes romance as a site in which "interdependent but distinct forces" intersect and act on in a "teleological dynamic" (7). These forces are counter-directional; they illustrate the yearning for conquest and elimination, but in the meanwhile indicate the anxiety over the appalling atrocities practiced by the crusaders and the uneasiness toward Christian military aggression. In *Empire of Magic*, Heng explores the political and cultural functions of romance stories; she explains that romance as a coping mechanism cunningly tackles the social discomforts emerging during the Crusades by its "narrational machinery" (44). This subtle narrative strategy offers ideological supports and functions as a political and social rescue in which "cultural fantasy was instantiated in order that the indiscussible, what is unthinkable and unsayable by other means, might surface into discussion" (2). Rather than a means of concealment or repression, romance is deployed to disclose the undesirable ideas, concepts, and experiences in an indirect or circumlocutory way. In other words, it is driven by an impulse to discover (and to make) "a safe harbor out of dangerous waters, in order that a *safe* language of cultural discussion accrues" (3). Dealing frequently with the themes of encounters, adventures and cultural collisions, romance not only unfolds the power relationship between different political entities and re-articulates authority over the external foes, but also mediates and witnesses different forces within a community. While "narrational machinery" indicates a leading force underlying the

stories, aiming to (re)shape and (re)interpret certain events or groups of people, it cannot be identified as a unitary force, and its effects are not unidirectional either. Heng's research carries out more multidirectional possibilities for understanding the East-West relation portrayed in the Constance romances as intricate and intermingled.

During the ages of Crusades, social discomforts were largely concerned with identity problems. Military frustrations and the loss of Holy Land had critical impact on the Western society, but what appeared as astonishing as the external enemies are the violence, atrocities, and various horrible behaviors practiced by the Christian parties. In *Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*, Jonathan Riley-Smith mentions that "[i]n many ways the Crusades deserve their poor reputation. Like all religious wars, they were marked by indiscipline and atrocities" (2). The military expeditions were open to both sinners and saints, and there was neither proper system for screening volunteers nor strict standards or restrictions by which to restrain the participants. More appalling than the bloody acts during the battles was the crusader cannibalism of the Muslim enemy, which happened during the First Crusade at Ma' arra or Antioch because of famine (cf. Heng 23-25). The infamous acts related to the crusading project ashamed the Christian society and even resulted in a state of self-denial; what occurred during the crusading movement was regarded as "an aberration, a departure from the norm in Christian history" (Riley-Smith 4). Christians were not only associated with the terrifying Muslim others in terms of the improper acts, but also by means of the intimate contacts with heathens at Eastern territories or borderlands; the contacts, interactions and co-existence troubled the Western world since the "purity" of the West was infringed due to cultural fusion and miscegenation; furthermore, there were also cases in which some Christians renounced their religion and embraced Mohammed due to the lack of justice during the Crusades (Menache 76). Medieval romances disclose the attempt to consolidate the identity of self and separate self from other, but at the same time mirror and struggle with the

intermingled relationship and similarities between Christians and Muslims.

Concerning the contradictive forces and the unease caused by East/West relationship, this thesis attempts to investigate the chosen romances by focusing on the issues of border, hybrid, and identity. Michelle R. Warren brings out the point of convergence between medieval romance and postcolonialism by emphasizing their joint concerns with the problem of representation, the wrestling of powers, the vacillation of border, and the uncertainty of identity. Warren states that postcolonial studies offer a perspective that sets a "kaleidoscope of contentious fragments," many of which "share anxieties about coercive cultural encounters; their motions deconstruct conventional narratives about relationship between centers of power and their peripheries" (116). The discussion about power struggles and narrative strategies can be traced back to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which sheds light on the representation of the East in Western tales. Said states that Orientalism, though seemingly a way of illuminating the Orient for Western readers, is ultimately a "Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (1979: 3). This statement comments more on the force, or the purpose, underlying the tale than on the superficial characterizations. Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha has investigated the strategies of forces, the ongoing process of negotiation, and the "traumatic ambivalence" and uncertainty emerging at the moment of cultural intersection (1-15). Power struggle and the reinscription of the "cultural relations between the spheres of social antagonism" (Bhabha 175) are the prime concern not only in the post-colonial era, but also in the Constance romances, which were composed after the crusade projects. Although medieval romances were set in the pre-colonial ages, the political contexts in medieval times in fact resembled the complicated international relations in the modern world: imperial discourses were cunningly manipulated in the historical making, forces of domination and resistance intersected, the Western perception of a "pure" self was challenged and destabilized, and hybrids emerged from

the in-between spaces. Due to the correspondences between modern situations and medieval contexts, postcolonial theories may provide a deeper insight into the "paradox, ambivalence, and irony" in relation to the representation in medieval romances (Warren 116). This thesis will appropriate the central concepts in postcolonial studies to penetrate the relationship between the East and West presented through the contacts and conflicts between the Christian protagonists and Islamic antagonists in the tales.

In addition to postcolonialism, this thesis also borrows ideas from psychoanalytic studies such as Oedipus structure, identity formation and fetishism. Sigmund Freud introduces the Oedipus structure in his psychoanalytical theory. He considers a son's identification with his father and his detachment from his mother the necessary process through which identity formation is accomplished. Subsequently, Lacan's theory emphasizes more on the "normative, structuring function of the [Oedipus] complex" and the importance of the symbolic father's necessary intervention, which helps structure the subject's symbolic universe (Fink 55). In the romance tales, the father figure that intervenes in the mother-son relationship to enforce symbolic order refers to not only the male characters but also the Christian God as the symbolic father; this depiction foregrounds the Christian patriarchal identity and its triumph over the often feminized East.

However, in his excellent work, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen investigates the perplexing role of "intimate strangers" that cannot be simply categorized into perverse other in romance tales. Cohen elucidates the intriguing relationship between self and other by referring to "a phenomenon that Lacanian psychoanalysis labels *extimite*, 'external intimacy' or 'intimate alterity'" (1999: xii). He appropriates this idea to examine the connection between the imagination of monstrous races and the construction of human and argues that while the bodies of monsters—particularly giants—are "excluded from the circle of the social,"

they paradoxically "incorporate the secret interior of 'civilized' identity" (1999: xv). If monsters signify the excess, the externality, and the excluded beings representing what we are not, they simultaneously become the boundary that helps define what we are. The borderline between self and other is not always stable, and the most extraneous stranger in romance tales may turn out paradoxically to lie in the center of self construction.

Apart from the obscured border between self and other, there are various "covers" in the Constance romances—including skins and clothes—that are in need of exploration. In "Fetishism," Freud defines fetish as a substitute for something crucial to identity and self-cognition; fetish is instituted through a process during which "the subject's interest comes to a halt half-way. . . . [I]t is as though the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one is retained as a fetish" (1975: 155). The idea of fetishism will be appropriated to explain two things in the thesis: first, the ambivalence revealed through the uses of covers—either physical or metaphorical, and second, the covers' function in re-patterning the Western perception. Freud explains that both "disavowal" and "acknowledgment"—though mixed in unequal proportions in different cases—find their ways into the construction of fetish itself (1975: 156-57). Likewise, the covers, which prevent the viewers from seeing the traumatic sights and retell the stories in a less distressing way, proclaim both disavowal and acknowledgment of the anxieties at the same time. These two concepts will carry forward the discussions over the significance of covers, the deliberate design of "two Easts" in displacement of the East/West contact, the cultural fantasy of Prester John, and the exotic cloth/robe in *Emaré*.

In addressing the Eastern motifs in Constance romances, I wish to trace the literary tradition of the "Marvels of the East," investigate the (re-)presentation of the Islamic others, and examine how the delineations of the other retrospectively comment on the

identity problems and the anxiety of the West. I will also bring into focus the pervading ambivalence in the Constance romances that subverts the power relation between Christian protagonists and Muslim antagonists. The space of ambivalence renders possible the coexistence of hybrid and dehybridization in the *King of Tars*, the inner split and doubles in the *Man of Law's Tale*, and the layers of clothing and unclothing in *Emaré*. In each chapter, I will begin an introduction of the depictions of the East and related Eastern images, then analyze the functions and effects of these depictions, and finally examine the Eastern cover as well as the hidden Western voice. In addition to textual analysis, the theoretical frameworks will offer additional insight into the wrestling forces and identity struggles in the romance tales.

Chapter II: (Re-)Viewing the East: Identity and De-hybridization in the *King of Tars*

The *King of Tars* is an early-fourteenth-century medieval English romance which amplifies the interreligious, intercultural and interracial confrontations. Set in the near East, where military conflicts, inter-cultural exchanges and political wrestling between Christian and Muslim societies took place, the *King of Tars* tells a borderland chivalric story and portrays the encounter of two cultures and races. The work was composed after the fall of Acre in 1291, a catastrophic crusade failure in defending Christian territories in the Holy Land; while it is possible to interpret the battles and massacres in the tale as mirroring the terrifying bloodshed in the era of crusades, the tale does not appear as a mere reflection. Instead, its way of portraying the Muslim others, its delineation of the Christian/Muslim relationship, and its presentation of the final Christian triumph disclose an effort in shaping the perception of non-Christian others and a negotiation of Christian identity.

The poem begins with the Sultan of Damascus's request for marrying the daughter of the Christian King of Tars. Thirty thousand Christian soldiers are killed due to the King's refusal. Witnessing this dreadful situation, the virtuous princess pleads her father to permit the match. She feigns conversion to the Saracen faith and soon bears the Sultan a child, which appears as a monstrous and formless creature, merely a lump of flesh. The Sultan brings the child to his temple and prays to his gods, but his religion fails to restore it back to normal human being. A Christian priest is then summoned by the princess to christen the child, and the baptism instantly transforms the lump of flesh into a beautiful male infant. The Saracen Sultan also has himself christened, and his black skin miraculously turns white. In the end, the Sultan of Damascus requires all his people to accept Christian baptism, and he leagues together with the King of Tars and

eventually beheads all the Saracen warriors who refuse the conversion.

The main themes in the story, namely the battles between the Tartars[1] and the Damascenes, the intercultural marriage, and the alliances between different social groups, can be traced back to various chronicles and records during the late thirteenth century crusades.[2] Lisa Lampert notes that the plot is furnished in part by real historical accounts and folklore that Ghazzan, the king of Tartars, married an Armenian princess in the late thirteenth century and allied with the Armenian Christians against other Saracens and Egyptians (406). Lillian Herlands Hornstein, however, questioned the fact of their marriage and denied Ghazzan's Christian identity, though she recognizes the possibility of the interaction and alliance between the Armenians and the Tartars under certain historical conditions (411-412). Following the previous investigation, Siobhain Bly Calkin explicitly recounts the historical and literary contexts in her *Saracens and the Making of English Identity* and refers to intense military conflicts between the Christian and the Muslims in the late thirteenth century. She describes that "in 1299, a battle occurred between Muslim Egyptians, and Ghazzan (Abaga's grandson) and his Christian allies from Armenia and Georgia after which, eventually, Damascus was taken" (2005: 104). Despite the military triumph over the Damascenes and Egyptians, what cannot be ignored is the fall of Acre in 1291, which inflicted heavy loss on the

[1] Three manuscripts, namely the Auchinleck, Vernon and Simeon texts, are found in academic research, and I base my paper mainly on the Auchinleck manuscript, which is influential, well-known, and probably the most frequently-discussed. In *The King of Tars: Ed. from the Auchinleck MS, Advocates 19.2.1*, Judith Perryman points out that "Tars" is a confusing name in the poem, because there are actually several possible interpretations of the word. By using the name "Tars," the poet may have meant "Tartars," or "the land of the Tartars," an interpretation most frequently adopted by critics. However, it can also mean Tarsus in Armenia, or the mythical kingdom of Tharsia, located by Mandeville roughly in present-day Turkestan (Perryman 47). To specify the scope of my discussion, this paper will adopt mainly the first interpretation, reading the "Tars" as "Tartars."

[2] In *The King of Tars: Ed. from the Auchinleck MS, Advocates 19.2.1*, Perryman refers to six chronicle analogues: The record for the year 1299 in the *Flores Historiarum*, Villani's *Istorie Fiorentine*, Rishanger's Anglo-Latin *Chronica*, the letter of 1300-7 to Jayme II of Aragon, the *Annales Sancti Rudberti Salisburgenses*, and finally Ottokar's *Osterreichische Reimchronik*, all of which mention the basic story similar to *The King of Tars.*

Latin West and must have had its influence on the late medieval Christendom (Whitaker 170). The city of Acre was captured by the Crusaders in the Third Crusade, which ended in 1192, and became the capital for the new kingdom after the collapse of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187 (France 16). When Acre fell, the Crusader armies lost their last major stronghold to the Muslims and were terribly frustrated by the bloody massacre during the final assault. Composed after these religious and military events, the *King of Tars* shows both the ideological, religious and military tensions between Christians and Muslims and discloses the yearning for re-establishing the superiority of the Latin West. As Cord J. Whitaker has argued, the sultan in the King of Tars "recalls Christendom's fears of eastern dominance while his conversion registers Christian longing for Muslim conversion" (170).

In addition to being a reflection on the hostility towards Islam in the thirteenth-century history, the *King of Tars* also uncovers the medieval attachment to the idea of purity and the anxiety over hybrid. In her summary of the analogues to the *King of Tars*, Hornstein groups the outcome of the abnormal birth into three categories: the hairy child, the half-and-half child, and the child born a formless lump (434). Depicting the hybrid child as a monstrous creature not only offers a space for divine intervention, but manifests the apprehension over mixed marriages and miscegenation, especially those happening during the crusades and East/West contacts in medieval period. To support this idea, I would like to refer to the statement of Katie L. Walter, who associates the problem of recognition and determinacy with the problem of discourse by reading the formless child as "the romance's failure to articulate and make sense of an encounter with difference" (121). A hybrid creature testifying the interreligious union, the infant visualizes the anxiety through its formlessness, which challenges the system of categorization. John M. Ganim notes that "The idea of the Middle Ages as a pure Europe (or England or France or Germany) both rests on and

reacts to an uncomfortable sense of instability about origins, about what the West is and from where it came" (125). This "uncomfortable sense of instability" and the uncertainty of self-identification correlates to the delineation of the unrecognizable, formless flesh and the border anxiety it represents. Michael Uebel explains that "[s]uch border anxiety in crusade literature often takes the form of an obsession with preserving the purity and fixity of origins" (1996: 269). The necessity of "purifying" the infant and his father thus demonstrates this "obsession" and the effort to reinforce the categorization that ensures social stability and defines self and other, the civic and barbaric, the West and the East.

Previous scholars have fierce debates over the central messages in the *King of Tars*, and in various literary analyses, the religious ideology is placed in the center of the discussion, interwoven with the paternal function it indicates. Judith Perryman suggests that "The theme of the poem is the transforming power of faith" (58). In the story, the Christian princess successfully preserves her spiritual virtues because of her resolute faith in God; moreover, the turmoil caused by the mixed marriage and the birth of a monstrous child is settled by two miraculous conversion scenes and the physical transformation of the child and his father. Jane Gilbert further reads the religious motif together with the text's ideological contention by stating that "non-Christians [presented in the *King of Tars*] are incapable of exercising the paternal function" (2004: 110). She interprets the conversion as the manifestation of Christian spirit and specifies the religious superiority underlying the transformative miracle, which demonstrates that symbolic paternity, or the "Name-of-the-Father" theorized by Lacan, can only function within Christianity. The discussion between Christian faith and its ideological messages also appears in the works of Lynn Tarte Ramey and Walter. With the seemingly uncomplicated and straightforward display of religious force, no wonder Perryman asserts that the *King of Tars* is a "pedestrian work with no complexity of thought,

perceptive imagination, or subtlety of expression" (58).

Intriguingly, the religious conversion goes along with the physical transformation and the controversial theme of color and race, which complicates the whole plot. The entangled relationship between religion and race makes Perryman's reading of the text as a work with no complexity rather unpersuasive. The father's and his son's physical transformations after baptism indicate that the conversion seems to change not only their religious belonging, but racial identity. The question does not rest merely on the juxtaposition of religion and body; Thomas Hahn and Lampert remind that medieval understanding of "identity and race" should be carefully considered with more significant factors, such as religion, culture, language, custom and gender under contemporary space and time (cf. Hahn 4-7 and Lampert 408-10). In accordance with this idea, Geraldine Heng also regards the monstrosity of flesh and the biological essences as something indivisible from religion and culture. However, though the story seemingly solves the interracial conflicts through religious force, the outcome actually appears to be quite ambiguous and problematic. If religion is really the decisive factor that differentiates self from other, then why should the text place so much emphasis on the physical change (or why is it even necessary)? Moreover, the "ferocious nature" of the Sultan is not modified after the conversion; he slaughters Christian knights before baptism and beheads Muslim warriors after being converted into a Christian king. The conversion does not succeed in taming his violence, nor does it make him a more temperate man. This depiction implies that baptism is only able to change the external form of the person that receives baptism, but incapable of making him internally transformed. Furthermore, if the intrinsic essence cannot be changed via religion, then what kind of role does the conversion play in terms of the characters' identity formation? Is the boundary between self and other re-established in the story? Or is it blurred in the end? What is revealed or concealed through the depiction of the physical change? All of

these questions can be covered under the central problem about how the Eastern others are depicted in the story, and what are the purposes and influences of this depiction.

In *Empire of Magic*, Heng coins the term "narrational machinery" to explain how medieval romance functions as political and social rescue and offers ideological support (44). She argues that as a combination between history and fantasy, "romance may offer a ready and—equally important—safe language of cultural discussion, and cultural transformation, in the service of crisis and urgent contingency" (18). Romance text not only mirrors its contemporary context and historical unease, but subtly reshapes and repatterns the uncomfortable, or rather unbearable experience. Adopting Heng's idea, this chapter endeavors to investigate Western perception of the East, to reveal how the romance helps solve the identity crisis by re-establishing the overly-simplified West/East, white/black binary, to unmask how the physical cover, that is, the skin, functions as a religious and ideological support, and to explore how the process of de-hybridization—an attempt to re-pattern the existence of mixed marriage and hybrid and a cushion for the effect of the breakdown of border—works and finally fails. I would like to argue that the text does help tackle the discomfort resulting from East/West conflicts, but the method is by no means the use of religion, but the historical displacement and the cover of skin. Scholars have tried to investigate the East/West, Christian/Saracen, white/black oppositions presented in the text, and explore how the cultural and social components of identity, self-consciousness and otherness are represented and challenged. Based on previous works and the postcolonial framework adopted by Heng, Hahn and Lampert, I would also like to explore the hidden messages in the story by applying Freud's idea of fetishism. The second half of this chapter argues that the change of skin colour does not work merely as the manifestation of religious force, but functions as the Western fetish that prevents the real traumatic memory to be disclosed publicly.

The Constructed Border and Western Depiction of Others

The *King of Tars* highlights the differences between the West and the East and establishes religious and cultural boundary from the very early stage. Two distinct groups of people are specified in the beginning of the story: the Christian Tartars and the Saracen Damascenes. The Tartars embody everything that can be identified with the Western tradition: their skins are white, they are pious Christian knights, and they seem to follow the medieval feudal system and social codes; the Damascenes, on the other hand, represent qualities opposite to those of the Tartars: their skins are black, they are heathen soldiers whose characteristics recall the savageness of animals, and their existence manifests excessive desire and ferocity. These apparent contrasts highlight the Christian-Saracen border both militarily and metaphorically. Though both the Tartars and the Damascenes are people from Central Asia, that is, the East according to the medieval understanding, the Tartars actually embody everything that Western Christian readers could identify with. Thus, what is shown by their dramatic interplay is actually the complicated tension between the Latin West and "the Rest," and their conflicts also draw the readers' attention to the historical context of the Crusades, indicating the turbulent religious, cultural and military border in the late Middle Ages. As Calkin has noted, the text "contain[s] neither English characters nor settings," but it actually involves the issues of cultural intermingling and identity struggle faced by the fourteenth-century English contemporaries (2005: 99). In her discussion of the identity of the princess of Tars, Heng also states that "this Oriental princess is *really* an authentic European Christian princess, like the romance Constance, and not an Oriental Christian princess" (231). Despite the nominal Eastern setting, the tale actually consolidates the East-West border in the very beginning, and the hostility against the non-Christian other is revealed through the description of the Saracen Sultan.

In the first part of the story, the narrator reveals the Sultan's barbarous personal traits and bestial desire by delineating his unreasonable rudeness and arrogance during his marriage proposal. Upon hearing that the princess is "As white as feþer of swan" ("as white as the feather of swan" [12]) and "Non feirer woman miȝt ben" ("no woman can be fairer than her" [11]),[3] the Sultan's heart bursts into fire; he then threatens the King of Tars that he would win the princess in battles if the proposal is rejected. Relenting the deaths of numerous Christian soldiers in wars, the princess eventually involuntarily consents to the union. Compared to her fairness, whiteness, and kind-heartedness, the Sultan's desire and his way of obtaining her seem brutal and monstrous. His desire signifies the Eastern aggression, cruelty, and the lack of order, which is often considered as the complete opposite of Western civilization and social system. These few lines describing the initial contact between the two groups clearly express the stereotypical portrayal or typical caricature of the East. Edward Said describes in *Orientalism* that "the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as career) despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orient" (1979: 5). In the *King of Tars*, the narrator does not show how the "real Orient" looks like, but the Western understanding of the Orient which appears to be consistent with the Westerners' ideological interests.

The Sultan's bestial traits are vividly described in several scenes. First of all, when the herald brings back the king of Tars's rejection of the marriage proposal, it is described that:

[3] In this paper, I refer mainly to Judith Perryman's edition, *The King of Tars: Ed. from the Auchinleck MS, Advocates 19.2.1* published in 1980. The translation of *The King of Tars* is my own, but I also base some of my translation and interpretation of terms on "*The King of Tars*: A New Edition" edited and annotated by John H. Chandler in his Ph. D. dissertation published in 2011.

When þe soudan þis wordes herd,

Also a wilde bore he ferd;

His robe he rent adoun;

His here he rent of heued & berd,

He schuld venge him wiþ his swerd,

He swore bi seyn Mahoun.

Þe table so heteliche he smot,

It fel into þe flore fot-hot,

& loked as a lyoun. (97-105)

[When the sultan heard these words, he appeared also like a wild boar; he tore his robe apart and plucked his hair and beard off, swearing an oath by Saint Mohammed that he would avenge himself with his sword. He looked like a lion, and struck the table so violently that it immediately fell into pieces.]

The Sultan's image is immediately associated with hybrid of human and non-human: he rages like a "wild boar" and violently strikes the table like a "lion." In the next three lines, the narrator goes further to describe that the furious Sultan smites whoever he meets, no matter they are servants, squires, clerks or nobles (106-8). This paragraph reveals the Sultan's animalistic nature, a creature lacking reason and temperance. Anna Czarnowus suggests that the wild boar and lion both represent the senselessness, brutal violence and the untamed fierceness (80), which corresponds to the aggressive and untamable Muslim others captured in various medieval texts.

The author does not attribute bestial characteristics only to the Sultan, but to the whole Muslim group, that is, the Damascenes in this tale. The night when the princess first comes to the Sultan's court, she has a dream in which she is chased by a hundred black hounds: "& als sche fel on slepe þore / Her þouȝt þer stode hir before / An hundred houndes blake, / & bark on hir, lasse & more" ("And as she fell asleep, it

seemed to her that a hundred black hounds barked at her all together" [421-24]). Czarnowus interprets the hounds as emblems of the infidel, which equate the Muslims in this tale (75-76). Though not until the Sultan's conversion scene from line 928 does the narrator explicitly state that the Sultan's skin is black, the princess's dream has already implied his dark complexion. The black hounds appearing in her dream, like the Muslims in the battle fighting against Christians, threaten to bite her, take her away, and cause damage to her spiritual and physical integrity. The canine metaphor presented here also appears frequently in other medieval texts, especially when referring to something or someone that crosses normal boundary, stepping into the space of excess and ambiguity to the extent that threatens the understanding of identity and humanity. As Czarnowus explains, "the dog-heads, highly hybrid creatures, visualize incomplete humanity: human bodies without sufficient reason" (76). This long-lasting tradition of transforming Saracens or Muslims into half-dog half-human cynocephali caricatures or depicting them as either monsters or beasts is common in medieval Western representation. In *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, John Block Friedman notes that:

> There was a fairly widespread connection of Saracens and Cynocephali ["dog-heads"] in the Middle Ages,[4] in both East and West, as the Moslems were often described by Christians as a race of dogs, an epithet ultimately deriving from Western biographies of Mahomet, which pictured him as a Christian heretic. (67)

In addition to this description, Jesus Montano also emphasizes that "As a result of more

[4] The depiction of Saracens as dogs or dog-head figure is extremely popular in the medieval period, especially after the thirteenth century. For instance, in the early thirteenth-century chanson de geste *Les Enfances Vivien* or in the fourteenth-century English romance *Sir Gowther*, the writers explicitly associate Saracen pagans as "dogs" or "hounds" which threaten the virtuous Christian characters. Friedman also explains that "The dog-headed Saracen by the end of the Middle Ages was sufficiently popular as an image to appear in a niello world map dating from 1430" (67).

than three centuries of crusades, the connection between the race of dogs and the Saracen became a widespread belief" (124). Because of the popularity of this stock information, the appearance of the Saracen hounds evokes a general feeling of hostility for medieval Western readers.

Moreover, the name of the Saracen saint, "Mahoun," which is a variant of "Mahound" in medieval spelling, also contains the word "hound," reinforcing the dog-like impression of the Saracen groups.Whitaker explains that the black hounds' image appearing in the princess's dream "is a pun on the name Mahounde, a misnomer for Muhammad popular in medieval Christendom that derogatorily combined the name Mahoun, for Muhammad, with the oft-used epithet for Muslims, 'hounde'" (183). This insinuation suggests that the princess is not only threatened by the barbaric heathens, but their religion as well. Hence, the way in which she reacts to the attack is to keep her God in mind. It is stated: "Ac þurth Ihesus Cristes passioun / Sche was ysaued þore" ("But through Jesus Christ's passion, she was kept save there" [443-44]). The story then proceeds to describing that although a black hound keeps following her and almost draws her away, "þurth miȝt of Ihesu, heuen king / Spac to hir in manhede / In white cloþes, als a kniȝt" ("Through the might of Jesus, king of heaven, it was turned to a knight in white clothes and spoke to her in manly demeanor" [449-51]). The transformation of the black hound reveals great ambiguity. Though some critics, for instance, Lampert, presume that the knight is in fact Christ himself (qtd. in Whitaker 184-85), it may also stand for the Princess of Tars's newly wedded Muslim spouse (Czarnowus 77). In this sense, the scenario becomes not only an exemplar of Christian force, but a foreshadowing of the later part of the story, in which the Sultan, who draws the princess into the pagan world and forces her to follow his own religion in the beginning, will be transformed into a knight in white through Christian baptism, reinforcing the fact that the battle is not just between the two groups of people, but their

religion as well. As Whitaker asserts, the princess's putting all her thought on Christ seems to "firm up the association between the hounds, blackness, and Saracenness in opposition to white Christian identity" (184).

The Challenged Binary Opposition and the Space of Ambivalence

The portrayal of the Saracens, however, indicates more significant messages than simply consolidating the binary opposition between Christians and pagans. Their existence potentially threatens the purity of human identity by means of embodying the collapse of border and the confusion of categorization. In the first place, the term "border" could be understood as geographical or political boundaries, which separate different nations, cultural communities or regions with different socio-economic systems, as discussed by researchers on complex international borders after the 1990s.[5] Yet, border can not only refer to literal boundary between nations, but imaginary boundary of ideas, concepts, or cognitions. In this sense, the "imaginative crossings at the 'beyond'" indicates the confusion of previous understanding as well as the departure from older ideas, thereby "fall[ing] foul of the binary logic of same/different, inside/outside, citizen/stranger," as John McLeod stated (218). A linear marker of difference, "border" is therefore an interchangeable term or a synonymy of boundary or borderline, which separates one space, concept, or category from another; when discussing the idea of border in this thesis, what is emphasized is in fact the transitory, the act of crossing beyond, the in-between space, the undefined. The concept of crossing obscures previous boundary and consequently creates a space of ambivalence where hybrids emerge. This brings forth another meaning of "border," which indicates not so

[5] The idea mentioned here mainly comes from postcolonial theories put forward by Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and other scholars. I also consulted *Living (with) Borders: Identity Discourses on East-West Borders in Europe* edited by Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, which focuses on the complex cultural identities, self understandings and memories of people living at the borderlands, where existing national borders had been redefined after dramatic social or political upheaval.

much the linear marker of difference as an "in-between" space. When discussing the negotiation of identity at the borders, Bhabha argues:

> These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innov/ative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (1-2)

Border visualizes a space where hybrids exist and contesting forces converge—a "beyond" that demonstrates "neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past," but "a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha 1). The emphasis on the transitory sense actually corresponds to the first definition of border. Mcleod explains that "[b]orders are important thresholds, full of contradiction and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places. They are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier" (217). Being at the border simultaneously indicates the inefficacy of boundary or borderline, which not only challenges the existing system of separation but results in the confusion of identity.

Embodying the idea of "crossing beyond border," the Saracens appearing as dog-like men represent the barbarity of non-Christians as well as the wonder of hybrid, the creature that lingers over the boundary lines and effaces the meaning of categorization. Hybrid refers to not only the creature of miscegenation, but beings at the in-between space or beings crossing beyond boundaries. Uebel suggests:

> The [Islam] problem was essentially one concerning the integrity and preservation of apparently inviolable boundaries. . . . Like the monstrous race of Cynocephali (dog-headed men) with whom they were often identified, Saracens and their religion symbolized the blurring of ideal boundaries, such

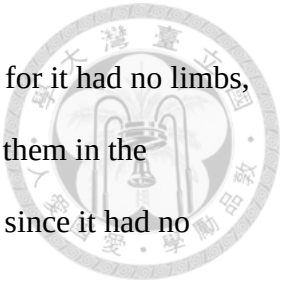
as those separating rational man from animal or civilized man from barbarian. (1996: 268)

In addition to Uebel's statement, Cohen also claims in "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" that the monster's hybrid body is disturbing because "their externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration . . . [they are] a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (1996: 6).[6] In the story, the image of the Sultan of Damacus is always unstable; he is basically a human, while he also bears the characteristics of animal and monster. This anxiety over the disturbing existence which unmakes the boundaries and dissolves the border between other and sameness is introduced through the connection between Saracen and hounds, but it reappears in a more frightening way in the birth of the hybrid child.

The birth of the child, who is the result of the mixed marriage, is extremely shocking. The narrator states that:

& when þe child was ybore
Wel sori wimen were þerfore,
For lim no hadde it non.
Bot as a rond of flesche yschore
In chaumber it lay hem bifore
Wiþouten blod & bon.
For sorwe þe leuedi wald dye
For it hadde noiþer nose no eye,
Bot lay ded as þe ston. (577-85)

[6] In "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," Cohen elaborates on the traits of monster presented in tales, literatures, movies and other cultural productions, and he also offers seven theses toward "understanding cultures through the monsters they bear" (1996: 4). Cohen argues that the monster's body is a cultural body, the monster always escapes, the monster is the harbinger of category crisis, the monster dwells at the gates of difference, the monster polices the borders of the possible, the fear of the monster is really a kind of desire, and finally, the monster stands at the threshold of becoming.



> [And when the child was born, the women were very sorry, for it had no limbs, but as a lump of flesh without blood and bone, lying before them in the chamber. The lady was so sorrowful that she wanted to die, since it had no nose and eye, but lay dead as the stone.]

There is no explicit proof that the hybrid child is a human being. It has no limb, blood, bone, nose and eye, appearing as merely "a lump of flesh" which "lay dead as the stone." The narrator refers to it as something unrecognizable, and its existence challenges the possibility of categorization and human integrity. The child's excessively fleshy appearance is associated with the fear of the incomprehensibility and the failure of categorization. Walter states that "[o]pen to the world, the skin is 'readable'; it is that which inscribes the interior on the exterior and manifests the self. . . . [i]f skin is legendary, then flesh—undifferentiated, closed in on itself—breaks discourse down" (119-120). However, the child is described as "fleshy" without any recognizable skin. Portraying the hybrid child as a flesh thus indicates the Westerners' fear of the ambiguous hybrid which cannot be applied to the white/black, Occidental/Oriental binaries. Like its biological father, the child itself is a hybrid of Christian and heathen, purity and filthiness, and senses and chaos.

The organs it lacks also bear certain meanings. The lack of eye points out the problem of representation and recognition; it is not capable of identifying and differentiating things, and it cannot be identified and differentiated as well. Likewise, its inability to produce sounds points to the issue of "discourse" mentioned by Walter, symbolizing that it is incapable of articulating and being articulated. In addition, its want of "blood" stands for its lifelessness, which questions how a creature can be called human if no sign of life is detected.

The question of miscegenation or mixed-race offspring is also read with several "seed theories" known in the medieval period. Aristotle's one-seed theory may be the

one that prevails among scholars. It regards mother as the supplier of flesh which constitutes the material aspect, and father as the sower of seeds and the supplier of soul that determines the spiritual quality of the offspring (Ramey 2). Endorsing this idea, Gilbert analyzes the lump-child scenario through discussing the relation between the child's monstrosity and its parents. Since the child is composed of excessive flesh but lack of spirit and order, Gilbert asserts that "there is simply no paternal input at all" (2004: 106), and attributes the child's physical imperfection to "its father's spiritual irregularity and his semi-bestiality" (2004: 104-105). She also demonstrates that its deformity is the result of "the Sultan's inability to impose the symbolic separation of the human from the natural domain" (2004: 108). In other words, the child's "formlessness" testifies the Sultan's failure in imposing symbolic order and even hints at his failure in being the "father."

The Christian Miracle and the Intervention of the Name-of-the-Father

The identity threats resulting from the Saracen hounds and from the miscegenation are both resolved by the Christian intervention. In the scenario of the princess's being chased by the Saracen hounds in her dream, it is through Jesus Christ's passion that she is saved (436-441). Her steady faith in God protects her from being devoured by the black hounds and preserves her purity and integrity; this scenario also testifies the Christian forces over the monstrous races. The switch of focus from the black hounds' attack to the divine intervention echoes the miraculous transformation in later conversion scenes.

The conversion scene of the lump of flesh brings the story to its first climax. Not until the baptism can the chaotic flesh be restored back to proper order; after the Christian conversion, the flesh becomes a beautiful human boy. Gilbert concludes that the *King of Tars* "thus identifies the Christian God as the sole and all-powerful

guarantor of paternity" (2000: 335). She combines the biological quality with the religious power in her explanation, but I would like to go further by suggesting that the conversion not only registers Christianity as the only symbol of civilization and paternity, but metaphorically feminizes the Saracen East. If, according to Gilbert and Ramey, the child is "fatherless" before the Christian God intervenes as the "Name-of-the-Father," the Sultan's role as a "masculine character" is completely denied. The lump is presented as "excessively fleshy" because he is made by two "feminine" characters. When it was christened "It hadde liif & lim & fas / & crid wiþ gret deray. / & hadde hide & flesche & fel" ("It had life and limb and face and cried with great commotion, and it also had skin and flesh and feel" [776-78]). The life, limb, and face bestowed upon it at the moment of its conversion enable the readers to make sense of it, and its "crying" also demonstrates its ability to have voice. Ironically, though the story is set in the Eastern background, this scenario indeed shows the silence and impotence of the East presented in the Western discourse.

The Sultan's conversion right after the baptism of the child reveals both the change of religious thought and the transformation of skin. In the Sultan's baptism scene, "Þe Christen prest hiȝt Cleophas; / He cleped þe soudan of Damas / After his owhen name. / His hide, þat blac & loþely was, / Al white bicom, þurch Godes gras, / & clere wiþouten blame" ("The Christian priest called Cleophas named the Sultan of Damacus after his own name. His skin, which was formerly black and loathly, was turned all white and became completely clear through God's grace" [925-30]). Though Lampert warns that racial and color issues in the *King of Tars* cannot be simply equalized with modern concept of race or be labelled as "racist systems of apartheid or anti-Semitism under national-socialism" (392), the issue of color is undeniably highlighted in the story. Different from the Christian princess who is "as white as the feathers of swan," the Sultan is repeatedly referred to as black and loathly. In the quotation above, the narrator

emphasizes that his skin becomes “all white through God’s grace.” The holy water cleanses his filthiness, and restores him to spiritual and physical purity. Yet, the “purity” itself is greatly problematic. As Ganim has noted, the importance of representing the medieval Europe as “pure” correlates to the historical self-consciousness of Western Europe (125). In order to erase the discomfort of being “impure,” which may cause the indeterminacy and instability about origins and the idea of “self,” the Sultan, who is the “father” of the mix-blooded child, is therefore made to adopt the Western values and transformed into white; through this overall transformation, the existence of “hybrid” is removed superficially. If, as Walter proposes, “the lump of flesh performs the narrative breakdown attendant upon the romance’s failure to articulate and make sense of an encounter with difference” (121), then both the successful conversions of the child and the father indicate the victory of romance discourse over the invasion of otherness against the purity and integrity of self.

Instead of reading the change of skin color merely as the proof of racism, I would rather suggest that the whole description can be read as the Western effort of de-hybridization.The narrator chooses not to let the Sultan remain visually different after his baptism, which would result in his being a constant reminder of the existence of hybrid. Rather, the Sultan is made physically white and religiously a Christian; the outcome of this conversion thus solves the anxiety caused by the interracial and interreligious marriage. As Calkin claims, “the text suggests that baptism physically incorporates outsiders into the Christian community by making them look like other Christians” (2011: 111). Nevertheless, whether the change of look can successfully help incorporate outsiders and fulfill the final process of de-hybridization is dubious.

Black as an Eastern Mask or as a Western Fetish?

Despite the triumph of spiritual and physical conversions of the hybrid father and

son, what is revealed and concealed in this story remains ambiguous. In the text, the black skin of the Sultan is referred to as the "hide." It is considered loathly and unclean, and thus Lampert and Whitaker use the term "washed white" to describe the change of skin color (Lampert 405; Whitaker 176). Though the verb "wash" is not mentioned in the original text, the image of water is clearly presented in the baptism. Moreover, the mention of the word "hide" follows closely after the description of the Sultan's taking off his clothes for baptism: "In al maner wise, / Þe soudan, wiþ gode wille anon, / Dede of his cloþes euerichon / To reseyue his baptize" ("Before long, in all wise manner, the Sultan followed God's will and took off every clothes he wore to receive his baptism" [921-24]). This parallel of "taking off clothes" and "washing skin white" can be read together to produce a new meaning linked to the impact of sight. Calkin explains that the ceremony of baptism demands two considerations: the word and flesh, or language and body. However, the transformation of the flesh/body, which can be literally "seen" by the onlookers, is weighed more heavily. As Calkin mentions, "Baptism becomes a ceremony that emphasizes the spectacle of the body. The romances suggest that physical acts, experiences and sights, not words, change religious identity" (2011: 108). In conformity with this statement, the sight of "washing away the Sultan's blackness and Saracen identity" is greatly emphasized, and becomes one of the main spectacles in the story.

With the idea of "turning off clothes" and "washing skin white" being connected together, it seems that the black skin is like the mask, or the clothes, that covers up one's internal whiteness. It is as if the narrator takes off the Sultan's black skin, thereby revealing his virtuous nature through the conversion scene. The word "hide" reinforces this idea. *Medieval English Dictionary* suggests that "hide" refers to not only the human

skin and complexion, but also "concealment and hiding."[7] This use of word implies that the Sultan's skin serves as a cover which conceals his inner self. However, I would like to suggest the opposite. The "whiteness" does not stand for the inner beauty revealed after the Christian purification; instead, it is the mask that covers up the "blackness," which is intolerable and impenetrable for the Western cognition. Likewise, the "blackness" is by no means the mask that prevents the inner truth from being seen and read, but the symbol of the Oriental civilization, which is terrifying because it represents something out of the grasp of Western knowledge system, something which is mysterious, uncontrollable, unknowable and unnamable.

Freud's idea of "fetishism" helps explain this argument. In "Fetishism," Freud defines fetish as a substitute for something crucial to identity and self-cognition, and of course he regards that "crucial thing" as the penis (1975: 152). By substituting it with something else, one can stop reminding himself/herself of the traumatic memory. Therefore, with the help of fetish, "the subject's interest comes to a halt half-way . . . it is as though the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one is retained as a fetish" (1975: 155). Appropriating this concept, this study also reads the Sultan's white skin as a Western fetish. Suzanne Conklin Akbari has noted, "It is significant that the term 'Saracen' is never used to identify Christian Arabs, showing that the term was understood as defining alterity . . . in terms of both religion and race" (155).Turning to the Christian faith, the Sultan can no longer be identified as "Saracen"; if his black skin remains the same, this appearance would thus make him an undefined other, a disturbing "in-betweenness" that can neither be entirely excluded nor included. In response to the difficulty in classification, the transformed white skin serves as a cover that conceals the existing ambiguity and hybridity which are considered traumatic by

[7] See *MED*: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED20734.> Dec 11, 2014.

the Western knowledge system. In other words, the white skin represents the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic monstrosity of blackness. By nominating the whiteness as the "fetish," the attempt of using Western discourse to "tame" the East is thus clearly shown.[8]

The white mask as a fetish helps conceal the traumatic sight on the one hand, but reveal the identity trauma on the other hand. Freud explains that fetish is essentially paradoxical, for it signifies both the disavowal and acknowledgment of the traumatic experience. In his description of fetishism and the castration of women, which is identified as the very traumatic experience that a subject unconsciously tries to avoid, Freud states that "[i]n very subtle instances both the disavowal and the affirmation of the castration have found their way into the construction of the fetish itself" (1975: 156). Likewise, covering the Sultan with the white mask prevents the readers from seeing the hybrid, but paradoxically points out its very existence at the same time.

Historical Displacement as a Means of De-hybridization

In addition to the alteration of the Sultan's skin color, the process of "hybridization" is also practiced in a different and more subtle way. Though the change of the Sultan's skin color seems to erase the visible existence of hybrid, the fact of the

[8] The Sultan's change of skin color accompanying his conversion also shows the insistence of the West to undermine everything that seems to be unrecognizable. In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Frantz Fanon also questions the issue of color and race, but in his discussion, the Eastern mimickers can only be "almost the same but not white/quite," as Bhabha describes. The ambiguity always exists. Bhabha states that "the very question of identification only emerges *in-between* disavowal and designation. It is performed in the agonistic struggle between the epistemological, visual demand for a knowledge of the Other, and its representation in the act of articulation and enunciation" (50). Fanon's and Bhabha's arguments are based on their observation of the reality. However, in *The King of Tars*, the narrator successfully eliminates the visual and epistemological ambiguity by making the Sultan not "almost the same but not white" but "perfectly white." Even so, considering the white Christian Sultan as an insider would over-simplify the issue. As Calkin has noted, the miraculous physical transformation does not signify the incorporation of the other, but the reinforcement of racial and religious border. The conversion scene only strengthens the idea that the Sultan has to meet certain qualifications in order to be included, which actually re-establishes the boundary between self and other.

mixed marriage between a Christian princess and a previously non-Christian Eastern governor in the greater context of East-West conflict remains unchanged. Besides, though finally turned into a beautiful human being through the Christian force, the child born of this interracial marriage is still a biological hybrid, an unwanted existence that shatters the idea of purity so crucial to medieval Western identity. As Nikos Papastergiadis explains in "Restless Hybrids," the value of hybrids "is always positioned in relation to purity and along the axes of inclusion and exclusion" (10); therefore, "[w]henever the process of identity formation is premised on an exclusive boundary between 'us' and 'them,' the hybrid, which is born out of the transgression of this boundary, will be figured as a form of danger, loss and degeneration" (9-10). To re-consolidate this "exclusive boundary between us and them" and to replace the hybrid with purity, the author cunningly alters the setting of the story from its original historical background by avoiding making reference to "Armenians" and instead nominating the Tartars as the representation of Christianity.

Though the two groups in this tale are presented as people in the East, the *King of Tars* is actually a story mirroring border culture and telling how Western people interact with their religious, racial and military counterparts. According to Hornstein's historical accounts, the story can be associated with the thirteenth-century background in which the Tartars allied with the Christian Armenians to defeat the Damascenes and Egyptians. However, the author subtly transfigures the historical account by replacing the original Armenian princess with the princess of Tars and making the Sultan of Damascus the substitute of the original Tartar father. The Tartars, who are associated more with the Saracen East and the unfamiliar, are now set as pious Christians and appear as the Western substitute. When discussing the princess of Tars, Heng identifies her as the real

"Roman Constance"[9] and states that "the *King of Tars* depicts its heroine from the very beginning as the archetypal true European beauty of romance" (231). However, if the author's attempt is only to present an "authentic European Christian princess common in traditional medieval romances," why doesn't he/she depict her as a real Western/European princess, just as the authors of other relevant stories and analogues have done? Instead of giving her an undeniable and unquestionable Western identity, the author portrayed her as an Oriental Christian princess. The result of this displacement is that the original East-West union is transformed into an East-East union, thereby eliminating the existence of hybrid.

In addition, since the princess of Tars embodies the Western values and Christian virtues, assigning her as the religious converter ensures that the story shows the Western victory over the pagan East without literally realizing a East-West union. This romance is composed after the loss of battle in 1291, and Perryman mentions the Eastern leaders like Ghazzan who were thought to be Christians "provided a hope for the recovery of the Holy Land" (46). Some of the analogues included in historical chronicles have already contained the element of conversion, but in those versions, the conversion of the Tartars is achieved via the biological union of Christians and Pagans. In the *King of Tars*, by contrast, Ghazzan is split into two facets (Perryman 46); he is both the Christian converter, and also the converted Muslim lying behind the Sultan of Damascus. This design enables the author to reconfirm the Christian superiority over the Eastern heathens and provides a literary compensation for the historical loss, while cunningly avoiding the emergence of hybrid, since both groups are originally split up from the same image, and only reunited in the end as a whole "East."

[9] The term "Roman Constance" addresses to other relevant Constance works known widely in the Middle Ages, including Geoffrey Chaucer's the *Man of Law's Tale*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, the anonymous *Emaré*, and *Florence de Rome*, etc. Although the princesses in these analogues have different names (or happen to be nameless), they are generally regarded as the variants of Constance as well as the representations of Latin West and steady Christian spirit.

The Shattered Border

Yet, this practice still generates other problems. Though the original hybrid, that is, the child of the princess and the Sultan, is de-hybridized and transformed into a child of "the East," the princess herself is hybridized in the meanwhile. She is a cultural "hybrid" embodying both Western values and Eastern lineage—a hybrid ironically emerges by means of the narrative strategy designed to realize the process of de-hybridization. As Cohen explains in *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles*, "[n]ever synthetic in the sense of homogenizing, hybridity is a fusion *and* a disjunction, a conjoining of differences that cannot simply harmonize" (2006: 2). It shows that hybridity appears within the unstable relationship; it is not simply the accumulation of two groups or cultures, nor the mixture after harmonization. Papastergiadis suggests:

> Hybrid identity is thus not formed in an accretic way whereby the essence of one identity is combined with another and hybridity is simply a process of accumulation. . . . [It] is both the process by which the discourse of colonial authority attempts to translate the identity of the other within a singular category, but then fails and produces something else. (18)

By the same token, the *King of Tars* tries to reconsolidate the Christian superiority and at the same time stabilize the shattered border by separating the pure West from the pure East; nevertheless, in the meanwhile, it accidentally produces another kind of hybridity, the "unexpected something else."

Not only does the princess's existence signify the new hybrid emerging out of the process of de-hybridization, the Sultan's reaction before and after his baptism also brings out a new question to the efficacy of categorization itself. After his conversion, the Sultan releases all their Christian captives and wages war against other Muslim lords.

His ferocious nature is not modified after his conversion to Christianity; instead, it seems to exacerbate. Before his conversion, he captured the Christians and imprisoned them; after his conversion, he asks all his people to choose either conversion or death. The Sultan summons all his barons and knights and announces:

> Houso it bifalle,
> Ȝe mot ycristned be.
> Miseluen, ich haue Mahoun forsake
> & Cristendom ich haue ytake,
> & certes, so mot ȝe,
> & hye þat wil nouȝt so anon
> Þai schul be heueded [euerichon],
> Bi him þat dyed on tre. (1037-44)
> [No matter what happens, you must be baptized. I myself have forsaken Muhammad and have taken the Christian law, and so must you. Everyone who refuses to do so should be beheaded immediately and die by Christ who died on the cross.]

This statement is not merely a threat, but has indeed been practiced after the final battle. When the Saracens are defeated, the narrator states that "& þai þat wald be cristned nouȝt / Into a stede þai [weren] ybrouȝt / A mile wiþouten þe toun, / & Cristen men, wiþouten wene, / Striken off her heuedes al bidene" ("And those who refused to be christened were brought to a place a mile outside of town, and pious Christian men struck off all their heads completely" [1231-35]). Though the Sultan's violence and the way in which he treats his former comrades seem to set him apart from his Saracen past, as Calkin argues, the violence, now enforced by not only the Saracen soldiers but the pious Christians, actually complicates the reconsolidated Christian-Saracen border after the two conversions.

The border is shattered for the following reasons. Firstly, the miraculous force of Christianity demonstrated during the Sultan's baptism neither alters his "animalistic nature" nor turns him into a person with proper temperance. The fact thus questions whether religion is a real marker separating the West from the East, self from other, as critics like Gilbert and Ramey have suggested. Secondly, the King of Tars and his soldiers, who are depicted as faithful Christians throughout the story, ally with the baptized Sultan and participate in the chaotic slaughter of the Saracen nobles who refuse the baptism. The battle in the end of the story becomes a parallel of the first one, in which thirty thousand Christians are mercilessly killed. This shows that Christians' and Saracens' attitudes toward religion are quite similar. They are faithful to their own religion, and they show no mercy to religious others. Hence, Whitaker reads the Sultan as "a metaphor with all the attendant ambiguity" and states that "he sometimes reinforces and sometimes undermines the divisions between purity and sinfulness and between Christian and Saracen identity" (189). This seemingly victorious but indeed ambiguous ending both provides the fourteenth-century readers with a literary compensation for the loss of crusade and serves as a reflection on the possibility of establishing a clear-cut, absolute border.

The Implied Prester John and the Fetishized Tars

Though the transformations of the lump child and his father display the most dramatic moments in the tale, the process of dehybridization is also manifested through the special delineation of the King of Tars, the romance's titular character who represents another fetishized displacement of the historical reality. While the *King of Tars* presents the conflict between Western Christians and Eastern heathens, the King of Tars—if the title refers to a Tartar king—is supposedly neither a Westerner nor a Christian. Regardless of Ghazzan's once intimate relationship with the Armenians and

the rumor of his conversion to Christianity, Ghazzan in fact adopted Islam as the official religion throughout his empire in the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the relationship between Armenians and the Mongols of Iran began to deteriorate (Collette and DiMarco 327). Hence, it would be suspicious why the author chose the King of Tars as the representative of the Christian force in the tale. As Carolyn P. Collette and Vincent J. DiMarco argue, "the *Tars* romance represents a curious dehistoricization of the actual events and how they had already been turned into legend in the widespread notices of Ghazan's conversion" (327); the "dehistoricization" echoes a popular historical fantasy circulated after the twelfth century: the legend of Prester John.

Prester John appears as a Western fantasy of an Eastern ruler who not only promises strong military support during the crusade era but offers a prospect of the universalization of Christianity. The record of Prester John first appeared in the German Bishop Otto of Freising's 1145 chronicle history, *Chronica sive historia de duabus civitatibus*, which was completed after the loss of the earliest established Crusader territory, Edessa, in 1144 (Taylor 46). After the failure of the second crusade in 1148, Prester John's legendary name became more popular throughout Europe because of the circulation of the *Letter of Prester John*, a letter guaranteeing "aid in liberating the Holy Land, gifts of vast material wealth, and a utopic future modeled on the peaceful coexistence of church and state" (Uebel 2000: 262); with the hopeful vision it offers, the *Letter* "works both to compensate for what is lost, namely, the Holy Land and its treasures, and to safeguard what is already possessed" (Uebel 2000: 262). Prester John comprises part of what Christopher Taylor called the "Christian geographic enclosure of Islam that offers the West imagined support in the project of vanquishing Islam" (41). A product of Christian imagination in an age of religious turmoil and military collision, the legend did not, however, unfold merely military promise and a fantasy in which Islamic alterity is enclosed within universal Christendom. If what catalyzed the

prosperity of the legend is the loss of Crusade territory and the failure of Western armed strength, it would be doubtful why the legend presented an anticipated future as well as the Crusade victory promised by an imagined Christian East rather than the successful expansion of the Latin West. It could be speculated that the emergence and sustainability of Prester John's legend indicate both a hope for universal Christendom and a resistance to directly dealing with the disturbing other.

The legend could be understood as a defensive process through which the anxiety can be dealt with in a safer language. Taylor argues that Prester John both signifies "the Latin Christian reluctance to engage ideologically with Islam in a direct manner" and envisions "an imagined Christian community from which the West can better control the relationship between Christian and Muslim identity" (42). Direct engagement with the Saracens—no matter on a personal, cultural or religious level—may result in the blurring of border, and the idea of enclosing religious alterity within Christendom may further bring about an identity crisis "where it is unclear whether we who find ourselves in these spaces possess or are possessed by them" (Howie 17). Uebel mentions that at the moments in the crusades histories when "Christians are discovered, with shock and revulsion, to share with Saracens many of their most monstrous traits," the distinction between internal and external is blurred and the division that ensures the stability of identity is undermined (1996: 282). Prester John's kingdom as a third force thus offers a possible solution to the identity crisis by guaranteeing military supports and the expansion of Christian territory. As Taylor argues,

> By externalizing their reactions to and anxieties about Islam, Western Christians renounce their own connection to Islam: Prester John and the mythic East are in competition with Islam, not Western Christians. In this way, Prester John guarantees an enclosure of an Islamic threat kept under constant surveillance and becomes the Other of the Other, flattening the spaces of

future possibility that are otherwise left open-ended in the unknown spaces of alterity. (54)

While embodying the "deliberately uncanny specter of a powerful distant patriarch imbued with all of the historical qualities of religious alterity," Prester John as the "Other of the Other" is always charged with "the elimination of those elements existing outside the doctrinal parameters of a unified *societas Christiana*" (Taylor 53-54). However, the legend as an imagined fiction—an imagination that has never existed—simultaneously discloses the anxiety over the obscured identity by serving as a cover through which the real East/West contact is eclipsed. Fetishized to a certain extent, the legend of Prester John, who "has to" but "never" exists, indicates both the acknowledgement and the denial of the overtly unstable border and represents a space of ambivalence.

The displacement of the Armenian ruler by the King of Tars corresponds to this significance of Prester John's legend. The oldest Christian nation in the world, Armenia, is both an "image of the Christian recovery of the Holy Land" and paradoxically a "symbol of the frustration of such hopes and the fragility of such dreams" (Collette and DiMarco 319). It is literally a borderland where religious and political forces collided, competed and wrestled, yet also an area where Christianity had confronted military frustration. The paradoxical role of Armenia probably results in its being eliminated in the *King of Tars*. Instead of putting Armenia in the foreground, the story replaced it with the Tartars, who were rarely perceived as people included in Christian territory. By eliminating the Armenians, the story successfully removed the borderland where Christians and Muslims had direct confrontation. Moreover, nominating the Kingdom of Tars as the representative of Christendom virtually converts the Tartars into Christianity, echoing the conversion of the Sultan of Damascus and his lump child. This replacement, resembling the replacement of skin color in the romance, makes the Kingdom of Tars a

fetish in the tale. While it creates a predominant Christian kingdom that finally claims superiority over the Islamic state, it also "admits a lack or loss of a stable Christian identity" (Taylor 49) by giving the kingdom an "unreal" ruler, as we can see from the legend of Prester John. Collette and DiMarco thus argue:

> The Middle English romance views the conflict in essentially religious, ahistorical terms that substitute for geopolitical realities the imaginatively satisfying motifs of conversion from and annihilation of a competing culture and worldview that, in fact, had already proved ascendant. (328)

Eclipsing the Armenia and replacing it with the Tars paradoxically conceals and reveals the anxiety about the religious confrontation and the ambivalence of identity at the borderland.

Conclusion

The *King of Tars* is a medieval English romance that demonstrates the Western conception of the East and the border anxiety resulting from the intimate East-West contact during and after the Crusade era. As Hornstein mentions, the *King of Tars* and relevant references "give fresh evidence of the influence of the East on the West, and indicate a process by which Oriental history, transmuted into fable, was conveyed to eager and credulous Europeans" (404). Though the story explicates Western ideologies, what it reveals is indeed not the purity crucial to Western cognition or identity construction, but an ambiguous, or even monstrous hybrid. The miraculous conversion which represents the Christian force and the Western triumph over the chaotic, feminized East cannot be seen as a means of revelation, but a process of concealment. Through the miraculous physical transformation of the child and the father and the subtle displacement of Western figure with Eastern substitute, this story unfolds how romance functions as a machinery that helps reshape and repattern the traumatic

memory and offers a safe language of cultural discussion. Hybridity is not simply the combination, accumulation or mixture of different races, religions or identities; it is, as Cohen suggests, a "conjoining of differences that cannot simply harmonize" (2006: 2).[10] The *King of Tars* cleverly reveals the Western effort to couple with the differences and manifests the process of de-hybridization and its eventual failure.

[10] This idea has already been brought up and discussed by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994).

Chapter III: Traveling Eastward but Not Quite: the Journey of Constance in the *Man of Law's Tale*

A text with affluent Oriental depiction, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* has won much attention and has often been recognized as a tale contextualizing the crusade propaganda and reflecting the contemporary East-West contact in the late Middle Ages. Resembling the *King of Tars* in its negative portrayal of the East, the *Man of Law's Tale* presents to its readers a heathen Syria of pagan laws, a desire-driven Sultan who is ready to trade his religion for marriage, and a tyrannical Sultaness who would rather kill her own son than enable his conversion and intermarriage to a Christian princess. Like the Saracen Damascenes in the *King of Tars*, the Syrian heathens in Chaucer's tale are associated with evil qualities, such as lust, violence, and envy. This delineation of the East is not uncommon in medieval textual records, particularly after the Crusades and the loss of Jerusalem. The struggles against Muslims on the battlefield and the failure of the Crusading movement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are often literarily compensated in the following portraits: either military triumph over the Saracens in the East and successful conversions of the Muslim groups (Metlitzki 6), or the annulment of "any links between the Muslims and the places holy to the Christian faith" (Menache 69), both of which help re-establish the Christian superiority over pagans and set up the religious and geographical borders. The final battle in the *King of Tar* and the Emperor's military attack against the Syrian Sultaness in the *Man of Law's Tale*—though only briefly mentioned near the end—do display the Christian military success, but oddly enough, both tales indeed render the East/West border too unstable and baffling for an explicit reading. This deliberate complication of the East/West relationship discredits the tendency of interpreting the Constance romances as tales unilaterally supporting or glorifying Christian faith and mirrors the way in which the

latent problems of "self" are crystallized via the depiction of "other."

Probably based on Nicholas Trevet's Anglo-Norman tale of Constance and John Gower's Constance story in *Confessio Amantis*, Chaucer's late fourteenth-century Constance romance also narrates the life of a Christian princess who is forced to leave her native land but eventually reunites with her own culture and family. The story starts with the business trip of the Syrian merchants; they travel to Rome, bring with them plenty of Eastern luxuries, and carry their knowledge of the West back to Syria, including the report concerning Constance, the fair lady embodying all kinds of virtues. Falling passionately in love with Constance, a "Western marvel" appearing in the merchants' tale, the Syrian Sultan insists on marrying her on condition that he converts to Christianity. The Roman Emperor grants his proposal regardless of Constance's unwillingness, but the matrimony is prevented by the Sultan's mother, and Constance is set adrift on the sea. Over three years' drifting, her ship wrecks on Northumberland, a pagan country ruled by King Alla. Constance converts the people in Northumberland and marries the King, and she soon bears him a beautiful boy. However, Alla's evil mother, Donegild, falsifies the letters between the couple when Alla is out for war, and her falsehood directly results in Constance's banishment. Constance is set adrift again; floating in the sea for five years, she is then found by a Roman senator and is brought back to Rome. After King Alla finds out the truth upon his return, he executes his evil mother and heads for Rome on a pilgrimage. He fortunately re-encounters Constance and his son, Maurice, who later becomes the Emperor of Rome and does great honor to Christ's church. Constance also meets her father again after a long separation; she goes back to Northumberland with King Alla, and returns to Rome after Alla's death.

While the *King of Tars* has already unsettled the East/West border, the *Man of Law's Tale* further complicates the identity issue by presenting a Rome-Syria-Northumberland triangular relationship rather than East/West binary

opposition. The story comprises various kinds of double: Syria and Northumberland as the double of Eastern pagan lands; the Sultaness and Donegild as the double of ruthless antichristian antagonists; Constance's two reluctant journeys as the double of narratives; furthermore, the deliberate obscurity in time and space enables the double, or even triple meanings of Rome—ancient Rome, Chaucer's contemporary Rome, and the Eastern Byzantine Rome. The doubling design should not be simply read as mere repetition or redundancy; instead, it cunningly raises several questions about this seemingly happily-ended story: How should we interpret Constance's role in the tale? Is she the representation of the Western Christian civilization, or the alternative "Western marvel" that invokes the sultan's enthusiasm for "the exotic"? How should we read the delineation of the Sultaness, who—though being the most dreadful antichristian villain—embodies extreme cruelty, violence and the zeal for religion that are disturbingly reminiscent of the crusaders and crusader supporters? What should be seen as the "Real East" in this story? Is it the Islamic Syria, the pagan Northumberland, or Rome, particularly the Byzantine Rome, which occupies the geographical East in relation to England and the Latin West? And finally, how can Constance's journey, which is delineated as a geographical, religious and material circulation, shed light on the idea of border and its (de-)contruction?

The *Man of Law's Tale* in fact contains a great deal of intertangled elements, such as religion, gender, politics, currency and trade. Scholars have probed into the story from different perspectives, and many focus on probably the most obvious subject matter: the confrontation between Christian values, basically represented by the obedient Constance, and the malice of pagans, mainly displayed by the two powerful mothers. Sue Niebrzydowski has highlighted the differences between Christian Self and monstrous Other by contrasting the Sultaness's "consuming appetite for power" with Constance's "mothering of the Emperor Maurice" (196). Brenda Deen Schildgen also

argues that Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* "distinguishes the non-Christian East and West from the Latin West which in this tale is equated with the Roman church and the Roman emperor" and states that this tale creates "binary spatial oppositions" and constructs "a religio-political geography that lays claim to certain spaces as Christian while locating peripheries of difference and otherness outside the borders of Christian power" (49). Similar standpoint can be seen in Susan Schibanoff's article, "World Apart: Orientalism, Antifeminism, and Heresy in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*," which gives rise to much discussion about and controversy over medieval understanding of Islam. Schibanoff argues that the Man of Law is not sympathetic but hostile to Islam, and his tale preserves and enhances the differences "between women and men, East and West, Islam and Christianity, ultimately between western patriarchal culture and the Other" (63). Schibanoff differs herself from other critics by adopting particularly Jonathan Dollimore's idea of the "rhetoric of proximity"[11] and cleverly argues that the portrayal of the dangerous closeness between Islam and Christianity, rather than the clear-cut opposition, is the key factor that makes Islam threatening and thus arouses the desire for separation (62).

However, the above readings, which interpret Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* as a story reconsolidating the East/West, Islamic/Christian border, would be called into question. Instead of centering only on the tension between East and West, Chaucer indeed presents the story with multi-dimensional complexity. Hence, the reduction of the Rome-Syria-Northumberland relationship to only an East/West, Self/Other binary or

[11] The idea of "rhetoric of proximity" is taken from Jonathan Dollimore's *Sexual Dissidence, Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*, 131-48. Schibanoff explains that in Dollimore's terms, "similarity" or "proximity" indicates "the intimate relationship that exists between supposedly opposite binaries," and it results in anxiety for its being the "most disturbing of all forms of trangression" that interferes the system of binary oppositions, which is so basic to western thought (Schibanoff 63-4). She reads the anxiety concerning the proximity/similarity as a strategy employed in the story, a way that helps strengthen the binary opposition; the rhetoric of proximity "plays an indispensable role in maintaining rigid binary oppositions by temporarily destabilizing them" (64).

the reading which considers the second antagonist as a mere double of the first would oversimplify the story. In her article discussing the "Saracens" in different places, Kathy Cawsey investigates the relationship between Syrian Muslims and Northern pagans and questions the necessity of the Syria/Northumberland parallel. While Geraldine Heng discusses the reason of repetition by focusing on the difference of race (227-28), Cawsey regards religion as the key factor that distinguishes English pagans from Islamic Syrians (390-91).

However, if religion instead of race is what differentiates good from evil, acceptable from unacceptable, self from other, then it would be hard to explain the implied corruption of Rome and its disturbing similarity with Syria. Celia M. Lewis has tackled historical records associated with the Crusades in her research on *The Canterbury Tales*, in which she matches Constance's movement with "the failed European impulse to reclaim the Holy Land through conversion, and the crusades that followed" (354). Though explaining that the fantasy of Middle Eastern conquest unfulfilled in reality may be revealed in Chaucer's text, Lewis also points out the problems of crusades, such as violence, pride, greed and lust, typically the sins ascribed to Islam. In addition, she specifies three shared traits through which Chaucer brings Christianity and Islam closer, monotheism, rationality, and a colonizing or imperialist impulse (369), and states that "the Sultaness's active willingness to massacre others in defense of her faith mirrors what the most pious of the crusaders may have felt" (372). Her suspicion of the malpractice of Christians echoes Sarah Stanbury's query about the symbolic meaning of Rome, the traditional center of Christian power. In the *Man of Law's Tale*, Rome is associated with commerce and trade, and as Stanbury has noted, it "comes shadowed with a troubled history of materiality" (124). The trading out of Constance, Rome's most Christian commodity, for religious and territorial expansion therefore reveals "Chaucer's particular uneasiness with the kind of materialist devotion"

(Stanbury 123).

Based on previous studies, this chapter aims to probe into the construction or deconstruction of East/West border, the ambiguous relationship between periphery and center, and the intriguing depictions of doubles in the tale. This chapter explores two intertwining strands: on one hand, how the border between Saracens, the symbol of decadence, and Rome, the typical representative of the Western civilization, is constructed and then blurred; and on the other hand, how the equivocal similarities between self and other and the doubling images in the tale help mediate the desire for a universal Christendom and the resistance to religious assimilation.

The Boundary Drawn Up

Resembling *The King of Tars*, the *Man of Law's Tale* provides a story in which two socio-religious groups are set up in an opposing way. The relationship between Syria and Rome is not as hostile as the two groups in *The King of Tars*, but their divergences and inconformity are repeatedly emphasized, with the Syrians characterized as spiritually inferior and desire-driven. The story begins with the following lines:

> In Surrye whilom dwelte a compaignye
> Of chapmen riche, and therto sadde and trewe,
> That wyde-where senten hir spicerye,
> Clothes of gold, and satyns riche of hewe.
> Hirchaffare was so thrifty and so newe
> That every wight hath deyntee to chaffare
> With hem, and eek to sellen hem hire ware. (134-140)[12]
> [In Syria once dwelt a company of rich merchants,

[12] The quotations of the *Man of Law's Tale* are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer* edited by Larry Dean Benson (1987).

And moreover trustworthy and true,

That wherever they sent their oriental goods,

Cloth of gold, and satins rich in color.

Their merchandise was so serviceable and so novel

That every person has desire to trade

With them, and also to sell them their goods.][13]

Though generally regarded as a story of hagiography, the tale starts with the depiction of trade, the image of exotic curiosities, and the Western people's material interest in the East. In these few lines, the narrator stresses the earthly richness, piling up words related to commerce and fortune, such as "riche," "gold," "thrifty," "chaffare," and "sellen." In contrast to the spiritual devotion and the constant, unmovable faith embodied by Constance, this brief depiction of the Syrian merchants reveals instead the idea of exchange and secular fortune, neither of which is everlasting. This portrayal corresponds to, on one hand, the gradually frequent Christian-Muslim trades in late medieval Europe, and on the other hand, the negative characterization of the Syrian Sultan and his treatment of his Islamic laws. Exchange is associated with Rome as well, which will be more clearly elaborated with the idea of double in later part of this chapter.

Unlike the stereotypical depiction of the Islamic enemy, the Sultan is presented as a rather mild and friendly character, who—contrasting the Saracen others in tales of the corresponding period of time or in the crusade reports—is willing to embrace Christianity and even ready for conversion; yet, the story reveals the Sultan's deviation from the Christian values in several different ways. First of all, he is described as an unwise ruler with excessive desire and lust for a beauty whom he has only known

[13] The translations of the *Man of Law's Tale* are borrowed from the interlinear translations of *The Canterbury Tales* uploaded on the *Geoffrey Chaucer Page*, which is built and edited by Harvard University. (http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/mlt-par.htm#TALE).

through the merchants' travel report. The narrator states, "That this Sowdan hath caught so greet pleasance / To han hir figure in his remembrance, / That al his lust and al his bisy cure / Was for to love hire while his lyf may dure" ("That this Sultan has caught such great desire / To have her figure in his remembrance, / That all his desire and all his intense concern / Was to love her while his life may endure" [186-89]). Instead of expressing his emotion as sincere love and care, what the narrator shows is his excessive passion and lack of reason. As a ruler, the Sultan desires Constance improperly to the extent that "he for love sholde han his deeth" ("he because of love should have his death" [193]) and "but he myghte have grace / To han Custance withinne a litel space, / He nas but deed; and charged hem in hye / To shapen for his lyf som remedye" ("unless he could have the good fortune / To have Custance within a little time, / He was as good as dead; and ordered them hastily / To arrange some remedy to save his life" [207-10]). Excessive lust and passion replace his duty and occupy his whole mind, inducing a sickness almost without cure. Regardless of other people's warning that Islamic and Christian laws differ so greatly that "no Cristen prince wolde fayn wedden his child under oure [Islamic] lawe sweete" ("no Christian prince would be willing / To wed his child under our sweet religion" [222-23]), the Sultan insists on receiving Christian baptism in order to marry the princess. This idea of religion as a currency for transaction reveals the clearly different way in which religion is treated in the East and the West. Besides, Constance is recognized not only as a suitable subject of marriage, but a "wondre" of the foreign place—an exotic object to be requested and possessed. Schildgen states that "[i]n drawing this contrast, the narrator suggests the fragility of Islamic religious conviction, for it can be traded away to satisfy the Sultan's contingent personal desire" (56). Here, the commercial element is associated with the Islamic world, echoing the beginning of the story in which the Syrian merchants are linked to material and secular, rather than spiritual wealth.

On top of the Sultan's deviation from Christian values, what further astonishes the readers is the Sultaness's evil behavior that manifests the very perversion and otherness Western people want to distance themselves from. When first introducing the Sultaness to the readers, the narrator refers to her as "the mooder of the Sowdan, welle of vices" (323). In the following description, she is also called "virago," "Semyrame the secounde," "serpent," and "feyned womman"—words combined to imply deception and malice. Known as a militant queen of Syria, Semyrame, or Semiramis, is a woman that hides her sex from her subordinates, masquerades as a man, usurps the throne, and pretends to be her own son. The image of this denounced female who encroaches upon the masculine privilege and confuses her own sexual identity appears in compliance with what "virago" indicates: the aberration of female power (Lewis 370). Schibanoff notes that though "virago" initially indicates Eve's "otherness from Adam," in the later Middle Ages it could also refer to "woman's perverse desire to take over male roles and claim similitude to him" (68). In the *Man of Law's Tale*, it is the Sultaness's existence as a "virago" and her rejection of staying in the traditional female position that makes her a rejected other. This idea of "border crossing" can also be detected in line 404, in which she is referred to as a "scorpioun." Niebrzydowski explains that "[t]he scorpion was considered grotesque within the animal kingdom because it violated boundaries and transgressed limits through being a strange union of reptile and insect" (203).The metaphor of scorpion, along with her connection to "virago" and "Semiramis," demonstrates the Sultaness's hybridity endangers the gender position and power structure through which the medieval people understood the world and situated themselves. Compared to Constance who obeys the patriarchal command and "accepts what patriarchy has mapped out for her" (Niebrzydowski 201), the Sultaness conceptually and practically "replaces" her son, the legitimate male ruler of Syria, and overturns the entire power structure. Through her political usurpation and her

antichristian actions, the Sultaness transforms herself from the role of mother to an unmaternal "Other," thereby becoming a malicious Islamic outsider who not only endangers her own people but threatens the Christian world.

The Crossing of Border

However, the reason that makes the Sultaness terrifying does not rest solely in her confusion of the traditionally assigned gender and social role, but also her controversial being that blurs the clear-cut border between the Christian Rome and the Islamic Syria. In *Patterns of Religious Narrative in The Canterbury Tales*, Roger Ellis states that the Man of Law's narrative "hints at this heterodox understanding when it gives similar terms to Christian and Muslim to describe the experience of their own faith. The Muslim law is 'sweete,' and the Christian 'deere,' to its followers" (146). Paradoxically, the "heterodox understanding" and the "similarity" of these two religions is not revealed through the delineation of the Sultan, who is relatively tolerant of Christianity and is willing to accept baptism, but the "evil" and hostile Sultaness. Though a mannish mother and ruthless murderer, the Sultaness's attitude towards religion indeed resembles the Christian devotion for faith and the belief in monotheism; these features make her both a threatening enemy and a closest stranger. After hearing the Sultan's decision to receive baptism in order to marry Constance, the Sultaness laments:

> "Lordes," quod she, "ye knowen everichon,
> How that my sone in point is for to lete
> The hooly lawes of our Alkaron,
> Yeven by Goddes message Makomete.
> But oon avow to grete God I heete,
> The lyfshal rather out of my body sterte
> Or Makometes lawe out of mynherte!

"What sholde us tyden of this newe lawe
But thraldom to oure bodies and penance,
And afterward in helle to be drawe,
For we reneyed Mahoun oure creance? (330-40)
["Lords," said she, "you know each one of you,
How my son is about to forsake
The holy laws of our Koran,
Given by God's messenger Mohammed.
But one vow to great God I promise,
The life shall rather out of my body go
Before Mohammed's law (goes) out of my heart!
What should come to us from this new religion
Except slavery to our bodies and suffering,
And afterward to be dragged into hell,
Because we renounced our faith in Mohammed?]

While the Sultan treats his own religion as a tradable currency, the Sultaness affirms she would rather die than abandon Mohammed's law. This characterization comes to suggest the split within the Syrian community and thus indicates the heterogeneity of the Islamic world. Associated with the ideas of changeability, excessive openness and abundant material luxuries that reify the typical impression of the Orient, heathen Syria initially appears as an "Orientalized" world, which is set as a contrast to the Latin West. However, the constructed border is rendered fractured as soon as the "perfect Orient" loses its uniformity and becomes internally contradictive. Kathryn L. Lynch notes that "the firm line between East and West soon grows blurry, for the tale seems to project onto the East both ungovernable extravagance and strict exchange, mutability and its own form of rigidity" (415). In contrast to the Sultan's excessive openness, what the

Sultaness stands for is the "economy of possession" which may be even "more envious, grasping, and retentive even than the West's" (Lynch 415).

Indeed, however eminent the Sultaness's insistence on her own religion and her respect to her God might be, she would not have created such border controversy had her ferocious attack been presented as mere violence or the desire for power rather than the protection of Islamic laws. As Lewis suggests, "Chaucer's addition of her speech draws the readers' or listeners' attention away from the barbarity of her act toward a pious and legalistic motivation" (371).[14] For the Sultaness, betraying Mohammed's law equates moral and spiritual degradation, as well as eternal suffering and damnation; hence, what is considered ruthless violence and barbarity may be in fact a holy war. Her faith-based motivation in committing the massacre evokes the bloodshed during the Crusades as well as the slaughters practiced by both parties, thereby undercutting the Christian/Islamic binary (Lewis 372). Besides the justification of her violence, the Sultaness's lament also unfolds Chaucer's reflection on the Latin West—the religious and social group with which the supposed readers would identify themselves. Lewis explains that "the brutality of warfare and the killing of heathens sanctioned by the Church was problematical for many because of the belief that killing in any context—including war and capital punishment—was wrong" (357). This re-viewing perspective suggests Chaucer's way of criticism, in which he subtly unfolds the problem of the Western society by showing its similarity with the East, which is believed to be the embodiment of excess, disorder, and various vices.

[14] Also see Juliette Dor's "Chaucer's Viragos: A Postcolonial Engagement? A Case Study of the *Man of Law's Tale*, the *Monk's Tale*, and the *Knight's Tale*," p. 168. Dor states that "After all, the Sultaness's words and behaviour are exact copies of those generally advocated by the Church against non-Christians. Her boundless loyalty to her belief and her firm determination to carry out her murderous plans would have been praised if she had belonged to Europe's dominant faith." Though reading the Sultaness as a devilish, blasphemous figure opposite to the Christian religion and acting against Western ethnicity, she also brings into focus the complex relation and disturbing similarity between East and West, calling into question the simple binary opposition.

This intentional obscurity of the East/West border can in fact be found from the beginning of the story. Though Rome is the center of Christianity, supposedly a place of spiritual wealth, Rome's connection with the idea of secular commerce and earthly transaction is shown in several different ways. Stanbury notices that Rome is first mentioned in the *Man of Law's Tale* as "the secular destination of merchants" and is introduced as "a city defined through its relationship in trading network with Syria" (128). This connection associates Rome with not only a cross-national trading network, but more importantly, with the image of the East. Moreover, Constance as a representative of Rome is also depicted as an "exotic beauty" that arouses male's desire for possession. She is part of the "wondres" (182) of the "strange place" (178) recounted by the merchants, and initially, her figure appears only as a marvel of the remote country, or an image the Sultan seeks ardently to satisfy his self-willed fantasy. As Carol Falvo Heffernan observes, "Here there is a reversal of western categories—normally it is the East that is associated with the marvelous" (32). Constance as a "fantasized object" is then "sold out" by her own father to trade for international alliance and territorial expansion. Rome as the merchants' commercial destiny already implies the analogy between trade and marriage. Stanbury states that "[t]he commercial opening of the *Man of Law's Tale*, followed by a story about the arranged marriage of a Roman princess, locates Rome at the nexus of trade" (122). Aside from showing the Sultan's arbitrary attitude towards religion, this arranged marriage also discloses the Roman emperor's problematic recognition of spiritual and material values. Lynch observes that

> Chaucer's comparatively limited focus on the dowry that Custance carries with her . . . may underscore the fact that the exchange of this woman is a carefully arbitrated bid to purchase the religious affiliation of the Saracens, a purchase whose terms the Saracens then subscribe to as well. (415)

If the Sultan's way of "trading" the lady is improper, so is the Emperor's. To him, the "religious affiliation," like the commercial goods with rich fluidity, can be "purchased" with marriage. As the head of Rome, the Emperor's response to the Sultan's request reveals, on one hand, the no longer stable condition of faith, and on the other hand, the underlying problem of Rome, a place in which earthly values have already contaminated the spiritual purity.

The Multilayer Images of Rome and the Implied Splitting Within

Though, as discussed in Chapter I, the medieval Western identity, or more specifically, the identity of the Latin West, is grounded in the idea of purity, the image of Rome in the *Man of Law's Tale* can no longer represent this idea. By contrast, several kinds of doubling underlie the superficial homogeneity. The first doubling is that of secularity and spirituality. Stanbury notes that via Rome, the ideas of faith and commerce are coupled and uncoupled (121). The coupling of these two terms/concepts is intriguing, since faith, according to the Christian values, should be constant and perseverant, but commerce is about floating and shifting, and therefore unstable. In the story, the only person representing the idea of constancy is Constance, but she is forced to leave her father, her family and Rome; furthermore, the person that forces her to leave in spite of her resistance is her own father, the Roman Emperor. If there are two kinds of Rome, namely the secular Rome, which is associated more with the Syrian commercial network and the material-based values, and the spiritual Rome, which is connected to the Christian devotion, penance and self-sacrifice, then the Roman Emperor corresponds to the former, and Constance the latter. Stanbury suggests that "Custance, not Rome, is the center of faith. The opening takes us to Rome, only to leave it" (131). I would rather argue that Constance, as "one aspect" of Rome, is the center of faith, and thus her departure symbolizes the leaving from the Roman decadence. Her

journey not only manifests her religious ordeal, but visualizes the shifting trajectory of the Christian center. As Constance leaves Rome, the religion itself is also carried off from the place of decadence—a place associated more with earthly fortune and exchange than with spiritual wealth and Constanc(y).

The second doubling is that of antique Rome and late medieval Rome. Chaucer himself presents the historical setting of the *Man of Law's Tale* with great ambiguity. Although the background of the *Man of Law's Tale* is set around the fifth to sixth century, concurrent with the Anglo-Saxon England (Dugas 31), it seems that the story also reveals Chaucer's contemporary space and time, in which both the trades and conflicts between Romans and Eastern Muslims are more frequent. Escaping the Sultaness's persecution and driven by the current for more than three years, Constance is finally cast on the coast of Northumberland, where a constable finds her and takes her to his house. The narrator then explains that the Saxon pagans have conquered all about the coastal regions of northern Northumberland by land and sea, and have driven the Christian people of old Britons to Wales (540-46). Here, Chaucer presents a time before the conversion of England, and Constance, as a rightful, pious Roman Christian, directly takes part in England's early Christianization. Yet, the description that Constance speaks to the constable in "Latyn corrupt" (519) and is somehow understood by those Saxon-speaking Northumbrians confuses the exact temporal background. Christine F. Cooper-Rompato states that "Custance's native tongue represents an ambiguous, difficult-to-define state of linguistic development and modification, as she herself hovers halfway between 'learned' Latin and vernacular language" (166). The "Corrupt Latin" is used throughout the Middle Ages and renders no clues for defining the exact time presented by Chaucer, but it also offers more space for interpreting the background in the *Man of Law's Tale*. In addition, the name "Mohammad"—in its various forms—has appeared four times in the tale, which clearly shows that the story is

set in a time after the emergence of Islam. The religious conflict and slaughter in the story also make the Crusade connotation clearer and associate the story more with the late Middle Ages rather than the Anglo-Saxon period.

The second Rome implied in the *Man of Law's Tale* is therefore Chaucer's contemporary Rome, which is influenced by secular corruption and military failures. Though Northumberland seems to be ancient, Rome is not. Chaucer's description of the mature international commercial network between the Western world and the Eastern Syria hints at a more contemporary context rather than the time of the ancient Roman. Heffernan explains that the Crusades, along with various expeditions, open up new fresh markets alluring to merchants. She suggests that "the reopening of the route to the East by the First Crusaders gave birth to an East-West, Moslem-Christian interchange in the Mediterranean which changed the course of medieval commerce" (20), making possible the reading of Chaucer's work as a reflection on the historical situation after, or during, the crusade era. Yet, in Chaucer's time, the Roman Church was far from divine as it was supposed to be; as the relation between Rome and Syrian merchants implies, the Roman church has been affected by the idea of transaction, and Christian values, along with Constance in whom all these virtues are embodied, are traded out as commodities. Moreover, the Man of Law states that it is a merchant who tells him the story: "I were right now of tales desolaat, / Nere that a marchant, goon is many a yeere, / Me taughte a tale, which that ye shal here" ("I would right now be without any tales, / Were it not that a merchant, gone by is many a year, / Taught me a tale, which you shall hear" [131-33]). Laurel L. Hendrix argues that "The Man of Law deftly exploits the reductive potential of the commercial language already embedded within Christian doctrine and already applied to the person and merits of Christ" (147). This "currency-based economy" used in the transaction of spiritual goods hints at the problem of indulgence selling in medieval churches, which is also satirized in the *Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale*. Hendrix

notes that in such formalized transactions, the divine economy is subverted by the temporal economy, and "[i]n the rise of indulgences we see the commercialization of grace carried to an extreme and the ultimate literalizing of redemption metaphors" (151). Through the implication of the medieval rather than ancient Rome, Chaucer cunningly reveals the corruption of Rome, a corruption which is initially related to Syria, to the East.

This intriguing congruence between Rome and the East bespeaks the third doubling: the doubling of Roman Empire (*Imperium Romanum*) and Eastern Roman Empire (*Imperium Romanum Orientale*), which is also known as the Byzantine Rome. In her discussion of Geoffrey Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Heng points out the possibility of reading the "Rome" in Monmouth's twelfth-century work as the Byzantine Empire, which was known to the native populations of the East by the name "Rome."[15] This interpretation can also be applied to Chaucer's work due to the ambiguous background setting and the delineation of Rome in the beginning of the *Man of Law's Tale*, in which Rome is portrayed as a meeting place for business routes. Heffernan describes that "[t]he Byzantine Empire had in Constantinople a metropolis which in the high Middle Ages was a meeting place for land and sea routes of the Far, Middle, and Near East as well as a crossroads for Northern and Western Europe" (19). Heng also explains that "Constance, who is ostensibly Roman and Western European, comes with a halo of Eastern origins" (194). She refers to Margaret Schlauch's explanation that the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Constantius, presented in Trevet's and Gower's tales "is a historical personage who reigned at Constantinople (not Rome), A.D. 578-82" (158) while "the name of Constance . . . suggests Constantia, daughter of Constantine (the Great)" (157). Heng further comments:

[15] See Heng's *Empire of Magic*, p. 47. Heng also mentions that a Byzantine Princess, Anna Comnena, routinely calls Constantinople "Rome," the Byzantine Empire "the Roman empire," and her people "Romans."

> The pretext that Constance is Roman and Italian, rather than Byzantine and Oriental, thus merely satisfies a cultural specification that this heroine of hagiographic romance should be an exemplar of Latin Christendom, for a fourteenth-century English audience, rather than a representative of deviant Greek Christianity with its schismatic heresies. (194)

Instead of assuming Chaucer's ignorance of Rome's double-signification, this chapter argues that Chaucer intentionally obscures the role of "Rome" by intensifying its latent connection with Islamic Syria and the frequent commercial interaction between both parties.

The discussion above reveals several things worth noting. First, the implication of Eastern Roman Empire reinforces the association between the Emperor and "the East," or "the heresies" as Heng has stated. The Emperor's attitude towards religion is not as praiseworthy as Constance's since what he represents is not "The Rome" but the Eastern Rome. This leads to the second point: the Eastern Rome embodies a negative meaning which the narrator has to distance Constance from. In addition to its relative geographic closeness and frequent interaction with the East, the Byzantine Rome has also lost its battle and part of its territory to the Islamic Turks in 1071 before the First Crusade. Its incapability of resisting the pagan soldiers signifies not only the Christian failures, but also its very impurity. Heng notes that "[b]y Geoffrey's day, the Roman Empire in the East was viewed in the West with suspicion, contempt, and hostility that amounted to loathing" (48). An empire invaded by pagans, the Byzantine Empire is also considered part of the "Eastern otherness," thereby becoming the military target of the fourth Crusade initiated by the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, it is even viewed as "detested crusader enemy whose army comprises the collective visage of the hated Oriental others including Turcopoles, Cumans, Patzinaks, and other Oriental races" (Heng 47), standing in contrast to the classical Rome which signifies the Latin West.

Though in the story, the Emperor's desire to achieve religious and territorial expansion may reveal a kind of literary compensation for the loss in reality, namely the compensation indicating the successful transfer of Jerusalem back to Christendom and the reopening of the free passage for trade and pilgrimage,[16] what the story actually presents is an ultimate failure of the intermarriage. Hence, the doubling of Rome points out the possibility of attributing all the negative characteristics of Christianity to the deviant "Eastern" Rome, and for this reason preserves the religious and ideological purity of Constance who, as Heng comments, should be an exemplar of Latin Christendom. All the factors that characterize the traditional impression on the Orient—excessive materiality, decadence, ungovernable extravagance, unreliable changeability (Lynch 415)—are now becoming the reverse attacks on the "West" represented by the Emperor. This connection shows that what Chaucer presents may not only be an East that perfectly fit into traditional stereotypes, but also an "Orientalized West." If the Rome in this tale is the doubled "East," what is the "real West" is then open to question. Chaucer characterizes a Rome that Constance has to leave, and she subsequently brings the Christian religion to Northumberland, a seeming double of Syria.

The Doubling of Eastern Other and the Relation with the Empowered M(O)thers

Constance's experience in Northumberland reveals great perplexity due to its extreme similarity to her first but unfinished marriage. In the *Man of Law's Tale*, Chaucer not only displays the resemblance between the heathen Northumberland and the Islamic Syria, but presents Constance's second marriage almost like a "double" of

[16] See Carol F. Hefferan's *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance*, p. 6. Heffernan states that "[f]rom 637 until the end of the First Crusade in 1100, Jerusalem remained in the hands of Mohammedan rulers." See also Geraldine Heng's *Empire of Magic*, p. 109, in which Heng mentions, "Constance's prospective union with the Sultan has achieved what a century and a half of crusades, after the loss of Jerusalem to Saladin, had conclusively failed to do."

the first one. The similarity is shown mostly by the characterization of the two M(O)thers in both communities. After her arrival at Northumberland, Constance converts the constable and his wife to Christianity; later, while falsely accused of murder, she proves herself innocent through God's divine miracle. Being touched by Constance and her faith, King Alla willingly receives baptism and then marries her. However, the King's evil mother, Donegild, is displeased by this marriage. She falsifies the constable's letter when the King is out at war with Scotland, telling the King that his wife gives birth to a "feendly creature" ("fiendish creature" [751]) and Constance herself is "an elf" ("an evil spirit" [754]); she then forges another letter originally written by the King, commanding the constable to banish Constance by sending her out in the same ship as she was found.

Donegild's monstrous deed is shown not only by causing Constance's exile, but by crossing the border between male and female, counterfeiting her own son and operating the masculine power. Like the Sultaness who steps into male's political domain and replaces her son, Donegild also exhibits her "mannish" quality to give commands by seizing the pen, a tool of knowledge and politics, both of which traditionally belong to male only. Schibanoff notes that Donegild's tyranny, which "in particular is an 'unwomanly' trait to the Man of Law's way of thinking" (87-8), has been mentioned twice by the Man of Law (696; 779). Not only is the depiction of Donegild a double of the Muslim Sultaness, the narrator also alludes to the Islamic world by having the king of Northumberland named Alla. This intriguing design has been discussed by many critics by far (Lynch 410 and 417; Dinshaw 28; Lavezzo 100). The spelling is changed from the Old English form "Aella" or "Aelle" to "Alla," which "gestures towards the Islamic name for God, Allah, in a way that contemporary readers would have been unlikely to miss" (Cawsey 388). These particular designs unfold a heightened sense of

similarity between Syria and Northumberland, rendering the latter almost a double of the former.

However, if the Northumberland episode is the double of Constance's first experience in Syria, it would be curious why Chaucer has to tell the same story twice. Critics also question that if Syria and Northumberland are both non-Christian others, why is Northumberland acceptable for the Christian world, whereas Syria is not? For instance, Heng writes,

> The twinned structure of episodes in the two locales is impossible to miss. . . . One nation in the diptych is embraced, Christianized, and given a symbolic royal family; the other nation is held off, refused, and its population is apparently decimated. Why the difference? (227)

Heng's answer is race, and she specifies the unacceptability of the Muslim-Christian union by referring to the delineation of the monstrous hybrid child appearing in the *King of Tars*, noting that "the marriage of the princess of Tars to the Muslim Sultan of Damascus hideously brings forth a shapeless lump of flesh: insensate, inanimate, and with neither 'blood' nor 'bone' nor 'limbs' (KT, II. 579-82), a true monstrosity" (228). Holding an opinion in contrast to Heng, Cawsey emphasizes the differences in religion instead of labelling the Muslim race as the inassimilable other. She notes that the Syrians or the "men of Barbary" converted for the wrong reasons but the Northumbrians converted for the "right" reasons; this "difference in conversion creates the differences in race, and not the other way around" (390-91). In contrast to both Heng's and Cawsey's studies, I would instead focus on the distinct treatment of the mother-son relationship, which helps distinguish England from the inassimilable other and thus makes it an "alternative East"—an East that can be safely incorporated into the Christian world without triggering discomfort.

Freud's theory provides an insight into the treatments of mother-son relationship in two parallel scenarios and addresses the identity issue from a different perspective. In his psychoanalytical theory, Freud considers a son's identification with his father and his detachment from his mother the necessary process through which identity formation is accomplished. The Oedipus desire is interrupted once the son becomes conscious of his mother's lack of penis, which leads to the following castration anxiety; the phallus father thus represents a potential castrator that forces the son to relinquish his attachment to mother and to become a masculine desiring subject capable of taking up the dominant role in a new heterosexual relationship. The father's crucial role in ensuring the "normative, structuring function of the [Oedipus] complex" is highlighted by Jacques Lacan, who suggests that the father's intervention as a third term helps structure the child's symbolic universe, and its failure may leave the child "unanchored in language" and his identity undifferentiated (Fink 55). The father who brings out the castration threats serves as a model for the child to identify with, and his existence enables the child to break away from the mother, to enter the symbolic, and to form his own identity. Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection provides another perspective to think about the necessary separation. Since the inseparable mother-son union is fatal to the subject's consolidation of an independent identity, the maternal is labeled as the abject, adhesive "bad object" that needs to be "cleansed" and "vomited" by the subject itself (Kristeva 45). The concept of cleansing from the inside and vomiting out corresponds to the subject's effort to separate self from the chaotic, maternal space.

What would happen if the mother is overtly powerful, the father absent, and the separation between mother and son unfulfilled, as shown in the *Man of Law's Tale*? Both the Sultaness and Donegild are overtly powerful mothers; they have intruded into men's exclusive spaces either by usurping the throne, wresting the sovereign power from man, or seizing the pen and the right to make order. Far from being the reminders

of the "lack," the two mothers are indeed the "phallus mothers" who supplant the father figures—which happen to be absent in both scenarios—as the horrible castrators. It shows that the "man-killing" act is not practiced only by literal slaughter of men, but through metaphorical castration, which means to excise men's masculine identity and remove them from their proper position.

The terms "virago" and "Semiramis," which bring out the masculine women motif with a number of illustrations in the Middle Ages, help explain the two mothers' overwhelming power. According to the *Medieval English Dictionary*, the word "virago" expresses two meanings: it could simply mean "woman," the name given by Adam to Eve; but it also refers to "a manly or heroic woman . . . a woman who usurps man's office, an unwomanly woman;—used as term of contempt."[17] In discussing its reference to the Sultaness, Dor considers the term "virago" synonymous not merely with masculine militancy and usurpation of power, but also with the monstrosity and evil nature (163). The manifestation of feminine power and the act of castration can be further associated with the "vagina dentate motif," which means the woman who has toothed vagina and therefore is capable of practicing the castration act. Vagina dentata also implies "woman with a penis." Jon Stratton explains:

> The male fear is that the passive and submissive female mouth will become active and consuming. The mouth of *dentata* has become the signifier of the phallic woman, the virago, as opposed to the phallicised woman whom men want to assimilate, consume. (149)

The "devouring" threat is closely linked to "the annihilation of men," and thus results in the elimination of identity which is manifested through the Sultan's final fate. In the Syrian episode, the Sultan—a supposed dominant figure in his reign—is overtaken by

[17] See *MED*: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?size=First+100&type=headword&q1=virago&rgxp=constrained>. Dec 11, 2014.

his powerful phallus mother, deprived of his authority, and entirely "devoured" during the bloody banquet.

In addition to virago, another name Chaucer mentions is Semiramis, which refers to the Sultaness in line 359, in which she is called "Semyrame the secounde." Schibanoff explains that the depravity of this militant queen, a woman who masqueraded as a man, includes "incest with her son, the sin for which Dante consigns her to the second circle of hell" (85). Giovanni Boccaccio notes that she resembles her son very much: "both were beardless; her woman's voice sounded no different from her young son's; and she was just a trifle taller, if at all" (9). This description reveals that the son is not only indifferentiable from his mother, but is actually "replaced" by her. Semiramis, the "empowered mother," prevents him from constructing his own identity and also deprives him of his political right. By the same token, the Syrian Sultan is politically replaced and eventually loses his life. Although he has shown his own desire for Constance—girl outside of the mother-son-father triangle whose existence somehow testifies the Sultan's wish for becoming a desiring subject and taking up the masculine role—his powerful mother prevents him from doing so.

The dissimilar mother-son relationships therefore mark the crucial distinction between the seeming double of Constance's two experiences, namely the Syrian and Northumbrian episodes. Being incapable of separating himself from the maternal force, the Sultan is not only metaphorically "devoured" by his phallus mother, but is literally killed in the banquet. By contrast, when King Alla hears his mother's despicable deeds, he overturns her power, heads to Rome for repentance, and finally reunites with his wife and son. In addition, Cawsey has pointed out the Sultan's problem by calling his conversion "a bargain, a merchant's deal" (391); the exactly same criticism could also be applied to the Roman Emperor, for whom the union is a "bargain" for religious and territorial expansion. King Alla, however, converts after witnessing Christ's force,

which indicates a form of paternal intervention. When judging the false knight's accusation, King Alla makes the knight swear on a "Briton gospel book" that Constance is, according to his claim, guilty of murder. Later, it is stated that "Jhesus, of his mercy, / Made Alla wedden ful solempnely / This hooly mayden, that is so bright and sheene; / And thus Christ ymaad Custance a queene" ("Jesus, of His mercy, / Made Alla wed full solemnly / This holy maiden, that is so bright and beautiful; / And thus has Christ made Custance a queen" [690-93]). Instead of stating that "King Alla marries Custance," the narrator unfolds how "Christ makes him wed Custance and makes Custance a queen." Through the paternal intervention, the King is able to break the mother-son linkage, receive baptism, and marry Constance. Moreover, the divine intervention also signifies the transformation of England from a pagan land to a new religious symbol. Despite the fact that Constance is sent to Syria by her Roman father, God brings her to England, and thus "makes the English less Rome's holy subject than God's chosen people" (Lavezzo 102).

In addition to marrying Constance, King Alla is also able to avoid Donegild's manipulation and hold his own judgment. After reading Donegild's fake letter, King Alla makes the following statement:

> 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 feir,
> And eek my wyf, unto myn hoom-comynge. (760-5)
> [Welcome be the dispensation of Christ for evermore
> To me that am now learned in his teaching!
> Lord, welcome be thy desire and thy pleasure;

I put all my will in thy governance.

Guard this child, whether it be foul or fair,

And also my wife, until my home-coming.]

Rather than being influenced by Donegild's repulsive description of his son and wife, the King insists on keeping his belief in God, and puts all his will in God's governance. His alliance with God the father ensures his unification with Constance and makes him an active masculine figure eventually reclaiming the political power once stolen by the maternal force.

Apart from marking difference from the Syria episode, King Alla's attitude towards Christianity also profiles the germ of Christian in a pagan land, reiterating the original Christian development. This idea could be testified by the distinct setting of the pagan Northumberland. While the heathen Syria and Rome together show a rather contemporary atmosphere, the Northumberland episode exhibits instead an antique world which is both spatially and temporally far away. The spatial and temporal distance creates a further sense of remoteness and primitiveness which makes England a metaphorical "Eastern land" regardless of its actual location. The "East" here signifies not the geographical East—since Northumberland is in fact located to the west of Rome—but a land outside of Western civilization, a primitive land inhabited by "the barbarous others." However, when describing the course of conversion in Northumberland, the narrative adds religiously embellished details to the story through which England is portrayed almost like a sacred land under God's blessing. Unlike the Sultan who receives baptism only to fulfill his desire for Constance or the Christian Emperor who "trades" his own daughter for territorial expansion, the inhabitants in Northumberland convert after witnessing God's miracle. When Constance is falsely accused, a Briton book written with "Evaungiles" ("the gospels") has been brought in (666); the narrator describes that "on this book he [the false knight] swoor anoon / She

gilty was, and in the meene whiles / An hand hum smoot upon the nekke-boon, / That doun he fil atones as a stoon" ("on this book he swore at once / That she was guilty, and in the same moment / A hand struck him upon the neck-boon, / That down he fell at once like a stone" [667-70]). The scene happening in front of the witnesses in King Alla's court is then followed by "a voice which could be heard by everyone there" (673), which testifies the guiltlessness of Constance. The direct intervention of God not only rescues Constance from the crisis she faces, but demonstrates the special role of Northumberland, for God's force neither appears in the delineation of Rome, the supposed Christian center, nor in the Syria episode, in which the Sultan and his followers all undergo Christian conversion. The unique and archaic setting and the portrayal of the Northumberland scenario obliquely refer to the initial development of Christianity an "Eastern pagan land" and its spread in ancient Rome, where Christianity had become the dominant religion. After Constance is proven innocent with the help of the holy miracle, "The kyng—and many another in that place— / Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!" (685-86). In addition, people in Northumberland do not regard conversion as an exchange or political expansion or confuse spiritual wealth with temporal one. A counter example of the "corrupted or deviated" Christianity in the contemporary age, the Anglo-Saxon England represents the ideal Christianity and therefore epitomizes a new "center." In this sense, England, which is a double East at the start, comes to signify a double West—or an "Occidentalized East" in contrast to the Emperor's "Orientalized West." Resisting a stable position, Northumberland is indeed a "hybrid" that represents both the East and the West. On one hand, it is a "doubled East" in terms of spatial and temporal remoteness as well as overtly obvious resemblance to the heathen Syria; on the other hand, it is a "doubled West" because Constance—the moving center of "ideal" Christianity—brings her religion to England and consequently converts the English inhabitants.

Internal Other in Universalized Christian World

Interestingly, Northumberland's double identity makes itself an interface of the various "doubles" discussed in this chapter: Rome and Byzantine Rome, Byzantine Rome and Syria, Syria and Northumberland, Northumberland and Rome thus present a four-fold doubling which subtly profiles a world enclosed within Christian boundary—even the seemingly religious others are encoded into Christian knowledge system and are assessed according to their relative position to the Christian "self." The Emperor's Rome is the "negative example" associated more with both Byzantine Rome and Syria, and on the opposite is the Christianized Northumberland and the implied "Ancient Rome." Nevertheless, far from displaying binary opposition, these different "doubles" are interconnected to each other and are defined and evaluated in terms of their conformity with the Christian values. In the *Man of Law's Tale*, the non-Christians signify not "external others" or "absolute alterity," but the "double in reverse." Hence, the Syrian Sultaness is referred to as "serpent under femynynytee" ("Serpent under femininity" [360]) or "Satan," both of which are typical evils within Christian framework. This echoes Said's discussion about Dante's *Inferno*, in which Mohammed is placed in the very heart of the Christian hell. He states: "Islam is inside from the start, as even Dante, great enemy of Mohammed, had to concede when he placed the Prophet at the very heart of his *Inferno*" (Said 2014: 193). Likewise, the Sultaness, who stands for the "faithful Islam" in this tale, is delineated as the "negative example" that, though being repulsive and frightening, is still enclosed within the Christian framework and indeed bears disturbing similarities to real Christians in the crusade era. Islam in this tale is therefore transformed from an external other into an internal other, an intimate stranger whose existence helps to define self.

The Christian enclosure to a great extent epitomizes the desire for Christian

expansion. It reveals not only the desire for territorial expansion—which is demonstrated most explicitly through the Emperor's consent to the Sultan's marriage proposal, or in fact "a deal" that exchanges daughter for Christian dominion—but also the desire to codify the whole world into Western understanding. Hence, the story does not avoid providing detailed delineation of the Muslim world, but uses familiar words, terms and names to encode the unfamiliar into the familiar. When discussing the first Latin translation of Qur'an, Christopher Taylor suggests that "[f]or the first time in Latin Christendom, Islam was granted an ideological space. Once recognized, this space could be Christianized" (40). The *Man of Law's Tale* offers a similar recognition or "ideological space" for the Islamic others, who can now be placed in a space ready for enclosure within Christian knowledge.

However, the idea of Christian enclosure results in an anxiety over the identity issue and impurity. In the *King of Tars*, the fear of impurity is unmasked through the portrayal of miscegenation; the visible monstrosity of the "hybrid" child manifests how interreligious marriage blurs the border between self and other and subsequently brings forth the "feared hybrid"—a creature that is physically and metaphorically "unrecognizable," a creature that defies explicit identification. In the *Man of Law's Tale*, similar anxiety is aroused in a different way. While the story presents a desire for a universal Christendom on the superficial level, the plot in fact prevents its realization by characterizing the Sultaness as dreadful, hostile, and resistant to Christianity. In other words, the existence of the Sultaness ensures the separation between Christianity and Islam, thereby avoiding the inclusion of the overtly inassimilable other. This fear for assimilation is concomitant with the desire for universalizing Christianity but revealed in an indirect way. Thus, it is the Islamic Sultaness instead of the Christian Romans that refuses intercultural marriage. The Sultaness's fear of losing her own faith, belief and central values, which make up her original identity and purity, mirrors in reverse the

fear of the Latin West.

Helping deal with these internally contradictive forces, the Northumberland episode represents probably the most important design in the tale because its "hybrid" existence lays bare both desire and anxiety. As a double of Syria, Northumberland realizes the conversion of the East, through which Constance's journey becomes a Crusade as well. However, as an assimilable other, Northumberland also replaces Syria to be the "pagan East" that is finally included in the Christian border, thereby offering a "safer language" for the delineation of Christian universalization. Being the ambivalent "double" of both the East and the West, Northumberland thus reflects the equally ambivalent feelings toward other, or more precisely, the East.

Conclusion

The model of East/West, heathen/Christian binary opposition and the seemingly Orientalist description of the East are evoked only to be challenged in the *Man of Law's Tale*. By deploying the complicated design of the Rome-Syria-Northumberland relationship, Chaucer simultaneously reflects the anxiety about religious other, introspects the emerging problems during or after the Crusade ages, and conciliates the desire for a universal Christendom. The East signifies a multifaceted target that triggers both desire and fear, and neither the East itself nor the Western perception of the East can be reduced to a unitary idea. Hence, England, which doubles both the heathen Syria and the Latin Rome, represents a hybrid that simultaneously promises exclusion and inclusion. Moreover, the four-fold doubling subtly profiles a world encircled by the Christian boundary and changes the external other into internal other, demonstrating how the romance offers a "safe language" to tackle what would otherwise be difficult to handle. It shows how the external other, the feared stranger, occupies a reverse while

interdependent space of self, and therefore brings forth a heightened sense of ambivalence.

Chapter IV: Covering (with) the East: Layers of Clothing in *Emaré*

Like the *King of Tars* and the *Man of Law's Tale*, the romance of *Emaré* features the dominant presence of the Eastern image under a (post-)crusade context that includes the military conflicts between the European Christians and Muslim others in part of its storyline. Despite many similarities it shares with other "Constance Romances," such as the innocent heroine's reluctant departure from her country, her subsequent sufferings resulting from the encounter with people living in unfamiliar places, and her re-unification with both her father and the Western patriarchy she belongs to, *Emaré* claims its uniqueness in terms of its presentation of the internal and external chaos. In *Emaré,* the anxiety over incest—the problem stemming from within a family unit or a certain social community—is intertwined with the anxiety over Eastern others—the military, religious and cultural threats coming from without Western territory. However, while other Constance romances foreground the East/West, pagan/Christian opposition, Islamic others in this tale only appear as the foil in the background. Paradoxically, the beautiful Eastern robe covering up Emaré's body renders the East omnipresent throughout the tale and consequently makes *Emaré* a hybrid being embodying both Christian virtues and exotic attraction. Edward Said has argued in *Orientalism* that what the Orentialist discourse aims "was not so much to represent Islam in itself as to represent it *for* the medieval Christian" (1979: 60). Written after the period of large-scale clashes between the forces of Christian Crusaders and Muslims, *Emaré* did work—in a way—for medieval Christendom, but it also wove the messages not so preferable to Western readers into its cunningly designed plots. Emaré's exotic robe, represented by the Western narrative but interestingly becoming the representation of Emaré's identity, occupies a crucial position in the study of East/West relationship in this tale.

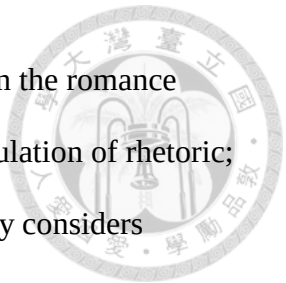
A tale roughly dated around 1400 (cf. Putter and Rickert), *Emaré* belongs to the Constance saga and is connected with various analogues, like Gower's second exemplum in the *Confessio Amantis*, Nicholas Trevet's Anglo-Norman *Cronicles*, the *King of Tars*, and *Le Bone Florence of Rome* (Heng 184); it is even more intimately linked to the *Man of Law's Tale*, according to many verbal parallels which do not appear in Trivet, Chaucer's major source, nor in Gower (Hanks 185). The romance of *Emaré* presents the story of a defenseless heroine who, resembling the virtuous Constance in the *Man of Law's Tale*, always keeps faith in God though undergoing reluctant exiles twice in her life and enduring much suffering because of her beauty. The story begins with Emaré's widowed father, Sir Artyus, who the narrative describes as a courteous king and an excellent person. He, while being a good ruler, has indulged himself with various kinds of "playing" after losing his beloved queen. When the King of Sicily comes visiting him, he is given a fabulous cloth made by a Saracen princess, which he later makes into a robe and bestows upon Emaré as a love token. Clothed with the fantastic artifact, Emaré becomes the object of her father's excessive desire. She rejects Sir Artyus's incestuous love and his marriage proposal and for this reason is then banished from her country. Emaré renames herself as Egaré after being saved by Sir Kadore in the land of Galys. The King of Galys immediately falls in love with her because of her "unearthly beauty" and marries her regardless of the Queen's disagreement. To break the marriage, the Queen of Galys falsifies the letters between the couple when the King is out for war against the Saracens, and her falsehood results in Emaré's second banishment. Emaré is set adrift again, this time with her little boy Segramour, and finally is driven toward Rome, where she is found by a rich merchant. Several years later, the King of Galys decides to go to Rome for repentance, and so does Sir Artyus; they head for Rome, re-encounter Emaré and Segramour, apologize for her suffering, and reunite with her as a perfect family after receiving her forgiveness.

Though often read as a divine tale with too much repetition and criticized for lacking tension and "sophisticated and dramatically effective presentation" (Mehl 138), the tale of *Emaré* is more controversial and complicated than other stories in the Constance Group. Its distinctiveness is shown in mainly two different ways: its presentation of the father-daughter incest and its depiction of the East/West conflicts; unrelated as they seem, these two motifs get entangled under the cover of the Eastern cloth-robe. In the Introduction to the *Man of Law's Tale*, the Man of Law declares that he will not recount the famous tales or epic stories which have already been told by Chaucer in one book or another, nor will he recount the tales of abominable incest—such as the wicked example of Canace, who falls into sinful love with her own brother, or the cursed king Antiochus, who deprives his daughter of her maidenhead—which Chaucer himself never writes in any of his compositions (47-89). The Man of Law's deliberate refusal to retell the stories of incest creates paradoxical effects: on one hand, he excises the incest elements from his tale; on the other, the announcement ironically draws the audience's attention to the very motif he defies—the motif that might otherwise have been ignored. In contrast to the ambiguous statement concerning the *Man of Law's Tale*, the theme of incest is portrayed in *Emaré* in an undisguised manner and placed blatantly in the center of the heroine's subsequent hardship. In addition, *Emaré* renders the relationship between Christian West and pagan East intertwined. Saracens, the representative enemies of the Christian world, are only briefly mentioned as the King of Sicily's and later the King of Galys's enemies in battles, dwindling only to an "off-stage menace" (Mills xiii) compared to the "main villains": Emaré's incestuous father and the King of Galys's envious mother. Compared with the *King of Tars*, in which all the Christians in historical accounts are displaced by Oriental characters, namely the Tartars, *Emaré* eliminates all the stereotypical Saracen antagonists, leaving only Christians on the forestage. They are the virtuous defenders of

Christian faith as well as the most despicable perpetrators causing great agony to Emaré. Yet, despite the excision of the Eastern characters, the fabulous cloth made by the heathen princess is worn by Emaré throughout the story and is described even as an indivisible part of her beauty. In this sense, the Western princess can also be read as the bearer of Eastern attraction, becoming a hybrid that blurs the boundary between East and West, self and other.

Several questions arise from this thought-provoking setting: How should we read the father-daughter incest in the tale? And how can we explain Emaré's robe, which is placed in the middle of the incestuous relationship? Is the robe a magical token of Eastern barbarity that triggers Sir Artyus's innate violence and excessive desire, or is it in fact an excuse for patriarchal violence? How can we interpret the East represented by the Western narrative, and how can we read the West covered under the Eastern mask? The fabulous cloth-robe occupies perhaps the most crucial role in the romance of *Emaré* because its existence complicates both the theme of incest and the motif of the East. Without the spices it adds to the plot, *Emaré* would simply be a tale triggered by incest—the internal problem of Sir Artyus's court. However, the cloth-robe's intervention covers up the anxiety over internal problems by drawing the Eastern motifs—the external problems—into the court within Western enclosure. A site where different motifs converge, the fabulous artifact becomes an object which uncovers the central issue in the tale: the anxiety over identity. It corresponds to the narrative of the story, through which rich complexity is manifested and the border between the East and the West rendered ambivalent.

Emaré unfolds a world filled with anxieties resulting from contacts between family members, between people from different socio-religious communities, and between humans and materials, yet the sophisticated intersection of things, identities, desires and fears have not yet been adequately explored. Previous scholars have brought about



critical insight into the robe, the narrative, and the incestuous desire in the romance from different perspectives, including religion, gender and the manipulation of rhetoric; however, their research mostly follows one single trajectory and rarely considers different issues together. For instance, Dieter Mehl categorizes *Emaré* among religious works and reads it as a devotional tale which comprises a large number of repetitive lines that creates a certain sense of "monotony and absence of tension" (138). Mehl regards Emaré as an exemplar of Christian virtues, especially chastity and faith, and her robe "an inseparable attribute, like her outward beauty," which is in many ways "symbolic of her inner perfections" (139). Following Mehl's interpretation, Mortimer J. Donovan also assigns much importance to the effect of the robe, which not only "reflects beauty," as Mehl has argued, but also magically weakens the Emperor's sanity and catalyzes the attempted incest (Donovan 340-41). Though offering introductory analyses, Mehl's and Donovan's studies focus much on the religious meanings and straightforward moral messages of the story and thus overlook the complexity invested in both the characters and the objects appearing in the tale.

On the other hand, Margaret Robson's and Gail Ashton's interpretations of *Emaré* stand in opposition to previous research by reading Emaré as an active character or at least a figure capable of carrying forward the plot in her own way. Resisting the reading of Emaré as "a passive heroine *par excellence*," Robson claims that she is indeed the dominating force in the tale, playing the role of both an active bearer of the magic robe and a lover desiring for her father (66-68). She also notes that the robe, which is fashioned by the sultan's daughter, is "effectively a message from one woman (more precisely, a daughter) to another," and the silent communication of weaving indicates the transferring of the forbidden sexual wishes (68). Ashton, on the contrary, considers Emaré not a desirer in disguise but a character who resolves the initial chaos resulting from her father's incestuous desire by transforming herself from a daughter, which is yet

an instable and shifting social role—to a wife and a mother. Emaré's re-negotiation of her position stabilizes the family unit and eliminates potential threats posted by incest. Ashton mentions that though the robe indicates the power of sexuality, it also figures as "the key to the repositioning of the daughter-father role" (425). Emaré's robe, therefore, finally functions as "a stabilizing influence, for through it she [Emaré] is able to reposition 'daughter' in favor of 'wife-mother,' mediator of order, of civilization" (Ashton 426). Robson's and Ashton's research did offer interpretations different from traditional religious readings and shed light on the relationship between the robe and its bearer, that is, Emaré. However, they still run short of explaining the Eastern motifs and the significance of the robe itself.

Appearing as an inseparable attribute of Emaré, the cloth-robe, its function as a gift, and the act of gift giving suggest significant messages. Christine Li-ju Tsai, for example, explores the robe's social and psychological dimensions and its specific connection to Eastern elements. The connotations of Sir Tergaunte's destructive force, his overtly intimate relationship with Sir Artyus, and the exotic cloth he gives to Sir Artyus all suggest that the outset of disorder could be attributed to "an external force thrust[ing] intrusively into the imperial family, disturbing its former moral probity and interpersonal propriety, against Christian ethics" (Tsai). Tsai's reading presupposes a stable, uncontaminated, harmonious Christian boundary, which is later intruded by the chaotic forces of the external pagan East. Amanda Hopkins, on the other hand, ascribes the blame to internal disorder rather than the external one. She argues that "the emperor's desire towards his daughter is neither explicitly nor implicitly founded in the cloth or any 'magical powers' it might exert" (76); instead, the robe "has an integral part in the emperor's attempt to coerce his daughter into marrying him" (Hopkins 81), and is deliberately used as a means to divert readers from the emperor's incestuous desire and diminish his culpability (Hopkins 76). Hopkins's explanation hints at the clever use of

rhetoric, which has been discussed more carefully in Anne Laskaya's article. While Hopkins highlights how the description of the robe helps attribute the incestuous lust and chaos to external factors and transmuting the emperor's desire for Emaré into "a passion less heinous" (76), Laskaya explores how "a rhetoric strategy of muting and evading women's suffering" works in favor of the male characters, frames the female subject within a patriarchal social order, and subsequently reconfirms patriarchy (101-07). Her study on the rhetoric of incest demonstrates that although Emaré escapes her father's sexual violence by resisting his incestuous desire, her exile from and restoration to the original family as well as another patriarchal household accomplish the purification of men and thus "[affirm] a form of family violence in which women's subjugation is naturalized" (111).

Though quite inspiring to some extent, these interpretations either attribute the source of chaos and instability to a single cause or regard the ending of the tale as a restoration of patriarchal order, thereby falling short of explaining the intriguing intersection between things, identities and border anxieties. I would suggest, however, the significance of the tale lies in its manifestation of an always unsettling East/West, self/other relationship and its deliberate obscurity of border, both of which are achieved through the subtle depiction of the robe. *Emaré* does offer a religious story on the surface which presents the disturbance of family relationship and social order at the start and demonstrates how everything is restored into its proper state in the end. Yet, something more radical underlies the tale; it not only destabilizes the borders, unsettles the concept of identity and undermines the existence of a "pure, virtuous" West as the story progresses, but also makes the final unification scene questionable and suspicious.

To continue and extend the study on border and East/West relationship discussed in previous chapters, this chapter will begin with the analysis of the father-daughter incest and the exotic robe, both of which stand for the most crucial elements that make *Emaré*

an unique tale. In the *King of Tars* and the *Man of Law's Tale*, the heroines both cross the geographical border, traveling from the Christian community to the remote pagan land; their journey enables readers to witness the change of geographical and cultural landscape. However, in *Emaré,* the main characters all belong to the Christian world, and they never travel out of Christian boundary—even when they fight with Saracens at the borderland, the battle scenes have never been brought to the foreground. Interestingly, the cloth-robe becomes the only thing that "visualizes" the act of border-crossing. Its intimate association with both the Eastern and Western characters strengthens the sense of ambivalence and makes the self/other, subject/object, East/West relationship complicated. In addition, the cloth-robe represents various kinds of "covers" in the romance, covering up *Emaré*'s body and identity as well as Sir Artyus's desire. It also manifests the idea of "enclosure": it encloses different Western legends within its embroidery and frames *Emaré* assiduous journey by participating in her exile and her final re-unification; the enclosure displayed through the cloth-robe even parallels the enclosure of the narrative, thereby making *Emaré* a romance with intricate layers, each of which is interlinked to the other. The cloth-robe and the narrative imbricate in the tale to denounce the existence of a clear-cut boundary and render the identity always unsettling, always shifting, and always under negotiation. Nevertheless, it is incest, rather than the exotic artifact or the Eastern world it originally belongs to, that first triggers the plot and unsettles the presupposed identity and social position. It is therefore necessary to begin with the discussion about incest in *Emaré* and how it helps bring in the Eastern motif which is the central focus of this chapter.

The Father-daughter Incest and the Disturbance of (B)Order

The romance begins with the portrayal of a harmonious royal family which appears in conformity with conventional standards in every aspect. Both the King and Queen

have received high praises from the narrative:

> Her [Emaré's] fader was an emperour,
>
> Of castelle and of riche toure,
>
> Sir Artyus was his nome;
>
> He hadde bothe halles and bowres,
>
> Frithes fair, forestes with flowres,
>
> So gret a lord was none.
>
> Weddedde he had a lady,
>
> That was both fair and semely,
>
> White as whales bone;
>
> Dame Eraine hette that emperes,
>
> She was fulle of love and goodnesse,
>
> So curtais lady was none. (25-36)[18]
>
> [Emaré's father was an emperor of castle and of tower, and his name was Sir Artyus; he owned both halls and bowers, beautiful woods and forests filled with flowers. There was no lord greater than him. He had married a lady, who was both fair and seemly and looked as white as whale's bone. The empress was called Dame Eraine; she was full of love and virtues. There was no lady more courteous than she.][19]

This short description about the court silhouettes an ideal Western family, in which everything is placed in proper position. Among all, Emaré's father, Sir Artyus, receives excessively positive regards. He is described as a good man, a good king, and a good

[18] The quotations of *Emaré* are taken from *Six Middle English Romances* edited by Maldwyn Mills (1992).

[19] In this chapter, all the translations of *Emaré* are my own. I have consulted the annotations and footnotes in *Six Middle English Romances* edited by Maldwyn Mills, *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* edited by David Wallace, and the *Geoffrey Chaucer Page* edited by Harvard University (http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/litsubs/breton/emare.html).

ruler in all aspects. It states that "Syr Artyus was the best manne / In the worlde that lyvede thanne, / Both hardy and therto wyght. / . . . / The emperour of gentyll blode, / Was a curteys lorde and a gode, / In alle maner of thynge" ("Sir Artyus was the best man in the world at that time, and was valiant and strong. . . . The emperor of noble lineage was a courteous lord and an excellent person in every respect" [37-75]). The praise for him sounds rather ironic because the ideal picture portrayed at the start is shortly disillusioned, and after that everything deviates from its presupposed order in a rapid speed.

The empress's death marks the first moment of the collapse of order. After losing his wife, Sir Artyus "ledde hys lyf yn weddewede, / And myche loved playnge" ("led the life of a widower, and love playing very much" [77-8]). The words "love playing very much" allude to not only Sir Artyus's inappropriate manner or licentious private life, but also the breaking-down of the father-mother-child balance. The wife's absence makes the husband's desire unanchored, and the unceasingly roving desire is finally directed to the emperor's own daughter. This inappropriate desire pictorializes a world where all characters are out of place: the father claims for the position of his daughter's husband, the mother is absent from her place, and the daughter is compelled to be her father's wife. In *Emaré*, the shattered family structure prompts the occurrence of incest, which retrospectively reifies the problem from within. The characters in this incestuous relationship transgress the border of kinship and thus enter a space where identities are destabilized and their supposed positions are challenged.[20] Yin Liu argues in her article that "[i]n the Middle English romances, where identity is primarily represented as a

[20] The way in which incest confuses identities and kinship categorization could best be exemplified by the Old English riddle Yin Liu refers to. She quotes from a riddle in the *Exeter Book* which begins with the following lines: "A man sat at wine / with his two wives / And his two sons / and his two daughters, / Dear sisters, / and their two sons" (qtd. in Liu 179). The nine identities collapse into only five when the readers realize that "Lot had children by his daughters, who are therefore also his wives, so that his sons are also his grandsons" (Liu 179-80).

configuration of social, economic, religious, and ideological systems, incest is self-destructive because it undermines the order of society" (180). The threat of incestuous desire has to be disavowed and displaced because it "defies the lines that connect and divide people" (Liu 180) and thus destabilizes one's identity, which is closely linked to one's position within a society and one's relation with others.

However, to tackle the problem originating from the Western world exemplified by Sir Artyus's court, the narrative cleverly introduces the "thing" from the external world and uses it as the cover of the internal chaos. The exotic cloth-robe represents the external intervention. It is placed in the center of the problematic father-daughter relationship and is bestowed upon Emaré at an intriguing timing: after the desire emerges and before the marriage proposal is made. Hopkins notes that although Sir Artyus does not tell Emaré of his intentions to marry her until she is wearing the robe, "the emperor's desire towards his daughter is neither explicitly nor implicitly founded in the cloth or any 'magical powers' it might exert" (76). Indeed, the robe is not so much a "trigger" as a "cover" of the emperor's desire because its resplendent appearance and Eastern origin make it seems like a love charm that bewilders the Western lord and distracts him from the right track. The cloth-robe further complicates the situation by occupying a site where the anxiety over incest and the anxiety over East/West border converge.

The Multifaceted Significance of the Cloth-Robe and Its Transformation

In order to understand the importance of the cloth-robe and how it mediates different anxieties, we must scrutinize its debut in the story and its connection with several different characters. The cloth first appears in the tale when the King of Sicily visits Sir Artyus's court. It is stated that "The riche kynge of Cesyle / To the emperour gan wende; / A ryche present wyth hym he browght, / A cloth that was wordylye

wroght" ("The rich King of Sicily went to the emperor's court, and brought with him a rich present, a cloth that was excellently made" [80-83]). This description is then followed by nearly 100 lines portraying the luxurious decorations on the cloth. The King of Sicily then explains that the cloth is made by a heathen emir's daughter, who weaves four love stories on the four corners of the cloth and gives it to the son of Sultan as a present of love. The King then describes that "My fadyr was a nobyll man, / Of the sowdan he hyt wan, / Wyth maystrye and wyth myghth. / For gret love he yaf hyt me, / I brynge hyt the in specyalté" ("My father, who was a noble man, won it from the sultan with mastery and might. He gave it to me because of his great love, and I bring it for you as a sign of special affection" [172-76]). When the King of Sicily returns to his country, Sir Artyus then thinks of his beautiful daughter, Emaré. He falls in love with her upon seeing her returning to his court and soon sends his counselors to Rome to ask for the Pope's permission of the marriage. After obtaining the Pope's consent, Sir Artyus makes the cloth into a robe, clothes it on Emaré, and then proposes to her. According to the description above, the cloth has been passed on to four different owners, namely the sultan's son, the King of Sicily's father, the King, and finally Sir Artyus, who then re-makes the cloth into his own artifact and uses it as a gift demonstrating his own purpose. Two significant details are revealed in this long description related to the cloth-robe: one is the meanings borne by the cloth, and another is the emperor's re-forming of the cloth.

The cloth is first and foremost a love token, but the "love" is not confined to the emir's daughter's romantic love for the son of sultan. The four corners of the tapestry comprise four love stories, three of which are taken from other romances, and the last one is about the weaver and her lover. The heathen lady's romantic love echoes the loves of the romance lovers, Ydoyne and Amadas, Trystram and Isowde, and Florys and Blawncheflour, all of which are lovers in popular medieval tales told in various

languages and versions. When describing the three tales on the embroidery, the narrator states that these different corners present lovers "Wyth love that was so trewe" (123), "for they loved hem ryght" (136), and "For they loved wyth honour" (148). While these tales help demonstrate the heathen lady's love, the terms "true," "right," and "honor" chosen by the narrator in fact fail to reflect the adulterous love or the forbidden love actually happening in either the romances on the tapestry or the loves presented in *Emaré*. Robson explains that "[t]he pairs of lovers depicted on the cloth created by the sultan's daughter are lovers who are forbidden to love each other" (68). When discussing the first three stories, Tsai explains more explicitly that

> these three couples include adulterers, namely, Tristan and Iseult, and lovers of unequal social status, as with Amadas and Ydoine, and Floris and Blauncheflour. The status inequality of Floris and Blauncheflur is further added complicated [sic] by their different religions, Floris being the Islamic Spanish prince, and Blauncheflur a Christian captive's daughter. Each of these three couples are impeded by some impenetrable social and cultural barriers that make their love unattainable.

However, these stories, all of which contain more or less some kinds of border-crossing and challenges to social norms, are intentionally chosen by the Emir's daughter as her "love token."

These "forbidden loves" or "unattainable love" are then linked to another kind of questionable love, that is, the homosocial love that transgresses the accepted morals and social norms. After the King of Sicily's father won the cloth from battle, the exotic artifact is then treated as an emblem of love between males. It is used as a demonstration of family love when the King of Sicily's father passes it on to his son to show his great love. The King then hands it to Sir Artyus in order to express his "special affection" (176). The homosocial, if not homosexual, love between these two lords is

elaborated through their intimate interaction. It is stated that "The Kyng of Cesyle dwelled ther, / As long as hys wyll wer, / Wyth þe emperour forto play" ("The King of Sicily is allowed to dwell there as long as he wanted and played with the emperor" [181-83]). The "play" used here cunningly conveys sexual connotation through its connection to other "playing" mentioned in different parts of the tale. The word is first mentioned in the sentence describing Sir Artyus's "playing" after his wife's death. While the first "playing" has disclosed the emperor's lack of discipline and his indulgence in sensuality, it is the following description that heightens the controversial effect of all the previous "playing." When Emaré refuses her father's proposal, she makes the response that "Yyf hyt so betydde that ye me wedde, / And we shulde play togedur in bedde, / Bothe we were forlorne!" ("If you really go so far as to marry me and we should have sex in bed, both of us would be forsaken [by God]!" [253-55]). The "play" here explicitly carries sexual meaning, and the frequent use of the word strengthens the connection between these "play/playing," thereby adding sexual connotations to the Emperor's "playing" after his wife's death and his homosexual "playing" with the King of Sicily.

A token of forbidden love, taboo love and homosexual love, the Eastern cloth is further problematized by its bringers, whose name also implies Eastern connotation. Tsai associates Sir Tergaunte's with the East by pointing out the similarity between the name "Tergaunte" and "Termagaunt," which refers to a deity "worshipped by Moslems, Saracens, or the pagans," and "has passed into the English language to denote a bombastic blusterer, an overbearing character, renowned for turbulence, violence, and destructive power" (Tsai). In the romance of *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, a widely appreciated work also written in the fourteenth century, the name "Termagaunt" (or "Tervagaunt") appears eight times when the Saracen characters make their prayers to Muslim gods; it is also mentioned in the *King of Tars*, the *Sultan of Babylon*, *Song of Roland*, *Guy*, and

other famous medieval romances. The frequency of bringing out the name "Termagaunt" and its juxtaposition to Mohammed and other Muslim gods not only indicates that the name may be a common knowledge among medieval readers, but echoes Said's argument that "there is the motif of the Orient as insinuating danger. Rationality is undermined by Eastern excesses, those mysteriously attractive opposites to what seem to be normal values" (1979: 57).

The deliberate choice of the name Tergaunte recalls the excesses, abnormality, and turbulence of the East and points out the anxiety over the pagan power that threatened the Western Christendom both physically and metaphorically. Tsai further elaborates that under the fourteenth-century post-Crusading background, Tergaunte's role, which "overflows with destructive pagan implication," signifies the external agent that "intrude[s] into Christendom and taints Christian purity." Tsai's argument echoes Ad Putter's statement that the robe "transforms situations by an unknowable power of determination that is *external* to them" (176) and that it epitomizes the same externality associated with Sir Tergaunte (177). While the deliberate use of the name "Tergaunte" does suggest the linkage between the gift-giver and the destructive pagan force, which is regarded as a threatening force against Christian society in the late Middle Ages, the actual cause of turbulence in this tale is by no means "external," nor is the Eastern cloth a magic talisman that enhances the seductive effect of Emarés' beauty, as Donovan and Robson have argued (Donovan 341; Robson 69). Instead, Sir Artyus's act of re-forming the cloth testifies the correspondence between Sir Artyus's internal alterity and the contaminating, destructive power which *seems* external. The cloth is therefore not so much the representation of the insinuating dangers from the outside, but in fact a point of intersection between the internal problem—incest—and the external threat—the East.

Sir Artyus's re-forming of the cloth is crucial because it not only denounces the possibility of externalizing the cause of incest, but manifests the cloth-robe's function as

"cover." Instead of directly bestowing the fabulous cloth on Emaré, Sir Artyus re-forms it into a robe before sending it out as a present. Because of his personal investment in it, the Eastern artifact cannot be simply viewed as an external source of chaos that intrudes the stable Christian world, nor can it be interpreted as a love charm which "suggest[s] that blame for the father-daughter incest rests with chance, with heathen practices, with exotic Eastern magic rather than with Artyus himself" (Laskaya 107). John F. Sherry argues that "once an individual invests psychic energy in an object, the object becomes 'charged' with the energy of that agent. Objects become containers for the being of the donor, who gives a portion of that being to the recipient" (159). Through the act of re-forming, Sir Artyus transforms the cloth, which generally means "[a] piece of woven or felted fabric" or "a decorative cloth, a hanging, a tapestry" (*MED*),[21] into a robe, which means "[a] long, loose outer garment worn by men or women" (*MED*).[22] According to the definitions offered by *Medieval English Dictionary*, the robe is associated more with the idea of "cover" and is used as an outer object that covers something inner. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word cover as "anything that is put or laid over, or that naturally overlies or overspreads an object, with the effect of hiding, sheltering, or enclosing it" (*OED*).[23] If the existence of the cloth signifies both the romance love—which can be worshipped and glorified—and the forbidden love, taboo love or loves that transgress social norms—which should be repressed and prohibited, then the making of the robe helps display the former and conceal the latter.

When bestowing the robe on Emaré and uttering his proposal, Sir Artyus only takes the superficial meaning of the cloth explicitly mentioned by the narrative. Sir

[21] See *MED*: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?size=First+100&type=headword&q1=cloth&rgxp=constrained> May 14, 2015.
[22] See *MED*: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?size=First+100&type=headword&q1=robe&rgxp=constrained> May 14, 2015.
[23] The definition is taken from *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, May 10, 2015.

Artyus himself is praised as “the best man in the world,” “the emperor of noble lineage,” and “a courteous lord in all kinds of manner,” and the romances on the cloth is described as tales showing “true,” “rightful” and “honorable” loves. As if emphasizing this “rightfulness,” the emperor pursues his marriage in conformity with proper procedures. When the thought of marrying his own daughter comes into his mind, he summons his counselors and orders them to obtain the Pope of Rome’s permission:

> Messengerres forth they wente,
> They durste not breke hys commandement,
> And erles wyth hem yn fere.
> They wente to the courte of Rome,
> And browghte the popus bullus sone,
> To Wedde hys dowghter dere. (235-40)
> [Messengers went forth to Rome at once since they dared not break his bidding, and the earls traveled together with them. They went to the court of Rome, and quickly brought back the Pope’s bulls, which permitted the Emperor’s request to marry his dear daughter.]

This description proves that Sir Artyus does not ignore social norms; he follows Christian rules to require permission, and his request is permitted by the Pope, which makes him “gladde and blythe” (“glad and blithe” [241]). Due to this procedure, the robe is not perceived by Sir Artyus himself as a token of incestuous love or forbidden love, but a testament to his “rightful” love. Yet, what he really aims to acquire is the incestuous love associated with the forbidden or unattainable love the cloth indicates. In this sense, the robe becomes a fetishized object which represents both the revelation of the proper love and the concealment of the forbidden desire.

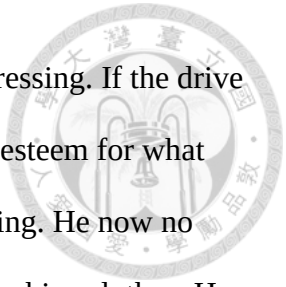
The Fetishized Robe as a Paradoxical Site of Disavowal and Acknowledgment

Echoing the function of skin in the *King of Tars*, the robe in *Emaré* also appears as fetish, occupying the paradoxical site of disavowal and acknowledgment. The robe, with its intense presence and dazzling beauty, covers up both Emaré's body and the "perverse" desire of the Christian emperor. When it first appears, the narrator describes it as a cloth richly contrived and full of beautiful, precious jewels, like topaz, ruby and gold (83-100). It is "So ryche a jwell ys ther non / In all Crystyante" ("So splendid and precious an object that nothing can match in all Christian lands" [107-08]). The resplendent appearance of the robe is repeatedly reminded by the narrator every time when desire—of whatever kind—appears in the tale. However, though the emperor's desire for his daughter emerges at the moment when he sees her returning to his court, he does not propose until she is covered under the robe. Rather than addressing her sexual charm, the emperor emphasizes particularly her visual attraction by stating that "Dowghtyr Y woll wedde the, / Thow art so fresh to behold" ("Daughter I will marry you, for you looks so fair" [248-9]).

In "Freud and Fetishism: Previously Unpublished Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society," Louis Rose elaborates Freud's observation that fetishism occupies a middle position between complete sublimation and repression; it manifests a mechanism which partially acknowledges while partially rejects the undesirable reality (1988: 156-57). Freud gives an example of a fetishist who was "a regular spectator during the act of undressing of a loved one who was very close to him: his mother" (1988: 154). When his voyeurism and inclination to his mother underwent a period of repression, fetishism is subsequently developed as a coping mechanism.[24] He became a clothes fetishist, but what really interested him is the unclothed state. Freud explains:

> The mechanism of the case is as following: it is a question of the drive to look,

[24] Also see Tsung-huei Huang's "After Hysteria—Debating Female Fetishism as a Coping Mechanism" (2005), p. 75-76, which offers an explicit explanation for Freud's idea of male and female fetishism.



> which likes to gaze and which is gratified by the act of undressing. If the drive is repressed, there suddenly emerges on the other side high esteem for what was concerned in a specific way with the scenes of undressing. He now no longer wants to look or to be reminded of it; but he now worships clothes. He now worships that which formerly prevented him from seeing: *he becomes a clothes fetishist out of the repression of the desire to look*. (1988: 155)

Freud's idea can be appropriated to explain the prolonged description of the robe, which is fetishized as a desired object that represents both the disavowal and confirmation of the emperor's incestuous desire. Sir Artyus's inclination to his daughter insinuates sexual meanings via his purpose to "marry" her, which suggests both social/legal bond and sexual unification. However, when he actually utters his intention, which happens after Emaré is dressed in the extravagant robe, his incestuous desire is elevated to a visual level: I want to marry you because you *look* so fair. In this sense, "clothes take the place of parts of the body" (Freud 1988: 156), and the emperor's desire to have her becomes his desire to worship her visual beauty, which is connected more intimately to the robe rather than her real body. Contrarily, the sexual dimension of marriage is uttered by Emaré, who rejects her father's proposal by stating that if they "play" ("have sexual intercourse") in bed, they will be eternally forlorn. Though Emaré addresses Sir Artyus's attempted incest and heinous desire, she speaks out only to reject it. In other words, the incestuous desire is denied and eliminated as soon as it is made public. The avoidance of having the sexual and incestuous desire explicitly articulated by the emperor indicates the effort of the romance narrative to select a safer language for the Western patriarchy to disclose the otherwise unutterable. The existence of the Eastern robe allows the narrative to retain the relatively acceptable part, the desire for the splendid artifact, and suppress the undesirable portion: the incest. The robe is therefore fetishized and so intermingled with the image of Emaré to the extent that it becomes the

reason of her attraction. In other words, the external threat appearing later in the story supplants the anxiety caused by incest, which is presented earlier in the tale, and becomes a metaphorical cover.

Nevertheless, the emergence of fetish as a coping mechanism paradoxically acknowledges what is to be repressed due to the double-faceted nature of fetishism. The emergence of fetish simultaneously announces—or in Freud's term, "acknowledges"—that there is a "perversion" that needs to be repressed, rejected and eliminated from the surface (1975: 156). Therefore, as Emaré travels from her own country to the kingdom of Galys and finally to Rome with her omnipresent robe, the idea of incest runs through the tale as well. Since the attraction of the robe is repeatedly reminded and idealized, Emaré's marriage with the king of Galys also becomes an extension of her first (but never completed) one, rendering not just the robe but also the incest omnipresent throughout the story. In this sense, the robe betrays the narrative's original intent and reflects the narrative's failure to disclose the actual situation.

It could be said that the anxiety over incest is covered up through the fabulous robe, without which it would be hard for the narrative to find a safer language to both present the emperor's desire and at the same time render it less problematic; however, the robe is also the key factor that unsettles the border between self and other, the East and the West. Sir Artyus does not propose to Emaré directly; instead, he proposes after Emaré is dressed in the robe made of the Eastern cloth. Because of the intervention of this exotic image, the anxiety over incest is deliberately linked to the anxiety over the East, which represents things unfamiliar, transgressive and out of control. Rather than recognizing the heinous desire as intrinsic to the West, the narrative defines it by addressing to the Eastern other. Richard Kearney argues that

> We often project onto others those unconscious fears from which we recoil in ourselves. Rather than acknowledge that we are deep down answerable to an

alterity which unsettles us, we devise all kinds of evasion strategies . . . such as the attempt to simplify our existence by scapegoating others as "aliens." (5)

The robe clothed on Emaré manifests how the narrative works to simplify the nature of the West and scapegoats the East as the "alterity" outside of proper norms; this idea also corresponds to the naming of Sir Tergaunte. The King of Sicily is a Christian king whose father fights against Saracens in battle; yet, he also maintains excessively intimate relationship with Sir Artyus and brings him the cloth which is connected with the incest. Instead of giving him a Western name, the narrator names him with the name of a Muslim god, thereby attributing what is undesirable to the force of Islam. Ironically, this act of externalizing the alterity fails to complete its purpose since using other to define the intrinsic alterity of self inevitably brings the very other to the center of self. In other words, in order to cover up the idea of incest, which is in fact part of the intrinsic desire of the Western emperor, and to present it as something external, the image of the East is paradoxically brought in to the center of the West.

Cover, Enclosure and the Intertwined Relationship between the East and the West

The robe manifests how the East and the West are superimposed upon each other, creating layer upon layer, through which the border between self and other becomes obscured. Not only is the East dragged to the center to represent the internal alterity of the West, the Western romances also have been situated in the center of the Eastern artifact, which reveals another kind of enclosure and ambivalence. In order to create an effect that the Eastern cloth, while being an object of love, embodies something "problematic," the narrative has the Eastern lady weave the Western romances into her exquisite cloth. In other words, the tales from the West, which demonstrate lovers transgressing social, cultural or religious boundaries, are used to define the latent problems of the Eastern cloth as well as the "alterity" of the East, which are then

attributed as the cause of the problems within Western society. This complicated and intertwined relationship demonstrates the "proximate, sometimes unlivable, duality of other and self" (Uebel 1996: 265). The East and the West both signify what Lacanian psychoanalysis labels *extimite*, "external intimacy" or "intimate alterity" (Cohen 1999: xii) for each other. The East becomes the external boundary that encloses the West and represents the internal alterity which the West aims to vomit out, and vise versa. Uebel argues that "imagining otherness necessarily involves constructing the borderlands, the boundary spaces, that contain—in the double sense, to enclose and to include—what is antithetical to the self" (1996: 265). Likewise, Uebel's concept could also be understood reversely: imagining selfhood necessarily involves constructing the borderlands that "contain—in the double sense, to enclose and to include—what is antithetical" to the other. Since self and other are opposite to each other, the mirror in reverse, their complicated interdependence indicates the impossibility of separating one from the other as well as the difficulty of establishing a pure, stable, and uncontaminated identity.

The relationship between the robe and the Western narrative further brings forth another kind of enclosure. As an Eastern artifact that covers up both the Western princess and the incestuous desire of the Western emperor, the robe itself is also embedded in an unreflecting Western narrative, which falsely incriminates the East as the source of chaos, degradation and heinous desire. The robe's attraction does not come from itself, but from the long narrative and the words that wrap it. Through 98 lines of description, the text spells out the exotic texture of the robe, weaving Emaré's Easternized body into a luxurious, splendid spectacle for the patriarchal gaze of the West. Said argues:

> It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space

beyond familiar boundaries. (1979: 57)

The visual effects of the robe are particularly highlighted. The East under the Western articulation is represented, animated, and constituted as the disturber of order that bewitches Emaré's father, wages war against Christians in battle, and triggers the Queen of Galys's hatred and hostility toward Emaré; it is a silent spectacle and at the same time a projection of alterity. The narrative becomes another kind of clothing, which covers up the robe that covers Emaré.

In addition, the Western narrative's enclosure of the Eastern object corresponds to a broader enclosure: the enclosure of the Eastern motif within a Western tale in which all the characters in the tale are Christians. Unlike other Constance romances which directly present the interactions and conflicts between Western Christians and Eastern pagans, *Emaré* delineates only Christian characters that never travel out of Christian boundaries. However, the East is portrayed as a non-negligible spectacle and a prime activator of the plot. In this sense, the Eastern motif is enclosed within the Western romance. Ironically, the East, which is summoned to help debilitate the undesirable effect of incest, becomes another kind of anxiety, which, like the anxiety over incest, poses great threat to the stability of identity. The layers of enclosure resulting from the narrative structure consequently create sites of ambivalence where the boundary between East and West become indistinguishable. Emaré, the Western princess, is enclosed by an Eastern robe, which is under the enclosure of Western narrative; this design renders the images of the East and the West structurally inseparable as well as obscuring the border between self and other. The robe, which signifies an external alterity, is formed by Western representation; this echoes Kearney's idea that what is considered external aliens are indeed the projection of self.

The Empty Center and a Reverse Crusade

In addition to the blurring of East/West border resulting from layers of enclosure, the story discloses another pressing threat to Western identity, that is, the emptiness of Roman Church. Religion occupies a significant role in the tale on account of *Emaré*'s nature as a crusade-related story composed under the (post-)crusade context. While "the old school of thought" regarded the fall of Acre in 1291 as the sudden termination of Latin dominion in the Holy Land, Aziz S. Atiya argues that the crusade zeal had never been extinguished in the fourteenth centuries (3-6). Instead, the fall of Acre "brought home to Christians in Europe a feeling of dismay and aroused in them a spirit of defensive, if not offensive, crusading" (Atiya 5). Warriors, clergymen, and pilgrims returning from Jerusalem brought with them written records, stories and experiences in the crusade territories, which "aroused the feelings of all Catholics" and "rekindled the enthusiasm for the crusading movement" (Atiya 5-6). Timothy Guard also notes that although organizing international crusades became harder during and after the fourteenth century, preaching remained a dynamic force that helped transmit the crusade ideas, publicize spiritual privileges, disseminating propaganda, and issue the call of arms (1320-22).

The background setting in *Emaré* reflects, or works as a reflection on, the "spirit of defensive crusading." The battle—though only receiving minimal length of description, especially when compared with the extended space reserved for the Eastern cloth—appears as inter-religious conflicts between Saracens and Western lords. It is the background story underlying Emaré's dramatic experience. Military conflict is first mentioned when Sir Tergaunte recounts his father's battle and victory over heathens; later after the marriage between Emaré and the King of Galys, the narrator also states: "The kyng of France yn that tyme / Was besette wyth many a Sarezyne, / And cumbered all in tene; / And sente aftur the kygn of Galys / And othur lordys of myche prys" ("The king of France was harassed by many Saracens at that time, and was greatly troubled

and harmed; he thus requested for the help from the King of Galys and many other respectful lords" [481-85]). These descriptions closely correspond to the Crusade project because the wars against Saracens are not merely wars but the conflicts for the sake of religion. In *Emaré*—and other Constance romances as well—religion marks the crucial difference between self and other: kings, knights and clergymen from different countries are gathered to fight against their joint enemies (493-95), and even the old queen of Galys also uses religion as an excuse to emphasize Emaré's alterity. When beholding Emaré's beauty strengthened by her splendid outfit, the queen responds that "I sawe never wommon / Halfvendell so gay! / . . . / Sone, thy sys a fende, / In thys wordy wede! /As thou lovest my blessynge, / Make thou nevur thys weddynge, / Cryst hyt forbade!" ("I have never seen a woman being half as fair as she! . . . Son, this is a fiend in the splendid dress! If you want to have my blessing, you should never complete the wedding that Christ forbids" [443-50]). The queen grudges Emaré because of her unearthly beauty, but instead of expressing her personal dislike, she associates Emaré with the temptation of devil or evil power and further connects her appearance to the counter-force of Christianity by identifying her as a woman Christ forbids the king to marry. The battles in the story carry out a superficial level of border construction by manipulating both the religious difference and the military victory. The religious opposition signifies the borderline between self and other, which is then reinforced by the victory in battles; military successes in *Emaré* ensure the religious others being safely kept outside of Christian territory and offer literary compensation for the Crusade failures that shattered Christian supremacy. It realizes the Crusade project despite the Christian military setback in reality. Nevertheless, the borderline is eroded and undermined exactly by religion and battle through which it is constructed.

Though religion symbolizes the central spirit of the crusade battles and marks the difference of self from other, the external from the internal, the tale intriguingly empties

out the very center of Christianity and renders its authority unreliable. Heng emphasizes the importance of differentiating the Latin Christianity from the Byzantine Rome, which is also categorized as the crusader enemy (47). Interestingly, despite Heng's account that *Emaré* "invoke[s] the Latin Pontiff at regular intervals, so ensure[s] we understand that it is Latin Christianity, and not the deviant Greek Church, which orients the religious culture and thus the normativity of their narratives" (194), the Pope's answer to Sir Artyus's request ironically deviates from "normativity." Sir Artyus's compliance with proper procedures in fact shows the latent problem of the Roman Church, the authority of Western Christendom, instead of his own disqualification.

The tale steps even further to undermine the Christian authority itself in a more radical way. Being tortured by their conscience for several years, both the King of Galys and the Emperor decide to proceed to Rome for penitence. Believing that his wife is drowned for his sake, the King of Galys feels sorrowful and says that "Thorow the grace of God yn trone, / I woll to the Pope of Rome, My penans forto take" ("Through the grace of God Almighty, I will go visiting the Pope of Rome and do penance" [820-23]). A hundred lines later, the narrator also depicts Sir Artyus's intention to repent: "He thowght that he wolde go / For hys penance to the Pope tho, / And heven forto wynne" ("He thought that he should go visiting the Pope to do penance for his sin in order to be taken into heaven" [955-57]). Interestingly, despite the narrator's account that both men depart from their country to find "the Pope" in Rome, the Pope has never appeared again in the story. Instead, they find Emaré, the fair lady in an exotic robe. The Pope's absence implies the emptiness of the Christian center as well as the negation of Christian authority. Emphasized in different ways throughout the story as the divide of military parties, moral judgment and self-identification, religion is emptied out from the core at the very end of the tale; this delineation subtly corresponds to the blurring of borders because the marker of division turns out to be inefficacious. The absence of

Pope appears particularly ironic in Sir Artyus's case because the Pope is the one who authorized his marriage proposal and is thus partially responsible for the tragedy. This suggests that the religious authority, which should hold back Sir Artyus's incestuous intent at the start and safeguard Emaré from her subsequent distress and suffering, has been dysfunctional before Emaré's journey.

Aside from emptying the Christian center and removing the Pope, the tale puts Emaré, the wearer of the Eastern artifact, in the place where the Pope is supposed to be, which indicates an utmost unsettling moment in the tale. Mehl states that "[t]he two men who have injured Emaré both come to Rome in order to do penance for their sin and there they meet Emaré as a visible sign of the grace and forgiveness of God" (136). However, this final re-unification does not merely convey the restoration of order or the formation of an ideal Christian family, but a "reverse Crusade" that overturns the power structure of the East and the West. Emaré is inseparable from the Eastern robe; the beauty of the fabulous robe is restated and reaffirmed every time her physical attraction and inner virtues are mentioned. It is important to note that even at the moment of unification in Rome, the robe has not been taken off and removed from the narrative. When Segramowre brings Sir Artyus to Emaré's chamber, it is stated that "Nevurtheles wyth hym he wente; / Ayeyn hem come the lady gent, / In the robe bright and shene" ("Nevertheless he went with Segramowre; on the other side, the gentle lady came to them in the bright and shining robe" [931-33]). The presence of the robe in the center of Christian territory reveals a sense of irony because the original borderline, which is assured through military success, is transgressed via the object from the East—material that brought back by the Christian king as a war booty. While the romance presents Christian military success to compensate the loss of Christian territories and crusade failure in historical reality, the robe reveals how the presence of the East penetrates the geographical border and enters the core of Christendom in a much more irresistible

manner. The floating material undermines the literary compensation promised by the military success since the intrusion of "things," which demonstrate better mobility than armies, proves that the existence of "Otherness" is able to invade the boundary of selfhood and nullify the idea of purity even if Christians win in battle. The robe—the only object traversing from the pagan land to the center of Christianity—thus materializes a reverse Crusade which, rather than bringing the Christians from Western countries to the Eastern Holy Land, visualizes the shifting of an exotic object from Eastern land to the center of Western territory. The cloth/robe—originally an exotic object taken from the defeated Saracens and a reminder of Western military victory over pagan others—now turns out to be a trigger of chaos which causes more troubles to both the Christian society and to Emaré than any battle could have done. This depiction not only overturns the Western superiority in the tale, but complicates the identity of Emaré, the supposedly "pure" Western princess representing unshakeable Christian spirit.

The overtly intimate relationship between the robe and Emaré signifies a confusion of identity. The robe is originally a war trophy from the Eastern land; it therefore represents both exotic fascination and the victory of Christian forces over the heathen others. However, as the tale progresses, it transforms from an Eastern object, an artifact being grasped, possessed and exchanged, to an inseparable image of Emaré, the titular character, the person who stands for steady Christian virtue, and eventually the visible sign of the grace and forgiveness of God. As the robe shines as Emaré's visible outfit and becomes part of her identity, the difficulty of maintaining Western integrity and upholding a stable perception of selfhood increases. For this reason, Emaré's "true self" is indeterminate all the while, and characters in the romance perceive her in very different ways. The King of Galys regards the robe as a manifestation of Emaré's noble birth, whereas the Queen of Galys detests her because of her "exotic" beauty; the latter echoes the depiction in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, which questions whether a Christian

knight growing up in heathen land and dressed in Eastern clothes could really maintain Christian identity and be regarded as part of the West. Emaré's overly visualized robe destabilizes identity and challenges the East/West border ensured by race. Emaré, a descendent of Western noble lineage, turns out to be neither a complete Western symbol nor an absolute Eastern other, but a hybrid whose identity is always subjected to interpretation. In the end, a fixed interpretation of Emaré does not exist, and neither does a stable self.

The confusion of identity in the final scene of the tale controverts the ideal ending promised by either religion or military victory. The traversing "thing"—just like the idea of the East itself—becomes a lingering shadow that disturbs the harmonious re-unification of the Christian family. This idea echoes the interesting repetition of the King of Galys's episode and Sir Artyus's re-encounter with Emaré. When addressing the King of Galys's reunion with Emaré, the narrator states that "Nevurtheles wyth hym he wente; / Ayeyn hem come the lady gent, / In the robe bright and shene" ("Nevertheless he went with him (Segramowre), and the gentle lady came to them in the bright and shining robe" [931-33]). However, when it comes to Sir Artyus's scene, which is near the very end of the tale, the narrator repeats almost the entire descriptions in the King of Galys's section but cunningly omits the reference to Emaré's robe without mentioning that Emaré has taken it off. It is now stated: "Nevurthelesse, wyth hym he wente; / Ayeyn hym come the lady gent, / Walkynge on her fote" ("Nevertheless he (Sir Artyus) went with him (Segramowre), and the gentle lady came to them walking on her foot" [1015-17]). Rather than successfully removing the Eastern image and promising a fixed identity—which may be achieved if the narrator explicitly takes off Emaré's "cover"—the deliberate erasure of the robe only testifies the role of the exotic "thing" as an object of anxiety, an object that needs to, but cannot, be eliminated. The connection between Emaré and her robe is strengthened every time her beauty is highlighted, and

this connection is consolidated to the extent that Emaré's presence is reminiscent of her robe even if it is not mentioned. The robe, which helps join the internal and external anxieties together in this tale, disturbs the seemingly peaceful ending and renders the Christian protagonist's identity still perplexing and unsettled, corresponding to the identity crisis penetrating the whole story.

Conclusion

Though apparently a religious story in conformity with Christian values, *Emaré* indeed presents a plot and characters with rich paradoxes. It is a story of Western anxiety: the anxiety over incest, over the instability of social structure, the anxiety over the collapse of border, and most of all, the anxiety over the confusion of identity. Resembling the fetishized Eastern artifact, which signifies both the concealment and revelation of the incestuous desire, the story also conveys paradoxical messages. It presents Western military success and religious restoration on one hand, and renders the border between self and other, East and West always unsettling on the other hand. Through layers of enclosure, *Emaré* defies the possibility of clear-cut division and displays instead the intermingled relationship between the perception of self and what is categorized as alterity. The appearance of the Eastern artifact at the center of Rome suggests a disturbing end of the tale. Though *Emaré* eliminates all the Eastern characters appearing in other Constance sagas, the final scene discloses that there may be no "pure" West at all and that what is considered as alterity may in fact rest in the very center of self.

Chapter V: Conclusion

From the *King of Tars*, the *Man of Law's Tale* to *Emaré*, what string up these Constance analogues are the identity problem and subsequent anxiety resulting from the intertwining East/West relationship during and after the Crusade era. The three tales have been categorized by scholars as hagiographic romance or stories that convey religious or dogmatic messages; yet, underlying the religiously satisfactory endings are the uncertainty of identity and the obscurity of border. These works not only mirror the internal instability born from a world full of movement and intimate contact with the threatening other, but also struggle to handle the problems concerning hybrids or unmask the otherwise unutterable difficulties. A symbol of unshakable faith and religious piety, the "Constance" in each tale is none the less situated in a world that is by no means constant or stable; the spatial or geographical changes and the mutability of the characters surrounding her are highlighted just as much as her constancy. While eventually presenting an ideal portrayal in which the ill-fated princess returns to her own world and reunites with her original family, these romances neither guarantee a stable world where religious and social role are fixed nor maintain a clear-cut border between self and other. Instead, the turbulences during the course of the heroine's reluctant journey, the challenges to identities and social roles, and finally the various forms of border-crossing become the lingering shadows that disturb the seemingly peaceful endings.

Geraldine Heng suggests that the "impetus of romance" is toward "recovery—not repression or denial—but surfacing and acknowledgment through stages of transmogrification, and the graduated mutating of exigency into opportunity" (3). Romances help address the ineffable difficulties or anxious pressures through the presentment of familiar or even pleasurable surface. As Heng has stated, romance

functions as a coping mechanism and is driven by one impulse that aims to discover and makes a safe language of cultural discussion (3). In the Constance stories composed during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the occurring "difficulties" or "dangers" may be the loss of a "pure" self. The Western perception of self is disturbed firstly by religious and military frustration, and secondly the emergence of hybrid on the borderland. Hybrid refers to not only the creatures of miscegenation—although interracial or interreligious children are undoubtedly one of the causes of social unease—but also the hybrid beings at the space of ambivalence, hybrids that frustrate previous understanding of boundary and confuse traditional system of categorization. During and after the age of Crusades, identity is blurred either because there were cases of crusaders who went over to the Saracens or settlers in the Crusade kingdoms who got more acquainted with Muslims practices and rituals (Menache 78-79), or because the indiscipline and atrocities of the Crusade soldiers (Riley-Smith 2) undermined the boundary between "virtuous Christians" and Saracens, who were traditionally reproached by the Westerners for being cruel, bestial and lack of temperance and order. Corresponding to these disturbing similarities and intertwined relationship between Western Christians and Eastern heathens, many of the Christians presented in the Constance stories are hardly ideal followers of the Christian spirits, neither are the monstrous others the representations of absolute alterity.

The *King of Tars* reflects on the historical unease in its presentation of the Princess of Tars's experience in the Eastern land as well as the terrifying depiction of the hybrid child. The tale's primary spectacle is the presence of the lump of flesh and the miracle of physical transformation after religious baptism. The unrecognizable appearance of the lump-child demonstrates the discomfort caused by interreligious union and miscegenation; therefore, the child's and his father's conversion not only helps reinforce the Christian supremacy but also aims to eliminate the existence of hybrids by making

the marriage no longer an "interreligious" one. Rather than presenting the disturbing co-existence between Christians and Muslims, like what happened to the Western settlers in Eastern lands in history, the story has the Muslim Sultan and his followers converted to Christianity. In addition, the process of de-hybridization works more subtly via replacing the Armenians with the Tartars, which both function as a wish fulfillment of Christian expansion and a removal of the borderland where Christians and Muslims had direct confrontation. Yet, what the final battle reveals is rather ambiguous; the atrocity demonstrated by the Christians and the converted Tartars undermines the efficacy of conversion, which is supposed to mark the difference between "good" Christians and "monstrous" heathens, the virtuous and the evil.

The *Man of Law's Tale* carries out similar ambiguity. The complicated design of the Rome-Syria-Northumberland triangle and the folded doublings profile a world where self and other are not set as two extremities, but the proximate duality of each other. Chaucer's presentation of Syria, the external threat embodying negative stereotypes of the Orient, becomes also the introspection on the problems within Christian world. At the same time, the story avoids the problem of Islam—the "Orientalized East" in this case— by presenting Northumberland, a double pagan land, whose hybrid existence both lays bare the desire for converting the heathen land and expanding Christian territories and the anxiety over the inclusion of the overtly terrifying stranger.

Emaré steps even further to address the complicate relationship between self and other by bringing the motif of the East into a story which is set within the Christian world. Though the Eastern elements—like the cloth/robe itself—only serve as visual decorations on the surface, they indeed demonstrate how the anxiety over the East is dragged to the center to cover up the anxiety over incest, over the instability of social structure, over the collapse of border, and finally over the confusion of identity, all of

which are problems stemming from within. Furthermore, the appearance of the Eastern artifact intrudes into the Christian center and hybridizes Emaré; the delineation of Emaré and her robe shows that victories in battles—which seemingly ensure geographical frontier and provide literary compensation for the military loss in reality—cannot ensure a "pure" self and prevent the Christian identity from being "confused" or "contaminated" by something more irresistible: things, materials, and ideas.

What the Constance romances show is the struggles with the shattered identity emerging at the unsettling borderland where different forces intersect and different groups of people had contacts and conflicts. Though the tales offer simple, superficial solution to the crises encountered by the protagonists, including religious and military forces, what underlies the straightforward plot is in fact the entanglement between self and other as well as the complexity that cannot be easily tackled. The analysis is proven fruitful in terms of the exploration and discussion about the space of ambivalence, the layers of cover and the fetish and fetishization, which provide insights into the paradoxical descriptions in the Constance stories concerning the monstrous East, hybrids, and borders.

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