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GRANVILLE SYDNOR HILL

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO CHAUCER'S HAGIOGRAPHY

Chaucer's Second Nun's Tale, Man of Law's Tale, and Prioress's Tale belong to the genre known as hagiography, the literature of saints' lives and miracles. Once popular with the literate as well as the illiterate Christians of the Middle Ages, hagiography declined as the Reformation progressed, and the genre failed to survive the new age's criticism and condemnation. Chaucer's three hagiographic Canterbury Tales are among the victims of this historical and sociological turnabout. With the important exceptions of Carleton F. Brown, Gordon H. Gerould, Walter Morris Hart, and Helen Neill McMaster,¹ Chaucer's post-medieval critics have until very recently shown little, if any, appreciation or even awareness of the genre's purposes and literary methods; this ignorance of hagiography can all too easily lead to largely irrelevant criticisms of Chaucer's hagiographic Tales: flatness of characterization, excessive sentimentality, brutality, and bigotry. Some critics have treated these Tales sympathetically but have still disregarded the legends' hagiographic contexts. Instead, they have focused upon the works' immediate sources,² the narrators' behavior,³ or the philosophical or moral issues raised
by the characters' or narrators' actions. Only recently, almost exclusively within the past decade, have scholars critically examined the Second Nun's Tale, the Man of Law's Tale, and the Prioress's Tale in terms of the works' hagiographic origins; the resulting studies of the Tales' themes, structures, and conventions have clearly shown Chaucer's superior artistic attainment in a highly stylized and restricted genre.

The narrators' rhetorical conduct within the hagiographic scheme, however, has been neglected. The omission is all the more difficult to explain because Chaucer was evidently the first English hagiographer who introduced into his tales a self-conscious, dramatic, narrating presence, who has brought to his or her tale a perspective influenced by his or her background, occupation, and prejudices. The resultant effect on Chaucer's saintly legends, particularly on the Man of Law's Tale and the Prioress's Tale, was profound. By imposing what amounted to a conscious, critical filter between the story and the audience, Chaucer created an additional dimension of interest in each Tale: the narrator's responses to the generic peculiarities of the account. Almost always, the provocations for the narrators' intrusions in the Second Nun's Tale, the Man of Law's Tale, and the Prioress's Tale are attributable to the conventions and
excesses of the hagiographic genre; moreover, the patterns of the narrators' interruptions frequently appear to be modeled after the formal rhetoric that is conventional in hagiography. For these reasons, we may better appreciate Chaucer's boldness and originality if we examine the background and nature, first, of medieval rhetoric and, later, of hagiography.

Compared with its classical and post-classical practice, medieval rhetoric was crudely pretentious, calculated to glorify the speaker and to adorn language, rather than to promote and enhance ideas. The reasons for rhetoric's degradation are understandable, however. Greek literature and learning were lost to Western Europe by the time of the Roman Empire's division into eastern and western realms, as J. W. H. Atkins has pointed out, and "the teachings of Plato, Aristotle and others on literature remained closed books"; moreover, the primary rhetorical textbooks of the Middle Ages were, in Charles S. Baldwin's words, "Cicero's youthful digest De inventione and a second book universally attributed to him, the Rhetorica ad Herennium." The practical—and restricted—vision of these two works suited the Middle Ages' limited educational resources and literary aims, as Baldwin explains:
De inventione reduces to summary what the middle ages taught least, those counsels of preparation and ordering which ancient teaching had progressively adjusted to oral discourse, and for which the earlier middle ages had less opportunity. The Rhetorica ad Herennium, comparatively summary also as to analysis and sequence, is devoted largely to style, and reduces stylistic ornament to a list so conveniently specific that medieval schools made it a ritual. 9

Resulting from the superficial treatment of rhetoric, as well as from the dearth of old and new literature and criticism, was a confusion between poetica and rhetorica. 10 In the Middle Ages' four most prominent artes poeticae, 11 the emphasis fell upon methods of amplifying certain accepted themes--love, beauty, and grief, for instance--by using such means as descriptio (description), digressio (digression), apostrophe; 12 these large devices were in turn embellished by internal tropes and figures. Gone was the former emphasis upon inventio (finding a topic), and missing also was the attention formerly given to abbreviatio (the abbreviation of material). The medieval rhetoricians' preoccupation with elocutio ("style"), 13 in the words of Atkins:
determined. . . the nature of the poetic theory, its concern with stylistic detail, elaborate technique, and specious ornament; all of which were calculated to produce those artificial effects which from the time of the New Sophistic had distorted both poetry and prose. . . . 14

Because of these unattractive features, which by their pedantic nature were antithetical to literary originality, Chaucer's knowledge of rhetoric has been an issue and, for a few critics, it would seem, an embarrassment since 1926. At that time, J. M. Manly suggested that Chaucer's early works revealed, in both structure and expression, an indebtedness to formal rhetorical theory, an influence which was largely overcome as the poet matured.15 Manly's views have since been amplified and revised, notably by Marie Padgett Hamilton, Dorothy Everett, Roger Parr, and Robert Payne;16 Parr concludes his very detailed study of Chaucer's rhetoric with the following observation:

A careful analysis of Chaucer's works reveals that there is no significant decline in the percentage of rhetoric used in his later as opposed to his earlier works. Rather, it becomes clear that he consistently employed it whenever it served his narrative purpose.17
More recently, James J. Murphy has countered the proposals of Manly et al. regarding Chaucer's acquaintance with rhetoric, by arguing that Chaucer's rhetorical knowledge must have been acquired not through formal study of the medieval rhetoricians, but through secondary sources and through instruction in grammar; as a result, Murphy theorizes, the poet's acquaintance with rhetorical technique was actually that of an alert and educated gentleman, but not that of a scholastic practitioner. Murphy's position, however, has been attacked by Douglas Kelly and by Janette Richardson, who remind us of Chaucer's interest in literature and his allusions to Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova. Most recently, Ernest Gallo has questioned Murphy's "insistence" that the artes poetriae of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries "belong to grammar and not to rhetoric."

One of the purposes of Chaucer's rhetoric, we shall argue, was to characterize the narrator. Although the formulaic patterns of rhetoric and the often volatile nature of Chaucer's narrators might seem incompatible with each other, the existence of a relationship between rhetoric and character had long been accepted. Plato, Aristotle, and Quintilian believed that rhetorical style and eloquence should be appropriate to the speaker.
Chaucer, however, seems to have rediscovered and expanded the possibilities of this idea, to the enhancement of both narrative and narrator--the latter, incidentally, is an entity that evidently did not exist in the sources and analogues of Chaucer's hagiographic Canterbury Tales.24

The rhetorical interruptions made in the accounts by the speakers themselves--particularly by the Man of Law and the Prioress--are immediately obvious even to the most casual reader of these Tales, yet these passages are far from being simple interruptions in the story. Critics have long noted these narrative intrusions (as well as intrusions made by other Canterbury pilgrims),25 but judgement of these interruptions has varied, especially with regard to the characterizational and rhetorical impact of these passages. Some critics have charged that a hagiographic narrator's rhetorical conduct cancels the characterization of that pilgrim offered in the General Prologue,26 while other critics have argued that the pilgrim's behavior as narrator reinforces the original portrait.27 As for the rhetoric itself, its figures have been identified in Chaucer's hagiographic Tales by critics who have noted the appropriateness of the speaker's rhetoric to his or her profession.28 However, little more than passing notice has been given to the hagiographic context of the speakers' rhetoric.29
The provocations for the narrators' intrusions in the Second Nun's Tale, the Man of Law's Tale, and the Prioress's Tale are almost always attributable to the conventions and excesses of the hagiographic genre; these generic features are in turn reflections of the two cultural extremes from which hagiography evolved: classical rhetoric and popular imagination, which will be discussed shortly.

The classical form which the early Christians customarily took for memorializing the deeds and passions of their saints and martyrs was the panegyric, a type of occasional (rather than deliberative or forensic) oratory which Charles S. Baldwin has defined as being appropriate to "the commemoration of persons and days, the address of welcome, the public lecture." From the panegyrics, the Christian orators developed two biographical forms, which afterward merged: the martyr's passio and the saint's vita. Initially, these holy panegyrics maintained the structural framework and preserved the rhetorical poise of their classical predecessors; as a result, the passio and the vita originally were highly respectable forms and were sanctioned by the Church to be read during the regular service on the saint's feast day.

Two problems confronted the early hagiographers and contributed to the corruption of classical standards in
the genre. One obstacle that the Church's panegyrist
early encountered was the dearth of facts known about a
saint or martyr, a situation which forced the hagiog-
ographers to cast about for ways of lengthening--and
inspiring--their commemorative elegies. Consequently,
biographical commonplaces became acceptable fillers in
the holy panegyric's structure when facts were unobtain-
able: the saint became almost always a scion of royalty
or at least of nobility; and he or she was comely,
brilliant, and well-schooled.

A different type of problem that hagiographers faced
somewhat later was the official acceptance of Christianity
and the resultant cessation of persecution. Presumably
to remind their audiences of the sacrifices made by
earlier Christians, the latter-day hagiographers adopted
more commonplaces: a thorough exposure of the chief
persecutor's (often, a judge or an emperor) monstrosity
and wickedness; a complete account (or so it would seem
after awhile) of the martyr's always brilliant speeches
to--and refutations of--his or her accusers' charges;
detailed descriptions of the martyr's tortures and death;
and the martyr's unfailing serenity throughout the
ordeal.

During this time, the hagiographical accounts began
to incorporate elements from the popular imagination.
To the heroes' and heroines' already idealized portrayals were added such epic qualities as superhuman endurance, strengths, and wisdom; in addition, the saint was endowed with more miraculous powers, diabolical opponents, and, more and more frequently, fanciful adventures. Thus, hagiography's broad cultural appeal during the Middle Ages, as well as its thousand-year life-span, account for the wide spectrum of its generic subdivisions, which may be classified in three groups: biography--the martyr's passio and the saint's vita--represented among Chaucer's works by the Second Nun's Tale; the hagiographic romance, which relates the fantastic adventures of a saintly, frequently historical (or pseudo-historical) personage, and appears in the Chaucer canon as the Man of Law's Tale; and the miracle (of which the Prioress's Tale is an example), which tells of one or more miracles performed by a saint--frequently the Virgin.

Because they promote virtuous behavior and demand inhuman sacrifices of their heroines, Chaucer's Clerk's Tale and his Physician's Tale are sometimes counted as hagiographic pieces. The fallacy in this judgment is that neither the Tales nor their characters are motivated by purely Christian considerations. Not religious reasons, but unquestioning obedience to her husband, her lord, causes Griselda to undergo bereavement and humiliation,
while the pagan Virginius's devotion to preserving his pagan daughter's chastity compels him to kill her. This tale was first told, moreover, by the Roman historian Livy, to whom Chaucer acknowledges his indebtedness; Chaucer did not Christianize his version.40

Another work in the Chaucer canon which has been identified with the hagiographic genre is the Legend of Good Women. For this piece Chaucer has appropriated the format of the Christian martyrology to tell us the tragic love stories of classical heroines, who (in F. N. Robinson's words) "are represented as saints or martyrs on Cupid's calendar."41 Once we are past the Legend's "Prologue" (in which the delightful narrator tells us how he was accosted by the outraged god of Love and why he came to write the martyrology), the Legend of Good Women falls into the pattern common to hagiographic collections: that of an uninterrupted and generally humorless succession of stories similar in plot, characters, and moral. The narrator, bumbling, self-deprecating, and altogether ingratiating in the "Prologue," becomes competent, confident, and rather distant (though not totally absent) in the legends. With this change in the narrator, the appeal in the Legend of Good Women fades. Like its Christian archetype, Cupid's martyrology suffers from the stories' relentless repetitiveness of theme and outcome,
and without any respite between the individual legends, the characters, their woes, their injuries and deaths blur together, just as they do in the Church's martyrologies and legendaries. Apart from the structural similarities between Christian legendaries and Cupid's martyrology, as well as the common themes of suffering and death, the Legend of Good Women bears little resemblance to the Christian saints' legends. Robinson states that "[t]he nine individual stories seem to have been based ... chiefly [on] Ovid and Virgil"; the legends lack the conventions (not to mention the religious emphasis) which we have seen are inseparable parts of hagiography.

Not surprisingly, a number of amplificatory rhetorical forms flourished in connection with hagiography's narrative distention: digressio, apostrophe, oppositio, descriptio, and collatio. Accompanying these large, amplificatory subdivisions were such minor rhetorical figures as repetitio, contentio, exclamatio, interrogatio and ratiocinatio, sententia and exemplum, occupatio, definitio, interpretatio, and conduplicatio; with such contrivances, the hagiographer's (and rhetorician's) influence in the tales is almost always unmistakable. By the thirteenth century, the classically-structured holy panegyrics had degenerated into widely digressive, loosely arranged, often bathetic tales.
Two different attempts to control hagiography's narrative and rhetorical excesses were made in the thirteenth century. The earlier of these reformed collections appeared about 1230 and was first called Abbreviatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum, later to be called the Auxerre Abbreviatio. According to Helen Neill McMaster, "[t]he more incredible incidents [were] omitted, and dates or other corroborative evidence [were] supplied whenever possible."45 Appearing later in the century was Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda Sanctorum, better known as the Legenda Aurea,46 certainly one of medieval Christianity's best known and most influential hagiographic collections. Unlike the Auxerre Abbreviatio, which was prepared for the parish priest,47 the Legenda Aurea was (in McMaster's words) "designed for the general reader of cultivated taste as well as the preacher."48 Jacobus's efforts confirmed the presence of a new, relatively concise style in hagiography,49 one which influenced succeeding hagiographers,50 including the compilers of the late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century's South-English Legendary, the fourteenth-century's North-English Legendary, the late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth century's Scottish Legendary, as well as Geoffrey Chaucer. While Chaucer was indebted to this reformed phase of hagiography, as his translation of the "Life of
St. Cecilia" (better known as the Second Nun's Tale) proves, his other two efforts in the genre—the Prioress's Tale and, especially, the Man of Law's Tale—certainly indicate an obligation to old-time hagiography's rhetorical exuberance. The difference between Chaucer's treatment of structure and rhetoric and his old-school predecessors' handling of these two concerns lies in Chaucer's using the speaker's own rhetorical intrusions to develop the narrator's character—an interest that appears to be hitherto unique in England's hagiography, and very likely, unique in Europe's.

Digressio (digression), unknown to the classical rhetoricians, but recommended in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova, was an occasional amplificatory occurrence in early hagiography, a rare event in the Legenda Aurea and its vernacular imitators (including the English and Scottish legendaries listed above), and a frequent indulgence in the Man of Law's "Life of Constance."

Unlike the Man of Law's ostentatious and (as we shall later argue) insecure rhetorical displays, the digressions of the early Anglo-Latin hagiographers may be attributed primarily to their interest in recording knowledge and in teaching. In Eddius Stephanus' "Life of Bishop Wilfrid," Eddius digresses to describe the magnificence of the church at Hexham, built by Wilfrid:
It is not in my poor power to describe how its foundations were set deeply in the earth with crypt-chambers of wonderfully dressed stone, and how above the ground rose a church of many parts supported on various columns and many side aisles and chapels, and furnished with walls of astounding length and height, surrounded by various winding passageways with spiral stairs leading up and down. . . . Moreover who has the power to tell how Bishop Acca of blessed memory, by the grace of God still living, enriched this multichambered building with magnificent ornamentation in gold and silver and precious stones, and how he clothed the altars in cloth of purple and silk? Let us now return to our story.

Similarly, the author of the "Life of St. Gregory" leaves his subject to recount the conversion of "our most Christian King Edwin." The *Legenda Aurea* 's few instances of *digressio* seem most often to be simply St. Ambrose's comments on a saint's behavior, such as we find in the accounts of Sts. Euphemia, George, and Cecilia. These digressions on opinions of a recognized authority--St. Ambrose--suggest a certain defensiveness, as if the hagiographer might be anxious to strengthen his position by naming an important witness.

Chaucer's reasons for using the device appear to be different. According to Roger Parr:
Short digressions occur frequently in the form of comparisons, apostrophes and sentences. They are used not so much to show erudition as to fulfill the expectations of the audience. This was the age when sententia, short exempla and apostrophe in particular were synonymous with poetry because they were mainly didactic. 58

The frequent occurrence of these devices in the Prioress's Tale indicates a didactic, though scarcely intellectual, side of the lady's character. The Man of Law's rhetorical expansiveness seems to reflect his pompous, professional stance (upon which Chaucer drily comments in the General Prologue), 59 while his actual digressions—not always accurate—on biblical and hagiographical episodes suggest not only his uneasiness with the genre, but also his myopic conception of literature.

Apostrophe—defined by Richard A. Lanham as "[b]reaking off discourse to address directly some person or thing either present or absent" 60—is another amplificatory and digressive device used by early hagiographers as well as by Chaucer; variations of apostrophe included interrogatio ("rhetorical question implying strong affirmation or denial") 61 and ratiocinatio ("reasoning by question and answer"). 62 The rhetorical purpose of apostrophe (or exclamatio) 63 was two-fold, as J. W. H. Atkins explains:
In poetry an interpolation of this kind was calculated to emphasize an idea by pausing in the narrative; and in enlarging on the significance of that idea, it also heightened the emotional effect by a show of feeling on the part of the poet.64

In the eighth-century "Life of St. Guthlac of Crowland," the monk Felix follows his description of Guthlac's uncorrupted body, his beautifully ornamented vault, and the saint's willingness to intercede, with a fervent apostrophe:

O hero of blessed memory! O master of divine grace! O vessel of election! O physician of salvation! O what weight, what dignity lay in his words and discourse! How eager, how effective he was in searching out causes! How quick and easy in resolving spiritual problems! How unerringly he served in the service of God!65

Felix's apostrophe summarizes some of the important themes in St. Guthlac's life and, at the same time, attempts (in Atkins' words) to "heighten[...the emotional effect by a show of feeling on the part of the poet."66

After the thirteenth-century reforms in the genre, however, hagiographers became self-effacing, if not altogether inaudible: apostrophe appears to have been used only sparingly, chiefly in direct quotations, or in dedications, prayers, and benedictions.67 In the Legenda Aurea,
for example, Jacobus de Voragine gives us, without com-
ment of his own, St. Catherine's apostrophe to her
pagan adversaries:

"O igitur infelices talium
ydolorum cultores, quibus advocata
in necessitate no adsunt, in tribu-
latione non succurrunt in periculo
non defendunt." 68

Throughout the Man of Law’s Tale and Prioress’s Tale,
however, Chaucer’s narrators break into apostrophes,
usually at crucial points in the Tales’ narratives. 69
Besides emphasizing the emotional and climactic episodes
in the narratives, Chaucer’s apostrophes highlight the
speakers. The emotional—and rhetorical—responses of
Chaucer’s narrators to their respective narratives pro-
vide a counterpoint to the Tales, such as we find in the
Prioress’s motherliness and in the Man of Law’s sympathy.

A major amplificatory device used frequently by early
hagiographers, but less regularly by Chaucer, 70 was
descriptio, defined by Lanham as "[a] self-contained
description, often on a commonplace subject, which can
be inserted at a fitting place in a discourse." 71 Ac-
ccording to Hippolyte Delehaye, the Christian panegyrists
expanded their elegies by describing many of the same
commonplaces treated by the sophistic 72 rhetoricians:
"countrysides, seasons, persons, festivals, works of art, monuments. . . . The ecphrases [formal descriptions] of persons are relatively rare." 73 As a result, rather than finding formal, head-to-toe descriptions of an individual (such as we may see in the description of Blanche in the Book of the Duchess, 11.855-960), we are more likely to encounter rhetorically balanced enumerations of the saint's character. In the late-seventh or early-eighth century "Life of St. Cuthbert," the anonymous hagiographer interrupts his account of St. Cuthbert's early monastic life to address his audience, to utter the customary apology for his narrative unworthiness, and, most important, to extol his subject's virtues:

O my brothers, I do not presume to think that I am worthy to tell his life. In fact, no one's words can describe it. He was of angelic aspect, of polished speech, holy in deed, spotless in body, noble in nature, weighty in counsel, orthodox in belief, most patient in hope, universal in charity. Nevertheless I shall attempt to unfold the story of his miracles. 74

Such set portrayals of the saint's character were one form of descriptio that survived the thirteenth-century's revisions of hagiography. In a restrained manner, Jacobus de Voragine sketched St. Cecilia's spiritual character:
Cecilia uirgo clarissima ex nobili Romanorum genere exorta, et ab ipsis cunabulis in fide christi nutrita, absconditum semper euangelium Christi gerebat in pectore et non diebus neque noctibus a colloquuis diuinis et oratone cessabat, suamque uirginitatem conservari a domino exorabat.\textsuperscript{75}

More than a century later, Chaucer faithfully translated this prose description into English rhyme royal:

This mayden bright Cecilie, as hir lif seith,  
Was comen of Romayns, and of noble kynde,  
And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith  
Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.  
She never cessed, as I writen fynde,  
Of hir preyere, and God to love and drede,  
Bisekynge hym to kepe hir maydenhede.  
\textit{(SNT 11.120-26; Chaucer's additions in italics)}

A rhetorical device sometimes occurring with \textit{descriptio} is \textit{oppositio}, a form defined by Lanham as "[c]onjoining contrasting ideas . . . ."\textsuperscript{76} and one of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's major means of amplification.\textsuperscript{77}

The account of Boniface's martyrdom, in the eighth-century Life of that saint, uses \textit{oppositio} to underscore the ironic circumstances of the missionary's death:

But when the day grew light and the morning sunrise broke upon the world, it was a world turned upside down, for there advancing on them were not \textit{friends but enemies, not new Christian worshippers but new executioners.}\textsuperscript{78}
The *Legenda Aurea*'s description of St. Agnes, for example, and Chaucer's brief observation on Constance's character both owe their rhetorical balance to the graceful antitheses of *oppositio*. Of St. Agnes, Jacobus de Voragine writes:

\[
\text{XIII. anno aetatis suae mortem perdidit et vitam invenit. Infantia quidem computabatur in annis, sed erat senectus mentia immensa, corpore juvencula, sed animo cana, pulchra facie, sed pulchrior fide.79}
\]

Chaucer, in his treatment of Nicholas Trivet's Anglo-Norman "Life of Constance," includes a passage of *oppositio* in his description of his heroine:

"In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
Yowthe withoute grenehede or folye,
To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde;
Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye."

(MLT 11.162-65; *oppositio* in italics)

Another descriptive means of amplification favored by hagiographers and by Chaucer is *collatio*, or comparison, which was used in two ways: covertly and overtly.80 Implicit comparison of the saint with the warrior or the athlete were two widely used forms of covert (*occulta*) *collatio*; these images reflect the Christians' desire to triumph over evil, just as the pagan heroes vanquished monsters, enemies, and armies.82 "Boniface points out
Clinton Albertson triumphs as a 'hero athlete.'"83 Chaucer also uses the comparisons of athlete and soldier in his translation of the "Lyf of Seint Cecile":

Cecile hem seyde with a ful stedefast chere, "Now Cristes owene knyghtes leewe and deere, Cast alle away the werkes of derknesse, And armeth you in armure of brightnesse.

"Ye han for sothe ydoon a greet bataille, Your cours is doon, youre feith han ye conserved. Gooth to the corone of lif that may nat faille."84 (SNT 11.382-88)

A different image, however, appears in the Prioress's use of occulta collatio. Considering the Prioress's jeweled rosary and her predilection for fine, luxurious items, we may find the following comparison of the clergeon particularly appropriate to our speaker:

This gemme of chastite, this emeraude And eek of martirdom the ruby bright, Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright (PrT 11. 609-11)

More frequent are the occurrences, both in hagiography and in general literature, of overt (aperta) collatio, which may be a simple comparison, or which may be an exemplum (which Lanham defines as, "[a]n example cited, either true or feigned; illustrative story").85 Alcuin, in his eighth-century "Life of St. Willibrord," compares his subject with a bee:
Like a very provident bee he fed on the honey-filled blossoms of their friendship and built sweet honeycombs of virtue in the apiary of his heart.86

The exemplum, with its inherent digression, is associated chiefly with hagiographic accounts untouched by the reforms of the thirteenth century. The eighth-century "Life of Bishop Wilfrid," by Eddius Stephanus, tells how Wilfrid's ship had been grounded by a storm on the pagan Sussex coast. With an Old Testament exemplum, Eddius compares their salvation from the pagans:

Thus one time when Joshua, the son of Nun, and the people of God were fighting against Amalek, Moses gained the victory by continually imploring the Lord's protection while Hur and Aaron held up his hands. In the same way these few Christians overpowered the wild, fierce pagans three times and put them to flight with no little slaughter, and at the cost of only five men killed on their own side—which is a marvel.87

Exempla such as the one just quoted do not occur in Chaucer's Second Nun's Tale or in the Prioress's Tale. In the Man of Law's Tale, however, Chaucer uses a good number of old-time hagiography's rhetorical props,
including the exemplum: the Man of Law interrupts his account of Constance's floating for "yers and dayes" in a rudderless ship to remind his audience that Daniel survived the lion's den, Jonah escaped the whale's maw, and St. Mary of Egypt endured privation (MLT, 11.470-501).

Among the minor rhetorical figures scattered throughout hagiography— including Chaucer's—are: 88 sententia ("a short pithy statement of a general truth"), 89 conduplicatio ("repetition of one or more words for amplification or pity"), 90 definitio ("a brief and pointed summary of the characteristic quality of a person or thing"), 91 interpretatio ("repetition of a single idea in synonymous words"), 92 and occupatio ("description of a situation, or naming of objects, while professing to leave them unmentioned through lack of knowledge, or unwillingness to discuss them"). 93 Of these minor figures (and those mentioned earlier in connection with major amplificatory devices), occupatio shows the widest divergence between Chaucer's usage and that of other hagiographers. Customarily, occupatio (also known as occultatio) was a coy contrivance for amplifying a subject— despite the speaker's pretenses to the contrary, he is not unusually interested in sparing his audience the details. Sometimes a slight economy of words might result, but scarcely more than
that, as we may readily see in the anonymous "Life of St. Cuthbert" (ca. 700):

But, lest I should weary my reader, I shall be silent about all the other many deeds that flowered from Cuthbert's bountiful youth. I am more anxious to single out the quiet fruits of his mature years in God's service, full of the power of Christ. Thus I shall say nothing about the time when he was with the army encamped in the face of the enemy, and though he had only meager rations with him, managed to live royally the whole time. He was nourished by divine means, just as Daniel and the three children, after they had spurned the royal food, throve wondrously on even the smallest amounts of slaves' food. Nor shall I tell about his seeing the soul of a reeve carried up to heaven when he died. Lastly, I shall not recount how admirably he put demons to flight and cured the insane by his prayers.94

Contrary to the practice of his predecessors, Chaucer used *occupatio* frequently95 as an abbreviatory device. Roger Parr suggests that "[t]he rather profuse employment of *occupatio* reveals that Chaucer is conscious of the danger of overtaxing his audience,"96 a concern which Chaucer appears to express both in his silent editing of the Second Nun's Tale97 and in his employment of *occupatio*. A comparison of the Second Nun's Tale with its probable sources, for example, shows that
Chaucer's cryptic allusion to his subjects' works replaces the enumerations of deeds occurring in the versions of Jacobus de Voragine and Simon Metaphrastes:

It were ful hard by ordre for to seyn
How manye wondres Jhesu for hem wroghte;
But atte laste to tellen short and pleyn,
The sergeantz of the town of Rome hem soghte
(SNT, 11.358-61)

Similarly, Chaucer's Man of Law, in a detectably irascible tone, registers his impatience with details of a royal wedding:

Me list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree,
Maken so long a tale as of the corn.
What sholde I tellen of the roialtee
At mariage, or which cours goth biforn;
Who bloweth in a trumpe or in an horn?
The fruyt of every tale is for to seye:
They ete, and drynke, and daunce, and synge,
and pleye.
(MLT, 11.701-7)

While most rhetoricians' use of *occupatio* falls short of being actually abbreviatory, *abbreviatio*, the counter-balance, in theory at least, to *amplificatio*, did appear in hagiography. Chaucer condensed some episodes and eliminated others, as we shall see in our examinations of the Second Nun's Tale and the Man of Law's Tale; the *Legenda Aurea*, however, remains the principal monument to brevity in hagiography. Abbreviatio even appears (infrequently, to be sure) in early hagiography.
The anonymous biographer of St. Cuthbert, for example, provided the following ending to his account of the saint's death:

Therefore why not come right to the conclusion of the story without delaying through a long circumlocution? The bishop [Cuthbert] and the hermit both later died on the same night and at the same hour, in accord with the bishop's promise; and they reign together with Christ forever and ever.99

As we have seen in the foregoing survey, Chaucer's hagiographical works and those of his predecessors and contemporaries share many of the same rhetorical devices, yet even the most casual readings reveal basic differences in Chaucerian and non-Chaucerian methods of narration, use of detail, and characterization. While the first-person hagiographical narrator is certainly not Chaucer's exclusive property, he alone among the English writers (and also the profoundly influential Italian, Jacobus de Voragine) appears to recognize the hagiographical narrator as a dramatic entity, rather than as a narrative expedient. Accordingly, when rhetorical devices are used by Chaucer, they are used not for their own sake, but for the sake of sharpening the audience's perception of the story or of the speaker's character. For example, the Man of Law's apostrophe to the persecuted Constance
serves the dual purposes of underscoring the pathos of her situation and, at the same time, of revealing an unexpected reservoir of pity in what might have earlier seemed a not so gentle heart.

The contrast between Chaucer's hagiography and that of other hagiographers is equally striking when we compare conventions and characterizations in specific versions of the same story. The first half of Chaucer's "Lyf of Seint Cecile" is translated directly from the *Legenda Aurea*. As a result, Chaucer's account shares many of the genre's traditional clichés of characterization and story: for example, miraculous intervention to preserve the saint's virginity; the saint's noble upbringing; her almost insufferable self-assurance and conviction of purpose; the tedious (although not so tedious as in the source) and, it would seem, ill-mannered debate between St. Cecilia and Almachius, the emperor's prefect. In the second half of the "Lyf," however, Chaucer edits and abbreviates the account, openly in many instances; for the hard-working persona, whom he has created, is frankly anxious about the *Tale's* acceptability to the Virgin Mary, to St. Cecilia, and to his contemporary audience. Apparently, Chaucer's creation of a narrator is his positive response to the source's (and the genre's) impersonality. While this narrator's intrusions lack the frequency and the
protraction of the Man of Law's and the Prioress's interruptions, the "Second Nun's" remarks, like the rhetoric of Chaucer's other two pilgrim-hagiographers, are intended for a contemporary audience and serve an annotative purpose.

One problem in our examination of the narrator's role in the Second Nun's Tale is the elusiveness of that character. As we shall later see, the "Second Nun's" behavior is un-nun-like, especially when we compare her narrative conduct with that of the Prioress. The most likely explanation for the disparity between narrator and nun lies in the "Lyf's" time of composition: very likely the Second Nun's Tale is the earliest of Chaucer's hagiographic legends. Speculation concerning the year of the Tale's translation ranges from approximately 1373 to 1383.\textsuperscript{100} Even the latest date proposed would probably precede the two other hagiographic tales' dates of composition by several years: the date of the Man of Law's Tale is set around 1390,\textsuperscript{101} and the Prioress's Tale appears to be a later work, belonging, in F. N. Robinson's judgment, "to the period of the Canterbury Tales."\textsuperscript{102}

Although the "Second Nun's" character is hardly developed and sustained in the full sense in which the Man of Law's and the Prioress's characterizations are treated, the Second Nun's Tale is not an immature piece. Without always acknowledging it to his audience, Chaucer adds descriptive touches to episodes and characters, touches which brighten
the genre's drabness of emotion and incident. These structural improvements, as well as the narrator's vitalization, are worth examining; they are uncomplicated advances in the development of medieval narration, and they allow us to anticipate--and to appreciate--the complexity and the artistry of Chaucer's succeeding hagiographic undertakings.

Like the Second Nun, the Man of Law turns out to be an enigmatic character, who in some ways conforms to our expectations of appropriate behavior but who, in other ways, tramples inexplicably on our preconceptions. Unlike the Second Nun, however, the Man of Law is a character whose relationship with his hagiographic legend might be called symbiotic—the narrator and the tale are mutually enhanced and sustained by their association. The Man of Law's presence in the Tale is continual, and, as we might expect of a successful lawyer, his rhetoric is skillfully executed, and his behavior is self-assured. Using rhetorical questions, apostrophes, asides, examples, and truisms, he presents his heroine's story to us as if she were his client and we, a stony-face jury. What seems to have happened is that the Man of Law, unsure of the hagiographic genre's credibility and appeal, has embellished the Tale with his courtroom tactics; apparently he felt a unique need to insure his audience's acceptance of the genre's customary (and frequently
bizarre) conventions and turns of plot. In the process of winning over his audience (a concern that probably never occurred to a bona fide hagiographer), the Man of Law appears to be swayed by the force of his own arguments and rhetoric; as a result, he becomes genuinely involved emotionally in Constance's fortunes.

Whether we are entertained or irritated by the Man of Law's rhetorical histrionics, his behavior is unsettling, and the confusion which it causes us surely helps to account for the Tale's unpopularity with post-medieval readers. A crippling disparity exists between the General Prologue's Sergeant of the Law and the Man of Law who reappears as Constance's champion: in the General Prologue, Chaucer the pilgrim portrays the unnamed lawyer as a calculating pragmatist, but in much of his narrative, the Man of Law behaves like a shallow sentimentalist. Perhaps because of some indecision concerning the Man of Law's character, Chaucer has neglected to forge the missing link in the lawyer's characterization, the link which would connect the Man of Law's self-serving use of his profession with his sympathy for an outcast woman. Chaucer's creating a lawyer to narrate the life of Constance is an original and complex undertaking, but the poet's effort, and the outcome of it, are incomplete.

In the Prioress's Tale, however, Chaucer achieves complete compatibility between narrator and narrative: the
Prioress's portrait in the General Prologue is reinforced and, finally, extended by her account of a child's martyrdom. The heavy sentimentality associated with miracle stories is altogether appropriate to a lady whose soft-heartedness is documented in the General Prologue; and, on a darker side, her spiritual blind spots, revealed in the General Prologue, and her hostility shown toward the Jews in her tale are understandable when we consider her restricted perspective on the world. Chaucer has tailored the Prioress's rhetoric to fit the story as well as its narrator's character; an examination of her speech does not reveal the fine points of rhetorical expertise found, appropriately enough, in the Man of Law's Tale, but instead reflects liturgical rhetoric and commonplace observations. Mingling with her convent-nurtured speech is an irrepressible didacticism, a characteristic which reinforces her status as a spiritual community's leader and diminishes the impression of the Prioress as an irresponsible and half-witted social parasite. The association between the Prioress and this miracle is mutually beneficial: the Prioress's presence brings human feelings and responses to a story which, in other versions, is nearly devoid of humanity and real compassion, while the Tale itself allows us an expanded view of Madame Eglentyne's emotions, prejudices, and capabilities.
Hagiography, a popular and influential genre for more than a thousand years among literate and illiterate Christians, has been neglected and misunderstood by all but a few scholars and critics. That Chaucer found the genre worthy of his energy and imagination makes our latter-day neglect of the form so much the more astonishing.

The purpose of this study will be to examine the Tales of the Second Nun, the Man of Law, and the Prioress as hagiographic accounts and to analyze the pilgrim-narrators' rhetorical intrusions into their stories: the interruptive asides, comments, exclamations, clarifications, and explanations which the hagiographic genre invites and which remind us of the speakers' emotional, as well as artistic, involvement in the tales. By examining the rhetorical and narrative conventions which Chaucer used in creating his own versions of saintly tales, we may appreciate his accomplishment as a hagiographer; and by analyzing the hagiographic narrators' rhetoric and comparing our observations with the character portraits drawn in the General Prologue, we may better understand the relationship between the rhetoric and the characterization of Chaucer's three pilgrim-hagiographers. In so doing, we hope to show that the speakers' rhetoric and conduct supplement and complement in definite, demonstrable ways the characterizations given us in the General Prologue.

The Man of Law's Tale is especially accessible to this type of analysis, since Constance (unlike Sts. Mary and Cecilia) is not a recognized saint and has no official standing in the Church or its literature. Margaret Schlauch, editor of Sources and Analogues' chapter on the Man of Law's Tale, emphasizes the Tale's kinship with folklore in her examination, pp. 165-206; Edward A. Block, "Originality, Controlling Purpose, and Craftsmanship in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale," PMLA, 68 (1953), 572-616, acknowledges hagiographic elements in the Tale and in its immediate source, Nicholas Trivet's Life of Constance, but concentrates on similarities and differences in the texts of the two versions. Robert Enzer Lewis, "Chaucer's Artistic Use of Pope Innocent III's De Miseria Humane Conditionis in the Man of Law's Prologue and Tale," PMLA, 81 (1966), 485-92, points out parallels and similarities between the Man of Law's character and Tale, and between portions of the De Miseria.
3 See, for example, William Bradford Gardner, "Chaucer's 'Unworthy Sone of Eve,'" Texas Studies in English, 26 (1947), 77-83, for a discussion of the "Second Nun's" curious autonym.


The conventionality of St. Cecilia's character and the unobtrusiveness of the Second Nun's Tale's narrator do not readily lend themselves to this type of critical analysis.


Chaucer appears to have been the creator of English hagiography's self-conscious, rhetorical narrator, if I may judge from my readings of representative tales, whose times of composition range from the late seventh to late fourteenth centuries. Derek Pearsall refers to "the Chaucer-Lydgate tradition of embellished rhetorical hagiography," in his article "John Capgrave's Life of St. Katharine and Popular Romance Style," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, N. S. 6 (1975), 123. See also Theodor Wolpers, *Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964), pp. 304 ff., and 330-42.


Baldwin, pp. viii-ix.
10 Baldwin, p. ix, writes: "Medieval rhetoric was generally a lore of style. Here rhetorica tended to coincide with that school study of Latin poetry which was a recognized function of grammatica. The constant quotation of Horace's 'Ars poetica' is one of the signs of the merging of poetic with rhetoric. The conventional doctrine from both was largely of descriptive dilation."

11 Ars Versificatoria, by Matthew of Vendôme; Poetria Nova, by Geoffrey of Vinsauf; Grecismus, by Evrard (or Eberhard) of Béthune; Poetria, by John of Garland. Baldwin points out (p. 185) that these four works "may be assigned approximately to the half-century divided by 1200 (c.1175-1225)."

12 Descriptio, digressio, and apostrophe were the three most favored means of amplification. See Roger Phillip Parr, "The Rhetorical Analysis of Chaucer's Narrative Technique," Diss. Univ. of Toronto 1956, p. 244; and Edmond Faral, Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (Paris: Champion, 1924), pp. 172 ff.

13 According to Atkins, p. 100, elocutio in medieval rhetorics came to "deal [...] mainly with the use of amplification and ornaments of style."


17 Parr, p. 375.

19 See Douglas Kelly, "Theory and Composition in Medieval Narrative Poetry and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*," *Mediaeval Studies*, 31 (1969), 117-48. Kelly observes, pp. 144-45: "If, in fact, there was no 'tradition' of rhetoric in England in Chaucer's time (as Murphy suggests), there were certainly ancient and medieval treatises on rhetoric and poetics in contemporary libraries, as anyone who examines the catalogues of thirteenth and fourteenth century British libraries will realize. *The Poetria Nova* was often found in those libraries, and thus it must have been known by those who were interested in literature and writing, as Chaucer was."

20 Janette Richardson, *Blameth Nat Me: A Study of Imagery in Chaucer's Fabliaux* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), p. 23 n. 12, argues that "Chaucer's own use of rhetoric and of the *Poetria Nova* specifically seems better proof of his knowledge than does Mr. Murphy's reconstruction of a possible lack of such knowledge."

21 Ernest Gallo, "Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise on the Art of Poetry," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 118 (1974), 54, remarks that "Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and Shakespeare all composed rhetorically throughout their careers. They would have been puzzled to hear that their devotion to rhetoric was a passing aberration with no real impact on their best work."


23 See Parr, pp. 7, 28, 65.
24 Compare the Second Nun's Tale, the Man of Law's Tale, and the Prioress's Tale with their sources and analogues, in Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Concerning the suitability of tale to teller in Chaucer, J. R. Hulbert, "The Canterbury Tales and Their Narrators," Studies in Philology, 45 (1948), suggests, p. 565: "Perhaps the only indication before Chaucer that an author felt the possibility of such a relationship is in the difference between the novelle told by Dioneo and those of the other members of the company in the Decameron, which probably Chaucer never saw. As far as we know, therefore, Chaucer's realization that the story should be suitable to its teller is entirely original."

25 The Franklin, the Merchant, the Physician, the Pardoner, and the Nun's Priest, for instance.

26 Norman Eliason proposes that the Second Nun owes her existence to scribal error, rather than to Chaucer's imagination: see Eliason, "Chaucer's Second Nun?" Modern Language Quarterly, 3 (1942), 9-16. Raymond Preston observes that the rhetoric in the Man of Law's Tale is skillfully executed and is, therefore, appropriate to a lawyer, but Preston feels that the Life of Constance "no more appears to fit its narrator than the story of Appius and Virginia appears to fit the Physician"; see Preston, Chaucer (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), p. 204. Ambiguities in the General Prologue's characterization of the Prioress support diametrical interpretations of her Tale--and of the Prioress herself. No critic, to my knowledge, argues that the Prioress's narrative opposes her characterization in the General Prologue; however, critics have taken the same characterizational information--for example, the Prioress's weeping to see a trapped mouse--and have used the descriptions to argue for interpretations which, to one critic's thinking, prove Madame Eglentyne a sensitive, sympathetic woman, but to another critic, condemn her as an emotional cripple. For summaries of these critical positions, see Ridley, pp. 1 ff.

27 Trevor Whittock proposes that the Second Nun, a translator, is reading her manuscript to the Pilgrims; see Whittock, A Reading of the Canterbury Tales (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), pp. 252-53. Rodney Delasanta, "And of Great Reverence: Chaucer's Man of Law," Chaucer Review, 5 (1971), 288-310, connects the Tale's rhetoric, its attention to legalistic details, its black and white characterizations, and its narrator's "pharisaical spirit" with the legal profession. Concerning the Prioress's Tale,
we have already mentioned (n. 26) that the Prioress's ambiguous characterization will support almost any critical interpretation of the narrator's appropriateness to the Tale.


29 Critics who have observed a relationship between the hagiographic convention and the Man of Law's rhetoric are Mary Giffin, Studies on Chaucer and His Audience (Hull, Quebec: Les Editions "I'éclaire," 1956), p. 72; and Paull, pp. 188-89.


31 Baldwin, p. 5.

32 See E. R. Curtius' remarks on the development of the vita sancti and the passio, p. 425.

33 The form of the panegyric was rigidly determined, according to Delehaye: "at the beginning, a preamble; at the end, an epilogue; and between the two, an elegy, appropriately said, according to a series of carefully determined commonplaces, topoi." See Delehaye, p. 196 (translation mine).

34 Charles W. Jones outlines the stages of development in a saint's cult: "The growth of a saint's life from calendar entry through the breviary-martyrology to the historical martyrology, and the transference of this material to the office in the form of legendary and hagiography, and then into popular romance written in meter and in the vernacular, is a natural, almost unavoidable growth." See Jones, Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1947), p. 58.
35 In the Anglo-Latin "Life of St. Gregory," we sense the hagiographer's frustration and trepidation, as he pleads for our understanding: "All these are signs of that bountiful man, and we beseech the reader in Christ that if he should know better about any of these acts he should not bite with the teeth of his censure this our work. It was painfully pieced together more by love than by knowledge of so great a man." See Jones' translation in Saints' Lives and Chronicles, p. 117.

36 The ten commonplaces for constructing the saint's life are listed by Delehaye in Les Passions, p. 197: "1) the country, city, people having the honor of producing the hero; 2) his family; 3) his birth, especially if accompanied by a miraculous sign; 4) his natural qualities; 5) his education; 6) his childhood; 7) his type of life, his occupation; 8) his deeds; 9) his fortune; 10) comparisons."


The Anglo-Latin writer of St. Gregory's Life acknowledges his use of commonplaces and justifies it as follows: "neither should anyone be offended if any of these deeds were actually done by some other of the saints, since the holy apostle, through the mystery of one body with its members the saints, by comparing it with the living body has so brought them into union that we should attribute to each member the works of the other in turn. . . . Hence if any of these things which we have written were not of that man (for indeed we learned them orally from those who had not seen or heard--so much do we have them from common report), we should little doubt that they too should be in so great a man. . . ."

(translation Jones'), p. 118.

37 Even Thomas Becket, historically the son of an upper middle class Londoner and his French wife, is given a royal and romantic background in Caxton's translated edition of the Legenda Aurea. According to Caxton, Gilbert Beckett, the saint's father, was imprisoned by a pagan prince while on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The prince's beautiful daughter, also pagan, befriended Gilbert and helped him escape from prison. Some months later, the princess, still desperately in love with Gilbert, escaped her father's realm, made her way to London, and ran down the city's streets crying the only English word she knew--"Beckett!" She and Gilbert were reunited and married, and Thomas was born to them.

38 See Curtius, p. 425.

39 Delehaye discusses, rather sardonically, these three commonplaces in Les Légendes hagiographiques (Brussels: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes, 1905), pp. 105-7.


41 Robinson, p. 481.


43 Periphrasis, or circumlocutio, was another means of amplification recommended by rhetoricians; according to Hippolyte Delehaye, periphrasis was commonly used by hagiographers, especially in avoiding the mention of the saint’s proper name: “We would not dream of reproaching our orators for not always calling things by their name, if they would at least not advertise their horror of people’s names.” See Delehaye, Les Passions, p. 208 (translation mine).

In reading accounts from the Legenda Aurea and from English hagiography, I did not find significant abuse of the device. Concerning Chaucer’s use of periphrasis, Parr has written (p. 297), “We find very little use of that figure of amplificatio known as circumlocutio, or of its variations diminutio and interpretacio. . . . In some instances circumlocutio serves to complete the verse or to avoid objectionable words. Its real function is to clarify. Chaucer’s comparatively rare employing of this figure is consistent with his usual clarity of expression.”

44 One scholar, Clinton Albertson, has likened the typical Anglo-Saxon monk’s treatment of Latin to “a Germanic warrior wearing newly captured Roman armor[;] the Anglo-Saxon monk handles Latin proudly but awkwardly, and with a boyish curiosity and enthusiasm.” See Albertson, Anglo-Saxon Saints and Heroes (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1967), p. xiii.
McMaster, p. 68. I am indebted to McMaster, pp. 67-68, for the preceding information on the Auxerre Abbreviatio.

According to McMaster, the Legenda Sanctorum became more widely known as "the Legenda Aurea (for so its admiring readers named it to distinguish it from all other collections). . . ." See McMaster, p. 71.

According to McMaster, p. 67: "The author states that his purpose is to provide the parish priest with the lives of saints that he may be able to incite the faithful to devotion."

McMaster, p. 70.

Concerning the Auxerre Abbreviatio, Jacobus' influential predecessor, McMaster states: "The more incredible incidents are omitted, and dates and other corroborative information are supplied whenever possible" (p. 68). Of the Legenda Aurea, McMaster observes, "Varagine has been accused of being prosy and prolix, but chiefly by modern readers unfamiliar with his sources, in contrast with which he is a model of concision. Scarcely a subsequent writer of legends escaped his influence" (p. 71).

McMaster comments, p. 72: "This thirteenth-century interest in revamping the lives of saints provided the authors of the South-English Legendary and the North-English Homiliary with several new sources upon which they might draw for information."

See Faral, p. 74.


Another regular use of digressio is the dedication of a Life to a bishop or other patron. Such a digression occurs in Alcuin's "Life of St. Willibrord," in which the opening summary of the saint's life is interrupted by a dedication to Bishop Beornred. See Albertson's translation, p. 278.
Decriptio (formal description) and occupatio (feigned reluctance to continue) overlap with digressio in this passage. See Albertson's translation of Wilfrid's Life, pp. 121-22.

See Jones' translation of the "Life of St. Gregory," p. 106.


Such name-dropping, according to Delehaye, is common in hagiographic literature and reveals a writer's eagerness to have his work circulated and accepted as truth, not for personal honor, but for that of the saint. See, for example, Delehaye, Étude sur le Légendier Romain: les saints de novembre et de décembre (Brussels: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes, 1936), p. 12.

Parr, p. 276.

Discreet he was and of greet reverence--
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.

(General Prologue, 11. 312-13)


Lanham, p. 61.

See Nims' notes to her translation of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova, p. 104.

Atkins explains, p. 105, that apostrophe originally "meant the procedure of turning from the judge to address an opponent in a law-suit"; afterwards apostrophe "assumed the meaning of the figure known as exclamatio, that is, an impassioned or pathetic exclamation directed to some object, whether animate or inanimate."

Atkins, p. 105.


Atkins, p. 105.
67 A fairly common means of concluding legends was with an apostrophe to the saint, to Christ, or to the Virgin, such as we find in this early miracle of the Virgin (Harley MS. 2277), "The Jews and the Cross," in Early English Poems and Lives of Saints, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (1862; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1974), p. 43. Furnivall places the date of Harley MS. 2277 "about 1305-10 A.D." (p. iii).

Nou leuedi, for pe mylce: hat euere had mid pe ibeo
And for pe grete sorwe hat pu haddest: po pi sone
deide on pe treo

Qeue ous grace hat we mote: such milce her wynne
hat we mote to pe ioye: come hat pu ert inne.


"O unhappy worshippers of these idols! Call upon them in need, and they cannot come to you! Invoke them in tribulation, and they cannot succour you! Summon them in danger, and they cannot defend you!"

69 Parr discusses Chaucer's use of "apostrophe for narrative effectiveness rather than mere amplificatio" (p.283) on pp. 280, 282-83. He observes "that Chaucer's apostrophes are employed primarily in the stories of tragedy to express and intensify emotion, and elsewhere to emphasize climax" (p. 283).

70 Two notable occurrences of descriptio in Chaucer's works are found in the Book of the Duchess' description of Blanche (11. 816-1040) and in the Knight's Tale's descriptions of Venus' temple (11. 1918-66), Mars' temple (11. 1970-2050), Diana's temple (11. 2051-88), and the arrival at the tournament of the knights and their retinues (11. 2494-2515).

71 Lanham, p. 39.

72 Sophistics, according to Curtius, represented "the old Greek intellectual values" (p. 68). The Second Sophistic was a revival of these classical ideals, which lasted "from the first half of the first century before Christ . . . until about the middle of the fourth century. The leading role in this movement falls to rhetoric. For it is rhetoric, and not poetry or philosophy, which appears as the representative of the old Greek intellectual values" (p. 68). See also Curtius, p. 194, for the New Sophistic's development of ecphrasis, or descriptio.
73 Delehaye, Les Passions, p. 214


75 Jacobus de Voragine, Legenda Aurea; see Sources and Analogues, pp. 671-72.

76 Lanham, p. 12.


79 Jacobus de Voragine, Legenda Aurea; see Graesse, p. 113.

Caxton translates the passage as follows: "She was fair of visage, but much fairer in the christian faith, she was young of age, and aged in wit, for in the thirteenth year of her age she lost the death that the world giveth and found life in Iesu Christ. . . ." (Caxton, II. 245).


81 Chaucer, according to Roger Parr, used collatio (also known as comparatio) more frequently than any other rhetorical figure: "between five and six hundred times in The Canterbury Tales and at least one hundred and fifty times in Troilus and Criseyde" (p. 288).

For a discussion of the heroic and athletic motifs in hagiography, see Delehaye, Les Passions, pp. 211 and 213.

82 See Albertson, p. 23.

83 Albertson, p. 23.

84 As Robinson points out in his notes (p. 759), 11. 386-91 are taken from II Timothy iv. 7, 8. "Cours" functions in both an athletic and in a martial sense in this exhortation. According to the O.E.D. (II.ii.1087), "cours" meant "the action of running," "race," as well as "The rush together of two combatants in battle or tourna-

85 Lanham, p. 49.

The bee simile appears in the Legenda Aurea and in Chaucer's translation of the "Lyf of Seint Cecile," in which Urban likens St. Cecilia to "a bisy bee, withouten gile" (p. 195).


Because of Jacobus de Voragine's editing, the Legenda Aurea's versions have fewer rhetorical figures than do earlier tales--and Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale and Prioress's Tale as well. In the prefatory remarks to their translation of the Legenda Aurea, Ryan and Ripperger comment upon the almost complete lack of "style" (p. xvi).

Lanham, p. 92.

Nims' definition, p. 105.

Nims, p. 104.

Nims, p. 105.

Nims, p. 105.

"Life of St. Cuthbert," trans. Albertson, pp. 40-41. See also Eddius Stephanus' description of Wilfrid's church at Hexham (p. 15 of this text) and the note (n. 54) accompanying that passage.

See Parr, p. 301; and Robinson's note on the Knight's Tale, l. 884, (pp. 670-71).

See Parr, p. 302.

Chaucer, for example, summarizes what Cecilia teaches Tiburtius, 11. 345-48. Compare the text of the Legenda Aurea, in Sources and Analogues, p. 674.

See McMaster, p. 71.

100 F. N. Robinson argues that "a safe date for the whole work would be shortly after 1373" (p. 755). Robinson does not mention the efforts of two researchers to link the "Lyf's" composition with a historical event: the appointment, in December 1381, of an Englishman, Adam Easton, to be Cardinal-Priest of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. On this basis, McMaster, pp. 100-10, argues for a date after 1381. Somewhat later, Mary Giffin fixes the "Lyf's" date at 1383. She connects a royal visit to Easton's former priory with problems that Richard II was having with the pope, and she suggests (p. 31) that "a poem honoring Easton's title of Santa Cecilia might have been persuasive toward obtaining the English cardinal's assistance." Furthermore, Giffin points out (p. 48), Chaucer's poem seems "even to refer to the work upon which Easton was engaged in 1383, the Office of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin." See Giffin's chapter on the Second Nun's Tale in Studies on Chaucer and His Audience, pp. 29-48.

101 Robinson observes (p. 692) that "such positive clues as have been detected all point to a rather late date (about 1390) for the composition of the whole poem."

102 Robinson, p. 734.
CHAPTER TWO

THE SECOND NUN: CHAUCER'S TRANSLATOR

The Second Nun's Tale today occupies an ambivalent critical position. On the positive side, Chaucer's translation of a popular saint's legend is one of the best, if not the best, of the saintly tales to come out of the English Middle Ages. His versification of the Latin prose is both remarkably literal and unfailingly graceful, and his retelling of the "Life," in which he condenses some episodes and embellishes others, is a better story.¹ On the negative side, post-medieval distaste for Chaucer's "Lyf of Seint Cecile" may be blamed on the apparent disunity between the Second Nun's Prologue and the Second Nun's Tale, the need for revisions which would make this early² work appropriate to its subsequent setting in the Canterbury pilgrimage, the Tale's flatness of characterization, and the unpleasantness of the story itself.³ The ambiguous role of the narrative persona has further confused the issue of the Tale's merit. The narrator's stance, as we shall see, is not appropriate to a nun, whose lack of a portrait⁴ in the General Prologue has left us little choice except to regard her as a stereotype; rather, the "Second Nun's" narrative behavior suspiciously resembles the customary
conduct of the Chaucerian narrator, who, in such works as the Book of the Duchess, the Parliament of Fowls, the House of Fame, and throughout the Canterbury Tales, is portrayed as being conscientious, anxious to please, humble, and, sometimes, arch. At the same time, the narrator's independent presence in the "Lyf of Seint Cecile" is apparently an innovation in the St. Cecilia legend which critics have largely overlooked or have taken for granted. In so eccentric a genre as medieval hagiography, with its customarily bizarre plots, unreal characters, and uncritical acceptance of these conventions, the Chaucerian narrator's characteristic "function as intermediary between poet and audience" (to use Charles Muscatine's phrase) is well suited to the genre's intrinsic opportunities for interpretation and comment.

In the Second Nun's Tale, Chaucer makes tentative attempts to acknowledge at least some of his audience's likely responses to the legend; one purpose of this essay will be to examine the relationship of the Chaucerian narrator to hagiographic peculiarities. An impediment to this approach is that at this stage of his literary development, Chaucer is apparently unconcerned with developing a full-bodied narrative character from the narrator's rhetorical responses to the genre's eccentricities (such as he later does with the Man of Law
and the Prioress). Since the Second Nun's character is not developed in the line-and-a-half devoted to her in the General Prologue, a strict correlation of her character and her rhetoric is unfeasible. Still, this essay will examine the speaker's narrative intrusions and will also treat, as far as can be determined,8 the elaborations and adaptations of the source that Chaucer unobtrusively adds to his version. From this approach we may gain at least a sense of Chaucer's feeling toward a very popular genre, and, at the same time, we may come to a better appreciation of his talent as a translator. Having gotten some understanding of Chaucer's accomplishment in his "Lyf of Seint Cecile," we may be better prepared to accept his achievements in his other hagiographical efforts, the Man of Law's Tale and the Prioress's Tale.

In its organization, Chaucer's "Lyf of Seint Cecile" is typical of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' hagiographic accounts: Chaucer's version opens with a meditative Prologue,9 and, following the lead of his main source, Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda Aurea, Chaucer precedes the actual "Life" with an etymological interpretation of the saint's name.10 The "Life" itself, following hagiographical convention, notes the heroine's high birth (l. 121), reports her conversions of the pagans, details her trial before the Roman prefect (11. 421-511),
relates her subsequent torture and death (11. 512-46), and states the site of her burial (11. 547-53). 11

In other respects, however, the Cecilia legend differs from accounts of other virgin-martyrs in the *Legenda Aurea*—Lucy, Anastasia, Agnes, Agatha, Juliana, Margaret, Christine, Euphemia, Catherine, to name some. Perhaps the following unusual features in the Cecilia story explain why Chaucer was attracted to this legend of a "mayde and martyr": Cecilia's "Life," unlike the "Lives" of the saints previously mentioned, places less emphasis on the saint's last days; in the *Legenda Aurea*'s version of the legend, more than half the story, an unusually high proportion for accounts of virgin-martyrs, is concerned with events other than Cecilia's, Valerian's, and Tiburce's trials and deaths; and no satanic figures appear to tempt or to torture the imprisoned heroine. Moreover, Cecilia's "Life" is exceptional (though I would hesitate to call it unique) in its portrayal of a loving husband-wife relationship (her continuing virginal state notwithstanding); and Chaucer, apparently, was more interested in the conduct and works of the Christian characters than he was in their final sacrifices for the Church.

At the same time, the Second Nun's Tale differs from the Man of Law's Tale and the Prioress's Tale in that the
"Lyf of Seint Cecile" contains no long, narrative interruptions. Instead, the speaker's intrusions in the Second Nun's Tale are largely half-line or one-line comments and asides. Because the persona's constant, audible presence is the binding factor in the Second Nun's Prologue, which is a series of meditations by the narrator, our impression of the "Second Nun" is derived largely from our reading of this Prologue. For this reason, we shall examine with some care the speaker's rhetoric and role in the Second Nun's Prologue.

The Prologue presents a serious, yet homely, narrator, who continually reminds us that we are to receive the saint's legend through her (or, as we shall soon argue, "his") consciousness: for example, the speaker tells us:

I have heer doon my feithful bisynesse  
After the legende, in translaccioun   (11. 24-25)

First wolde I yow the name of Seint Cecilia  
Expowne   (11. 85-86)

Despite such forthrightness, the speaker's relationship with the audience is, as we shall soon see, a slippery one: we are sometimes included in the speaker's address, only to find in the next stanza that we are being ignored. In this fashion, the speaker is able to enlist our attention and sympathy, yet by shifting stance elsewhere, the "Second Nun" is able to preach without seeming didactic.
The speaker's uncertain identity, however, makes it difficult for us to imagine the "Second Nun" in the company of the other Canterbury pilgrims. None of this speaker's narrative addresses, intrusions, or attitudes seems exclusively ecclesiastical or feminine. In fact, the "Second Nun's" orientation seems to be masculine: except for specific references to the Virgin throughout the Prologue and to the Canaanite woman (ll. 58-61), all of the Prologue's references to human beings, individually and collectively, are masculine:

\[ \ldots \text{men clepe in English ydelnesse} \quad (1. 2) \]

Whan he may \textit{man} in ydelnesse espye,
He kan so lightly \textit{hym} in his trappe,
Til that a \textit{man} be hent right by the lappe,
He nys nat war the feend hath \textit{hym} in honde. \quad (11. 10-13)

And though \textit{men} dradden nevere for to dye,
Yet seen \textit{men} wel by resoun, doutelees \quad (11. 15-16)

As \textit{man} may after reden in hire storie \quad (1. 35)

Ful frely, er that \textit{men} thy help biseche \quad (1. 55)

And though that I, unworthy \textit{son} of Eve,
Be synful, yet acette my bilee \quad (11. 62-63)

\[ \ldots \text{men may in hir storie see} \quad (1. 86) \]

Despite the arguments for nuns' liturgical speech, arguments which are advanced in defence of the speaker's notorious reference to himself as "I, unworthy sone of Eve" (l. 62),\textsuperscript{13} it is hard to believe that even a medieval
nun could so thoroughly repress her own sexual identification. Moreover, the speaker's comment, not found in the Latin text, on wedding night procedure--

\[
\text{to bedde most she gon}
\]

With hir housbonde, \textit{as ofte is the manere} (ll. 141-42; Chaucer's additions in italics)

--seems more appropriate to Pandarus or the Wife of Bath than to a nun. Finally, we may note that instead of appearing to entertain or edify a live audience, the speaker of the \underline{Second Nun's Prologue} seems isolated, preoccupied with the acts of translating and glorifying for a \emph{reading} audience; such a stance is inappropriate to an audience and narrator on horseback. For us to concentrate on the \underline{Tale's} hagiographical and narrative concerns, we must regard Chaucer's "Lyf of Seint Cecile" as being primarily an independent, hagiographical piece, rather than as an anomaly in the \underline{Canterbury Tales}.

In the \underline{Second Nun's Prologue}, the tone immediately set by the narrator's opening meditation on idleness is one of seriousness tempered by homely and, sometimes, droll images, a stance characterized by the speaker's deference to the audience. The first Idleness stanza, tortured as it is with \underline{hyperbaton} ("departure from ordinary word order")\(^{14}\) and \underline{periphrasis} (circumlocution), seems to re-enact verbally for us the translator-speaker's mental
labor: 15

The minestre and the norice unto vices,
Which that men clepe in Englissh ydnelnesse,
That porter of the gate is of delices,
To eschue, and by hire contrarie hire oppresse,
That is to seyn, by leveful bisynesse,
Wel oughten we to doon al oure entente,
Lest that the feend thurgh ydnelnesse us hente. (11. 1-7)

The narrator has opened with a morality play-like
personification ("The minestre and the norice unto vices"),
and in the next line defined the figure ("ydnelnesse"),
and then romanticized the vice ("That porter of the gate
is of delices"; cf. Romance of the Rose, 11. 643-44).
At this point the writer catches up the suspended sentence
and awkwardly tacks on a verbal, "To eschue," which is
followed by a shorter, but still elliptical phrase: "and
by hire contrarie hire oppresse." Having exhausted his
resources for explaining allegorically (and clearly) his
purpose in writing, the speaker signals the end of his
circumlocutions ("That is to seyn") and in a concluding
sententia clearly summarizes what he has been trying so
painfully to say: 16

by leveful bisynesse,
Wel oughten we to doon al oure entente,
Lest that the feend thurgh ydnelnesse us hente. (11. 5-7)
Through *periphrasis* Chaucer has introduced his narrator to us and, through this rhetorical medium, has suggested to us how we might interpret the narrator's stance; the rhetoric alone would cause us to sympathize with the Chaucerian narrator, who gropes through phrase after phrase trying to reach and then to express the central thought—a mind-racking process. When the speaker finally gains the kernel, the *sententia*, in the stanza's last couplet, we feel as relieved for the narrator, who has at last hit upon an acceptable opening, as we feel relieved for our own comprehension.

The *periphrasis* which begins the Second Nun's Prologue is not comic: to laugh at vice or the devil would be to belittle these dangers to man's eternal soul and, consequently, to threaten the soul itself. The healthy respect of the speaker, as well as of the age, for "the feend" and his awful powers assures the audience that the intent of the *Prologue* is serious, a feeling which the profoundly reverent *Invocacio ad Mariam* (ll. 29-77) later strengthens. Instead of lampooning foolish people or their inflated ideas (a function of *periphrasis* which occurs in the *Parliament of Fowls*, ll. 1-4, and in the Introduction to the *Man of Law's Tale*, ll. 1-14), the *periphrasis* in the Second Nun's Prologue is serious and conscientious in its tone, even if its
labored expression makes us smile in sympathy as we remember our own struggles with writing. Here, the rhetorical pattern appears to reflect literally the difficulty of writing: the twisted syntactic order and the painstaking clarifications and qualifications mirror the torturous mental processes of refining an idea. The reader, trying to order the twisted phrases, if only to understand what is being discussed and then refined, feels that he has already become a participant in the process by the time that the speaker seems to acknowledge indirectly, in the stanza's concluding sententia, his audience's participation:

Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,
Lest that the feend thurgh ydelenesse us hente.
(11. 6-7; emphasis mine)

In the two stanzas following the periphrastic opening, the speaker continues to hold the audience's attention by relying on homely language and images to illustrate the dangers of "ydelenesse":

For he that with his thousand cordes slye
Continuelly us waiteth to biclappe,
Whan he may man in ydelsenne espye,
He kan so lightly cache hym in his trappe,
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,
He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde.
Wel oghte us werche, and ydelenesse withstonde.
And though men dradden nevere for to dye,  
Yet seen men wel by resoun, doutelees,  
That ydnelnes is roten slogardy,  
Of which ther nevere comth no good n'encrees,  
And syn that slouthe hire holdeth in a lees  
Oonly to slepe, and for to ete and drynke,  
And to devouren al that othere swynke,  

(11. 8-21)

"The feend" becomes a personal, palpable menace in the Prologue's second stanza, a villain so sly that "Til that a man be hent right by the lappe [sleeve],/ He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde." The one-line warning which follows the above description--"Wel oghte us werche, and ydnelnes withstonde"--parallels, in abbreviated form, the sententia which closed the first stanza ("Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,/ Lest that the feend thurgh ydnelnesse us hente," ll. 6-7). Even so, the speaker avoids sounding self-righteous or pedantic by manipulating the first-person form of address to third-person and vice versa. The speaker exhorts the collective "us" to positive action, obviously including himself in the menaced group. However, in giving negative examples of man's behavior--his unknowingly falling victim to the devil (ll. 8-13) and his purely physical, animalistic behavior (ll. 15-21)--the speaker uses third person. We are of course all implicated in the foolish behavior of "man" and "men," but the speaker points no finger at anyone; nobody is forced against his will to see
himself in such ugly scenes. Such tactfulness, sure to
gain and hold an audience's attention, would have befitted
such a public rhetorician as Cicero himself.

The dedication to St. Cecilia (11. 22-28) ends the
"Idleness Stanzas" fearful pageant of the human condition
with an outlook more hopeful for mankind: her "glorious
lif" represents a human triumph over fleshly sloth and its
inherent sins. At the same time that Cecilia is being
introduced as a model of Christian virtue and, as we later
learn, "bisynesse," she is also serving as a guide to a
higher plane of religious exaltation, that held by Mary,
"flour of virgines."18

With the Invocatio ad Mariam, the speaker's attitude
and rhetoric assume a formality appropriate to addressing
the Virgin Mary. The speaker confirms his shift of
address to the Virgin through apostrophe and at the same
time through an anglicized version of repetitio,
"repetition of a word at the beginning of successive
clauses."19 Using the direct address to Cecilia ("Thee
meene I, mayde and martyr, Seint Cecile," 1. 28) as a
conclusion to one section of the Prologue and as a
transition to another, the speaker pivots immediately
into the Invocatio ad Mariam:
And thow that flour of virgines art alle,
Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,
To thee at my beginning first I calle;
Thou confort of us wrecches, do me endite
Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hire merite
The eterneel lyf, and of the feend victorie,
As man may after reden in hire storie.

(11. 29-35; emphasis mine)

The hammering repetition of the second-person singular,
made even more impressive visually by the forms' placement
at the beginning of the verse-lines, continues in the
next stanza (11. 36-42);20 the apostrophe and repetitio
together generate a fervent, emotional effect that helps
to balance the speaker's conscientious and rather cerebral
stance, which we have seen in the rhetoric of the "Idleness
Stanzas." At the same time, the speaker's personal and
direct address to the Virgin in effect excludes the
audience from all but an onlooker's status, which perhaps
is all that a hagiographic reader should expect, but which
is out of keeping with the Canterbury Tales' narrative
mood and context.21 Emphasizing the audience's removal
from the speaker's communion with Mary is the curious,
third-person reference concerning his implied audience, a
reference made in the course of his address to the Virgin:

    do me endite
Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hire merite
The eterneel lyf, and of the feend victorie,
As man may after reden in hire storie.

(11. 32-35; emphasis mine)
Yet it is this same audience that the speaker deferentially turns to address in the stanza which we know as the "Envoy to the Reader," (ll. 78-84):

Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,
Foryeve me that I do no diligence
This ilke storie subtilly to endite,
For bothe have I the wordes and sentence
Of hym that at the seintes reverence
The storie wroot, and folwen hire legende,
And pray yow that ye woile my werk amenede. (ll. 78-84)

After the speaker's initial aloofness toward his reading audience, his shift of address from the Virgin Mary to us "that reden" is all the more startling because of its sudden and direct appearance. The final line of the speaker's Invocacio ad Mariam is polite but practical and seems to signal the task's beginning:

O havene of refut, o salvacioun
Of hem that been in sorwe and in distresse,
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse. (ll. 75-77)

Instead of proceeding immediately into his "werk," however, the speaker pauses (as the opening "Yet" suggests) and apologizes directly to us, still using language appropriate to religious address:

Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,
Foryeve me that I do no diligence
This ilke storie subtilly to endite,
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
And pray yow that ye woile my werk amende.22
(ll. 78-80, 84; emphasis mine)
For us, finally, as well as for the Saints, the Chaucerian narrator's attitude is deferential, perhaps a little anxious, and subtly flattering; he throws his work at the mercy of our critical powers—"pray yow that ye wole my werk amende." (l. 84)—and begins the Life itself.

The Interpretatio nominis Cecilie ("interpretation of the name Cecilia"), the last segment of the Second Nun's Prologue, begins Chaucer's translation of Jacobus de Voragine's Latin "Life of St. Cecilia." With the appearance of the actual hagiographical material, the speaker recedes from his formerly dominant role and hereafter occupies a translator's—and annotator's—marginal position in the Tale. In this new capacity, the persona apparently acts as a front for Chaucer the translator's critical sensibilities. By expressing his observations and queries through the retiring, deferential persona, Chaucer can from time to time give us his emended translation without seeming didactic or pretentious. In other instances, Chaucer uses his speaker to inform us of abridgments and deletions made in the Second Nun's Tale, changes from the original which, as we shall see, insure Cecilia's central role in the Tale. Even when we take into account the possibility that some of Chaucer's narrative intrusions may be no more than fillers to satisfy rhyme or meter, enough suggestively placed comments, pertinent to the text, remain.
Even after the speaker has confessed in the "Envoy," which immediately precedes the Interpretacio nominis, that his influence on the story is slight, he opens the Interpretacio's etymological explication of "Cecilia" with a reassurance of his presence: "First wolde I yow the name of Seint Cecile/ Expowne" (ll. 85-86). This introduction, and the first-person intrusions that later occur, all serve to remind us of the narrator-translator's presence and concern for our understanding—a gesture that we, the audience, can appreciate after our earlier unsure standing in the speaker's apostrophes.

A number of these narrative intrusions in the Second Nun's Tale serve an additional, corroborative function in the "Life": Chaucer's narrator sometimes mentions his source when he is about to describe an unusual condition or to relate a miraculous occurrence. This subtly flattering deference to his audience's apparent critical acumen has a curious, two-edged effect on us: from one perspective, the speaker's concern with supporting his statements is reassuring and encourages us to trust the Tale; from another perspective, the speaker's intrusions create a totally different impression, that of pointing to the translator's own acknowledgments of the "Life's" weak points.
Some of the speaker's intrusions, of course, function simply as reminders of the narrator's presence and as rhyming or metrical fillers, a consideration which we suggested earlier. The following couplet, for example, comes between two statements spoken in adjoining stanzas by Cecilia; the couplet's main reason for existence seems to be that of providing two verses necessary to the completion of the rhyme-royal stanza:

Seyde this blisful fayre mayde deere,
And after that, she seyde as ye may heere:
(11. 293-94; Chaucer's additions in italics)

On another occasion, the reason for the speaker's intrusion is probably that of completing the rhyming pattern demanded by "sacrifice" (1. 365):

Anon thise martirs that I yow devyse
(1. 367; Chaucer's addition in italics)

In the first line of the Tale, the speaker's intrusion seems to reflect the demand of rhyme ("seith/feith") as well as the translator's feeling of responsibility for maintaining accuracy:

This mayden bright Cecilie, as hir lif seith,
Was comen of Romayns, and of noble kynde,
And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith
Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.
(11. 120-23; Chaucer's addition in italics)
The narrator's remaining references to his source occur at points at which the audience's credulity is likely to be strained, and at these places the translator relies on the written word for supporting dubious statements. Here again, we might note that the translator's critical attitude toward the material seems less appropriate to a medieval nun than to a conscious literary artist. The speaker sidesteps responsibility for the portrait of Cecilia's saintliness when he qualifies his account:

She nevere cessed, as I writen fynde,
Of hir preyere, and God to love and drede,
Bisekynge hym to kepe hir maydenhede.
(11. 124-26; Chaucer's additions in italics)

We find the speaker hedging again when he reports the angelic visitation, which occurs after Valerian's baptism:

This angel hadde of roses and of lilie
Corones two, the which he bar in honde;
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
He yaf that oon (11. 220-23; Chaucer's additions in italics)

In the second half of the Second Nun's Tale, the speaker's interruptions assume an abbreviating function, an unusual feature for a genre which owed its existence to the amplification of a few facts and conventions. By reducing the account of the works of Valerian and
Tiburce to a three-line summation (ll. 358-61), Chaucer avoids needlessly repetitive episodes and pushes us along to the heart of every hagiographic "life": the Christians' confrontations with the enemy:

It were ful hard by ordre for to seyn
How manye wondres Jhesu for hem wroghte;
But atte laste, to tellen short and pleyn,
The serjeantz of the toun of Rome hem soghte.
(11. 358-61)29

As McMaster has pointed out (see note 28), the account of Tiburce's and Valerian's executions is condensed, so that we retain our perspective fixed on Cecilia's good life and, finally, on her martyrdom:

But whan they weren to the place broght
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,
They bolde encense ne sacrifise right noght,
But on hir knees they settyn him adoun
With humble herte and sad devocioun,
And lostyn bothe hir hevedes in the place,
Hir soules wenten to the Kyng of grace. (11. 393-99)

Earlier in the Tale, however, during Valerian's and Tiburce's respective introductions to Christianity, Chaucer expands and embellishes the Legenda Aurea's treatment of these two characters. In Chaucer's rendition, as we shall see, Valerian and Tiburce briefly lose the Gothic staidness associated with saintly behavior, possibly because the brothers are not canonized, with the result that Chaucer would not feel constrained to treat them in
the same sacrosanct manner appropriate to saints. Once again, we might observe, the narrator's identity as a nun is unconvincing. In two scenes, the neophytes show the same bewilderment and, in Tiburce's case, the same panic, that we in such circumstances might expect of ourselves, but which we would hardly expect to find in early Christian martyrs. Had Chaucer's "Second Nun" been a well-developed narrative character, such as the Man of Law or the Prioress, the brothers' unorthodox (though understandable) behavior might have elicited rhetorical outpourings from the narrator similar to those which we are to see in the Man of Law's Tale and the Prioress's Tale. In the case of the Second Nun's Tale, however, we may note Chaucer's changes from his source and glimpse a beginning of Chaucer's gifted, realistic--and humorous--portrayal of human action and emotion.

Chaucer has made the account of Valerian's confession of faith to the angelic "oold man" whirl with an urgency fostered by rapid questions and short, homely expressions:

Whan this was rad, thanne seyd this olde man, "Leevestow this thyng or no? Sey ye or nay."
"I leeve al this thyng," quod Valerian,
"For sother thyng than this, I dar wel say, Under the hevene no wight thinke may."
The vanysshed the olde man, he nyste where, And Pope Urban hym cristened right there.  
(11. 211-17; Chaucer's additions in italics)
The *Legenda Aurea*’s version, by contrast, flows at a more leisurely pace, its verbal indicators of excitement ("exclamavit," "Statim") notwithstanding:

> Cumque hoc legisset, dixit ei senior: 
> Credis ita esse an adhuc dubitas? 
> Tunc exclamavit dicens: Non est aliud quod verius credi possit sub celo. 
> Statim illo disparente Valerianus a sancto Urbano baptisma suscepit. . . . 30

The "senior's" rather gracefully phrased question, "Credis ita esse an adhuc dubitas?" contrasts with the "oold man's" impetuous "'Leevestow this thyng or no? Sey ye or nay.'" The question's abruptness and homeliness, both attributes emphasized by the simplest language imaginable, is intensified by the unceremonious command which follows before the awe-stricken Valerian can answer the question. For all the religious wonder of the episode, the effect is comic even if the angelic visitor does not necessarily remind us of Pandarus or the *House of Fame*’s Eagle. Increasing this comic effect is the inelegantly worded, absurd little echo of Valerian’s wonderment after the old man has vanished: "he nyste where."

The feeling of bewildered urgency just before Valerian’s baptism is perpetrated not only by Chaucer’s additions to the translation, but also by his arrangement of the stanza into abrupt, frequently interrupted phrases. In the depiction of Tiburce’s initial panic, when Tiburce
realizes the dangerous implications in his agreeing to become a Christian, Chaucer relies for his narrative effect on the methods mentioned above, and on two more: long, rambling phrases and unusual English words to accommodate the Latin terms:

"Til Urban? brother myn Valerian," Quod tho Tiburce, "woltow me thider lede? Me thynketh that it were a wonder dede."

"Ne menestow nat Urban," quod he tho, "That is so ofte damned to be deed, And woneth in halke alwey to and fro, And dar nat onse putte forth his heed? Men sholde hym brennen in a fyr so reed If he were founde, or that men myghte hym speye, And we also, to bere hym comapignye.

"And whil we seken thilke divinitee That is yhid in hevene pryvely, Algate ybrend in this world shul we be!"

(11. 306-18; Chaucer's additions in italics)

The *Legenda Aurea*'s version certainly shows Tiburce's consternation, but the conciseness and precision of his exclamation do not allow the hagiographer to develop Tiburce's apprehensiveness into wild-eyed terror:

De illo Urbano dicis qui tociens dampnatus est et adhuc in latebris commoratur? Hic, si inuentus fuerit, cremabitur, et nos in illius flammis pariter inuoluemur. Et dum querimus diuinitatem latentem in celis, incurremus furorem exurentem in terris.31
Chaucer immediately thrusts upon us Tiburce's shock, his unwillingness, which verges on inability, to believe that his own brother could deliberately involve him in so dangerous a situation: "brother myn Valerian" reaffirms their blood relationship but at the same time implicitly reproaches Valerian for betraying a brother's trust. Tiburce's dismay is borne out in the next line by the question, "Woltow me thider lede?" Two lines later appears a similar question which shows that Tiburce is still reeling and wants to check once more to see if he perhaps had misunderstood: "Ne menestow nat Urban. . . ." In contrast, the closest that the Latin comes to hinting at such an outburst is the question which begins Tiburce's description of Urban: "De illo Urbano dicis. . . ?"

In Chaucer's version, the interrupted phrasing accompanying Tiburce's initial reaction helps to stress the young man's jerky thinking, his struggle to find some logic behind what has befallen him. However, once Tiburce's notions take hold of him, he panics, and his words run away with his imagination:

"Ne menestow nat Urban," quod he tho,
"That is so ofte dampned to be deed,
And woneth in halkes alwey to and fro,
And dar nat ones putte forth his head? (11. 309-12)

His tumbling speech, emphasized by polysyndeton, "And . . . And," links together ideas which are not all clearly
related; his gratuitous description of Urban, "alwey... heed," not found in the Legenda, suggests Chaucer's desire to show how completely the young man's imagination has flown.

Intensifying our impression of Tiburce's loss of control over himself is the young Roman's lapsing into inelegant old English expressions: "woneth in halkes alwey to and fro." The idea of a man's having to exist in hideouts further spurs Tiburce's terrified imagination, and by the end of his question, he seems unable to think of Valerian's and Cecilia's spiritual father in any way except as a hunted animal confined to its burrow: "And dar nat ones putte forth his heed?" In contrast to Chaucer's Tiburce's panicked and loquacious reaction to the name of Urban, the Latin description of the Pope is brief and objective—"qui tociens dampnatus est et adhuc in latebris commoratur." The reasoned, ironic assessment in Latin of Urban's and his followers' probable fate betrays a little more emotion—phrases are initially choppy, are twice connected by "et... Et," and Tiburce is now speaking in first-person, though plural: "Hic, si inventus fuerit, cremabitur, et nos in illius flammis pariter inuoluemur. Et dum querimus diuinitatem latentem in celis, incurremus furorem exurentem in terris." A good imagination, however, is still needed to find much
drama, humor, or even pathos in the *Legenda Aurea*’s version.

The main problem in judging the *Second Nun’s Prologue and Tale* is the work’s ambivalent literary position. As the "Lyf of Seint Cecile," Chaucer's rendition is unexcelled: his subject is focused and his rhetoric controlled. Moreover, Chaucer innovates—a narrative presence introduces us to the material and helps us maintain a practical, yet respectful, attitude toward the appropriate characters and events, while at the same time, thematic unities bind the *Prologue* with *Tale*.

On the other hand, the work as a Canterbury Tale is a near-failure. Compared with the realistic characters we have encountered among the pilgrims and among the pilgrims' tales, Cecilia in particular is so idealized that most of the time she seems more like a stiff figure from a Gothic mural than a living person. Because we are conditioned by the *Canterbury Tales*’ context to expect some interplay between visible narrator, subject, and audience, we are confused by our sense of the speaker's isolation, and most of all by the "Second Nun's" unexplained failure to assume a narrative stance appropriate to her station.

As Chaucer has proven by his "Lyf of Seint Cecile," he is able to fashion as nearly perfect an example of the
genre as is possible, and when examined as a saint's legend and not as a Canterbury Tale, we can appreciate his achievement. It appears, then, that Chaucer's problem in dealing with hagiographic material for presentation in the Canterbury Tales is finding an appropriate narrator. Against the "reality" of a well-drawn narrator, the hagiographic rhetoric, characters, and events may interplay, so that, ideally, the narrator and the "storie" mutually illuminate and enhance each other for us. This hypothesis will guide my examination of the Man of Law's Tale and the Prioress's Tale.

Chaucer's fidelity to his initial source, the Legenda Aurea of Jacobus de Voragine, is often astounding, especially when we consider the problems of converting Latin prose into Middle English verse. Compare, for example, Chaucer's version of the "oold man's" appearance to Valerian with the Legenda Aurea's description of the same episode:

And with that word anon ther gan appeere
An oold man, clad in white clothes cleere,
That hadde a book with lettre of gold in honde,
And gan bfore Valerian to stonde.

Valerian as deed fil doun for drede
Whan he hym saugh, and he up hente hym to,
And on his book right thus he gan to rede:
"O Lord, o feith, o God, withouten mo,
O cristendom, and Fader of alle also,
Aboven alle and over alle everywhere."
This wordes al with gold ywritten were. (11. 200-10)

All quotations from Chaucer, unless otherwise indicated, will be taken from F. N. Robinson's The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

Et ecce subito apparuit senex quidam nieuis
uestibus indutus, tenens librum aureis litteris
scriptum, quem uidens Valerianus pre nimio
timore quasi mortuos cecidit, et a sene
leuatus sic legit: Vnus dominus, una fides,
unum baptisma, unus deus et pater omnium,
qui est super omnes et per omnia et in
omnibus nobis.


2 Robinson, p. 755, states, "a safe date for the whole work would be shortly after 1373."


More recently, critics have begun to re-examine the Second Nun's Tale more receptively. Its place in the Canterbury Tales has been defended on one point, at least, by critics who argue that thematic unities exist between the Second Nun's Tale and the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, which together comprise Fragment G of the Canterbury Tales.

The existence of thematic unity between the Second Nun's Prologue and the Second Nun's Tale has been discussed and, it would appear, proven, by Mary Giffin, Studies on Chaucer and His Audience (Hull, Quebec: Les Editions "L'éclair," 1956), pp. 29-48; Russell A. Peck, "The Ideas of 'Entente' and Translation in Chaucer's Second Nun's Tale," Annuaire Mediaeval, 8 (1967), 17-37; and Paul M. Clogan, "The Figural Style and Meaning of The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale," Medievia et Humanistica, N. S. 3 (1972), 213-40. Peck argues that the persona's artistic consciousness and his (or her) concern with overcoming idleness bind together thematically the Prologue and Tale. Clogan has shown "that the Prologue is artistically related to the legend in theme, pattern, and imagery" (p. 218). Giffin's remarks serve to point out relationships but do not approach the detail of the two later studies.

4 The General Prologue's only reference to the Second Nun occurs immediately after the description of the Prioress:

   Another NONNE with hire hadde she,
   That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.
   (GP, 11. 163-64)

The anonymity of the Second Nun surpasses that of her companion in the Prioress's retinue, the Nun's Priest (which priest, we never learn). We at least glimpse the priest's humble, accommodating nature and fowl-like appearance in the Prologue and Epilogue of the Nun's Priest's Tale, 11. 2810-20 and 3447-62, but such outside
hints about the "chapeleyne's" personality or appearance are not to be found; this problem prompted one critic to argue that the Second Nun never existed for Chaucer, but that she evolved later through scribal misunderstanding. See Norman Eliason, "Chaucer's Second Nun?" Modern Language Quarterly, 3 (1942), 9-16.

5 The Eagle carrying Geoffrey to the House of Fame tells him that Jupiter has been touched by the writer's conscientiousness:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{thou wolt make} \\
\text{A-nyght ful ofte thyn hed to ake} \\
\text{In thy studye, so thow writest,} \\
\text{And ever mo of love enditest} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(HF, 11.631-34)

See the Parliament of Fowls, especially 11. 106-12, in which Geoffrey dreams that Scipio appears to him to reward Geoffrey for reading all that day his "olde bok totown," a book "which Macrobe ye roughte nat a lyte"; also, in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey tells us that

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{when the sonne was to reste,} \\
\text{So hadde I spoken with hem everichon} \\
\text{That I was of hir felawshiphe anon} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(GP, 11. 30-32)

The narrator then proceeds to tell

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{the condioun} \\
\text{Of ech of hem . . .} \\
\text{And whiche they weren, and of what degree,} \\
\text{And eek in what array that they were inne.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(GP, 11. 38-41)

Chaucer's humility is nowhere better expressed than in his Retractions to the Canterbury Tales. His eagerness to please is apparent in his conversation with the grieving lover in the Book of the Duchess and, on a lighter note, his willingness to atone for displeasing the god Love and Alceste in the Legend of Good Women.

Geoffrey shows this same eagerness to please, but with an ironic undertone, when, in the General Prologue, he reports the Monk's flagrant violations, in action and attitude, of the monastic code, and, in the middle of his description, tells us, "And I seyde his opinion was good" (GP, 1. 183). We see this archness again in Chaucer's conversations with the Host in the Prologues to Sir Thopas and to Melibee, 11. 708-9 and 937-39 and in his warning to his gentle audience of the Miller's offensiveness (Prologue to the Miller's Tale, 11. 3167-86).
Theodor Wolpers, Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964), pp. 304 ff., discusses the Chaucerian narrator's contributions to the original version. Peck, p. 18, reminds us that this narrator has "his first person counterparts in the dream visions, [and that] like those figures the narrator of the saint's life poses as a writer."

Compare Chaucer's "Lyf of Seint Cecile" with the accounts by Jacobus de Voragine and Mombritius, found in Sources and Analogues, pp. 671-84; both Latin accounts are narrated objectively. The North English Homily, which appeared about 1300, according to A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 205, also shows little, if any, involvement by the narrator. Compare the opening of Chaucer's "Lyf of Seint Cecile" with that of the North English Homily:

Jhesus Crist, ful of pete,
To mankind es of mercy fre
And schewes his pouste & his might
Of(t)-sithes here unto sum men sight,
So ñat we may his mightes ken,
Als wele in wemen als in men,
And all-ñermost in maydens zing
ñat will be boun to his biding.
ñat may men by ensample se
Of saint Cecill, ñe mayden fre,
ñat born was of ful gentill blode
And euer was halie & milde of mode,
And in hir hert ful wele scho knew
All ñe lare of oure lord Jhesu.


Helen Neill McMaster, "The Legend of St. Cecilia in Middle English Literature," Diss. Yale Univ. 1936, observes, p. 122, that "the obtrusion of the narrator's personality" was characteristic of fifteenth century hagiography, which was declining in its literary quality as well as in the quality of its religious expression. McMaster's observation implies that narrative prominence in hagiography was a new development.

8 McMaster, p. 114, states: "The first 350 lines of the poem are a faithful, if occasionally free, translation of Varagine." By my calculation, 264 lines, not 350, of the "Lyf" are directly rendered from Voragine: the Interpretacio nominis Cecilie, beginning at 1. 85, introduces the Legenda Aurea as a source, and according to F. N. Robinson, p. 759, n. 349, Chaucer's reliance on the Legenda Aurea as a direct source ends with 1. 349. After mentioning possible reasons for Chaucer's abandonment of Voragine (p. 119), McMaster observes that "Chaucer's abbreviation of what follows is greatly superior to that of Varagine."

The point is that after 1. 350 of the Second Nun's Tale, Chaucer's translation is either very free, or else his direct source for the latter half of the "Lyf" has been lost. Thus a close examination of Chaucer's narrative additions to the source is possible only up to 1. 350.

9 Gordon H. Gerould, editor of Sources and Analogues' chapter on the Second Nun's Tale, remarks, p. 664: "No source has been discovered for the four stanzas on idleness, with which the prologue begins, nor need one be sought, since the device they embody has been shown to be a convention frequently used in Chaucer's time and later."

10 According to McMaster, p. 71: "The lives compiled by Jacobus [de Voragine] are set off by a novel feature, an allegorical etymology of the saint's name. These are hopelessly unscientific, but as a homiletic device to capture the imagination of the readers accustomed to instruction by means of allegory, they are successful." On p. 114, McMaster states that the source to which Chaucer refers at the beginning of his "Lyf" "is clear[ly] . . . the Legenda Aurea, for nowhere else would he have found the etymology of St. Cecilia's name."

11 Hippolyte Delehaye, Les Passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires (Brussels: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes, 1921), p. 308, lists conventions of plot regularly found in martyrs' Lives: "Generalities on the persecution, introduction of the hero, arrest, interrogation, refusal to sacrifice, tortures, return to prison, heavenly vision, new interrogation, new tortures, a new stay in prison, and so on until the execution--such is the program that the hagiographer would try in vain to modify, while repeating certain scenes, introducing some incidents, scattering widely the miraculous interventions" (translation mine).
12 Trevor Whittock, *A Reading of the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), suggests, pp. 252-53: "It is easy to suppose that even on a pilgrimage /The Second Nun/ would carry her manuscript with her, and deliver her story as she had written it down."


15 Peck, p. 22, proposes that "/t/translation is the plot /of the Second Nun's Tale/." He bases this statement on his etymological examination of "translate," which "in the fourteenth century . . . was not primarily a literary term. The sense of its Latin ancestor, *translatus* (p.pl. of *transferre*, to bear across), was strongly present. According to the *OED* the implication of change from death to life was most common. . . . The word was also used by alchemists as a synonym for *transmute* and *transform*, metaphorically indicating the resurrection of a dull spirit in base metals, with translation in all of these senses, especially the Latinate sense of conveying and the metaphorical sense of revitalizing."

Peck, p. 23, interprets Chaucer's translator-narrator as finally "place[ing] himself in a sequence of transmission of primary truth, a chain that goes back to the archetypal translator, Mary. Mary inspired Cecilia (cf. 32-35), who in turn inspired the first author, who inspired the next, etc." This sequence at the end includes us, who are invited in the "envoy" (11. 78-84) to "amende" the work ourselves.
The reader's involvement in this process of clarification is worth comparing with two better known examples of Chaucer's periphrasis, where the intent of the figure is overtly comic—and most likely satiric. The Chaucerian narrator begins the Parliament of Fowls with a *sententia* which could easily be misinterpreted by his audience:

> The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
> Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
> The dreadful joye, alwey that slit so yerne
>
> (PF, 11. 1-3)

Instead of referring to the writer's or artist's "craft," however, the narrator explains, "Al this mene I by Love" (PF, 1. 4). Here, the ostensibly scatter-brained narrator has played a joke—or to be more accurate, several jokes. The obvious victim is himself, who has, it would seem, taken four lines to discover the ambiguity in his writing. Most likely, we too have fallen for the wrong interpretation, but if we take comfort in the notion that Chaucer fell for it too, we have been doubly duped. The same effect occurs in the *Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale*, in which the Chaucerian narrator, outlining for us Harry Bailly's mental process, runs us through fourteen lines of astronomical calculations before announcing, "It was ten of the clokke, he gan conclude" (MLT, 1. 14). Again, the joke may be on the narrator, the Host, or ourselves, depending on how we interpret this exercise in pedantics. The simplest way to interpret the passage is to accept Chaucer's words as mirroring the pretentious Host's thought; Harry's inflated calculations are then deflated when Chaucer reveals the elementary conclusion toward which Harry has marshalled his mental resources—the time of day. If we have read the first fourteen lines anxiously trying to comprehend what is being discussed, then we have been tricked by the narrator. Another possibility of interpretation is that the Chaucerian narrator (not Chaucer, we should note) has himself been taken in by the calculations' dazzlement and never quite realizes the ludicrousness of the situation. Our recognition of these options, as we re-read the tangled passage, is entertaining as well as enlightening.

17 Compare Peck's suggestion (note 15, paragraph 2), that the reader is, finally, the last in a long series of translators.
Peck, pp. 24-25, states that brightness and "bisynesesse" (which is the antithesis of "ydelnesse"), both of which are associated with St. Cecilia in the Prologue, are themes that influence Cecilia's course of action in the Tale: she leads the spiritually blind towards enlightenment and, in doing so, "Release[s] the dull of spirit from the fetters of their idleness" (p. 25).


While the second stanza of the Invocacio is indebted to Dante and, to a lesser extent, Alanus de Insulis' Anticlaudianus (see Robinson, pp. 756 ff.), the non-English writers do not use the "tua" repetition; it seems safe to assume, therefore, that Chaucer is responsible for the English translation and versification.

A similar problem in the Prologue of the Prioress's Tale is lessened somewhat by a transitional passage between the Shipman's and Prioress's Tales, in which the Host courteously requests the Prioress to tell a tale, thereby reaffirming the oral context; in addition, the Prioress opens with an apostrophe, suitable for public worship, rather than with a personal meditation.

In addressing his reading audience, Chaucer changes the intimate "Thow," used in his invocation to Sts. Cecilia and Mary, to the plural "Yow," which would be appropriate for a group, such as the Canterbury Pilgrims. If, however, the speaker-reader relationship is interpreted as being one-to-one, then the significance of "Yow" becomes especially noteworthy. The O.E.D. states: "During the 14th century [YOW] ... appears as a substitute for the singular obj. THEE and nom. THOW, being originally used in token of respect in addressing a superior, but later also to an equal, and ultimately generally" (O.E.D. X.ii, p. 169). Such an interpretation leaves open the possibility that the speaker is being exceptionally polite to the audience which has until now been given only the most general notice.
23 Other instances in which the narrator's intrusion apparently serves to satisfy rhyme with an important word are:

Or Cecilie is to seye "the wey to blynde,"
For she ensample was by good techynge;
Or elles Cecile, as I wren tynde,
Is joynd . . .

(11. 92-95; Chaucer's addition in italics)

And whan this thyng was seyd as I devyse,
Men ledde hem forth to doon the sacrefise.

(11. 391-92; Chaucer's addition in italics)

24 One episode on which the narrator offers no immediate comment is possibly the most wondrous (and inexplicable) event in the Tale: the miraculous appearance of the mysterious "oold man" at Valerian's conversion, 11. 200-17. Here, as in the Man of Law's Tale, 11. 668-76, in which the hand and voice of God intervene on behalf of the accused Constance, Chaucer's persona apparently reasons that the obviously inexplicable miracles are adequate testimony of divine intervention and as such require no explanation or apology.

The speaker does not comment directly on Cecilia's painless endurance of her torture:

The longe nyght, and eek a day also,
For al the fyr, and eek the bathes heete,
She sat al coold, and feelede no wo.
It made hire nat a drope for to swete.

(11. 519-22)

Description of the torture(s) and the saint's indifference to the pain were an expected part of the martyr's "Life," with the saint's unfailing serenity being one more way of showing his or her triumph over the flesh, the world, and evil (see Delehaye, Les Passions, pp. 205, 207-8, 284, 288). Chaucer probably felt that this undisputed (and, moreover, conventional) miracle required neither explanation nor apology.

25 The Legenda Aurea's portrait of Cecilia's conventional background and character is as follows:

Cecilia uirgo clarissima ex nobili Romanorum genere exorta, et ab ipsis cunabulis in fide christi nutrita, absconditum semper euangelium Christi gerebat in pectore et no diebus neque noctibus a colloquis diuinis et oratione cessabat, suamque uirginitatem conservari a domino exorabat. (Sources and Analogues, pp. 669-70)
Robinson, p. 758, n. 220, discusses the background and possible interpretations of the floral crowns.

Delehaye, Les Légendes hagiographiques (Brussels: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes, 1905), pp. 10-11, states that the two factors essential to creating a hagiographic legend were: a historical fact and the fact's being "embellished or disfigured by popular imagination" (p. 10; translation mine).

In medieval rhetorical theory abbreviatio, the compression of material, was one of two ways of treating a topic, the other option being amplificatio. In practice, however, abbreviatio was seldom used; Geoffrey of Vinsauf, in Poetria Nova, devotes 470 lines to techniques of amplification (Poetria Nova, 11. 209-689), but gives only 46 lines to its theoretical equal, abbreviation (PN, 11. 690-736). The Latin transcript of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova may be found in Edmond Faral, Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (Paris: Champion, 1924), pp. 204-20.

On Chaucer's independence of Voragine after line 350, McMaster, pp. 119-20, comments: "His abbreviation of what follows is greatly superior to that of Varagine. He omits the tedious questioning of Tiburtius and Valerian, which Varagine had included, as extraneous to the life of the saint; conversely, he uses two speeches by Cecilia, which Varagine had omitted. The story of Maximus is successfully subordinated to the reader's interest in St. Cecilia; whereas Varagine had given the full account of his conversion and quoted Maximus' speech to the young man."

Concerning this passage, McMaster writes: "Be it personal opinion or national sentiment, the author of the late thirteenth-century's South-English Legendary leaves no doubts in the reader's mind of why Cecilia does not accompany Valerian and Tiburtius in their deeds of mercy: 'vor heo womman was; atom heo moste abide'; only men 'aboute wende wide'" (p. 80)

Legenda Aurea, in Sources and Analogues, p. 672.

Legenda Aurea, in Sources and Analogues, p. 674.

"Halke," meaning "a corner, refuge, hiding-place"; its provincial character is suggested by its occurrence "only in Middle English; perhaps a diminutive of O.E. halh, corner" (O.E.D. V.i, p. 40).
CHAPTER THREE
THE MAN OF LAW: DEFENDER OF HAGIOGRAPHY

The Man of Law's Tale appears to be one of the Canterbury Tales' least popular works. The plot's repetitiousness, its improbable and inexplicable occurrences, and its unimaginative characterizations may be understood and grudgingly tolerated as being typical of medieval romance literature;¹ the narrator, however, is a more troublesome feature of the Man of Law's Tale.

The narrator's often lengthy digressions and apostrophes, self-conscious abbreviations of the story, and short but frequent comments on the tale's characters and plot sharply contrast with the almost complete impersonality of Chaucer's sources: Nicholas Trivet's Life of Constance, found in his Anglo-Norman Chronique, and John Gower's Life of Constance, found in his Confessio Amantis.² While most of the narrator's interruptions are in themselves diverting, they are at the same time distracting, because as a whole they seem inappropriate to the pilgrim-narrator who in the General Prologue is characterized as "discreet," seemingly "of great reverence" (l. 312), and thoroughly professional (ll. 314-27).³ Yet, for Chaucer to have departed from his sources by creating a continuously present narrator for his tale of
Constance, and for him to have completed his long experiment, he must have felt that the story had a potential that Gower's recent translation and versification had not touched. 4

One explanation of why Chaucer created a narrative guide for the audience of the Man of Law's Tale is that he saw the hagiographic genre's structural and rhetorical irregularities ("flaws," in modern judgment) as opportunities for developing and characterizing a narrative persona, whose presence in turn would add another dimension of interest to the original tale. By causing the narrating character to react to--or to interact with--such peculiarities of the hagiographic genre as its improbable characters and events, its sometimes extravagant rhetorical excursions, and its unanswerable philosophical and theological problems, Chaucer apparently has attempted to convert the Constance legend's liabilities into narrative assets. Since constance was not canonized, Chaucer could exercise artistic license without risking accusations of impiety for treating a saint's life too freely. Chaucer's experiment has been partially successful: to the account of Constance's life he has added a sphere of interest of his own creation, the Man of Law's responses to his own story; the speaker's self-characterizing interruptions, however, damage the story's structure. As determined as
the Man of Law is to make this saintly legend acceptable to his audience, Chaucer seems to have transferred a good portion of interest in the Man of Law's Tale from the story to its narrator.

Even if the Man of Law's portrait in the General Prologue has not specifically prepared us for his running critical commentary on his Tale, the rhetorical facilness which the lawyer displays so lavishly is hardly surprising, considering his professional attainment: the Man of Law's Tale is what we might expect from a successful lawyer who fancies himself as a literary critic and who imposes on a hagiographic romance the same rhetorical method which he might use in entering a plea for a client. By examining the Man of Law's "own" rhetoric we may come to a better understanding both of Chaucer's reasons for assigning this tale to the Man of Law, and of Chaucer's tactics for presenting his saintly romance to a latter-day, predominantly secular audience.

The Man of Law's stance toward his material raises a question of narrative sincerity. We know that he is neither a hagiographer nor an ecclesiastic, and his emotional and, sometimes, compassionate responses to human predicaments seem out of keeping with Chaucer the pilgrim's unflattering portrait of the Sergeant of the Lawe, in which Chaucer hints strongly that the Man of Law
is a man of appearances:

Discreet he was and of greet reverence—
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.

(GP, 11. 312-13)

Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.

(GP, 11. 321-22)

We are thus inclined to view with suspicion the Man of Law's professed disgust with immoral tales ("unkynde abhomynaciouns," he calls them, MLT 1. 88), and we are likely to regard the Man of Law's responses to his heroine's story as being consonant with the professional tactics of a successful lawyer. He is obviously concerned for his tale's credibility before a contemporary audience, so that he anticipates the audience's doubts and hastens to tighten the loopholes; he continually tries to relate his far-fetched tale to his audience by interrupting the story and digressing in his own voice and by appealing (three times) to the experiences of a contemporary audience. Further damaging our belief in the Man of Law's sincerity is his evident desire to practice literary criticism, a process which requires not only a sizable amount of objectivity, but which in so subjective, fantastic, and loose a genre as hagiographic romance, also requires flexibility. The Man of Law's condescending judgment of Chaucer's poems (in 11. 46-50 of the
Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale) is a clue to the lawyer's literary sensibilities, and the garbled list of Chaucer's (and probably Gower's) literary accomplishments (ll. 57-85) might be explained, as William L. Sullivan has suggested, by the Man of Law's dilettantish acquaintance with contemporary literature. The critical presence of the Man of Law in his hagiographic romance is often comical to us, as he goes about expanding on obvious flaws and questioning stock elements in the story—hardly the conduct that we expect of a hagiographer.

Our hesitancy to interpret the Man of Law's narrative stance sympathetically may be explained in part by our experiences with such con-men as the Merchant, the Pardoner, and the Reeve, whose words at one time or another reflect their venomous natures. In the General Prologue we have been forewarned about these three characters' moral deficiencies, just as we have been told about the Man of Law's shrewdness and concern with appearances. Thus forearmed, we are apt to bristle at the Man of Law's every sally, determined not to swallow the narrator's religious or sentimental pitches while he sneers at our gullibility. Without denying that the Man of Law does practice his rhetorical wiles on his audience, we can see that the Man of Law strives throughout his Tale to maintain the responsible, trustworthy image that
we have seen him trying to project in the Introduction and "prologue" to the Man of Law's Tale. His eagerness to make a good impression on his companions (an eagerness which admittedly may be attributed to professional habit) is demonstrated by his professed willingness to abide by Harry Bailly's rules (11. 39-45); by his pronouncements (some of which we have already mentioned) which subject him to our suspicions of his hypocrisy; and by his attempts throughout the Tale to reassure his audience of their narrator's control over the unwieldy Tale. While the Man of Law's prefatory priggishness and his rhetorical exhibitionism are undeniable, the sincerity of his concern for Constance as a human being (rather than as a saint) becomes evident, too. Surprisingly, perhaps, the Man of Law's usage of formal rhetoric, particularly apostrophe, supplies the evidence that the lawyer is not entirely a rhetorical robot, shedding crocodile tears in hopes of winning the free meal at the end of the pilgrimage.

Rhetorical devices occurred as a matter of course not only in public speeches but also in hagiography, where they served not only to amplify and abbreviate the story where needed, but also to help occasionally (and crudely) in characterization and dramatization. The difference between the rhetoric of the "typical"
hagiographic legend (such as we might find in the thirteenth century's *Legenda Aurea*, which was Chaucer's source for at least half of the *Second Nun's Tale*) and the rhetoric of the *Man of Law's Tale* lies basically in the degree of narrative exposure. Since the purpose of hagiography was to glorify the saints and the Church and to provide models for Christian conduct, the hagiographic author was customarily self-effacing, imposing his presence only occasionally and then, briefly, usually at the beginning or end of the account. ¹¹ Neither Trivet's nor Gower's version of the Constance legend contains any first-person statements from the narrator or references to the narrator. Perhaps the closest that Trivet comes to imposing a narrative presence on our consciousness is his *exclamatio* "(allas! si ne fut la volunte dieu),"¹² while Gower's persona reminds us of its presence with an occasional, objectively-expressed proverb or with an admonition, such as we find in 11. 1226-27 of his "Life of Constance" and in the "Life's" conclusion, 11. 1604-12. ¹³ Such inconspicuousness of the narrator is practically non-existent in the *Man of Law's Tale*. The speaker pops up everywhere, at some points telling us that he is abbreviating the *Tale*, and at other points amplifying the *Tale* with his opinions on characters and situations.
The spontaneity in the Man of Law's remarks is not entirely convincing, especially when we consider the Man of Law's rhetorical proficiency and his professional success, but the efforts that the Man of Law makes to have us accept his story are apparent, and the differences in his apostrofistic styles and degrees of control, particularly, suggest that the Man of Law does become caught up emotionally in his heroine's troubles. This interpretation of the Man of Law's character through his rhetoric does not have to oppose the portrait of the Man of Law that the General Prologue has given us. The Man of Law's interruptions, both amplificatory and abbreviatory, repeatedly demonstrate his knowledge of rhetoric (though his tact as well as his dramatic and critical sensibilities are sometimes seen to be woefully lacking), and his secular approach to a hagiographical romance is what we might expect of a lawyer's rendition. Although his attempts at manipulating his audience's responses, his occasional displays of impatience with the story, and his eventual involvement with Constance's misfortunes forbid a unified effect in the story itself, these shows of character extend rather than cancel the portrait of the Man of Law in the General Prologue.

In the Man of Law's Tale, amplificatio (hereafter known as "amplification"), the rhetoricians'
all-encompassing term for the process of and the means for expanding the material at hand, has another purpose besides the traditional hagiographic objective of enlarging into a story the sketchy facts of the subject's life; in the Man of Law's Tale, the amplificatory devices which the speaker so liberally employs in his own voice have the unusual and, perhaps, hitherto unique function in hagiography of commenting critically on the Tale, thereby drawing as much attention to the narrator as to the story. The amplifications which the Man of Law adds to his Tale in his own voice—the large amplificatory sub-divisions of digressio and apostrophe and within them, the amplificatory devices of exclamatio, ratiocinatio, and the exemplum—appear often to be the self-conscious lawyer's own admissions of his Tale's shortcomings, as if he felt obliged to apologize for his Tale in order to forestall criticism from the audience. With few exceptions, the Man of Law's amplifications occur at critical points in the Tale; usually in these excursions the dubious credibility of character or plot is analyzed and, if not fully justified, nevertheless explained. What makes these extra-narrative passages so odd—and so funny—is that the Man of Law is dwelling upon, and at times apparently apologizing for, hagiographic conventions that had been known and accepted
for hundreds of years, and which are accepted with little or no comment in Trivet's and Gower's versions. Instead of silently accepting Constance's unhappy life (unhappy by earthly standards, at least) as being decreed by the will of God, the Man of Law digresses twice on the stars' foreordained influences over human affairs (ll. 190-203, 295-308); instead of applauding (or at least condoning) the opportunity that Constance will have for converting Saracens, the Man of Law berates the Emperor for his ignorance in sending his daughter away without first consulting a "philosophre" (ll. 309-15); instead of taking for granted the miracles of Constance's salvation from the Sultaness' massacre and from the perils of the sea voyage, the Man of Law admits the extraordinariness of God's intervention and seeks to persuade the audience, which he assumes is skeptical (another hagiographic anomaly), of the possibility of such miracles by recounting biblical (and, in the case of "Egyptien Marie," hagiographic) precedents of direct, divine intervention (ll. 470-504). In a similar fashion, the Man of Law attempts to justify Constance's fortunate deliverance from the lecherous steward's intent (ll. 932-45).

Further contributing to the comedy of the Man of Law's uniquely secular approach to his Tale is the very existence of his overwhelming extra-narrative
amplifications: the presence of the exempla which the Man of Law so lavishly employs to illustrate his points and, to a lesser extent, the presence of the sententiae that he derives from these flights, are anachronistic, even for fourteenth-century hagiography. The Man of Law, as he warms to his subject, turns to old-time hagiography, and although he periodically tries to balance his rhetorical excesses with abbreviatory comments (which we shall discuss later), our lasting impression of the Man of Law's Tale is of its narrator's long-windedness. In this Tale Chaucer, it seems, was trying to portray the Man of Law in terms of rhetorical expertise and his critical myopia. In the midst of it, we see the Man of Law succumb to his own tactics for winning an audience's sympathy, and we find emerging a new facet of the Man of Law: his genuine concern for Constance.

All of the Man of Law's amplificatory outbursts may be classified either as digressio or apostrophe, yet neither Trivet's nor Gower's version uses either one. Putting aside apostrophe for later discussion, we find that digressio was a respectable tactic among medieval rhetoricians for amplification, although its temptations and abuses were acknowledged and denounced. Geoffrey of Vinsauf advised in his Poetria Nova:
If it is desirable to amplify the treatise yet more fully, go outside the bounds of the subject and withdraw from it a little; let the pen digress but not so widely that it will be difficult to find the way back. This technique demands a talent marked by restraint, lest the bypath be longer than decorum allows.  

Chaucer's use of *digressio* was generally sparing and purposeful, and, as Roger Parr has stated, served often "to develop character and dramatic realism," and frequently helped to "clarify the theme." While the Man of Law's apparent objectives in using *digressio* (as well as other rhetorical devices) may sometimes coincide with the probable intentions of Chaucer himself, it is important that we not confuse the poet's voice with the speaker's.

The Man of Law's heavy-handed use of *digressio* blemishes his literary and critical efforts, but his professional expertise shines forth as he puts the device to practical use. Generally shunning flowery speech and allegorical implication, the Man of Law uses *digressio* to reach his audience directly and dramatically, twice adding further interest—as we might expect of a lawyer—in series of questions and answers, a so-called ornament of style defined as *ratiocinatio*. Although the Man of Law may sprinkle these excursions with literary
and historical references, such as we find in his classical comparisons in 11. 288-94 and 400-6, the digressions' reasons for existence are, for the Man of Law, rarely any other than pragmatic: \(^{24}\) he uses *digressio* as a means of anticipating the audience's skepticism (which may or may not exist) and bolstering his evidence (11. 190-203, 470-503; 923-45); along the same lines, for enhancing the hagiographic aura of his romance (11. 470-503, 932-45); for playing upon and intensifying his audience's responses to the heroine's plight, often done by referring to everyday experiences of a "modern" audience \(^{25}\) (11. 267-73, 643-51, 709-14); and in one instance, for characterizing (11. 575-81), a function otherwise included in the story's text or performed by the Man of Law's apostrophes.

In the first occurrence of *digressio* in the Man of Law's Tale, the Man of Law provides a scientific (rather than a theological) explanation for the calamities that befell his long-suffering heroine: \(^{26}\)

Paraventure in thilke large book 190
Which that men clepe the hevene ywriten was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love sholde han his deeth, allass!
For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,
Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede, 195
The deeth of every man, withouten drede.
In sterres, many a wynter therbiforn,  
Was written the deeth of Ector, Achilles,  
Of Pompei, Julius, er they were born;  
The strif of Thebes; and of Ercules,  
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates  
The deeth; but mennes wittes ben so dulle  
That no wight kan wel rede it atte fulle.  
(11. 190-203)

His interest here (and similarly, in an apostrophe in  
11. 295-308) in accounting rationally for his heroine's  
misfortunes, thereby broadening the Tale's intellectual  
appeal, sets the Man of Law at odds with hagiographic  
tradition, in which God's will and His omnipotence needed  
neither explanation nor justification. Apparently  
recognizing the inherent contradiction between God's  
loving omnipotence and His seeming disinclination to  
become involved in all of Constance's misfortunes, the  
Man of Law attempts to rationalize for his audience a  
traditional and inexplicable feature of the saint's Life.  

We may interpret Chaucer's motive for inserting the  
digression on stellar prophecies as an honest desire to  
provide a philosophical explanation for his heroine's  
sufferings, but we are likely to interpret the Man of  
Law's purpose (conditioned as we are by his ambiguous  
portrait in the General Prologue) as being motivated by  
more pragmatic considerations—the Man of Law seems to  
assume that his audience will be skeptical. Elsewhere in  
the Man of Law's Tale we see our lawyer-turned-hagiographer
trying to anticipate and to allay his audience's doubts, a concern that rarely, if ever, troubled the ecclesiastical hagiographer. We read the series of questions and answers that follow his query "Men myghten asken why she was nat sleyn/ Eek at the feeste? who myghte hir body save?" (ll. 470-503); a similar acknowledgment of the audience's possible skepticism occurs in ll. 932-45, beginning with the question, "How may this wayke womman han this strengthe/ Hire to defende agayn this renegat?" Such precautions might be expected of a lawyer, but not very likely of a fourteenth-century hagiographer. Certainly, when Constance's innocent sufferings are considered from a secular (and legal) perspective, rather than from a religious perspective, the unjustness of her ordeal is inescapable, and the Man of Law could not have failed to see it. Yet for him to judge his story and its characters from his own restricted experience, rather than from the broader religious perspective offered by the Tale itself, implies a narrow and faulty literary sensibility, a failing which has already been suggested by the Man of Law's foolish critical remarks in the Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale, ll. 47-89.

The presence of these digressions is unorthodox and suggests the Man of Law's uncomfortableness with his chosen genre and a resulting wariness toward his audience,
but the rhetorical execution of these passages is managed expertly. So unobtrusive is the Man of Law's glide into his first major digressio that not until its fourth line (l. 193) do we realize that we have come upon an editorializing exclamatio:

Paraventure in thilke large book
Which that men clepe the heven ywritten was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love sholde han his deeth, alas!
(11. 190-93)

Helping to ease the disjunction between the digressio and the Tale's plot sequence is "Paraventure," the digressio's first word. Its casual quality and especially its rhyming with "dure," (l. 189) the last word of the preceding stanza (an affinity emphasized by the caesura following "Paraventure"), seem initially to bind the two stanzas closer. Moreover, the narrator first disguises his philosophical plunge by constructing his metaphor for heaven out of an ordinary object which might otherwise have been used in the Sultan's court: "thilke large book." In presenting this metaphor, the Man of Law moves us from a narrow, pseudo-historical perspective to a more nearly universal scope, one that would apply to us all.
For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,
Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede,
The deeth of every man, withouten drede.
(11. 194-96)

The list of ancient heroes in the succeeding stanza is the Man of Law's evidence for his assertion, and the catalogue's universality, containing the greatest heroes of the non-Christian cultures admired in the Middle Ages, supports his claim: Trojan (Ector); Greek (Achilles, Ercules, Socrates); Latin (Turnus); Hebrew (Sampson); Roman (Pompeii and Julius Caesar). By acknowledging that the stellar phenomena are common to the saintly woman's and the non-Christian heroes' experiences, and by suggesting that the same astrological influences apply to the rest of mankind, the Man of Law has tried to show Constance's kinship with other human beings, a relationship that hagiographers were extremely reluctant to admit.

In two lengthy occurrences of digressio, the Man of Law uses a rhetorical technique called ratiocinatio (defined by Margaret F. Nims as "reasoning by question and answer") to preclude what he apparently assumes will be a skeptical response from his audience. In the process of his arguments, the Man of Law's efforts in producing one miraculous exemplum after another not only illustrate and fortify his position, but also enhance the saintly
aura of his heroine. As might be expected, the two defensive digressions occur after the Man of Law has told us of three undramatic miracles that God has worked for Constance: God's sparing her at the Sultaness' banquet; His preserving her during the "yeeres and dayes" that she spent aboard the Sultaness' rudderless ship (ll. 470-504); and His causing the lecherous steward, a renegade Christian, to fall overboard as Constance struggled against him (ll. 932-45). The three miracles lack the dramatic, the unreal, the miraculous qualities of "typical" hagiographic miracles, such as we find in the miraculous intervention by the hand and voice of God at Constance's trial for the murder of Hermengyl (II. 666-79)--a miracle on which neither Chaucer's nor Trivet's nor Gower's personae find it necessary to comment. But because Constance's survival of the fatal banquet and, then, the "yeeres and dayes" at sea, as well as her salvation from the lecherous steward all occur without visible help from God, and because these extraordinary occurrences might have had a logical explanation, the Man of Law presumably feels compelled to reassure us of the events' divine influence. In each case he tries to repair what to him must appear to be gaps in his story's plausibility—as if our acceptance of saints' legends hinged on normal patterns of evidence and belief.
The Tale's passages of ratiocinatio carry out an additional function to that of showing what a clever lawyer and misguided hagiographer the Man of Law is: the interruptions serve the Man of Law (and of course Chaucer) as a means of camouflaging the story's often abrupt chronological and geographical changes. The first complete sequence of questions and answers (ll. 470-504) interrupts the Man of Law's abbreviated account of Constance's first voyage and suspends us over seas on which Constance was forced to float for "yeeres and dayes." Not knowing where the story will take us next, we figuratively share in Constance's experience, and we gain some appreciation, however slight, of the vast amount of time she endured while floating from the Eastern Mediterranean to the North Sea. The second passage of ratiocinatio performs a similar function under a similar circumstance: instead of again descanting on the hardships of this ocean voyage, the Man of Law this time takes as his rhetorical departure point the theme of the weak overcoming the strong, a digression inspired by Constance's deliverance from the lecherous steward (ll. 932-45). Again, the Man of Law's digressio serves to disguise the lapse of time and space.

The relentlessness of the Man of Law's questions, the assuredness of his answers, and the absolute respectability of the holy exempla are a credit to the method of a lawyer,
though the spirit of his inquiries might well have dismayed a hagiographer. The audience, in effect, becomes a jury, unnecessarily deciding on the authenticity of miracles. By associating Constance with unquestionable wonders and with heroes and heroines of the Bible, the Man of Law cleverly transfers the onus of doubt, which he has unnecessarily brought out, from himself to his audience: he, who raised the questions of the events' possibility, seemingly out of respect for his listeners' probing minds, has by the end of the exempla all but dared his audience to deny the miraculousness of divine intervention on Constance's behalf--to do so would cast doubt on the occurrence of related biblical wonders, and such a position would leave the doubters standing uncomfortably on the brink of heresy.

The Man of Law's tone in his first cross-examination is polite and somewhat diffident, as suggested by the presence of subjunctive verbs ("myghten asken," "myghte"), by his use of an initially indirect question (11. 470-71), and by the Man of Law's answer to the questions in his own voice, "And I answere to that demande agayn" (1. 472):
Men myghten asken why she was nat slayn
Eek at the feeste? who myghte hir body save?
And I answere to that demande agayn,
Who saved Danyel in the horrible cave
Ther every wight save he, maister and knave,
Was with the leon frete er he asterte?
No wight but God, that he bar in his herte.
(11. 470-76)

Having introduced a reasonable stance toward the question,
the Man of Law in the next stanza discourses in a Boethian
fashion, without the aid of exempla, on God’s self-revela-
tion through His works:

God liste to shewe his wonderful myracle
In hire, for we sholde seen his myghty werkis;
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,
By certeine meenes ofte, as knован clerkis,
Dooth thyng for certein ende that ful derk is
To mannés wit, that for oure ignorance
Ne konne noght knowe his prudent purveillance.
(11. 477-83)

By now the Man of Law is secure in his control of the
subject and has changed his tone. He has become insistent
and aggressive in his examinations of Constance’s
preservation from drowning, which is compared with
appropriate episodes in the Old and New Testaments: 36

Now sith she was nat at the feeste yslawe,
Who kepte hire from the drenchynge in the see?
Who kepte Jonas in the fisses mawe
Til he was spouted up at Nynyvee?
Wel may men knowe it was no wight but he
That kepte peple Ebrayk from hir drenchynge,
With drye feet thurghout the see passynge.
Who bad the foure spirites of tempest
That power han t'ANOyen lond and see,
Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
"ANOyeth, neither see, ne land, ne tree"?
Soothly, the comandour of that was he
That fro the tempest ay this woman keppe
As wel when she wook as when she slepte,
(II. 484-97)

Next, the Man of Law discusses Constance's deliverance
from hunger and thirst, concerning which he draws our
attention to the miraculous feedings of St. Mary of Egypt
and of the Gospel's multitude:

Where myghte this woman mete and drynke have
Thre yeer and moore? how lasteth hire vitaille?
Who fedde the Egipcien Marie in the cave,
Or in desert? No wight but Crist, sanz faille.
Five thousand folk it was a greet mervaille
With loves fyve and fissinges two to feede.
God sente his foyson at hir grete neede.
(II. 498-504)

In defending Constance's survival despite the Sultaness'
schemes, the Man of Law associates her escapes with the
more spectacular deliverances of, first, Daniel, and then
Jonah. Having accustomed his audience to the notion of
God's continuous watchfulness, the Man of Law concludes
his indulgence in *ratiocinatio* by implying, through the
*exempla* of St. Mary of Egypt and the Gospel's account of
the feeding of the multitude, that Christ personally
ministered to Constance. The Man of Law's defensiveness
toward Constance's surviving her long voyage suggests his
lack of familiarity with hagiography and romance, for
miraculous or magical ships and voyages appeared often enough in both genres to be considered conventions. Yet, instead of accepting this device in the plot (as he later does in Constance's exile from Northumberland) the Man of Law confronts the miracles' irrationality and attempts to justify their occurrence rhetorically.

The Man of Law's later examination of Constance's salvation from the lecherous steward again puts the audience in the jury box. From the Man of Law's point of view, the possibility of Constance's escape through other than divine means must be quite likely, even though he has explained:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{blisful Marie heelp hire right anon; } \\
\text{For with hir struglyng wel and myghtily } \\
\text{The theef fil over bord al sodeynly, } \\
\text{And in the see he dreynete for vengeance; } \\
\text{And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Custance.} \\
\text{(11. 920-24)}
\end{align*}
\]

The Man of Law defends the suspicious circumstances surrounding the steward's drowning with a lawyer's finesse. So that we do not interpret Constance as being a calculating, deceptive woman (as did Trivet), the Man of Law distracts our attention from his already ambiguous account of the steward's drowning by apostrophizing the "foule lust of luxurie": 
O foule lust of luxurie, lo, thyn ende!
Nat onely that thou feyntest mannes mynde,
But verraily thou wolt his body shende.
Th' ende of thy werk, or of thy lustes blynde,
Is compleynyng. Hou many oon may men fynde
That noght for werk somtyme, but for th' entente
To doon this synne, been outhere slayn or shente!
(11. 925-31)

Instead of being a gratuitous bit of rhetorical exhibitionism, as these lines may appear to be, the Man of Law's ecclesiastically-toned pronouncements on lechery function as a smokescreen in which we lose sight of any possible guilt on the part of Constance, instead focusing our attention on the steward's sinfulness. This transitional apostrophe is not an entirely honest usage of rhetoric, since it serves to distract us from what may be a truthful consideration. Coming as it does from a lawyer, rather than from a monkish hagiographer, however, the subterfuge is not so shocking. And after all, if the cross-examining passage, which begins,

Hou may this wayke womman han this strengethe
Hire to defende agayn this renegat?
(11. 932-33)

were not separated from the account of the steward's drowning (11. 920-24) by the intervening apostrophe to "luxurie," the juxtaposition of innocence and fact would be embarrassingly ironic.
The Man of Law continues subtly to direct our thoughts on the steward's wrongdoing, rather than on any possibly unholy behavior by Constance, in the exempla. He again brings us face-to-face with embodied evil by apostrophizing not the good, religious, little David, but the wicked giant, Goliath:

O Golias, unmesurable of lengthe,  
Hou myghte David make thee so maat,  
So yong and of armure so desolaat?  
Hou dorste he looke upon thy dredful face?  
Wel may men seen, it nas but Goddes grace.  
(11. 934-38)

Then, to mitigate directly Constance's involvement in the steward's death, the Man of Law explicitly compares her predicament with that of the Apocrypha's beautiful widow, Judith, who cunningly and with the help of God beheaded her would-be seducer, Nebuchadnezzar's general, Holofernes:

Who yaf Judith corage or hardynesse  
To sleen hym Olofernus in his tente,  
And to deliveren out of wrecchednesse  
The people of God? I seye, for this entente,  
That right as God spirit of vigour sente  
To hem, and saved hem out of meschance,  
So sente he myght and vigour to Custance.  
(11. 939-45)

The remaining occurrences of digressio exhibit a detachment toward the Tale's hagiographic obligations which further reveal the Man of Law's fundamental misunderstanding of his chosen genre and, more specifically, his confusion toward his heroine's purpose. Two of the
digressio's which appear in the course of the "Surryen" episode use classical comparisons, purportedly to give the audience a context for appreciating the extraordinariness of the events being described. The effect of these two passages, however, is the aggrandizement of the speaker: in both cases he sees to it that his classical information (emphasized by his introductory "I trowe" and "noght trowe I") receives primary attention in the stanzas, while the object of the comparison nestles deep within the stanza:

I trowe at Troye, whan Pirrus brak the wal,  
Or Ilion brende, at Thebes the citee,  
N'at Rome, for the harm thurgh Hanybal  
That Romayns hath venquysshed tymes thre,  
Nas herd swich tendre wepyng for pitee  
As in the chambre was for hire departyne;  
But forth she moot, wher-so she wepe or synge.  
(11. 288-94)

Noght trowe I the triumpe of Julius,  
Of which that Lucan maketh swich a boost,  
Was rolaller ne moore curius  
Than was th' assemblée of this blisful hoost.  
(11. 400-04)

Three digressio's in the Man of Law's Tale focus on Constance. Compared with the Tale's other examples of digressio, these are informal, phrased to appeal to the common sensibilities of an audience contemporary with the Man of Law. Sounding much like "confidential" aside to an audience--or a jury--these three digressio's treat Constance not as a saint but as a wrongfully persecuted
woman. In his efforts to present sympathetically Constance's case to us, the Man of Law shows an awareness of human feelings, missing in some other parts of his narrative, and unknown to the "typical" hagiographer.\(^\text{42}\) Not so commendably, the Man of Law shows his humanity by stooping occasionally to coarseness, in hopes perhaps of ingratiating himself with his secular audience.

When the Man of Law interrupts his narrative to comment on Constance's sadness over leaving her family and friends in Rome, the passage forces upon us, to an extent greater than any previous passage in the story, an awareness of a distinct narrative personality, one who is no hagiographer:

The day is comen of hir departynge; 260
I seye, the woful day fatal is come,
That ther may be no lenger tariynge,
But forthward they hem dressen, alle and some.
Custance, that was with sorwe al overcome,
Ful pale aryst, and dresseth hire to wende; 265
For wel she seeth ther is noon oother ende.

Allas! what wonder is it thogh she wepte,
That shal be sent to strange nacioun
Fro freendes that so tendrely hire kepte,
And to be bounden under subjeccioun 270
Of oon, she knoweth nat his condicioun?
Housbondes been alle goode, and han ben yoore;
That knowen wyves; I dar sey yow na more.
\(^{\text{(11. 260-73)}}\)

In this passage we see the Man of Law combining the rhetorical and dramatic ploys of his profession and while doing so, ignoring the proprieties appropriate to a
hagiographer. While the Man of Law's exclamation of grief—"Allas!"—is as suitable for grabbing our attention in a saint's history as in a lawyer's histrionics, the Man of Law's eager outpouring of sympathy for his heroine would be considered poor form for a hagiographer, whose attitude toward saintly sufferings, typically, was that such trials, though regrettable perhaps for the individual involved, nevertheless furthered the Church's glory and were therefore good. The Man of Law (aided by Chaucer's editorship) gives us for the first time an emotional and realistically human sketch of Constance, who was earlier in the Tale described in the balanced, formal manner appropriate for enumerating the prescribed qualities in a romantic heroine. The opportunity that Constance has for converting Saracens and glorifying the Church is far from the minds of Constance and Chaucer's Man of Law. Missionary zeal in either one could hardly lack more, and their sentiments almost parallel each other's:

Allas! what wonder is it though she wepte,  
That shall be sent to strange nacioun  
(II. 267-68)

"Allas! unto the Barbre nacioun 
I moste noon, syn that it is youre [the Emperor's or] will" 
(II. 281-82)
In the middle of his sorrowful digression on Constance's sacrifices—her friends and freedom, her fate "to be bounden under subjeccioun/ Of oon, she knoweth nat his condiccioun"—the Man of Law makes a second play for his audience's attention with a sudden shift in tone, sliding from the elevated tone of a lamentation down to the street level of a down-trodden male's tired-out platitude:

Housbondes been alle goode, and han ben yoore; That knowen wyves; I dar sey yow na moore.

(11. 272-73)

While such a stylistic lapse would be unthinkable in Trivet's version (or in any hagiographer's account), in the Man of Law's Tale the shift in tone serves to remind us of the continuing presence of the secular narrator and, presumably, his awareness of his audience. Not only does the speaker's wisecrack remind us of his existence; the remark reinforces and supplements what we already know about the Man of Law: he is a facile rhetorician, accustomed to dealing with people, and apparently anxious to be thought of as "one of the felawes," at least while he is telling his story.

The Man of Law's platitude is not so vacuous as it might at first seem. Obviously the remark acts as comic relief, breaking the tension generated by the Man of Law's
impassioned *digressio* (ll. 262-71), and the couplet's ironic intent would explain the otherwise incomprehensible juxtaposition of sentiments in the stanza. Two stanzas later the irony in lines 272-73 is proven when Constance concludes her own lamentation (the opening and intent of which, we have seen, parallel the Man of Law's own digression) with a couplet on the same subject, the relationship of men and women:

"Wommen are born to thraldom and penance,  
And to been under mannes governance."
(11. 286-87)

Although Constance's remark undoubtedly contains an element of self-pity, we are inclined to accept her comments as being reliable, since she has been presented to us as a well-meaning, dutiful maiden; furthermore, in view of the events that follow, Constance's assessment of woman's lot in life seems accurate. Here at last we can appreciate the Man of Law's clever duplicity, by which he has derived the maximum benefit from one remark (11. 272-73), using it to realign his narrative and at the same time to ingratiating himself with everybody. For the Man of Law to have made the comment that Constance utters would have been tactless and, most likely, damaging to his relationship with the audience; although the remark appears to be accurate (in the context of this
tale at least), for a man to speak such a sentiment, even sympathetically (which, in a written context, we would have no way of proving), would leave him open to suspicions of being a domineering woman-hater. Yet the Man of Law's observation on marital relationships can mean all things to everybody: he has ostensibly complimented husbands' goodness and wives' discernment, and those members of the audience (Harry Bailly and the Merchant, for instance) who would wish to accept the Man of Law and his pronouncement as being sympathetic to their condition would be free to do so. At the same time such evidence as Constance's lamentation (ll. 286-87) and the injustices that she repeatedly suffers indicate the Man of Law's sympathy to be with wives.

The response of the distinct narrative personality to the heroine's plight allows Chaucer to emphasize where extra attention might be needed. For example, the digressio in lines 267-73 helps to lengthen and emphasize an episode whose purpose is to show the heroine's humanity--a consideration which does not normally enter into hagiographic writing, and one which is not included in Trivet's or Gower's versions. By suiting his narrator in the habit of a lawyer, Chaucer achieves two results: he helps us to accept the narrator's obvious attempts to manipulate our feelings and responses as being tactics
concomitant with a lawyer's pose; and in doing so, Chaucer adds to the characterization of his Man of Law.

Even though the Man of Law's observation on husbands and wives (ll. 273-74) has revealed a commonness in his elegant facade, his infamous digressio on wedding nights still comes as a shock:

They goon to bedde, as it was skile and right;  
For thogh that wyves be ful hooly thynges,  
They moste take in patience at nyght  
Swiche manere necessaries as been plesynges  
To folk that han ywedded hem with rynges,  
And leye a lite his hoolynesse aside,  
As for the tyme,--it may no bet bitide.  
(ll. 708-14)

The deliberateness of this amplification, as well as the seeming inappropriateness of it, are emphasized by the narrator's impatience in the preceding stanza (ll. 701-7) with having to describe the marriage, the feast, and the entertainment. Then, in apparent contradiction to his literary sensibilities, which he has just expresses--"Me list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree,/ Maken so long a tale as of the corn" (ll. 701-2)--he devotes a full stanza to his observations on the subject of wedding nights, Constance's in particular. Hagiographic convention again bears some responsibility for the Man of Law's digression: purity was a major theme in hagiography, and many miracles were worked on behalf of that virtue's preservation. The presence of Constance's son, Maurice,
in the second half of the story, however, precluded the working-of such a miracle for Constance, and the Man of Law stumbles through an extraneous digression as he tries to justify this latest unconventional feature in the story. At the same time, the Man of Law seems to enjoy giving his explanation: the euphemistic circumlocutions ("Swiche manere necessaries as been plesynges/ To folk that han ywedded hem with rynges," ll. 711-12) lengthen his excursion into a subject already quite clear; the cavalier dismissal of wives as "thynge"; and the coyness of his approach ("leye a lite hir hoolynesse aside," l. 713) are apparently intended to entice the audience's interest, the male segment's anyway. As with the Man of Law's earlier comments on the plight of Constance and the goodness of husbands (ll. 267-73), this digressio appeals to the common experiences of a secular audience--an appeal that a lawyer might use to explain the unsaintly behavior of his otherwise saintly defendant.

In his description of Constance at her trial for Hermengyld's murder, the Man of Law invites his audience to identify a scene which they might have witnessed, with the ordeal that Constance was said to have experienced so long ago:
Have ye nat seyn somtyme a pale face,
Among a prees, of hym that hath be lad
Toward his deeth, wher as hym gat no grace,
And swich a colour in his face hath had,
Men myghte knowe his face that was bistad,
Amonges alle the faces in that route?
So stant Custance, and looketh hire aboute.
(11. 645-51)

Again, the Man of Law has drawn his audience's attention
to the humanity of his heroine: not only is she frightened
and sorrowful over leaving her home and friends and,
later, willing to sacrifice herself to wifely duties;
she also is as fearful at her trial as anyone in the
audience might have been, despite hagiographical tradi-
tion that saints should always be the coolest and most
confident participants at their trials.\(^7\) The episode
in which the above passage occurs has been pointed out
by Marie Padgett Hamilton as being the only trial scene
in the \textit{Canterbury Tales},\(^8\) a fact that gives us further
insight into why Chaucer chose the Man of Law to tell
the \textit{Life of Constance}; appropriately, the Man of Law
phrases the description of his defendant as a question
which might be directed to a jury. Here again the Man
of Law has behaved as we might have expected, and once
more, a characteristic gesture has contributed to the
\textit{Tale}'s dramatics. By interrupting the flow of events,
the Man of Law offers his audience an opportunity for
relief, but in delaying the story with his descriptive
question, followed by the apostrophe to "queenes . . . duchesses . . . ladyes," he suspends us over crucial moments in the Tale, paradoxically encouraging our restlessness to get on with the story.

Apostrophe does not occur in Trivet's or in Gower's "Life of Constance," and it appears to have been an obsolete device in the hagiography popular during Chaucer's time,49 yet its nine occurrences in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale are, for better or worse, among the Tale's most memorable features. What effect was Chaucer hoping to create with this innovation? Obviously he wanted to focus our attention on the speaker as well as on certain characters and issues. Yet the stylistic diversity among the Tale's nine passages of apostrophe tends to fragment the Man of Law's character, at least for modern readers. Tempting as it is to interpret each apostrophe as a subjective, spontaneous explosion boiling out of the overwrought Man of Law, the evidence in the rhetorical textbook indicates that apostrophe was calculated to produce an effect.50 Geoffrey of Vinsauf closed his lengthy (196 lines) discussion of apostrophe in the Poetria Nova with the following advice:
Apostrophe varies its countenance thus: with the mien of a magistrate it rebukes vicious error; or it languishes in tearful complaint against all that is harsh; or is roused to wrath over some great crime; or appears with derisive force in attacking buffoons. When evoked by causes such as these, apostrophe contributes both adornment and amplification.31

The Man of Law indeed assumes what might pass for the "mien of a magistrate" when, with the help of apostrophe, he "rebukes [the] vicious error" of the "Imprudent Emperour of Rome" (ll. 309-15); his apostrophes frequently "languish[ ] in tearful complaint against all that is harsh," as he cries out to the "firste moeving," Mars, and the "fieble moone" (ll. 295-308), to "my Custance" (ll. 446-48 and 803-5) and again to the defenseless woman (ll. 631-37), and to "queenes, lyvynge in prosperitee" (ll. 652-58); and his rhetoric "is roused to wrath over some [such] great crime" as the Sultaness' inhumanity (ll. 358-64), Satan's treacherousness (ll. 365-71), Donegild's fiendishness (ll. 778-84), and the steward's "foule lust of luxurie" (ll. 925-31). Even the Man of Law's apostrophe to and description of the messenger's drunkeness "appears with derisive force in attacking buffoons," (ll. 771-78).

While the intimate tone and, as we shall see later, the placement of the Man of Law's three apostrophes to
Constance strongly suggest that his concern for her is sincere, the Man of Law's didactic apostrophes to "sodeyn wo" (11. 421-27) and to the "foule lust of luxurie" (11. 925-31) support our inference that the Man of Law's apostrophes frequently serve simply as dramatic gestures. These two outbursts are supposedly inspired by exciting events—a massacre and an attempted rape—but their abstract, didactic address, whose grandiloquence jars with the more restrained and natural style of surrounding stanzas, forbids our attributing to them any emotional value:

O sodeyn wo, that evere art successour
To worldy blisse, spreyn with bitternesse!
The ende of the joye of our worldly labour!
Wo occupieth the fyn of oure gladnesse.
Herke this conseil for thy sikernesse:
Upon thy glade day have in thy mynde
The unwar wo or harm that comth bihynde.

(11. 421-27)

O foule lust of luxurie, lo, thynde! Nat oonly that thou feynest mannes mynde,
But verraily thou wolt his body shende.
Th' ende of thy werk, or of thy lustes blynde,
Is compleynynge. Hou many oon may men fynde
That noght for werk somtyme, but for th' entente
To doon this synne, been outhere slayn or shente!

(11. 925-31)

Even if we did not know of the passages' ecclesiastical origin, they would still probably seem out of place to us; unlike the Tale's other apostrophes, the Man of Law's homiletic wailing attacks philosophical and moral problems
instead of a specific character (the imprudent emperor, for instance) or a specific circumstance (the unfavorable astrological aspects); and the homiletic apostrophes' integration with the Man of Law's Tale is at best tenuous. Their main purpose seems to be that of manipulating the dramatic impact of their respective scenes. The first occurrence, the apostrophe to "sodeyn wo," separates the stanza describing the assemblage at the Sultaness' feast (ll. 414-20) from the stanza describing the massacre (ll. 428-34); in this usage, the apostrophe to "sodeyn wo" acts to create suspense and to prolong the scene. The apostrophe to "luxurie" concludes the account of Constance's escape from the lecherous steward (ll. 911-24) and precedes the Man of Law's extended commentary on the miracle's precedents (ll. 932-45). Instead of trying to heighten the drama, however, this apostrophe depresses the excitement generated in the preceding stanzas' account of the attempted rape and in doing so prepares a somber mood for the ensuing digression on miraculous victories of the weak over the strong.

The homiletic apostrophes' inclusion is in keeping with the Man of Law's efforts to make his rhetorical presence known, but the similarities between Pope Innocent III's addresses and the others in the Tale go no further. Perhaps more than any others in the
**Man of Law's Tale**, these two *apostrophes* arouse uncomfortable, distrustful thoughts concerning the Man of Law: we may excuse his leering comment on Constance's wedding night as being fallibly human, and we may attribute to professional habit or to sincere outrage his indignant *apostrophes* to the Sultaness and Donegild, but his homiletic flights are passé in "late" hagiography, bear little relationship to the story, and grate against the Man of Law's performance in the rest of the *Tale*.

The professional rhetorician's detachment toward his subject is detectable also in the Man of Law's first two apostrophic passages, as well as in his third and ninth *apostrophes*, which we have just discussed. Significantly, none of these *apostrophes* deals directly with Constance. When the Man of Law does address Constance, a change comes over his rhetoric, so that with the exception of the *apostrophe* to "foule lust," the remaining apostrophic passages are affective and, apparently, sincere expressions of the Man of Law's sentiments.

As hysterical as the Man of Law's first *apostrophe* may initially sound, it is fundamentally intellectual, objective, and well organized. Chaucer evidently meant for his speaker here to retain control over his audience and his subject, as well as over himself. Such being the case, this three-stanza interruption in the story
presents us with a cameo-portrait of the Man of Law in action: shrewd, professional, manipulative. Again, we see him posing as an enlightened critic of hagiography, attempting once more to explicate the genre's inexplicable cruelties of plot through astrology. Moreover, instead of accepting Constance's father, the emperor, as a conventional, heartless parent (a stereotype that is especially prevalent in the lives of virgin-martyrs), the Man of Law berates the emperor, not for his heartlessness, but for his ignorance! The passage follows:

O firste moevyng! cruuel firmament,
With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdest ay
And hurlest al from est til occident
That naturelly wolde holde another way,
Thy crowdyng set the hevene in swich array
At the bigynnynge of this fiers viage
That cruuel Mars hath slayn this mariage.

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

Imprudent Empyreour of Rome, allass!
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun?
Is no tyme bet than oother in swich cas?
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun?
Noght whan a roote is of a burthe yknowe?
Allass, we been to lewed or to slowe!
That the Man of Law, a hundred lines previously, had speculated on astrological influences and then had dropped the subject, makes his first flight into elevated style all the more disconcerting for the audience; nor does the offhand manner of the classical comparisons in the digressio immediately preceding the apostrophes offer much of a transition. The Man of Law compounds our confusion by rushing headlong through the first stanza, enjambing, explaining, qualifying. The one clear idea emerging from this technical jargon is "That cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage." Even so, far from being a frenzied, irrational apostrophe, the address is objective and, as it were, scientific.\textsuperscript{55} The enjambment, \textsuperscript{56} the opening exclamatio, and the presence of three subjective tags ("cruel firmament," "fiers viage," and "cruel Mars"),\textsuperscript{57} plus the audience's disconcertion by the outburst itself, are together responsible for the erroneous, but on the speaker's part, deliberate, impression that the narrator has yielded to the sentiments that he hopes will affect his audience.

In the second stanza of the passage, the Man of Law refines his attack by addressing the specific astrological elements which he believes contributed to the disastrous outcome of the betrothal: the "Infortunat ascendent tortuous," Mars, its "atazir," the "fieble moone." This
development of the Man of Law's contention has the paradoxical effect of dispersing the focus of the accusation, at least for those of us unfamiliar with astrological lore. Again, the Man of Law's use of subjective qualifiers prompts us to translate the Man of Law's rhetoric into emotion. Accepting apostrophe's artificiality almost without thinking, we over-react to the subjectivity of the attributes which the Man of Law assigns to the objects of his address: "Infortunat ascendent tortuous," "fieble moone, unhappy" (emphasis mine).

The Man of Law's strict adherence to metrical boundaries in the second stanza, and again in the third, has consequences as ambiguous as those of his individual addresses within the apostrophic stanzas: the conformance of idea to restrictions of meter and rhyme, appreciated visually, would appear to reflect a disciplined, well-organized mind. Audibly, however, these precise units lurch from one subject to another, and the dominant impression among an audience would more likely be that of the speaker's excitement and lack of control. However, such suspicions of the Man of Law's spontaneity are finally refuted, even for a listening audience, by the alliterative acrobatics that the Man of Law exhibits in the closing couplet of the second stanza:
Thou knytttest thee ther thou art nat receyved;  
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.  
(11. 307-8)

Chaucer and his southern-eared audience surely must have 
howled at the Man of Law's alliterative revival, but for 
the Man of Law to join his audience and laugh at himself 
would be unlikely as well as unprecedented. We have seen 
in the Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale how seriously 
he takes himself and his imagined literary acumen; we 
would have no reason to believe that the Man of Law would 
suddenly and without motive satirize his own rhetoric 
(which after all would be equivalent, practically, to 
making light of his profession and thus, by extension, of 
himself). Furthermore, if we judge from his few graceless 
attempts at humor in the Tale, the Man of Law lacks the 
humorous subtlety and the wittiness even to conceive of 
such Chaucerian humor. Therefore, we have reason to 
assume that the Man of Law has contrived his alliterative 
couplet in order to emphasize his condemnation of the 
"fieble moone" and, in so doing, to arouse such feelings 
as indignation and sorrow in the audience.

As odd as the Man of Law's denunciation of a mortal, 
the Roman emperor, may at first seem in this apostrophic 
passage's cosmic context, the Man of Law's apostrophe 
to Constance's father, the emperor, is the culmination 
of the entire passage's rhetorical development. Again,
the Man of Law's rhetoric serves dual purposes: his abrupt change of subject supports the calculated impression of the Man of Law's emotional distraction, while his address to the "Imprudent Emperour of Rome" represents the outcome in the Man of Law's gradual focusing of blame for Constance's suffering. The Emperor of Rome, after all, is immediately responsible for not having taken the preventive measure of consulting a "philosophre," learned in astrological lore. Once more the Man of Law has shown his dissatisfaction with hagiographic convention: his rebuke to the emperor is the Man of Law's admission of the plot's irrationality.

In examining the father's unfatherly conduct, the Man of Law turns to courtroom rhetoric. For the first time in this apostrophic passage, the Man of Law directly questions his subject, using *interrogatio* ("summing up the case against an adversary, together with a challenging question"). The Man of Law's introduction of *interrogatio* brings to his critique the excitement of a courtroom cross-examination. With the exception of one couplet (ll. 312-13), which is a complete question, every line in the stanza is an independent exclamation or question:
Imprudent Emperour of Rome, allass!
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun?
Is no tyme bet than oother in swich cas?
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun?
Noght when a roote is of a burthe yknowe?
Allass, we been to lewed or to slowe!

(11. 309-15)

The resulting choppiness, which has increased from that in the second stanza, contributes to the tension generated by the Man of Law's rapid-fire questions to the "Imprudent Emperour." The sententia which the Man of Law exhails at the stanza's end has the condescending but nevertheless accusing tone that would befit a prosecuting attorney: "Allass, we been to lewed or to slowe!"

The biggest problem with this narrative interruption and with the other apostrophes not directly addressed to Constance is the apostrophes' disruptive effect on the story. For example, the Tale's first series of apostrophes, which we have just examined, comments on theme and on a character's behavior and serves as a dramatic device for suspending action and enlarging a short scene. Here and elsewhere, the stilted formality of these narrative intrusions forms a barrier that prevents the complete integration of the narrator's dimension with the plot's dimension. Yet the apostrophes seem to represent Chaucer's most elaborate effort to incorporate the narrator's sphere with the story's sphere.
The Tale's second occurrence of *apostrophe*, the Man of Law's paired addresses to the Sultaness and Satan (ll. 358-71), repeats the problems found in the first passage of *apostrophe*: the sudden formality of the narrator's rhetoric thrusts into the foreground a speaker who demands our attention at the expense of the story and whose words, again, lead a double function. While the Man of Law's cries to the Sultaness and Satan may casually strike us as being merely a spontaneous string of impregnations flowing from an overwrought narrator, a closer examination of the stanzas' structure shows that the *apostrophes* and *exclamations* are logically ordered and calculated to let the audience come to its own "reasonable" conclusion:

\[
\begin{align*}
0 \text{ Sowdanesse, roote of iniquiteit!} \\
\text{Virago, thou Semyrame the secounde!} \\
0 \text{ serpent under femynnytee,} \\
\text{Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!} \\
0 \text{ feyned womman, al that may confounde} \\
\text{Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,} \\
\text{Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
0 \text{ Sathan, envious syn thilke day} \\
\text{That thou were chaced from oure heritage,} \\
\text{Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!} \\
\text{Thou madest Eva brynge us in servagye;} \\
\text{Thou wolt fordoon this Cristen mariage.} \\
\text{Thyn instrument so, weylawey the while!} \\
\text{Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigile.} \\
\text{(ll. 358-71)}
\end{align*}
\]

The Man of Law builds his case against the Sultaness carefully and logically. He does not begin by denouncing
her as a fiend incarnate but, instead, first chooses mortal epithets for her, descriptions with which the audience might easily agree. After denouncing the Sultaness as a "roote of iniquitee," thereby establishing the mood of the stanza, the Man of Law reminds us of her humanity, negatively to be sure: "Virago, thou Semyrame the secoundel!" The Man of Law delves more deeply into human nature, as understood by medieval authorities, when he next declares the Sultaness a "serpent under femynynytee"; his associating that figurative phrase with "the [Feal] serpent depe in hell ybounde" in the following line proves where his rhetoric is leading us. The succeeding three-line denunciation, the last and longest _exclamatio_ in the stanza, combines the two views of the Sultaness and proclaims matter-of-factly the transcendent evilness of this "feyned womman." Sealing this indictment against the Sultaness is the succeeding _apostrophe_ to Satan, in which the Man of Law reasonably presents his evidence implicating Satan in the Sultaness' actions: he begins with a universally accepted belief ("Sathan, envious syn thilke day/ That thou were chaced from oure heritage") and clarifies his position with a misogynistic (and, to a predominantly male audience, such as the Man of Law faced, an undoubtedly acceptable) statement—"Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!"
He refines and particularizes his statements which lead to his judgment, which we accept, that the Sultaness is a Satanic agent ("Thyn instrument").

The calculated process of the Man of Law's indictments and of the misogynistic attitude which he expresses here (the inappropriateness of which has seemingly failed to register with him) are traits that we might by now expect of our Man of Law. From this perspective, the interruption to the story by Chaucer's narrator is innovative and purposeful, providing not only a crude characterization of the Sultaness (about whom we have previously been told nothing, except that she is a devout follower of "Mahoun" and that she is a "welle of vices," l. 322) but also an attribution (equally crude) of her motivation. Moreover, these first apostrophic passages in the Man of Law's Tale appear contrived to reveal the Man of Law's stance toward his audience: ingratiating and manipulative.

In the course of his apostrophic outbursts, a genuine change seems to come over the Man of Law: his objectivity is transformed into sympathy, and he becomes personally involved in recounting his heroine's actions and, especially, her misfortunes. When Constance's troubles really begin, just before midpoint in the Man of Law's Tale, the nature of the Man of Law's apostrophes changes.
In lines 446-48 he addresses Constance for the first time:

O my Custance, ful of benignytee,
O Emperoures yonge doghter deere,
He that is lord of Fortune be thy steere!

(11. 446-48)

The simplicity of this *apostrophe* contrasts with the accusatorial tone and the philosophical speculativeness of the Man of Law's previous, lengthy *apostrophes* (11. 295-315, 358-71, 421-27), and the passage's tender, subjunctive expression is a departure from the Man of Law's customarily bombastic method of arousing his audience's emotions. Perhaps the most arresting feature of this passage is the Man of Law's addressing his heroine as "my Custance"--the first personal involvement to occur in the Man of Law's *apostrophes*. The speaker seems for the moment to be unaware of anyone else except for Constance and himself, and in his simple possessive, "my," is a sense of the Man of Law's protectiveness and sympathy towards his heroine. The benedictive framework of this address, with its indirect appeal to God, "lord of Fortune," supports our belief in the sincerity of the speaker's feelings toward Constance, for despite the corruption of the pardoners, the friars, the summoners, and others who lived off the Church, religion remained a serious subject, and it seems likely that Chaucer would
have given us definite clues had he wanted us to interpret
the Man of Law's religious expressions as being mocking
or consciously hypocritical.61

The benedictive tone of the Man of Law's first
apostrophe to Constance is the first occurrence of the
religious theme that characterizes many of the digressio's
and apostrophes that follow, and the Man of Law's indirect
appeal to the "lord of Fortune" is his first acknowledgement
in the Tale of a governing power higher than the
Prime Mover's or Fortune's. This tone of religious
concern for his heroine continues in the Man of Law's two
other apostrophes to Constance (ll. 631-37, 803-5), which
occur, as did his first apostrophe to her, when Constance's
fortunes seem bleakest.

The subject of ll. 631-37 is appropriate to a
lawyer's interests, as Marie Padgett Hamilton has pointed
out,62 but his indirect appeal to Christ to be Constance's
champion continues the religious theme which the Man of
Law initiated in his benediction (ll. 446-48) and to which
he devoted thirty-five lines soon afterwards (ll. 470-504).
The hopelessness of Constance's legal situation 63 is
barely alleviated by the Man of Law's hesitant religious
pronouncements, which have the same feeling that the
father of the epileptic boy expressed to Jesus--"I be-
lieve; help my unbelief!":64
Allas! Custance, thou hast no champioun,  
Ne fighte kanstow noght, so weylaway!  
But he that starf for our redempcioun,  
And boond (and yet lith ther he lay),  
So be thy stronge champion this day!  
For, but if Crist open myracle kith,  
Withouten gilt thou shalt be slayn as swithe.  
(1l. 631-37)

The uncertainty which our would-be hagiographer experiences at the idea of divine intervention is reflected by the subjunctive expression of the *exclamatio* in 1l. 633-35, and by the conditional mode, in 1. 636, which introduces the horrible reality of Constance's predicament, the near-certainty of which is impressed on us by the emphatic use of the verb, "thou shalt be slayn" (1. 637; emphasis mine). Uncharacteristic, too, of the hagiographer is the horror which the Man of Law feels toward the prospect of Constance's innocent death; he does not view her seemingly inevitable execution in terms of a triumphant reception into heaven, but, rather, as a grievous miscarriage of justice. Two stanzas later he resumes his legal theme, in the very moving description of the condemned prisoner (1l. 645-51), and in this context the ensuing *apostrophe* to "queenes, lyvynge in prosperitee,/ Duchesses, and ye ladyes everichone" (1l. 652-58), becomes more than an empty, melodramatic outburst, instead serving as an appeal to a secular audience for empathy. 65
The Man of Law's third apostrophe to Constance, in 11. 803-5, duplicates the subdued, private manner of the Man of Law's first address to his heroine. Here again, this latest apostrophe consists of three lines, is expressed in the subjunctive (rather than in the rhetorically more forceful indicative mode), appears after the mother-in-law's evil schemes have been fully divulged, and addresses the heroine as "my Custance":

O my Custance, wel may thy goost have feere,
And, sleypnge, in thy dreem been in penaunce,
Whan Donegild cast al this ordinance.
(11. 803-5)

The intimacy of the address, the Man of Law's apparent lack of awareness of any audience except for Constance, and the sincere, unassuming quality of his wish strongly suggest that the Man of Law is caught up in his heroine's plights and that his emotions in these three apostrophes have escaped the Man of Law's rhetorical guards.

The extent of the Man of Law's emotional involvement in the midsection of his Tale can be appreciated best, perhaps, if we examine his apostrophe to the drunken Messenger and, particularly, to Donegild (11. 771-84) and contrast it with his apostrophe to the Sultaness and Satan (11. 358-71). As we tried to show in our examination of the earlier passage, which precedes the Man of Law's apostrophes to Constance, his stance in 11. 358-71 is
rhetorical and cerebral, and seems calculated to arouse a response in the audience, rather than to express the Man of Law's personal feelings. His exclamatio's to the Sultaness are articulate, balanced, and gradually climactic (as we saw also in his first series of apostrophes to the First Mover, to Mars, to the atazir, the moon, and the Emperor); the indignant sentiments which the Man of Law proclaims against women and Satan are the same tiresome charges which have circulated since biblical times.

The pair of apostrophes in 11. 771-84 also deals with a mother-in-law's machinations and is addressed to the agent and the instigator, but in spite of these circumstantial similarities to the apostrophes in 11. 358-71, the apostrophes to the Messenger and to Donegild lack the organization and the control found in the first pair:

0 messager, fulfild of dronkenesse,           771
Strong is thy breeth, thy lymes faltren ay,
And thou biwreyest alle secreenesse.
Thy mynde is lorn, thou janglest as a jay,
Thy face is turned in a newe array.          775
Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,
Ther is no conseil hyd, withouten doute.

O Donegild, I ne have noon Englishh digne
Unto thy malice and thy tirannye!
And therfore to the feend I thee resigne;    780
Lat hym enditen of thy traitorie!
Fy, mannysh, fy!--o nay, by God, I lye--
Fy, feenlych spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Thogh thou heere walke, thy spirit is in helle!
The differences in tone between the first and second stanzas are striking: the apostrophe to the messenger, who is an inept victim of evil circumstances rather than an inherently evil character, is objectively disapproving, a catalogue of drunkeness which Chaucer borrowed from Pope Innocent's *De Contemptu Mundi*. In the apostrophe to the inherently evil Donegild, however, we see the Man of Law losing control of his subject and of his objectivity. He passes judgment on her in first person singular ("I ne have noon Englishh digne/ Unto thy malice and thy tirannye!" ll. 778-79), and he continues in that mode throughout the stanza. Such subjectivity on the speaker's part appears in no other apostrophes in the *Man of Law's Tale* except for the two brief addresses which begin, "O my Custance . . ." (ll. 446, 803).

While the Man of Law's protestation of having "noon Englissh digne" of expressing Donegild's wickedness falls into a category of hagiographic convention, the sincerity of his frustration seems evident from the inarticulate series of *exclamatio's* in ll. 782-83: "Fy, mannysh, fy!--- o nay, by God, I lye--/ Fy feendlych spirit. . . ." Interestingly, the Man of Law charges Donegild with the same offenses that he has pronounced against Constance's first mother-in-law, the Sultaness: behaving mannishly ("Virago, thou Semyrame the secounde,"
1. 359) and acting on behalf of the devil ("Thyn instrument," 1. 370). The delivery of these charges against the two mothers-in-law, however, differs in structure, style, and content:

O Sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee!
Virago, thou Semyrame the secounde!
0 serpent under femnymnytee,
Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!
0 feyned womman, al that may confounde
Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!
(11. 358-64)

O Donegild, I ne have noon Englishh digne
Unto thy malice and thy tirannye!
And therfore to the feend I thee resigne;
Lat hym enditen of thy traitorie!
Fy, mannysh, fy!--o nay, by God, I lye--
Fy, feendlych spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Thogh thou heere walke, thy spirit is in helle!
(11. 778-84)

As we have already seen in the apostrophe to the Sultaness, the Man of Law builds his case against her carefully, keeping out references to himself and beginning with charges on which his audience could easily agree ("roote of iniquitee," 1. 358); from there he moves gradually into more substantial indictments ("Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde," 1. 361). His speech against her is controlled and business-like; he never professes to be at a loss for words, nor does he indulge in conversational gambits and space fillers. The opposite is true for the apostrophe to Donegild, in which the
speaker clearly seems overwrought and unable to cope with even the thought of his heroine's malefactor. The repetition of the denunciatory expletive, "Fyl!" in lines 782-83 and, especially, the unusual occurrence of correctio ("retraction of what has just been said, and substitution of a more suitable word") promote an impression of narrative involvement and anguish, missing from the earlier apostrophe to the Sultaness, but appearing later in the three apostrophes to Constance.

By interposing his narrator at the expense of the story's continuity, Chaucer focuses our attention on the Man of Law, in whom his main interest in the Tale seems to lie. The pattern of changes in the Man of Law's styles and in the degrees of control in his digressio's and apostrophes strongly suggests that Chaucer was trying to develop further the portrait of the Man of Law given us in the General Prologue and supplemented in the Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale. If we consider the evidence offered by the rhetorical changes in the Man of Law's amplifications--his apostrophes in particular--the Man of Law does turn out to be a sentimental, rather than a hypocritical, narrator. This revelation is a gradual one, coming about as the Man of Law's reserve is broken down. At the Tale's beginning and at its happy conclusion, the Man of Law's behavior is appropriate to
our expectations of a lawyer's manner--dramatic, rhetorical, poised. Rather than cancelling the General Prologue's portrait, the Man of Law's behavior as a hagiographic narrator extends it; in this tale, we simply have to look for the pattern more closely than we do in some of the other Canterbury Tales.

Even though the Man of Law's abbreviations lack the flamboyance of most of his amplifications, his abbreviatory devices--permissio's, simple summarizations, and occupatio's--serve two important purposes: they help in characterizing the narrator and aid greatly in controlling the narrative structure. The Man of Law's abbreviatory remarks often follow his digressive or apostrophic outbursts. Resulting from these juxtapositions is a comic irony of which the Man of Law seems unaware. With some impatience towards the story's detail he struggles to control the unwieldy plot (which he seems not to understand fully) in the hope, presumably, of keeping himself in favor with his audience.

The abrupt shifts in time and geography in the Man of Law's Tale make narrative continuity a real problem. Whereas Trivet's account does not bother with transitions more elaborate than "then" and "when," and Gower's version is simply constructed also, every episode in the Man of Law's Tale, except for Constance's exile
from Northumbria, is concluded by the Man of Law's rhetorical presence—by apostrophe, digressio, summarization, or by a variant form of permissio.

In its classic usage of "giving the audience leave to consider or judge according to their discretion," permissio "is not found in Chaucer," according to Roger Parr, who goes on to say that "[o]ccasionally, however, [Chaucer] ends a description abruptly by saying he will leave the person under discussion to his own devices." As an example of this usage, Parr cites 11. 410-11 of the Man of Law's Tale:

And thus in murthe and joye I lete hem dwelle; The fruyt of this matiere is that I telle. (11. 410-11)

Other occurrences of this form of permissio in the Man of Law's Tale are:

And forth I lete hire saille in this manere, And turne I woole agayn to my materere. (11. 321-22)

Now lat us stynte of Custance but a throwe, And speke we of the Romayn Emperour (11. 953-54)

I wol no lenger tarien in this cas, But to kyng Alla, which I spak of yoore, That for his wyf wepeth and siketh soore, I wol retourne, and lete I wol. Custance Under the senatoures governance. (11. 983-87)
Who can the pitous joye tellen al
Bitwixe hem thre, syn they been thus ymette?
But of my tale make an ende I shal;
The day goth faste, I wol no lenger lette.
This glade folk to dyner they hem sette;
In joye and blisse at mete I lete hem dwelle
A thousand foold wel moore than I kan telle.
(11. 1114-20)

These narrative intrusions are undoubtedly abbreviatory.
Parr has written: "This figure is rightly regarded as a part of Chaucer's conscious narrative technique since it accelerates the pace of the tale by enabling the teller to pass on at once to another phase." However, permissio's effect in the Man of Law's Tale is not altogether economical. The speaker's use of permissio in concluding these episodes widens, rather than narrows, the disjunctions in the plot, and in this case Trivet's bald endings and beginnings seem less awkward. While the Man of Law's continuing presence affords one area of continuity in the Tale, his appearances and responses are a subject in themselves, and they distract from the story. Permissio may give us an impression of narrative restraint—a notion rather comical when we consider the Man of Law's many amplifications—but its presence in the Man of Law's Tale benefits only the speaker's conscientious image. But, perhaps developing the speaker was Chaucer's biggest interest in the Man of Law's Tale.
The open concern that the Man of Law repeatedly shows for restricting his material camouflages Chaucer's editing of this old legend. As a result, *abbreviatio* is largely responsible for the general impression—a false one—that Chaucer's Life of Constance is shorter than Trivet's. In at least four places in the *Man of Law's Tale* the Man of Law's summarizations of inconsequential details mark Chaucer's compressions of Trivet's descriptions. Beginning with 1. 232 ("What nedeth gretter dilatacioun?") and continuing for two stanzas is the Man of Law's breathlessly polysyndetonic account of the process and outcome of the nuptial negotiations; 11. 428-41, which begin, "For shortly for to tellen, at o word," condense to two stanzas' length the Sultaness' massacre and Constance's banishment in the "ship al steerelees"; 1. 990, "if I shortly tellen shal and playn," marks the abbreviated circumstances of King Alla's pilgrimage to Rome, sketched in 11. 988-94; and 1. 1011, "I may nat tellen every circumstance," brusquely dismisses details surrounding Maurice's presence at the feast for Alla, summarized in 11. 1009-15.

However, in other instances, similar abbreviatory phrases do not represent any condensation of the story but merely create an impression of the Man of Law's ostensible regard for our time and our intelligence.
Some of the Man of Law's abbreviatory remarks appear to be no more than line fillers or formulas common among oral narrators: "I kan sey yow namoore" (l. 175); "shortly for to sayn" (l. 564); "shortly, this is th' ende" (l. 965); "shortly, if I shal nat lye" (l. 1007). At other times, the Man of Law may use abbreviatory remarks as a smokescreen for actual rhetorical elaboration taking place, a rhetorical trick called occupatio. 73 For example, after the Man of Law's two-stanza expansion on the prophetic properties of stars (ll. 190-203), he returns to his story:

This Sowdan for his privee conseil sente,
And, shortly of this matiere for to pace,
He hath to hem declared his entente
(ll. 204-6; emphasis mine)

Instead of hurrying along the Sultan's love-longing, as did Trivet and Gower, 74 the Man of Law dwells for four stanzas (ll. 204-31) on the young, non-Christian ruler's blind, desperate love for Constance. 75

At other times, the Man of Law proclaims that he will pass over the details, and then he does. Besides being verbally and narratively economical, Chaucer's unusual, abbreviatory usage of occupatio gives to the story a certain urgency in its telling, or, as Roger Parr has observed, "the impression of action." 76 Besides using occupatio as an aid in defining the mainstream of the
story, Chaucer uses the same passages to suggest certain things about the Man of Law, whom we are likely to view as a long-winded character.

In summarizing the events of Constance's nuptials (ll. 232-45), Chaucer relies on polysyndeton ("use of a conjunction between each clause")

77 to counteract the impression of narrative reticence that this summary might otherwise give; the gushing stream of and's separating the short, and not always logically ordered, descriptions confirms our previously established notion of the Man of Law's loquaciousness and helps us overlook his actual conciseness:

What nedeth gretter dilatacioun?
I seye, by tretyes and embassadrie,
And by the popes mediacioun,
And al the chirche, and al the chivalrie, 235
That in destruccioun of mawmettrie,
And in encrees of Cristes lawe deere,
They been acorded, so as ye shal heere:

How that the Sowdan and his baronage
And alle his liges sholde ycristned be, 240
And he shal han Custance in mariiage,
And certein gold, I noot what quantitee;
And heer-to founden sufficient suretee.
This same accord was sworn on eyther syde;
Now, faire Custance, almyghty God thee gydel
(ll. 232-45)

Here and in other passages we see—or think we see—the Man of Law proposing brevity and producing the opposite.

In the two stanzas describing the Sultaness' visit to her son to announce her conversion to Christianity
(11. 372-85), the Man of Law is clearly trying to re-align his rhetorical priorities. In the preceding two stanzas, he has indulged in flamboyant apostrophes to the Sultaness (11. 358-64) and to Satan (11. 365-71); having concluded this rhetorical flight, the Man of Law attempts to recover his story and himself, and he apologetically proceeds with the conclusion to prima pars:

This Sowdanesse, whom I thus blame and warye, Leet prively hire conseil goon hire way. What sholde I in this tale lenger tarye? She rydeth to the Sowdan on a day, And seyde hym that she wolde reneye hir lay, And cristendom of preestes handes fonge, Repentynge hire she hethen was so longe;

Bisechyng heym to doon hire that honour, That she moste han the Cristen folk to feeste,— "To plesen hem I wol do my labour." The Sowdan seith, "I wol doon at youre heeste"; And knelynge thanketh hire of that requeste. So glad he was, he nyste what to seye. She kiste hire sone, and hoom she gooth hir weye. (11. 372-85)

The performance is comical. The qualifying phrase, "whom I thus blame and warye," is almost brainless in its redundancy (after all, we have just endured an entire stanza damming her, and in case there might have been any further question as to the "Sowdanesse's" identity, the Man of Law has pointed her out as "This Sowdanesse"). We can sense the Man of Law's nervousness as he attempts to recover his story from his recent spate of courtroom rhetoric, and his embarrassment is still evident in the
rhetorical question that launches his summarization:
"What sholde I in this tale longer tarye?"

Later in the Tale, the Man of Law's exasperation with details uninteresting to him is evident. After the long-awaited reunion between Constance, Alla, and Maurice, the Man of Law begins to tell us about Maurice, but unlike Trivet, checks himself, and in something of an inverted occupatio, baits our curiosity and then satisfies it only partially:

This child Maurice [was] sithen Empeour Maad by the Pope, and lyved cristely; To Cristes chirche he dide greet honour. But I lete al his storie passen by; Of Custance is my tale specially. In the olde Romayn geestes may men fynde Mauritces lyf; I bere it noght in mynde.

(11. 1121-27)

Nowhere does the Man of Law's impatience with details appear more acidly than in ll. 701-7; in refusing to discuss the pageantry accompanying Constance's marriage to Alla, the Man of Law spends six lines indicting narrative verbosity (and by extension, perhaps, the insatiable curiosity of audiences):

Me list nat of the chaf, ne of the stree, Maken so long a tale as of the corn. What sholde I tellen of the roialtee At marriage, or which cours gotth biforn; Who bloweth in a trumpe or in an horn? The fruyl of every tale is for to seye: They ete, and drynke, and daunce, and synge, and pleye.

(11. 701-7)
Of course, the Man of Law cruelly undercuts himself by pitching six lines of "chaf" and "stree" at his audience before presenting his pitiful one line of "corn," an outcome which anyone might have guessed: "They ete, and drynke, and daunce, and synge, and pleye." The stanza that follows, in which the Man of Law archly digresses on wedding night's, has been condemned by critics for its inappropriateness and coarseness. Yet, considered in terms of the narrator's academic--and ironic--diatribe immediately preceding, the Man of Law's voyeuristic interruption to the story can only be interpreted as his attempt to reinstate himself in his audience's favor, by appealing this time to their sensual, rather than to their rhetorical, interests. Juxtaposed as they are, these two stanzas depict the narrative double-standard that the Man of Law follows throughout the Tale: in telling Constance's life, he is sparing of details, condensing episodes and sometimes omitting informational passages, but in his extra-narrative voice, the Man of Law vacillates between allowing himself whatever excesses he pleases, presumably to foster a relationship with the audience, and, on the other hand, compensating for his in-character excesses and attempting to preserve his relationship with the audience by referring often to his abbreviatory efforts.
As we have already mentioned, abbreviatory formulas sometimes attempt to distract us from blatant amplifications in which the Man of Law has just indulged. This counterbalancing of course fools no one, but it does give the impression of a narrator who is sometimes embarrassed and somewhat flustered by his preceding rhetorical indulgences. In the abbreviatio's the Man of Law's business-like efforts to master detail and to get on with the story as efficiently as possible are often amusing.

Even more profound than its influence on the characterization of the Man of Law is abbreviatio's influence on the Tale's theme. The gloomy motif of De Contemptu Mundi is inescapable in the Man of Law's Tale. It comprises all but eleven lines of the Tale's "prologe," and in the Tale, three apostrophes from De Contemptu remind us of the vulnerability of mortal flesh to "sodeyn wo" (ll. 421-27), "dronkenesse" (ll. 721-77), and "foule lust" (ll. 925-31). Finally, the last extra-narrative statement that the Man of Law makes prior to his closing benediction, is a pronouncement taken from De Contemptu on the transitoriness of the "Joye of this world." Afterwards, the Man of Law not too subtly comments for us:
I ne seye but for this ende this sentence,  
That litel while in joye or in plesance  
Lassteth the blisse of Alla with Custance.  
(11. 1139-41)

A review of the Man of Law's abbreviatio's indicates that Chaucer has manipulated his rhetoric to give us an excessively gloomy picture of Constance's earthly experiences. All of the colorful pageants in the story--the retinue accompanying Constance to Syria, the wedding feast, Constance's marriage to Alla, her return to Rome, the senator's feast for Alla--are pointedly abbreviated by the speaker, who in several cases expresses his impatience with such details. We have already seen that the Man of Law's amplifications do not convey much confidence in mundane affairs and in human conduct. Instead, he urges reliance on God's care and protection. Such rhetorical counterbalancing appears to have been a means of directing the Tale's moral theme. Of this process in medieval narrative, Jane Baltzell has written:

Amplification and abbreviation could sometimes work coordinately in the structure of a medieval narrative; that is, applied jointly and in a complementary fashion to the details of a familiar story, they could operate to indicate moral judgment in no uncertain terms. . . . The balance between abbreviated and amplified elements in any given narrative is always a good indication of the moral region in which the thematic interest will be found to lie. Geoffrey of Vinsauf speaks of
amplification and abbreviation together, as a process concerned with "how to balance weights against one another in the scale if the sententia is to weigh out correctly" (81-82), and there seems no doubt that this was the only conception of narrative structure developed and received during the Middle Ages.86

Abbreviatio's role in the Man of Law's Tale is a functional one, primarily providing the setting--and the foil--for the Man of Law's amplifications. Because it serves basically a restraining influence on the Tale, rather than an edifying or entertaining purpose, abbreviatio in the Man of Law's Tale has little involvement with the Man of Law's performance as a hagiographer, except in curbing the Man of Law's amplificatory tendencies, guiding the Tale's theme, and providing the backdrop for the Man of Law's critical and histrionic performances. Without this indirect guidance, however, the Man of Law's Tale would be a morass of unnecessary detail, with no apparent themes, and with a garrulous but nevertheless unsubstantial narrator. As the Man of Law's Tale stands, details have been pruned to present a harsh picture of earthly life, with the motif of the transitoriness of earthly joys recurring throughout the Tale, an atmosphere undeniably appropriate to hagiography. These restrictions forbid our interpreting the Man of Law as a totally
undiscerning fool. Rather, they set in sharper relief the Tale's portrayal of its narrator as a facile rhetorician, an awkward hagiographer, and an ordinary story-teller.

If the Man of Law's Tale represents a conscious attempt by Chaucer to suit tale and teller to each other, why then is the Man of Law's Tale held in such low regard today? Obviously, the Tale's "medieval" plot and characterization hold little interest in themselves for the modern audience. However, we compound the problem if we approach the Man of Law's Tale only through its plot, allowing the plot to dominate our conception of the Tale. This approach does not appear to have been Chaucer's intention, since he created the narrator's role in the Life of Constance and, along with this role, created the narrator's peculiar rhetoric. To regard the narrator and his rhetoric as a detachable appendage to a sub-mediocre story is slighting to Chaucer's artistry: his total interest in the Man of Law's Tale certainly does not lie wholly in a traditional tale. Rather, Chaucer appears to have been trying to achieve a mutual interaction between narrator and tale. Fitting a popular genre, such as a hagiographic romance, to a narrator whose profession would have conditioned him to wax rhetorical at the slightest provocation, was a bold
idea, rich in possibilities. That the Man of Law proved to be a narrator difficult to control is not surprising: the simple and pathetic Life of Constance serves as a sounding board on which the Man of Law resonates his whole range of emotions—feigned and genuine. A more sophisticated story would not have offered such emotional and rhetorical freedom to the Man of Law. And because the saint's legend was a genre universally known and enjoyed, it seems reasonable to assume that Chaucer's contemporary audiences could enjoy, to a much greater extent than we are able to do, watching a prominent lawyer's interactions with a hagiographic romance. Such an encounter would add new dimensions to both teller and tale. Owing to the Tale's unwieldiness and the Man of Law's previously unsuspected emotional range, the relationship between the Man of Law and the Man of Law's Tale can be judged only a partially successful experiment. However, by again using the narrator's "own" rhetoric as the means of examining the interaction between the Prioress's Tale and the Prioress, we expect to show that Chaucer's experiment in mutually expanding tale and teller was finally a success.
1 Robert Kilburn Root remarks of the Man of Law's Tale that "there is too much of accident, and too little of direct causal connection, in the events of the tale to leave it an organic unity. . . . The tale has all the structural defects of the typical romance or saint's legend." *The Poetry of Chaucer: A Guide to its Study and Appreciation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), p. 185.


3 All quotations from Chaucer, unless otherwise indicated, will be taken from F. N. Robinson's *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957). Chaucer's full description of the Man of Law may be found in ll. 309-30 of the General Prologue.

4 It is possible, though not likely, that Chaucer intended originally for his version of the Constance legend to be included in the *Canterbury Tales* and for this reason created a narrator. However, the self-conscious narrator was a feature of Chaucer's earliest writings: e.g. the Book of the Duchess, while many of the later works in the *Canterbury Tales* are told objectively, with no trace of a self-conscious narrator except at the beginning and end of the story. An observation similar to that made in the statement immediately preceding has been made by Bertrand H. Bronson, "Chaucer's Art in Relation to His Audience," *Five Studies in Literature, Univ. of California Publications in Literature, Vol. 8, No. 1* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1940), p. 43, n. 25.
Critics who have pointed out the relationship between the Man of Law's profession and his Tale include Edgar C. Knowlton, "Chaucer's Man of Law," JEGP, 23 (1924), who observes on p. 84 that the legal "profession . . . is famous for its skill in pathetic narrative"; and Marie Padgett Hamilton, "The Dramatic Suitability of 'The Man of Law's Tale,'" in Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Margaret Schlauch (Warsaw, 1966), who states on p. 163 that Chaucer "might be surprised by our tardiness in recognizing points of compatibility between the Man of Law and his tale: the rhetorical manner in which he punctuates the narrative with pleas, encomiums, apostrophes, and imprecations; his professional handling of the problem of disparitas cultus; his informed presentation of the trial of Constance. . . ." Raymond Preston takes a qualified stand on the subject in his book Chaucer (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), p. 204: "The tale is told with an excess of rhetorical skill that might be expected from a lawyer who has been raised to the poetic stage of a Chaucerian pilgrimage; otherwise it no more appears to fit its narrator than the story of Appius and Virginia appears to fit the Physician."

That the Man of Law might shape his Tale along the lines of his professional training is not so far-fetched as it might at first seem. Concerning "medieval theory of plot," Jane Baltzell has written: "Medieval writers had no explicit notion of plot as mimesis, still less of its components as exposition, climax, and denouement; instead, they conceived of the representation of action in analytical terms almost like those of a trial lawyer." See Jane Baltzell, "Rhetorical Amplification" and 'Abbreviation' and the Structure of Medieval Narrative," Pacific Coast Philology, 2 (1967), 33 (emphasis mine).

Critics who have given attention to the implications of these descriptive lines include William L. Sullivan, "Chaucer's Man of Law as a Literary Critic," Modern Language Notes, 68 (1953), 2-3; Bernard I. Duffey, "The Intention and Art of The Man of Law's Tale," ELH, 14 (1947), 193; and Alfred David, "The Man of Law Vs. Chaucer: A Case in Poetics," PMLA, 82 (1967), 221. Both Duffey and David find the Man of Law's words and behavior, in Duffey's words, "symptomatic of the rising bourgeois," p. 193; David pictures the Man of Law "as the type of the wealthy bourgeois who condescends to dictate his taste to the artist. . . . What he actually appreciates in art is not morality but respectability, which is the appearance that morality confers," p. 221.
The Man of Law's private thoughts may not be so pure. Root first pointed out that the lurid details of Canace's rape are not found in Gower's version, as the Man of Law accuses. Rather than agreeing with Root's conclusion that Chaucer's memory of Gower's account was confused, William L. Sullivan states, p. 7: "This possibility makes no allowance for the extremely broad comical effect of Chaucer's selfish humor in putting into the mouth of the Man of Law a speech condemning Gower's choice of material, and, after a blunt relation of the most obnoxious facts (which Gower has carefully avoided), an announcement that he is not going to tell such stories. If one considers the absurdity of such criticism it becomes no criticism at all. It is perhaps the most self-revealing remark the Man of Law makes."

Sullivan writes: "There are many similarities between Chaucer's Legend of Good Women and John Gower's Confessio Amantis. Gower's work contains stories about almost all the women mentioned by the Man of Law. The inclusion of the eight extra names by the Man of Law might be considered as the result of his confusing two works similar in subject matter as one might confuse the title Murder in the Cathedral with Death Comes for the Archbishop. Chaucer would thus indicate that the Man of Law has some knowledge of both Chaucer and Gower but not a very accurate knowledge" (pp. 6-7). Elsewhere, Sullivan speculates: "It may be that Chaucer is allowing the Man of Law to make the list longer than it actually was, either from a natural tendency to exaggerate, or because Chaucer implies that the Man of Law has read only the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women and believes all the stories to have been written" (pp. 4-5).

The Physician is another unattractive character, with whom the Man of Law is sometimes associated, as we saw in Preston's remark in n. 5, above. Walter Clyde Curry even suggests that the Man of Law's Tale was originally intended for the Physician, and vice versa. Curry cites the Physician's proficiency in astronomy, his greediness (which would tie in nicely with the "prologe's" descriptions of poverty's horrors); the Physician's Tale relates a grievous miscarriage of justice and "The language of the story is legal and technical." See Curry, "O Mars, O Atazir," JEGP, 22 (1923), 367-8, n. 60.

This appears true for the fourteenth-century's South-English Legendary and North-English Homiliary, the late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century's Scottish Legendary, as well as for the Legenda Aurea.
"Alas! If only it were not the will of God."
Sources and Analogues, p. 167.

Now herke how thilke vnstable whel,
Which euere torneth, wente aboute.

(11. 1226-27; Sources and Analogues, p. 197)

Forthi touchende of this enuie
Which longeth vnto bakbitinge,
Be war thou make no lesinge
In hindringe of another wiht:
And if thou wolt be tawht ariht
What meschief bakbitinge doth
Be other weie, a tale soth
Now miht thou hiere next suiende
Which to this vice is acordende.

(11. 1604-12; Sources and Analogues, p. 206)

The only facts usually known about a hagiographic subject were his or her place of burial, approximate time of death, and, perhaps, the subject's home. The hagiographer expanded these few facts into a holy story with the help of such conventions as the saint's noble or royal background; the saint's works, miracles, trials; descriptions of the evil judge and of the saint's prayers and tortures.

Chaucer (or his Man of Law) accepts hagiographic conventions, but on his own terms. Thus, Constance is as beautiful and as well-born as any other romantic or saintly heroine, and she is conventionally described with the help of hyperbole and antithesis:

This was the commune voys of every man:
"Oure Emperour of Rome--God hym see!--
A doghter hath that, syn the world bigan,
To rekene as wel hir goodnesse as beautee,
Nas nevere swich another as is shee.
I prey to God in honour hire susteene,
And wolde she were of al Europe the queene.

"In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folye;
To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde;
Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye.
She is mirour of alle curteisye;
Hir herte is verryay chambre of hoolynesse,
Hir hand, ministre of fredam for almesse." (11. 155-68)
However, as John Yunck has pointed out (p. 250), Chaucer has omitted Trivet's depiction of Constance as a proselytizing intellectual, whose insufferable rightness ("arrogance," we would probably call it today) was a fairly common pose for the Church's saints.

16 In Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens, Margaret Schlauch treats the folk tale background to the father's uncommon behavior.

17 The change that Chaucer makes in Trivet's account of this episode is, from the characterizational standpoint, surely the most important transformation of Constance's character that Chaucer makes. Instead of relying on her wits and words and deceptiveness to save herself from the steward, Chaucer's Constance relies on divine aid. As Yunck, in another context, remarks, "What Trivet's heroine accomplished by preaching, Chaucer's accomplished by prayers and tears" (p. 251).

18 Even though apostrophe, like digressio, is a turning aside from the material at hand, the two devices are independent rhetorical categories.

19 According to Edmond Faral, Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (Paris: Champion, 1924), p. 74, "there is nothing in the ancient rhetoricians which corresponds exactly to what the authors of the rhetorical arts say of this figure" (translation mine). The medieval rhetoricians who discuss digressio in their treatises are Evrard, John of Garland, and Geoffrey of Vinsauf (Faral, p. 74).


22 Parr, p. 275.

23 In his discussion of the "Ornaments of Style," Geoffrey of Vinsauf catalogues ratiocinatio as "Easy Ornament": "If a mode of expression both easy and adorned is desired, set aside all the techniques of the dignified style, and have recourse to means that are simple, but of a simplicity that does not shock the ear by its rudeness" (p. 56).
24 An exception to this statement is the Man of Law's moralistic digressio in ll. 132-38, which will be discussed with other passages in the Man of Law's Tale that are taken from De Contemptu Mundi.

25 Here the line between apostrophe and digressio becomes blurred, since the Man of Law does question the audience directly in one case (ll. 645-57) and indirectly in another (ll. 267-73). However, because the Man of Law's attention is focused primarily on Constance and only secondarily on the audience, and then only because of the audience's listening role, it seems proper to treat the passages as digressio.

26 Walter Clyde Curry, in his article "O Mars, O Atazir," p. 366, seems to suggest that the Man of Law's remarks on astrology reflect Chaucer's own feelings: "Chaucer here stands with the best of mediaeval astrologers who recognize in their darkest prognostications the fact that certain combinations of stars which seem to foretell inevitable death are subject to the intervening and arbitrary hand of God. By emphasizing this belief Chaucer has made reasonable not only the escapes all along the way of Constance's life but also her final happiness."

Edward A. Block, "Originality, Controlling Purpose, and Craftsmanship in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale," PMLA, 68 (1953), states on pp. 597-98: "The addition of the astrological passages [to Trivet's plot] enabled Chaucer to rationalize events by referring them to astral influence. In other words, having elected to follow the main outline of Trivet's plot, he introduces astrology to account for the otherwise incredible succession of dangers which persistently threaten Constance's life."

27 The closest that Trivet appears to come to questioning God's plan is in his parenthetical exclamatio, "Avynt que la mere le soudan, que vnquore viuoit (allas! si ne fut la volunte dieu) . . ." (p. 167). [Because the sultan's mother, who was still living (alas! if only it had not been the will of God) . . .].

28 After he has recited Constance's descriptio (ll. 156-68), which was quoted in note 15 above, the Man of Law acts apologetically, as if embarrassed at having interrupted his Tale:
   And al this voys was sooth, as God is trewe.
   But now to purpos lat us turne agayn.

   (ll. 169-70)
Our ignorance in matters of universal importance is emphasized and practically depicted by the Man of Law's *circumlocutio*, "Paraventure in thilke large book/ Which that men clepe the heven ywriten was/ With sterres. . . ."
Unable as we are to read the "book" so basic to planning our affairs, mankind's elaborate schemes and grand kingdoms shrink to miserable proportions.

The catalogue of heroes whose deaths were foretold by the stars (ll. 198-201) is not found in Trivet's or in Gower's accounts.

The universality of human and stellar relationships is pressed more emphatically a hundred lines later in the Man of Law's *apostrrophes* to the "first moevyng, etc., ll. 295-308.

Yet, even as he tries to rectify the narrow, hagiographic setting of his Tale, the Man of Law errs in his proof: concerning Sampson's death, no mention of stellar or of any other phenomena is made in the Bible. (Sampson's life story is found in Judges 13:1-16:31.) F. N. Robinson, p. 693, n. 197, states that the Man of Law's heroic catalogue is "[F]rom the Megacosmos of Bernardus Silvester," but it is odd that the Bible's authoritative and well-known account would have been overlooked. Such an omission taints the reliability of the Man of Law's "factual" and corroborative statements.
If we had identified the speaker as Chaucer's own persona, we might have attributed the mistake to the poor narrator's usual, bumbling ways; however, since the mistake comes from a well-educated and, as the Man of Law would like us to think, well-read, lawyer, we are likely to view his misinformation less charitably and to attribute his error(s) to his pretentious over-reaching.

We have already seen that William L. Sullivan, "Chaucer's Man of Law as a Literary Critic," makes this point, basing his argument on the Man of Law's literary pronouncements. Rodney Delasanta, "And of Great Reverence: Chaucer's Man of Law," Chaucer Review, 5 (1971), 288-310, makes this same point, using the Man of Law's biblical *exempla*—Daniel, Jonah, and David—as well as his literary errors as evidence of the lawyer's actual ignorance. (Sampson is not included in Delasanta's remarks.)

Nims gives this definition in her "Explanatory Notes" to *Poetria Nova*, p. 104.
34 Block, p. 613, states that "the biblical allusions and the moral apostrophes serve not only as rhetorical decorations deliberately introduced for formally poetic purposes, but they are also a means of emphasizing the religious element. . . . The biblical allusions and rhetorical questions when thus combined have the further functional significance of emphasizing the fact that Constance's life was saved only by God's miraculous intervention."

35 Apparently feeling the same need to reassure us of divine presence in the same events, Trivet's and Gower's personae comment, briefly, in their respective versions. After describing the Sultaness' ship and its equipment and Constance's boarding, Trivet remarks:

Mes dieu estoit soum mariner,
quar par treis aunz entiers fu
elle mesme en la grande occean;
en tut le temps unques homme ne
neef ne vist ne encontre. Mes
dieux soul lauoit conforte e
conseile de sa parlance.

(Source and Analogues, p. 168)

Gower's remarks are even briefer:

Bot he which alle thing mai schilde,
Thre yer, til that sche cam to londe,
Hire schip to stiere hath take in honde,
And in Northumberlond aryveth

(ll. 714-17; Sources and Analogues, p. 184)

In the later episode, Trivet gives Constance alone the credit for saving herself from the lecherous steward's intentions: she tricks the man into waiting until they are beyond sight of land, and as he eagerly watches the disappearing shore, she sneaks up behind him and pushes him overboard: "Et taunt com fu plus curious, Constance, pur sa chastete sawer, priuement luy vient rere au dos e le tresbucha en la mer" (p. 176).

Gower, unlike Trivet, involves God in the steward's drowning and makes the circumstances of the lecher's death ambiguous, 11. 1112-25, p. 176.

Chaucer, by putting his pure and passive heroine into categories with biblical, apocryphal, and hagiographical heroes and heroines, suggests a forcefulness of character underlying Constance's meek and helpless exterior.
36 In his note to l. 491, p. 694, Robinson refers us to Revelation 7:1-3, which is paraphrased in 11. 491-94. It seems possible, too, that Chaucer is suggesting the Gospel's account of Jesus' stilling the winds and waves, thereby saving the Disciples (or so they believed) from drowning in their boat as they crossed the Sea of Galilee. This account is found in Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25.

37 The Sultaness' original motive for sparing Constance at the massacre is explained by William Leffingwell, "Saints' Lives and the Sultaness: A Note on a Perplexing Episode in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale," Thoth, 12 (Fall 1971), 30-31: Trivet "explains why Constance is allowed to live: the Sultan's mother must conduct an interrogation of the Christian saint. Not only is this explanation more reasonable than the Man of Law's, but it is more satisfactory because it has the sanction of saint's life convention."

38 Miraculous ships appeared in the Old English Andreas and the Morte D'Arthur. Hippolyte Delehaye, Les Légendes hagiographiques (Brussels: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes, 1905), p. 35, states: "Nothing more banal exists in popular hagiography than this theme of the miraculous arrival of an image or of a holy body in an abandoned ship, and nothing more ordinary exists than the wonder of the vessel which stops itself" (translation mine).

39 In Trivet's account, Constance thwarted the steward's advances by telling him that she did not want her young son to witness and to remember his mother's sin, and she asked the steward to wait until they were out of sight of land; then, she would find a convenient time for love-making. Satisfied, the steward stood at the rail, watching for the moment that the land dropped out of sight. Then Constance pushed the steward into the sea (Trivet, Sources and Analogues, pp. 175-76).

40 This apostrophe was taken from Pope Innocent III's De Contemptu Mundi (Robinson, p. 695, n. 925).
41 Rodney Delasanta suggests that the speaker's self-aggrandizement may actually be self-delusion. Delasanta points out, p. 296, "the Pharsalia explicitly describes Caesar's sorrow over Pompey's death," rather than Caesar's "triumphe"; and "the lawyer's reference to Hannibal, which contains a curious detail of his having vanquished the Romans 'tymes thre' (B 291). The number is improbable since a reading of the Second Punic War (even in Plutarch) reveals more than three Carthaginian victories before Hannibal is finally beaten by the Romans."

42 The works of the "miracle" writers and fifteenth-century hagiographers, however, thrived on emotion and sentimentiality.

43 Delehaye remarks, p. 107, that the hagiographers "multiply the tortures without giving much thought to the limit of endurance in the human nature" (translation mine).

44 Neither Trivet nor Gower mentions Constance's feelings about leaving Rome, her friends, and her family.

45 In lines 156-68. St. Agnes is described thus in Caxton's Golden Legend: "She was fair of visage, but much fairer in the christian faith, she was young of age, and aged in wit, for in the thirteenth year of her age she lost the death that the world giveth, and found life in Jesu Christ. . . ." See William Caxton, The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton, ed. F. S. Ellis (1900; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973), II. 245.

46 An angel guarded St. Cecilia's virginity and promised that the miraculous crowns of lilies and roses would remain with Cecilia and Valerian as long as they retained their virginity. More bizarre is the legend of St. Agnes, who scorned the prefect's son's proposal of marriage, refused to become a Vestal Virgin, and was thrown into a brothel. She was stripped naked, but her hair miraculously grew long and thick enough to cover her. A bright angel stood beside her, so that the friends of the prefect's son were driven back by the brightness when they entered the room. The prefect's son, however, persisted, and since God had abandoned him, the devil killed the boy. See La Légende dorée, trans. Teodor de Wyzewa (Paris: Libraire académique perrin, 1933), p. 98.
47 Compare St. Cecilia's behavior toward Almachius at her trial, in the *Second Nun's Tale*, l. 425-511.

48 Hamilton, p. 156.

49 The device does not occur in Trivet or Gower; it appears, rarely, in the *Legenda Aurea* and in fourteenth-century English legendaries as a direct quotation by a character.

Concerning Chaucer's use of this device, Roger Parr asserts, p. 279: "Analysis shows . . . that not only is *The Book of the Duchess* free of this device, but that all of Chaucer's works written before his second Italian journey are also free of it. The *Second Nun's Tale*, thought to have been written around the year 1373, shows no apostrophe. In later tales, however, apostrophes abound."

50 Geoffrey of Vinsauf gives the following advice for conducting an apostrophic attack, p. 31:

If you wish to rise up in full strength against the ridiculous, assail them in this form of speech: offer praise, but in a facetious manner; reprove, but with wit and grace; have recourse to gestures, but let these be consistently fitting. Give your speech teeth; attack with biting force—but let your manner rather than your lips devour the absurd. Lo, what was hidden in darkness will be revealed in full light.

51 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, p. 32.

52 See Robinson's comments on *The Man of Law's Prologue*, p. 691.

53 An exception to this statement is the Man of Law's descriptive apostrophe to the drunken Messenger, ll. 771-84. Here, Chaucer has made this character the embodiment of the vice that Innocent describes and denounces.

54 The pagan fathers of Sts. Christine and Juliana, for example, personally (and classically) tortured their daughters because they would not renounce the Christian faith.
Robinson discusses the attempts that have been made to explicate the Tale's astrological passages, p. 693, n. 295-315. "The astrological situation—if Chaucer himself had an exact one in mind—is not wholly clear," Robinson remarks.


The placement of "crueel," occurring in the first and last verses of the stanza (ll. 295, 301), emphasizes the harshness of the astrological forces.

Nims, p. 104.

The Oxford English Dictionary uses this line (359) as an example in its definition of Virago as "A bold, impudent (+ or wicked) woman; a termagant, a scold" (X.i.i., 228).

Robinson, p. 694, n. 360, notes that "The serpent who tempted Eve in Eden is sometimes described as having a woman's head."

Chaucer leaves no doubt concerning the Pardoner's hypocrisy.

Hamilton, pp. 156, 158, 163.

Hamilton states, p. 159: "Even had there been time, Constance, an alien with an undisclosed past, was not a legally qualified member of the community entitled to summon oath-helpers, from family or old acquaintances, to testify to the truth of her denial. The Lawyer underscores her plight as a stranger:

She hath no wight to whom to make hir mone.
O blood roial, that stondest in this drede,
Fer been thy freendes at thy grete nede!
(11. 655-68)

Mark 9:24.
This apostrophe is probably a vestige of pre-Canterbury times. Mary Giffin, Studies on Chaucer and His Audience, (Hull, Quebec: Les Editions "L'éclair," 1956), p. 87, reads this passage as a tactful appeal by Chaucer for help for John of Gaunt's wife, Constance of Padilla. Perhaps the speaker's attention to the feminine members of his audience accounts for his "male only" comment on wedding nights (ll. 708-14), scarcely fifty lines later.

Delehaye, p. 75, observes: "Nothing is more common in the prefaces of the saints' lives than the excuses for the imperfection of form and the preoccupation with good style. The author frequently bemoans his incapability and affects the fear of boring his reader" (translation mine).

The definition is Nims', p. 105. Roger Parr states, p. 345: "Correctio is another word figure that can be found [in Chaucer's writings] only a few times."

Even at the conclusion of this episode, which ends on l. 875, the narrator is audible:
For wynd and weder almyghty God purchace,
And brynge hire hoom! I kan no bettre seye,
But in the see she dryveth forth hir weye.
(ll. 873-75)

It should be pointed out that a textual division—Explicit secunda pars—closes the scene. The audience is not left hanging after this or any other episode in the Man of Law's Tale.

Parr, p. 345.

Parr, p. 345.
Nims, p. 105, defines permissio as "surrender of the total situation to the will of another."

Parr, p. 346.

Block states, p. 594, that "approximately two thirds of the Man of Law's Tale consists of Chaucer's additions; of the remaining one third, somewhat less than a half represents condensations and miscellaneous changes, while somewhat more than a half, or 18 per cent of the whole tale, represents passages where he followed Trivet."
73 Nims, p. 105, defines *occupatio*: "description of a situation, or naming of objects, while professing to leave them unmentioned through lack of knowledge, or unwillingness to discuss them; also called *occultatio*.

74 In Trivet's account the Sultan immediately falls in love with the merchants' description of Constance, and he at once converts to Christianity and asks to marry Constance:

> par quelz paroles lui soudan, trop supris de l'amour de la pucele (com il estoit homme de joeuene age), maunda de nouel mesmes ceux Cristiens qil converti a la fei, e ouesqes eus un admiral paen oue graunt aparail et richesses e presentz a Tyberie e a sa fille, en demaundaunt la pucele en mariage. . . .

*(Sources and Analogues, pp. 165-66)*

Gower is equally brief:

> And when the Souldan of Constance Vpon the point that thei ansuerde The beaute and the grace herde, As he which thanne was to wedde, In alle haste his cause spedde To sende for the mariaghe. And furthermore with good corage He seith, be so he mai hire haue, That Crist, which cam this world to saue He woll believe: and this recorded Thei ben on either side acorded.

(11. 620-30)

75 Paul E. Beichner, "Chaucer's Man of Law and Disparitas Cultus," *Speculum*, 23 (1948), 74, comments: "Instead of closely following Trivet's life of Constance, letting the council of Tiberius lay down as a condition of the marriage of his daughter that the Sultan be baptized, Chaucer chose to have the whole matter of *disparitas cultus* [Religious differences] brought up and discussed and the course of action decided upon in the Sultan's council before any messengers were sent to Rome to ask for the maid in marriage. He let the legal profession display its knowledge of canon law."

76 Parr, p. 278.

77 Lanham, p. 78.
78 Trivet tells of Maurice's succession to the Roman throne, his title and how he arrived at it, and his recognition as "Mauricius Cristianissimus imperator," pp. 180-81.

79 The Man of Law has performed a similar trick on us in l. 246-55, in which he prepares us for a lengthy description and then cuts us off with a few generalities:

Now wolde some men waiten, as I gesse,
That I sholde tellen al the purveiance
That th'Emperour, of his grete noblesse,
Hath shapen for his doghter, dame Custance.
Wel may men knownen that so greet ordinance
May no man tellen in a lite clause
As was arrayed for so heigh a cause.

Bishophopes been shapen with hire for to wende,
Lordes, ladies, knyghtes of renoun,
And oother folk ynowe. . . .
(11. 246-55)

80 In Robinson's edition, l. 1121 reads "This child Maurice with sithen Emperour" (emphasis mine). "With" is a misprint and should be "was." See John Matthews Manly, ed., Canterbury Tales (New York: Holt, 1928), p. 277.

81 Bronson mentions a "hint of indelicacy," p. 51. Giffin, p. 70, states: "This second marriage is consummated in a stanza which has been regarded as in questionable taste. Yet it is not out of harmony with the colloquial phrasing and the material considerations by which Chaucer holds the attention of his listeners."

82 The elaborate figure for rhetoric--winnowing chaff from corn--coupled with the Man of Law's impatience with what he deems frivolities, combine here into a pettish academicism.

83 Michael R. Paull, "The Influence of the Saint's Legend Genre in the Man of Law's Tale," Chaucer Review, 5 (1971), 188, commenting on Chaucer's use of occupatio in the Man of Law's Tale, states that "in the Man of Law's Tale, Chaucer uses this device to concentrate all of the action on a single character, the saint-like Constance, presenting just those portions of her life which illuminate her saintliness."
These excesses include the Man of Law's literary over-reachings, pointed out by Sullivan and Delasanta.

Yunck, pp. 256-57, and David, p. 223, have already suggested this idea.

Baltzell, pp. 35-36.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRIORESS AS PREACHER

In the Prioress's Tale Chaucer achieves a compatibility between narrator and narrative which is lacking in the Second Nun's Tale and which is largely obscured in the Man of Law's Tale. Chaucer has adapted this brutal story to the Prioress and has made us accept it as hers by compelling our awareness of her diction, her characterizations, and her narrative intrusions. The narrative intrusions in particular have an important effect on our interpretation of the Prioress's character, not only because these intrusions reveal her emotional involvement in the story, but also because they convey a didactic, magisterial side of Madame Eglentyne that critics have ignored. (Sister Mary Madeleva does approach this interpretation in her argument that the Prioress's behavior and office are appropriate to an older woman.)

The Prioress's interruptions portray a didactic elder accustomed to instructing subordinates, habitually interjecting exempla and sententiae into any personal remark longer than a line, and frequently re-phrasing, presumably for emphasis or elucidation, statements or ideas that have just been presented.
This authoritarian image of the Prioress is counter-pointed, however, by a sentimental side to her character, revealed in the General Prologue by her maudlin regard for mice and dogs, and in the Tale by her romanticized depiction of an impoverished little choirboy. As we might expect, the Prioress's sentimental nature colors her diction and description, and we find that she relies repeatedly on certain adjectives and types of analogies to express her pity and indignation. The epithets which Madame Eglentyne attaches to the clerkeon—"litel" (seven times), "yong" (two times), "tendre" (once), and "innocent" (three times)—confirm the sentimental characterization of her in the General Prologue, where Chaucer the pilgrim remarks, "al was conscience and tendre herte." Related to this emotional side of the Prioress's character is her religious faith which, like her young hero's, is child-like in its belief and acceptance. Yet, almost paradoxically, the most sophisticated rhetoric that the Prioress employs in her Tale (a series of formal apostrophes) is used to express her simple beliefs in the Jews' depravity and in God's omnipotence.

Thus, two separate facets of Madame Eglentyne's character are highlighted, as we shall see, by her narration of the miracle: the pedagogical, and at times authoritative, manner of a religious mentor; and coexisting
with this stance, the sympathetic, and frequently sentimental, disposition of a sheltered older lady. These two dominant traits in the Prioress's character--her authorita-
tiveness and her sentimental naïveté--combine to give us a remarkably confident narrator. Unlike the Man of Law, Madame Eglentyne's faith is so unquestioning that she does not indulge in philosophical speculation. Moreover, once she has acknowledged her need of the Virgin's guidance (Prologue of the Prioress's Tale, ll. 481-87), the Prioress never apologizes for her tale, her source, or herself, a stance that distinguishes her from Chaucer's two other hagiographic narrators, the Man of Law and the persona in the Second Nun's Tale. Sentimental she undeniably is, but for a woman characterized by sympathetic as well as unsympathetic critics as being of "limited mentality," "childish," and having a manner of "affected girlishness," her stance is remarkably pedagogical. The Prioress's narrative intrusions reflect this attitude: they show her trying to convey to her audience not entertainment, but rather a sense of value and meaningfulness in a simple story.

The Prioress's rhetoric complements this effort: her diction and rhetorical devices are simple and always oriented toward the story's effective presentation. Because the Prioress is not a rhetorician and, moreover,
does not pretend to be, she uses the rhetorical devices which we might expect to hear in the ordinary speech of a religious administrator somewhat advanced in years: illustrative exempla and sententiae; explanatory definitio; emphatic interpretatio and conduplicatio. On the three occasions in the Tale that she does resort to more formal speech (apostrophes), the Prioress's language echoes the liturgy, rather than the intricate patterns of rhetoric's main practitioners, the clerks and lawyers.

The simplicity of the Prioress's customary rhetoric serves a number of purposes. First, the ordinary, or "low style," of rhetoric would probably satisfy our expectations of the Prioress's rhetorical stance--homegrown and circumscribed by the convent, like her Stratford-atte-Bowe French. Moreover, her low style of narration is consistent with what appears to have been the usual rhetorical tenor of the miracle genre. Finally, the Prioress's customary, low-style stance provides the dramatic contrast for her three flights into liturgical high style--all three of which occur at critical points in the Tale.

The purpose of this essay will be to examine the Prioress's rhetorical intrusions into the Tale, and the primary intent of the examination will be to discuss the woman's didactic and pastoral stance toward her
audience. Instead of belaboring Madame Eglentyne's alleged childishness, this study will regard the Prioress as a religious administrator, accustomed to judging and expounding before a deferential audience. (Such a view is not without humor.) Without denying the General Prologue's portrait of the Prioress, the reading which I am proposing offers at least an alternative approach to the Prioress's often-maligned character, one that allows us to appraise, from a professional perspective, the Prioress's worth as a teacher, as a churchwoman, and as a human being.

The Prioress's rhetorical intrusions color to some extent our perceptions of the Tale's setting, characterization, and plot; her sentimentality is contagious, and most of us willingly accept her pictures of the "litel clergeon" and his "litel scole." At the same time, the Prioress's interruptions reveal a didactic, and sometimes imperious, presence in her sweet, sentimental personality. Corollary to this magisterial stance (and apparent in her rhetoric) is the Prioress's sense of her own wisdom, importance, and spiritual experience.

Even as the Prioress is introducing the Tale's setting, "in Asye, in a greet citee" (l. 488), her sentimental nature is revealed almost at once, and her didactic character is exposed immediately afterwards.
Having introduced in the first stanza the polarities of Jewish and Christian communities, the Prioress in the second stanza particularizes—and sentimentalizes—her miracle's immediate setting: she tells us about the Christians' "little scole" (l. 495—her first use of that oft-recurring and pity-evoking adjective) and about the Christian children who attended it:

A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stod
Down at the ferther ende, in which ther were
Children an heep, ycomen of Cristen blood,
That lerned in that scole yeer by yere
Swich manere doctrine as men used there,
This is to seyn, to syngen and to rede,
As smale children doon in hire childhede.

(ll. 495-501)

The Prioress's didacticism and authoritativeness are fully asserted in this second stanza. To ensure her audience's grasp of the situation, the Prioress stresses the Christian character of the school's students and its curriculum by introducing definitio ("a brief and pointed summary of the characteristic quality of a person or thing")\(^{10}\) to her thus-far brief account:

Swich manere doctrine as men used there,
This is to seyn, to syngen and to rede,
As smale children doon in hire childhede.

(ll. 499-501; definitio in italics)

The Prioress's efforts to assure our understanding are, no doubt, well-intended but are nevertheless condescending
and suggestive of an aging superior's lack of faith in her unenlightened audience's perception. Such subjects ordinarily would be expected in a Church-related school, while the Prioress's elucidation of her phrase "Swich manere doctrine as men used there" (l. 499; emphasis mine) makes that initial statement seem rather grandiose, especially when the Prioress then remarks that the "doctrine" being learned, not by men, but by "smale children," is singing and reading.\textsuperscript{11}

The Prioress's authoritative attitude toward her audience and material appears again, fifty lines later, when she interjects:

As I have seyd, thurghout the Juerie,  
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,  
Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie  
\underline{O Alma redemptoris} evermo.  
(11. 551-54)

In the stanza preceding the one just quoted, the Prioress has related how the "litel clergeon" learned the \underline{Alma redemptoris} from his "felawe," and how

Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,  
To scoleward and homeward when he wente;  
On Cristes mooder set was his entente.  
(11. 548-50)

For the Prioress to repeat herself in the immediately following four lines suggests her lack of confidence in her audience's ability to comprehend, as well as her
probable fondness for the sound of her own voice. Moreover, her didactic verbal mannerism reveals a lapse in her narrative, of which the Prioress seems unaware:

As I have seyd, thurghout the Juerie
This litel child, as he cam to and fro
(ll. 551-52)

Contrary to what the Prioress claims to have seyd, this statement is the first that she has made regarding the clergeon's daily passage through the Jewish ghetto. She has of course described the street which runs through the ghetto, the street on which, "[a]oun at the ferther ende," was the "litel scole of Cristen folk"; elsewhere (ll. 503-8) we are told of how the little boy daily knelt and prayed before an "image" of the Virgin which he passed on his way to school, but the Prioress does not specify the street used by the clergeon. Moreover, her telling us in the Tale's first stanza that the street "was free and open at eyther ende" prevents our assuming that this street was a dead end (and thus the only means of access to the school). For the Prioress to have prefaced this new piece of information with "As I have seyd" suggests her confidence in herself as a narrator (gained, perhaps, through many years of telling this Tale) as well as her willingness to take command and credit, whether or not the need exists.
The Prioress's rhetorical involvement in her depictions of the clergeon and the Jews reflects the two sides of her character: an older nun's naiveté and a superior's didactic and pastoral authoritativness. Besides the sentimental epithets, previously mentioned, which the Prioress attaches to the clergeon, two rhetorical devices beloved by preachers and teachers occur in her treatments of the boy and the Jews: the exemplum ("an example cited, either true or feigned; illustrative story")\textsuperscript{12} and the sententia ("judgment, sentiment, opinion").\textsuperscript{13} Using exempla and sententiae, the Prioress appeals to our emotions and at the same time patronizes us.

No sooner has she introduced her little hero than she interrupts her narrative with a hagiographic exemplum—the infant St. Nicholas' legendary refusal to suckle on fast days:

\begin{quote}
But ay, when I remembre on this mateere, 
Seint Nicholas stant evere in my presence, 
For he so yong to Crist dide reverence. 
(11. 513-15)
\end{quote}

The Prioress's lapse into first-person singular suggests her personal involvement in this story;\textsuperscript{14} her self-assurance might be attributed to her age, experience in lecturing, and familiarity with hagiographical anecdotes. This exemplum, moreover, helps to establish in the Tale her homiletic stance, which has been anticipated
in the Prologue to the Prioress's Tale, subtitled "Domine dominus noster." The Prioress's illustration serves to reinforce the religious validity of the Tale; by comparing her nameless, landless, and timeless clergeon with the great St. Nicholas, the Prioress apparently hopes to encourage our interest in her unsung hero.

This exemplum has the possibility of affecting the audience's reception not only of the Prioress's clergeon, but also of the Prioress herself. Her tendency toward didacticism, which we have noted in her rephrasings and reinterpretations, is again evident in her observation on St. Nicholas. Further suggesting that the Prioress is patronizing her predominantly lay audience is the presence of an apparently well-known sententia,¹⁵ which immediately precedes the exemplum:

For sely child wol alday soone leere
(1. 512)

The Prioress uses this saying as her final comment on the little clergeon's pious upbringing:

Thus hath this wydde hir litel sone ytaught
Oure blisful Lady, Cristes mooder deere,
To worshipe ay, and he forgat it naught,
For sely child wol alday soone leere.
(11. 509-12)

By incorporating the sententia into her narrative account (insuring this incorporation with the aid of a conjunction,
"For") the Prioress apparently feels that she has provided unassailable proof of her subject's piety. Certainly, Madame Eglentyne has extracted the maximum usage from a simple proverb; the very presence of a proverb would likely impress, favorably, such sententious characters as Harry Bailly and the Reeve; with the help of her sententia, she has managed a definite, and for some people, convincing, conclusion to her character sketch of the clergeon; finally, she has provided herself with an occasion for digressing on Baby St. Nicholas, thereby adding color as well as support, as far as she is concerned, to her narration of the clergeon's piety.

Despite her tendency toward stereotyping and sentimentalizing, the Prioress extends her "pitous" nature sincerely and appropriately in her treatment of the Tale's characters. She is by all indications genuinely sympathetic as she relates the clergeon's conversation with his "felawe" and his decision to learn the Alma Redemptoris no matter what the cost (ll. 516-50)—a poignantly ironic touch. Moreover, her account of the frantic widow's vigil and panicked search for her son (ll. 586-606) approaches the empathic and supports Kittredge's theory of the Prioress's "thwarted motherhood."
Even more surprising to us than the Prioress's concern with the widow's fearfulness, a concern that overrides the Prioress's interest in the woman's religious faith, is "charitable" Madame Eglentyne's attitude toward the Jews, yet if we were to compare the villains in the Prioress's Tale with those in the Second Nun's Tale and the Man of Law's Tale, we could easily appreciate the Prioress's economical treatment of the Jews. The "litel clergeon" is her constant point of reference; only when characters or events relate to the clergeon does the Prioress bring them to our attention—thus she mentions the "Jewerye" and its attendant vices in her description of the setting but does not refer to the Jews again until they enter the clergeon's life. In fact, the Prioress's account of the clergeon's murder is concise to the point of starkness:

Fro thennes forth the Jues han conspired
This innocent out of this world to chace.
An homycide therto han they hyred,
That in an aleye hadde a privee place;
And as the child gan forby for to pace,
This cursed Jew hym hente, and heeld hym faste,
And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste.
(11. 565-71)

After relating the gruesome account of the child's death, the Prioress explodes emotionally and rhetorically. As if afraid that her imperceptive audience might not have grasped the horrible implications of the Jews' casting
the clergeon "in a pit," the Prioress interposes her narrative authority and using the didactic figure interpretatio ("repetition of a single idea in synonymous words")\textsuperscript{22} informs us:

\begin{quote}
I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe
Where as this Jewes purgen hire entraille.
(11. 572-73)
\end{quote}

With her emphatic "I seye" introducing the interpretatio, the Prioress personally and unshrinking takes responsibility for assuring our understanding of the full horror. The daintiness which Chaucer the pilgrim observed in the Prioress's manners and dress now dissolves in the face of such a desecration. Her replacing "pit" with the particularly scatological "wardrobe"\textsuperscript{23} is further emphasized by the meter: the caesura's occurrence immediately after "wardrobe" adds stress to this key word in the line, an emphasis which the Prioress continues and intensifies in the succeeding line, with her gratuitous explanation of the Jews' use of the wardrobe.\textsuperscript{24}

The Prioress's outraged interpretatio and the apostrophes that immediately follow interrupt the Tale at a critical dramatic point, a technique that the Man of Law used a number of times. Here, and again in lines 607-13 (prefacing the mother's miraculous discovery of her son's body), Chaucer suspends the action and has the
Prioress apostrophize first the Jews and the martyr and, in the second occurrence, God Himself. The pause allows us time to digest the event's dramatic impact and at the same time lets us observe both the inauguration of homiletics into her didactic discourse and the Prioress's emergence as a preacher.

This pastoral dimension of the Prioress's character is suggested by her formal, elevated rhetoric, appropriate to the deliverance of a sermon; the liturgical and scriptural colorings which embue her apostrophes; the apocalyptic nature of her subject and its lesson; and the emotional, moralistic tone associated with pastoral rhetoricians, Chaucer's Parson and Pardoner included. At each religiously significant event in the story—the child's martyrdom, his mother's divinely-inspired discovery of his corpse, and his soul's departure—the Prioress steps forward with a rhetorically formal, liturgically resounding commentary, an interruption which appears to be unusual for the miracle genre, but appropriate to sermon literature. In these passages, all of which are apostrophes, the Prioress attains a rhetorical solemnity which we have seen in her Prologue but not, hitherto, in her Tale. She retains the didactic stance appropriate to a teacher or preacher, by continuing to use exempla and sententiae, but gone now is the shallow, almost
absent-minded character of the Prioress's first four interruptions (11. 500-1, 513-15, 550-51, and 572-73). Her formal rhetoric and its accompanying stance suggest now that the Prioress has elevated her thought, her language, and her attitude toward her audience to suit the exalted circumstances of the Tale's key religious happenings, just as the martyred clergeon later instructs the abbot and the other mourners with an assurance and tone appropriate to his new status and understanding of it. 26

While these homiletically-toned passages show the Prioress at the peak of her professional attainment—preaching to us of the life awaiting Christians after death—these same apostrophes also reveal some of the Prioress's human weaknesses: her initial, mortal aversion to death, her self-righteousness, and her sometimes overbearing didacticism. The portrait emerging from these passages is that of a preacher who lacks the saintliness of Chaucer's Parson but who instead has some of the human foibles found in ourselves and in those around us.

The emotional tone of the Prioress's homiletics is in part caused by the histrionic nature of the apostrophe, which appears to have been a fairly regular rhetorical occurrence in the sermon literature of Chaucer's time.
In the Parson's Tale, for example, the preacher exclaims to God and addresses a sententia to the women in his audience:

O goode God, ye wommen that been of so greet beautee, remembreth yow of the proverbe of Salomon. He seith: "Likneth a fair womman that is a fool of hire body lyk to a ryng of gold that were in the groyn of a soughe."

(Pars.T., 11. 154-55)

Even the cynical, hypocritical Pardoner apostrophizes passionately in his sermon, the Pardoner's Tale:

0 glotonye, ful of cursednesse!
0 cause first of oure confusioun!
0 original of our damnpacioun,
Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!
Lo, how deere, shortly for to sayn,
Aboght was thilke cursed vileynye!

(Pard.T., 11. 498-503)

The Prioress's first apostrophic passage, addressed to the "cursed folk of Herodes," uses rhetorical devices appropriate to sermons--apostrophe, interrogatio, and sententia--to express Old Testament ideas and medieval Christian prejudices. By prefacing the narrator's apostrophe with an equally subjective (though less formal) interpretatio, Chaucer lessens the shock for us of an unexpected apostrophe:
I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe
Where as thise Jewes purgen hire entraise.
0 cursed folk of Herodes al newe,
What may youre yvel entente yow availle?
Mordre wol out, certeyn, it wol nat faille,
And namely ther th'onour of God shal sprede;
The blood out crieth on youre cursed dede.

(11. 572-78)

Linking these two rhetorical modes is their common subject, the murderous Jews. In the first line of her *apostrophe* (l. 574), the Prioress uses *pronominatio*, one of the "difficult ornaments" in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, to elevate her discourse and, at the same time, to refer us back to the Jews' depraved conduct:

0 cursed folk of Herodes al newe

(1. 574)

King Herod is the pivotal point of the Prioress's rhetorical transition: she uses Herod's ethnic kinship with the clergeon's murderers to suggest a relationship between the clergeon's grotesque murder and the slaughter of the Holy Innocents by the Jewish king's troops. By associating Herod, however tenuously, with the thugs' ethnically-related resentment and violence, the Prioress uses biblical precedent to remind us of Jewish depravity and to sharpen the religious significance of the little clergeon's death.

Having addressed herself to the "cursed folk of Herodes" and their "al newe" slaughter of a Holy Innocent,
the Prioress poses a rhetorical question, a device which
the Parson uses in his sermon, to ridicule the Jews' efforts: "What may youre yvel entent yow availle?" (l. 575). The figure is as appropriate to the Prioress's character as it is to her preaching: we might reasonably expect to find this belittling, scolding stance in our Prioress, a woman who, we may assume, is responsible for the behavior and performance of her subordinates and who, we are told, is anxious to be considered "digne of reverence" (Gen. Prol., l. 141).

The Prioress continues her sermonizing by answering her rhetorical question with another device used by preachers, the platitude: "mordre wol out." Not content with a mere proverb, however, the Prioress goes on to attach religious significance to the saying, by suggesting that "th'onour of God shal sprede" (l. 577) along with the martyr's blood. She concludes this portion of her preaching with a biblical paraphrase immediately applicable to her own tale: "The blood out crieth on youre cursed dede" (l. 578). Appropriately, the Prioress's statement comes from the Torah's account of the first murder, in which God confronted, judged, and punished Cain for murdering Abel, his brother. By applying this exemplum to the story of the clergeon's murder, the Prioress intensifies the seriousness of the Jews' crime and closes
her first *apostrophe* with a favorite theme in homiletics: that of divine retribution.

Having ended her Old Testament lesson, the Prioress turns to New Testament themes as the framework for addressing the martyred clergeon. While her consideration of the Jews' crime has strictly adhered to Old Testament notions of judgment and punishment, her second *apostrophe* preaches, instead, apocalyptic judgment and reward and, in so doing, relies on the Book of Revelation (or the Apocalypse) 14:3-5 for her message:

O martir, sowed to virginitee,  
Now maystow syngen folwyng evere in oon  
The white Lamb celestial--quod she--  
Of which the grete evaungelist, Seint John,  
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon  
Biforn this Lamb, and synge a song al newe,  
That nevere, flesshly, wommen they ne knewe.

(11. 579-85)

The Prioress's descriptions of the clergeon's condition in heaven is itself an expression of her faith and understanding; this stanza represents the highest attainment of the Prioress's reflections of the child's martyrdom. At this point, her absorption in the clergeon's heavenly status—an absorption which excludes previous thoughts on Jewish accursedness and on revenge—reflects in the respectful, but nonetheless the near-rapturous, tone of her *apostrophe*. Her well-intentioned condescension ceases, and she now addresses the clergeon in a manner
appropriate both to his exalted, and to her pastoral, stations.

For the first time in the Tale, the language used by the Prioress in discussing the clergeon is sophisticated in concept as well as in diction, and her usual didacticism is subordinated to her religious enthusiasm. The entire stanza is a single, sweeping statement of the martyr's joyous condition; her words transport her heavenward, and she refers to doctrine, metaphor and terminology that would be far beyond the understanding of a seven-year-old scholar. Now, in deference, apparently, to the martyr's enlightened condition, the Prioress praises his "virgini-tee" (l. 579), to which she attributes his exalted status; later, in biblical language which would surely have puzzled a mortal child, the Prioress elaborates, in biblical cadence, on the requirement for claiming virginity's rewards: "never, flessly, wommen they ne knewe" (l. 585).

As a sermon should do, the Prioress's exalted apostrophe to the martyr likewise reminds us that a higher dimension co-exists with the daily, human affairs "in Asye, in a greeet citee"; the heavenly glimpse offered us in the Prioress's apostrophe provides the foundation for the miraculous revelation of divine pleasure that soon follows. Her depiction of the singer's glorious
place before the Lamb of God, and her implication, through vocabulary and idea, of the child's expanded sensibilities, contrasts implicitly with the wretchedness of the child's former surroundings on earth: the clergeon's fatherlessness (and thus his almost certain material impoverishment), his struggle to memorize an anthem which he does not understand, his daily passage to school through a ghetto filled with enemies, and his body's defilement.  

The Prioress's third apostrophe is addressed to God and represents the final step in her Christian acceptance of the clergeon's death; whereas her first apostrophe had been concerned with the Jews' crime and her second, with the clergeon's heavenly condition, this third apostrophe is an offering of praise to God:

O grete God, that parfournest thy laude
By mouth of innocenzt, lo, heere thy myght!
This gemme of chastite, this emeraude,
And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,
Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright,
He Alma redemptoris gan to synge
So loude that al the place gan to rynge.
(11. 607-13)

The gemstones which the Prioress uses as metaphors to describe the child's virtues perpetuate on one level the poetic and formal tenor of the exclamatio: the jewels evoke an image of immutable beauty, splendor, and worth shining through the corruption of the surroundings; associated with the Apocalypse's depiction of the
New Jerusalem, this image of jewels, with its suggestion of mystical virtues in the stones, serves as an *exemplum*, illustrating and emphasizing the same virtues inherent in the martyr. On another level, the Prioress's choosing gemstones as her metaphor for human worthiness is rather chilling and cannot fail to remind us of her consciousness of appearances—her concern with courtly deportment and, especially, her coral rosary and gold brooch. The ambivalence of the Prioress's metaphor—its association with mystical virtues and with worldliness—serves characterization as well as structural purposes: it reflects and reinforces both extremes of the Prioress's enigmatic character, and it functions as a transitional passage between the Prioress's address to God and her revelation to us of the miracle, which immediately follows this *apostrophe*.

After her series of *apostrophes*, the Prioress interrupts her story two more times; on these two occasions, however, her tone is not pastoral, so much as it is protesting. These two interruptions, in which the Prioress expresses her concern over monkish corruption, indicate that her dedication to her ecclesiastical profession is sincere, in spite of her susceptibilities to such secular attractions as dressing well, keeping pets, and maintaining the appearance and mannerisms of
the noble class. Madame Eglentyne's insistence on making an issue of monastic holiness has the ring of an elder unabashedly accustomed to handing out advice and judgments and, in the process, appearing to be rather self-righteous. The self-assurance borne of her aristocratic (or at least genteel) upbringing as well as of her high (for a woman) position in the Church, allows her to snipe at the spiritual corruption emanating from the lordly Monk's gold "love-knotte," his oily head and face, and his gleaming, shifty eyes. She casually interrupts her narrative with the ornament dubitatio ("expression of uncertainty as to which of two or more words is most suitable") to express her awareness of—and disgust with—the ecclesiastics who have relinquished their vows and who consciously flaunt the fact in their appearances and in their comments:

This abbot, which that was an hooly man,
As monkes been--or elles oghte be--
(11. 642-43) The deliberateness of the Prioress's barb is further suggested by the recurrence four stanzas later of the same verbal combination—"abbot," "Holy," and "monk"—spoken once again as a personal clarification by the narrator:

This hooly monk, this abbot, hym meene I
(1. 670)
The Prioress's superior attitude seems not to be an indication of hypocrisy so much as a manifestation of her own struggle with worldly temptation. Although Madame Eglentyne is obviously attracted to worldly enjoyments, the seriousness of her sins stops far short of the Monk's, Pardoner's, Summoner's, and Friar's transgressions. She expresses her disapproval of their conduct with what appears to be a dry and understandable bitterness, which other members of the pilgrimage, with perhaps the exception of the Parson, would be unlikely to feel.

Madame Eglentyne has begun her tale of the Virgin by invoking God and Mary, and she concludes her miracle with a prayer, thereby enclosing her whole work in a prayerful context. The Prioress's final stanza uses a rhetorical, specifically homiletic, means of conclusion, as is appropriate both to her profession and to the miracle that she tells: she closes by apostrophizing an English martyr, "petitioning [him] for a favor," one of the seven methods of conclusion recommended by Matthew of Vendôme in his Ars Versificatoria. Unlike the petitions presented by some other writers, however, the Prioress's final request is an unselfish one and by its presence suggests that the Prioress has regarded her Tale as a spiritual gift to the other pilgrims. Young Hugh of Lincoln serves as the mediator through whom the Prioress's
offering is given. A real person, essentially sharing the same death that the "litel clergeon" suffers, Hugh brings the story and its message of devotion and reward from the legend's never-never land, back to England. Besides presenting the story's reality to the pilgrims, the Prioress's invocation to Hugh recapitulates the important themes in the miracle of the Virgin.

In its first two lines, the *apostrophe* reminds us of the Tale's theme of martyrdom and the accursedness of those rejecting Christ's ways:

O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also
With cursed Jewes

(11. 684-85)

The Prioress's reminder of Hugh's historical existence and his death—"it is notable,/ For it is but a litel while ago," (11. 685-86)—draws us closer to the clergeon's story and its themes. The Prioress's request for Hugh's intercession—"Preye eek for us, we synful folk unstable," (1. 687)—not only brings us nearer to the spiritual climax of the invocation, but also reminds us of our weakness as human beings. At the same time the Prioress's supplication holds out the possibility of spiritual attainment, such as we have seen in a seven-year-old's learning a difficult anthem and dying for it, or as we witness in a young English martyr's presumed power to
intercede with God for his fellows. This expectant attitude continues in the invocation's final lines, which indirectly pray God's mercy:

Prey eek for us, we synful folk unstable,
That, of his mercy, God so merciable
On us his grete mercy multiplie,
For reverence of his mooder Marie. Amen
(11. 687-90; emphasis mine)

Here, the Prioress's rhetoric—her use of alliteration and of conduplicatio ("repetition of one or more words for amplification or pity")—emphasizes in each line the key words of hopefulness: "mercy . . . merciable; mercy multiplie; mooder Marie." The Prioress's rhetorical application here is heavy-handed and would likely offend the Parson's "Southren" ears (see the Parson's Prologue, 11. 42-43), but it accomplishes its purpose of compelling both our attention to the message, and our hope.

Within the Prioress's conclusion is reflected the theme expressed first in her Prologue, concerned with the Virgin, and second, in her story of the martyred schoolboy: the elevation of mortal creatures to communion with the divine. In and through her conclusion, the Prioress extends this same opportunity to her companions on the pilgrimage.

While the Prioress's Tale does confirm the General Prologue's sentimental portrait of Madame Eglentyne, her
rhetoric in the *Tale* reveals a didactic, authoritative side to the woman's character, a manner appropriate to her responsible rank. Her condescending stance toward us, the audience, is tempered, however, by a pastoral concern for our understanding, which the Prioress reveals in her reiterations and in her didactic rhetorical devices, as she seeks to share with us her offering of praise for the Virgin. More than a delicately-finished fable, the *Prioress's Tale* is a revelation of character, for, through it, the Prioress leaves behind much of her shallowness and emerges as an individual dedicated to her profession and its ends: serving God and edifying her fellow creatures.
Edward H. Kelly has stated: "By analyzing details of description, diction, and poetic technique it becomes apparent that the General Prologue is compatibly wedded to the tale through a unity of tone that pervades each." See Kelly, "By Mouth of Innocentz: The Prioress Vindicated," *Papers on Language and Literature*, 5 (1969), 363.

Sister Mary Madeleva's interpretation of the Prioress goes to an extreme in its defense of Madame Eglientyne's appearance, behavior, and (to my way of thinking) extravagances. However, Sister Madeleva contends that the Prioress's personal habits as well as her responsible rank are those of an older woman, and in this respect my examination of the Prioress's rhetorical stance in the Tale agrees with Sister Madeleva's sympathetic interpretation. I cannot agree entirely, then, with F. N. Robinson's judgment, in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 653, that "Sister Madeleva's interpretation is not convincing." See Sister Mary Madeleva, "Chaucer's Nuns," in *Chaucer's Nuns and Other Essays* (1925; rpt. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1965), pp. 20-24.

But, for to spoken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wold wepe, if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
With rosted flesshe, or milk and wastrel-breed.
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;

(GP, ll. 142-49)

The Prioress's defenders and her attackers cite these epithets to prove their various points. See, for example, Kelly, p. 374, who feels that the recurrent diminutives influence "the empathic and dramatic way she tells her tale." G. H. Russell, "Chaucer: The Prioress's Tale," in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London: Univ. of London, Athlone Press, 1969), pp. 217-18, suggests that her diction evokes a seemingly helpless, innocent world which then proves to be much stronger than its adversaries, evil and death. Florence H. Ridley, *The Prioress and the Critics*, Univ. of California Publications, English Studies, No. 30 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1965), pp. 30-31, sees the Prioress depicted by her diction as a shallow, unrealistic, but well-meaning woman whose words "do not indicate that
the love itself is either insincere or deserving of harsh ridicule." Making a similar interpretation regarding the Prioress's childishness, but taking the interpretation to a different end, is Alan T. Gaylord, "The Unconquered Tale of the Prioress," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, 47 (1962); he asserts (p. 634) that "the Prioress not only identifies with the 'litel clergeon,' she keeps the whole Tale at the emotional and intellectual level of a child." Sherman Hawkins, "Chaucer's Prioress and the Sacrifice of Praise," JEGP, 63 (1964), 600, suggests that the Prioress's diminutives, as well as her pets and jewelry, point to her childishness, which in turn is responsible for her humility as a narrator, a stance appropriate to "her story of a child and its growth" (p. 601).

5 See the Prologue of the Prioress's Tale, especially lines 455-66, 481-87.

6 Ridley, basically sympathetic in her treatment of the Prioress, observes that the story, "an expression of the most childlike faith, is a perfect reflection of the Prioress's limited mentality" (p. 29). Edward H. Kelly, for the most part sympathetic, remarks that the Prioress "further reveals her character by showing a typical childish fascination for excrement" (p. 367). Alan T. Gaylord, calling the Tale "a case of arrested development," charges that the Prioress carries over into the Tale "the affected 'girlishness' . . . that is revealed in the General Prologue"; see Gaylord, p. 634.

7 In this respect her role as narrator is similar to the Parson's, who in answer to Harry Bailly's demand that he "breke thou nat our pley" and that he tell the pilgrims "a fable," replies: "Why sholde I sowne draf out of my fest,/ Whan I may sowne whete, if that me leste?" (Parson's Prologue, 11. 35-36).

8 That the Prioress prefaxes her Tale with an invocation to our Lord and to the Virgin Mary, praying Mary's help "For to declare thy grete worthynesse" (l. 482), seems to preclude any possibility that Chaucer intended to use a story dedicated to the Virgin as a vehicle for destructively satirical purposes. See Ridley's comments on this point, pp. 1, 29.
The Prioress's treatment of the Tale's setting, "in Asye, in a greet citee" (l. 488), is, in Carleton Brown's judgment, "quite in keeping with the general tendency either to leave this miracle without local attachment or to remove the scene to some remote place." See Brown, A Study of the Miracle of Our Lady Told by Chaucer's Prioress, Chaucer Society, 2nd series, no. 45 (London: Kegan Paul, 1910; for the issue of 1906), p. 55. The vagueness of this miracle's time and place is not representative of the Marian miracles found in such thirteenth-century compilations as Gautier de Coinci's Miracles de Notre-Dame. In his discussion of Gautier's miracles, Walter Morris Hart has written: "in . . . the usual practice of the Mary-legends the time is the present or immediate past, and the place is near at hand and named. Indeed, one purpose of the story, as with others of the sort, is to magnify the importance of its setting." See Hart, "Some Old French Miracles of Our Lady and Chaucer's Prioresses Tale," in Charles Mills Gayley Anniversary Papers, Univ. of California Publications in Modern Philology, no. 11 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1922), p. 51.


Following Carleton Brown's lead, F. N. Robinson explains on p. 735, n. 495, "that Chaucer [probably] had in mind a regular village school."


Lanham, p. 92.

The Prioress's exemplum may remind us of her confession to the Virgin in the Prologue of the Prioress's Tale: "as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse,/ That kan unmethes any word expresse,/ Right so fare I, and therfore I yow preye" (ll. 484-86).

Hawkins, citing this passage, sees that description as "the key to the Prioress's character," p. 600. As Hawkins explains, p. 601, "the Prioress ranks herself with the babes and sucklings, the beginners still in need of milk. She has not been weaned from her delight in miraculous stories--the Glossa Ordinaria's explanation of 'milk'--to the bread of perfect wisdom."
Russell, p. 216, points out that the Prioress's "reference to herself as one like 'a child of twelf
month oold, or lesse' [is] the first of a series of
reminiscences of the mass of the Feast of the Holy
Innecents."

15 See Robinson, p. 735, n. 512.

16 Robinson, p. 734, notes that "the older felawe
seems to have been entirely Chaucer's invention." Hart,
p. 45, states that "in general, real conversation, exchange
of thought and feeling with narrative progression, is rare
[in the miracles]."

17 Russell has made this point in his article, p. 219.

18 George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (1915;

19 The Prioress's Jews play the same disagreeable,
inhuman, but usual role as other hagiographical antago-
nists—the Roman emperors and magistrates, the Saracens,
the unrelentingly pagan fathers and fiancés. Most likely,
Chaucer himself gave the matter little thought, just as we
would do if the clergeon's enemies had been Saracens.

For background information on the Jews' official
expulsion from England, in 1290 (a century before Chaucer's
pilgrims met at the Tabard Inn), see Ridley, pp. 13-14.

For a discussion of the ritual murders alleged
against the Jews and the Church's position on this recur-
ring libel, see Richard J. Schoeck, "Chaucer's Prioress:
Mercy and Tender Heart," The Bridge, A Yearbook of
Judaic-Christian Studies, II (New York: Pantheon Books,
1956), rpt. in Chaucer Criticism Vol. I: The Canterbury
Tales, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre

20 Jane Baltzell, "Rhetorical 'Amplification' and
'Abbreviation' and the Structure of Medieval Narrative," 
Pacific Coast Philology, 2 (1967), states (p. 37): "The
language used about Jews in the tale is strong, but the
fact is that a bare minimum of lines is devoted either to
the Jews or to their act. Chaucer noticeably practices
abbreviation, not amplification, in describing both the
murder of the child and the punishment meted out to his
murderers."
21 Baltzell, p. 37, believes that Chaucer is more concerned with the sins of usury and greed than with the mere presence of the Jews: "As Chaucer managed the descriptio of the action in the Prioress's Tale, the primary cause of the child's death was the very existence of the ghetto---'sustained by a lord of that contree/ For foule usure and lucre of vileynye.'"

22 Nims' definition, p. 105, n. 1173.

23 J. W. Draper, "Chaucer's 'Wardrobe,'" Englische Studien, 60 (1926), 249, comments: "Chaucer's use of the word does not necessarily imply that the Jew was rich enough to have, properly speaking, a wardrobe, a room combining the functions of privy and store-room: the passage in the Prioresses Tale seems to be merely an example of the derived use of the word, from which all thought of clothes-room had departed, and wardrobe had come to mean the privy or any part of it, even to the pit below—a euphemism quite appropriate to the delicately nurtured Prioressse."

24 As disgusted as the Prioress evidently is, a triumphant tone in her interpretatio is apparent, presumably caused by her having presented the anti-Christians in the most depraved behavior imaginable. Even though other versions of the legend tell of the body's being thrown into a privy, the Prioress appears to be the only speaker who leaves her narrative anonymity and its matter-of-fact recounting and, seemingly, becomes emotionally involved while trying to arouse a similar response in her audience.

Carleton Brown states in Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (1941; rpt. New York: Humanities Press, 1958), p. 450: "The following points may be noted as the special characteristics of Group C

   * * * * * * * *

2. The body of the murdered boy is thrown into a 'jakes' ('cloaca'). This is explicitly stated in every version of this group except C 3 (which is silent on this point)."

Compare the Prioress's emotional recounting with the following representative analogues:
C 1 (Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 32, Art. 19)  
(Sources and Analogues, p. 467):  
Raptus itaque ductus est in interius  
cubiculum, congregatisque circa eum  
iudeis nimia crudelitate ceperunt  
grassari in eum. Nam uentrem innocentis  
pueri scindentes in modum crucis,  
interiora eius extraxerunt & ea simul  
cum corpore in colacam proeicerunt.  
Cum hec ita fient, in tam crudeli  
facio gracia dei no defuit. . . .

C 5 (Vernon MS) Sources and Analogues, p. 471, 11. 46-50,  
107-12)  
Leste his Malice mihte ben asyet,  
þa Ieuh bi þouhte him of a gynne:  
In to a gonge-put fer wip-Inne  
þe child adoun þer-Inne he þrong.  
þe child song euere þe same song;

þe Meir let serchen hym, so longe,  
Til he was founden in þe gonge,  
fful depe I-drouned in fulþe of fen.  
þe Meir het drawe þe child vp þen,  
Wip ffen and ffulþe riht foule bi-whoruen,  
And eke þe childes þrote I-coruen.

Brown (p. 464) calls our attention to a passage in C 10  
and points out the similarity between Chaucer's phrase--  
I say that in a wardrobe they him threwe  
Wher as the Iewes purgen her entraile.  
--and the phrase in C 10:  
corpus extinctum in locum proicitur  
extreme vilitatis ubi natura se purgat  
per secessum.

However, C 10's phrase, even in its context (see Sources  
and Analogues, pp. 481-82) lacks the frenzied disgust of  
the Prioress's interpretatio (11. 572-73).

25 A third formal apostrophe concludes the Tale by  
invoking Hugh of Lincoln, the child martyr. John P.  
Brennan, "Reflections on a Gloss to the Prioress's Tale  
from Jerome's Adversus Jovianianum," Studies in Philology,  
70 (1973), 249, points out that "all three apostrophes  
occur at crucial points in the story, and all three share  
the rhetorical flavor of the prologue, an invocation to  
the Lord and the Virgin."
26 Russell, pp. 223-24, observes that the martyred clergeon's manner "is now the very reverse of the uncomprehending innocent": the child's "response to the abbot's gentle questioning is magisterial and he speaks with an authority which makes the abbot's mode of address look foolish."

27 The Pardoner particularizes his attack and apostrophizes the "wombe," the "bely," the "stynkyng cod, / Fulfilled of dong and of corrupcioun" (ll. 534 ff.) and, shortly afterwards, the drunkard (ll. 551-59).


30 "What seye we eek of wommen that mordren hir children for drede of worldly shame?" (Parson's Tale, l. 577)

"What seye we eek of hem that deliten hem in sweryng, and holden it a gentrie or a manly dede to swere grete othes? And what of hem that of verray usage ne cesse nat to swere grete othes, al be the cause nat worth a straw?" (Parson's Tale, l. 600)

31 See Robinson, p. 735, n. 576.

32 The account in Genesis 4:10-11 (RSV) reads: "And the Lord said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.'"

33 Instead of approaching the martyrdom from the professional Christian's perspective, the Prioress first dwells upon the defilement of the body, the accursedness of the Jews, and the certainty of revenge--all of which are attitudes counter to Christ's teachings, though not necessarily to the instincts of human nature.
34 Robinson, p. 735, n. 579, refers us to Revelation 14:3-4. The text of Revelation 14:3-5 (RSV) follows:

and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.

St. John's association with the Feast of the Holy Innocents is mentioned by Emil Mâle, The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century, trans. from 3rd ed. by Dora Nussey (1913; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 179-80: "In the three days following the feast of the Nativity, the Church celebrates the Massacre of the Innocents and the festivals of St. Stephen and St. John. She wishes, say the liturgiologists, to gather round the cradle of Jesus the sinless children and the spotless proto-martyr deacon who were the first to shed their blood for the faith. She includes St. John because he was the well-loved disciple who alone among men laid his head on the Saviour's breast."

35 Russell, p. 221, mentions the Prioress's outburst of joy at the clergeon's translation.

36 The "white Lamb" being praised by songs in heaven might have been recognized by a church-educated child as being simply another name for Jesus, but the symbolic implications of Christ as agnus dei would likely be hazy at best. Further complicating the image in a child's mind of Christ as "Lamb" would have been Christ's depiction of Himself as "the Good Shepherd."

"Celestial," "evangelist," and "Pathmos" would seem also to be beyond the knowledge of a mortal child.
37 See Robinson, p. 375, n. 579.
In the Introduction to Pearl (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. xcv, E. V. Gordon discusses the differences and similarities between virgines and innocentes and justifies the Pearl Poet's (and by extension, Chaucer's) inclusion of his protagonist in the Lamb's company. The scripture which Gordon cites in support of his position is the same passage that the Prioress paraphrases in her apostrophe to the clergeon. This text, Rev. 14:1-5, is "the lesson for the Mass of the Holy Innocents, 28 December," echoes of which recur throughout the Prioress's Prologue, as a number of critics have shown.

In light of Gordon's discussion of the Pearl's innocence, the Prioress's seeming preoccupation with a seven-year-old's virginity does not have the psychological significance that Madame Eglentyne's outburst might at first appear to reveal. However, Brennan, p. 249, does suggest that "an emphasis on the exalted state of virginity exists in the Prioress's Tale," which would make the Prioress an interesting contrast to the Wife of Bath.

38 Besides providing a dramatic contrast between the dual polarities of heaven and earth, bliss and misery operating in the Tale, the Prioress's apostrophe functions as a chronological expedient. Her addresses to the Jews and to the martyr interrupt the story's time-scheme by imposing the Prioress, with her "contemporary" comments, on the plot's framework. As a result, the Prioress's preaching on the Old and New Testaments separates two distinct stages of the plot—the clergeon's background, training and martyrdom, from the widow's search for her son; at the same time that it divides the story, the Prioress's rhetorical interruption allows time for the passage of the widow's fearful night.

39 Revelation 21:18-21:
The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoberyl, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.
James J. Lynch, "The Prioress's Gems," Modern Language Notes, 57 (1942), 440, states that an emerald "was believed to have the power to preserve the chastity of its wearer"; moreover, "[t]he emerald, assigned to the month of May, which is still regarded as the month of Mary by the Catholic Church, would be particularly close to the Virgin."


Phyllis C. Gage, "Syntax and Poetry in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale," Neophilologus, 50 (1966), 259, points out that Chaucer has syntactically embedded the clergeon's virtues—chastity and martyrdom—in gems.

Eileen Power, Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275 to 1535 (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), p. 4, states that "the medieval nunneries were recruited almost entirely from among the upper classes. They were essentially aristocratic institutions, the refuge of the gently born."

He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynyt;
His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his head,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;

(GP, 11. 196-202)

G. H. Russell suggests that the Prioress's Tale is a "sensitive rejoinder to the Shipman," whose story immediately preceded the Prioress's and involved a lecherous, conniving monk; Russell draws parallels between the two tales' settings and their sordidness. While this relationship seems reasonable, I think that a remark which Russell makes elsewhere in his article is narrow, ignoring the interaction between the Canterbury pilgrims: "There is no reason, I believe, to press the significance of the remark, far less see it as any kind of comment on the Monk of the Pilgrimage." See pp. 225, 216-17, and 223, n. 1.

Nims' definition, p. 105, n. 1179.
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44 This observation echoes ironically the remark that Chaucer makes about the Monk in the General Prologue: "A manly man, to been an abbot able" (I. 167). Whereas holiness is the noteworthy trait of the Prioress's fictional abbot, Chaucer the pilgrim suggests that in the real world, manliness, rather than holiness, is the trait that promotes monks to abbots.

45 See Power, pp. 4-6, 25-42, 509. Power observes that the upper class woman's rank left her with two choices for her life's vocation: marriage or the convent. "The reason for it--paradoxical as this may sound--lies in the very narrowness of the sphere to which women of gentle birth were confined. The disadvantage of rank is that so many honest occupations are not, in its eyes, honorable occupations" (p. 5).

When we consider such sociological circumstances as Power treats, the Prioress's foibles, mannerisms, and attitudes are more readily understandable. Almost certainly Chaucer's audience would have grasped the poignancy of the Prioress's behavior.

46 For the original text, see Edmond Faral, Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (Paris: Champion, 1924), pp. 191-92.


48 Nims, p. 105, n. 1169.
CONCLUSION

The hagiographic genre's eccentricities of plot, character, and emotion provided Chaucer with an ideal medium for experimentation, and his interest in doing so is implicit in his editing and revising of the tales' sources. The most striking feature of Chaucer's hagiographic accounts is his introduction of a contemporary narrator into each tale. Each speaker serves as the critical filter between the tales and their secular audience and, in so doing, injects a vital element into a genre which, by Chaucer's time, was nearly without emotion or originality. Thus, the narrators' occupations—translator, attorney, and preacher—and the resultant biases of each profession, influence our perspective and our apprehension of each tale. In turn, the speakers' rhetorical intrusions provide us with a means for interpreting the pilgrim-narrators' characterizations that supplement the portraits in the General Prologue. Thus, while the "Second Nun" does emerge as another guise of the diffident, occasionally insinuating, Chaucerian narrator, the Man of Law appears as a facile rhetorician, uncertain of his genre's conventions, yet surprisingly sympathetic to his heroine; and the Prioress gains stature as a conscientious religious leader, concerned for the understanding and enlightenment of her audience.
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