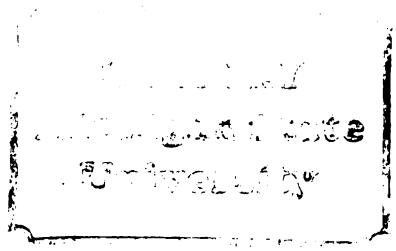

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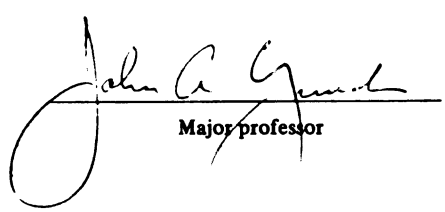

Major professor

Date June 12, 1981

MIDDLE ENGLISH VERSE ROMANCES: A PROBLEMATIC GENRE

By

Joanne Adrienne Rice

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1981

ABSTRACT

MIDDLE ENGLISH VERSE ROMANCES: A PROBLEMATIC GENRE

By

Joanne Adrienne Rice

The word "romance" first appeared in the titles of the Middle English verse narratives in the early nineteenth-century editions of Ritson and Ellis. Since then, this label has been indiscriminately applied to this group of eighty-two diverse tales, which differ in length, rhyme scheme, date and area of composition, subject matter, intention, and meaning. Thus, critics have inevitably compared these works unfavorably to the French courtly romance in the tradition of Chrétien de Troyes. To determine the legitimacy of this criticism, I determined those qualities most commonly associated with medieval romance; my discussion in Chapter Two focuses on five criteria in particular: 1) the existence of supernatural, marvelous, and exotic motifs, 2) an interest in courtly love, 3) the adherence to a chivalric ethic, 4) an emphasis on the individual as reflected by the new romance hero, and 5) the use of the quest pattern as a structuring principle. I then tested all the Middle English works against these criteria to determine whether they share the same qualities as other members of the medieval romance genre. Few of them do. Since the romance label is meaningless for the majority of these works, they need a different system of classification freed from the preconceptions and

expectations of romance. Chapter Three examines the generic labels in the manuscripts themselves to try to discover any obvious medieval sense of genre, but no coherent patterns emerge from this approach. Chapter Four reclassifies the works into five basic categories: 1) Popularized Pseudo-Histories, 2) Moral and Pietistic Tales, 3) Romance, 4) Chivalric Adventure Tales, and 5) Minstrel Tales. These groups of overlapping genres provide a means for better understanding the intentions, narrative structure, point of view, and literary kinship of these Middle English verse narratives, which have too long been collapsed into a single genre that only obliquely describes most of them.

To the Memory of

William W. Heist

(1910-1981)

teacher, scholar, friend

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my family and friends for their continual inspiration and encouragement. I especially want to thank Janice and George Lauzon for their bed, board, and typewriter; Linda Conrad and Kevin Rosner for their moral support as well as invaluable help in translating several German texts; the Horne family for their many kindnesses over the years; and the members of my Doctoral Committee, especially Professor Howard Anderson for his outside insights. I am also grateful to the Department of English and the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University, to the Inter-Library Loan Office at the Worcester Public Library, to the Bodleian Library of Oxford University for granting me access to a number of significant medieval manuscripts, and to the staff of the Middle English Dictionary at Ann Arbor, who kindly let me sift through their unpublished bibliographic slips.

I also wish to thank the two men in my life who have been my best--and worst--critics. Professor John A. Yunck, my dissertation director and personal travel agent, has cheerfully sent me off on long excursions into unknown territories and gleefully booked me for this solitary and arduous journey, during which he occasionally met me enroute

with fresh provisions and more up-to-date maps so that I might eventually arrive at a place remotely resembling my original destination. My husband Richard, despite his better judgement, also became entangled in this project and alternately despaired and reassured, cajoled and comforted. Without his expert editing, two-fingered typing, and scrupulous standards, this dissertation would not have turned out so well as it did. I will always be grateful to them both.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the word "romance" first appeared in the titles of the Middle English verse narratives edited by Ritson[1] and Ellis[2] in the early 1800s, it has been continually and indiscriminately applied to this group of extremely diverse tales. The more-than-eighty Middle English narratives collectively known as romances encompass vastly different metrical forms from the four-stress couplet and tail-rhyme stanza to the alliterative long line, cover subject matter as dissimilar as Charlemagne and Joseph of Aramathia, vary in length from 370 to 27852 lines, and span hundreds of years from the early thirteenth-century King Horn to the late fifteenth-century Romauns of Partenay.

From the very start, the term "romance" had a certain vagueness, an unspecified generic sense. Originally, it only meant a work written in a Romance language, nothing more. In the early years of modern scholarship, however, the works constituting the genre of romance were defined by their differences from works in other established genres, rather than by any shared similarities. Certainly this loose principle of classification applies to Middle English narratives, which were lumped together presumably because

they were not exactly saints' legends, chronicles, fabliaux, or any other readily recognizable literary type. This obviously troublesome hodgepodge within the romance genre has provoked general critical dissatisfaction, typified by Howard Patch's recent comment that "it is hardly profitable, for critical purposes at least, to classify as romance every sort of literary production in the Middle Ages which will not fit in with the religious, didactic, or dramatic or satiric writings."[3] Profitable or not, this is exactly what has happened.

Critics have become increasingly uneasy about the label "romance" for this body of Middle English verse narratives and have attempted different, more desirable classifications. Almost all these studies begin with the explicit or implicit rejection of the traditional groupings of romance by matter, first propounded by George Ellis in his Specimens of Early English Metrical Romance.[4] His classification, in turn, was based on Jean Bodel's twelfth-century classification for medieval French romances into the now-famous three matières: "De France et de Bretaigne et de Rome la grant."[5] The Middle English romances fit this scheme so unsatisfactorily, however, that a fourth matière had to be invented to salvage the system. But the inadequacy of this fourth matière, the matter of England, as a catchall category is immediately evident:

> This classification, where it is not obviously useless, as it is in dismissing twenty-three of the fifty romances under discussion as 'miscellaneous',

> can be actually misleading where it lumps together quite dissimilar romances because of some superficial coincidence of plot material.[6]

The absurdity of classification only by matter becomes obvious when comparing stories with the same subject. For example, Middle English versions of the King Arthur story range from the bland Arthur, thankfully only 642 lines, to the impressive Morte Arthure, an alliterative work of epic proportions with 4346 lines. For all practical purposes, the figure of Arthur himself is the only common element in these two works and reveals nothing of the essence of either. Another example of the unsatisfactory nature of this criterion by matter is the legend of Robert the Devil, which occurs in the Middle English Sir Gowther, and which resurfaces in different guises in a French pantomime, a ballet, a mystère, a ballad, and even a grand opera.[7] Similarly, the subject matter of the Middle English Emare appears in many unexpected forms: a chronicle, a chanson de geste, a didactic poem, a miracle play, and a chapbook story.[8] Even when two Middle English versifiers use not only the same subject, but also the same source materials, two startlingly different works may result. Ipomedon A and Ipomedon B illustrate this. As Dieter Mehl points out, "any story can be completely transformed in the process of being told and new forms can be created which have hardly anything in common with their sources."[9] Quite clearly then, subject matter alone can never provide a basis for coherent generic classification.

Classification by basic story type has also failed.

For example, Laura Hibbard Loomis, in her otherwise thorough and indispensable book-length study, divides many of the romances into three broad categories: "Romances of Trial and Faith" (ten Middle English works), "Romances of Legendary English Heroes" (nine poems), and "Romances of Love and Adventure" (twenty narratives).[10] Her decision to group together romances dealing with the same kind of story forces her to ignore more important considerations, such as narrative structure, the author's intentions and treatment of theme, the work's meaning, as well as other poetic matters--in fact, almost everything that makes a narrative worthwhile as a literary work. Content is not usually the determining factor in defining literary genres, and this is especially true for the romance genre, which borrows heavily from traditional motifs and popular materials. Thus it is not at all surprising that this criterion too fails completely.

The only other book-length attempt at classifying these Middle English narratives is Dieter Mehl's comprehensive and lucid study.[11] However, after pointing out all the virtually insurmountable difficulties in earlier methodological approaches, Mehl still retains the generic label. Length then becomes his criterion in defining the romances as he carefully subdivides the works into "Shorter Romances I," "Shorter Romances II," "Homiletic Romances," "Longer Romances," and finally "Novels in Verse."

Other comprehensive genre studies are rare. Intimidated by such an awkward and recalcitrant body of narratives,

most critics ignore the basic generic question and limit themselves to the study of single works or subgroups. For example, Trounce's work on tail-rhyme romances[12] and Oakden's on alliterative romances[13] concentrate on characterizing a number of works related by rhyme scheme.

While it is easy to criticize past attempts at classification for singling out and emphasizing superficial or accidental attributes, it is more difficult to formulate new categories broad enough to include the majority of these narratives, yet narrow enough to indicate something specific about them. So far, every such attempt at generic classification has failed. Although literary critics and cultural historians have undeniably provided us with indispensable insights into many of the Middle English texts, they have also rendered us a considerable disservice in their natural human desire for order by forcing these works into a category that is not wholly satisfactory even for French romances.

The question remains. Do these Middle English narratives properly constitute a single genre? Paul Strohm[14] and John Finlayson[15] have recently attempted answers to this question, with Finlayson concluding that over half the Middle English romances

> do not in any way meet the paradigms proposed; that is, they are not romance in any meaningful sense, though this is not to deny that they occasionally exhibit characteristics which are to be found in the romance.[16]

This generic problem is a serious one. Once these Middle English texts are labeled "romances," they are

automatically judged by criteria appropriate to and defined by generic ideas that have evolved mainly from the study of twelfth-century French courtly romances, which do not necessarily have much in common with narratives written in a different country, time, and language and for a different audience. In the study of Middle English romance, it is crucial to remember the historical fact that romance sprang up in France in the "gap between a generally evolving social, economic and cultural scene and the disappearance of a morally and psychologically satisfying rationale for knightly existence."[17] These peculiarly French circumstances do not apply to England's later history, and the compelling and complex reasons for the rise of romance in France have no significant bearing on the later English narratives.

These historical facts are often forgotten, however, when critics, mistakenly assuming a continuous tradition, compare Middle English verse romances with the great French romances in the tradition of Chrétien de Troyes. This critical attitude is understandable, perhaps even inevitable, since most of the Middle English works were written after the flowering of the best French romances. Cries of "bad imitation" and "incompetent handling" are not altogether unexpected, since the English writers, compared to their French counterparts, failed to appreciate the possibilities of development in their stories, and their treatment of source materials was obviously "misconceived and misapplied."[18] English hacks were still churning out bad romances

after the rest of Europe had gone on to other, and presumably better, literary endeavors. Or so it may seem. It is therefore not at all surprising that the history of the Middle English romance has usually been described as one of "popular debasement" with even its earliest forms manifesting an undesirable decadence.[19]

The underlying assumption behind much of this negative criticism is that Middle English writers attempted to write French romances, but failed miserably in their feeble attempts at imitation. Instead of judging these English works as failures because they do not fulfill the generic expectations of French romance, we need to re-examine the Middle English narratives without the preconceptions that originally forced them into such an unsatisfactory categorization.

Before evaluating a work of art, critics should first try to understand it. This seems obvious, but is frequently overlooked. For Middle English verse narratives, this is more difficult, because they are shrouded in mystery: we seldom know who composed them, how or where they were composed, who their audience was, or even whether some works are originals or translations of lost French or Anglo-Norman sources. Because these critical questions remain unanswered and are perhaps ultimately unanswerable, critics have mistakenly tried to evaluate these works according to the standards and expectations imposed by the strictures of French romance. E. D. Hirsch underscores the inevitable effect of generic preconceptions on all literary study:

> an interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything he subsequently understands, and this remains the case unless and until that generic conception is altered.[20]

Applying a preconceived romance genre to these works presents a real and practical danger, which John Reichert describes as

> the consigning to a work the traits of a genre prior to the demonstration that the whole work really belongs to it, and the ignoring of effects achieved in the work but not anticipated by the definition of the genre.[21]

Thus once the reader accepts the romance genre as the only--or even the best--possible way of understanding these works, he focuses his critical attention on the traits that fit the definition of romance and either ignores or downplays those that do not. I try to circumvent this problem in the following chapters.

After first summarizing in Chapter Two the qualities most commonly attributed to medieval romance by modern critics, I then measure the Middle English works against these criteria to determine whether they do in fact share the same qualities as true representatives of the medieval romance genre. Few of them do. The romance label is thus misleading and ultimately meaningless for most of these narratives. But then if they are not romances, what are they? In Chapter Three I try to answer this question by examining what the narratives call themselves as a possible means of understanding the medieval sense of genre. The data collected from more than seventy Middle English texts, however,

provides no coherent patterns in the use of such descriptive words as "tale," "romance," "tretis," "boke," "vita," "geste," and "story." In fact, many of the terms seem to be interchangeable as variant manuscript readings show. Chapter Four offers new alternative classifications for the narratives that are not romances. Through these groupings of similar works, the modern reader is able to see the wide spectrum of overlapping genres necessary for understanding these Middle English works. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the results of this investigation and points to the need for further study of this currently ill-defined body of Middle English poems.

This dissertation deals only with verse narratives. I have purposely excluded Laȝamon's Brut since it clearly belongs to a historical tradition and is not primarily a romance. I have also excluded Chaucer's poems in the romance tradition for two reasons. First, no individual tale in the Canterbury Tales is intended to stand by itself as a complete work; too much of the meaning and value of the Tales depends on the interrelationships among the tales and their tellers. Second, a poet of Chaucer's stature is never typical of his age, and his treatment of the romance tradition differs markedly and significantly from all other English writers. He twists conventions for his own subtle, sophisticated poetic ends. Lastly, I have excluded all the Scottish verse narratives, which, although from a similar tradition, differ significantly from the works studied here. I have included all

other Middle English verse narratives mentioned in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English.[22]

The spellings of the titles of the Middle English narratives throughout this dissertation conform to those in this manual, except for the following: Alexander A, Alexander B, and Alexander C, which Severs refers to as Alisaunder (Alliterative Fragment A), Alexander and Dindimus (Alliterative Fragment B), and Wars of Alexander (Alliterative Fragment C); Ipomedon A and Ipomedon B, which he refers to as Ipomadon and Lyfe of Ipomydon; and Destruction of Troy, which he calls Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy. My references to the Alexander fragments are shorter, more convenient, and more familiar than Severs' titles. Ipomedon A and Ipomedon B have become the accepted designations among modern scholars for these two works. In the case of Destruction of Troy, the phrase "Gest Historiale" was added by nineteenth-century editors, a reflection of a mistaken and imported generic sense not found in any of the medieval manuscripts.

NOTES

[1]J. Ritson, Ancient English Metrical Romances, 3 vols. (London, 1802).

[2]George Ellis, Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, 3 vols. (London, 1805).

[3]Howard R. Patch, "Chaucer and Medieval Romance," in Essays in Memory of Barrett Wendell by His Assistants (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1926), p. 100.

[4]Ellis, pp. 3-4.

[5]Jean Bodel, La Chanson des Saxons, ed. Francisque Michel (Paris, 1839; rpt. Geneva: Slatkin, 1969), l. 7.

[6]Derek Pearsall, "The Development of Middle English Romance," Medieval Studies, 27 (1965), 96. See also Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), especially pp. 31-33.

[7]Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1924), p. 50.

[8]Mortimer Donovan, The Breton Lay (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 216.

[9]Mehl, p. 32.

[10]Loomis, "Table of Contents."

[11]Mehl.

[12]A. McI. Trounce, "The English Tail-Rhyme Romances," MAE, 1 (1932), 87-108, 168-82; MAE, 2 (1933), 34-57, 189-98; MAE, 3 (1934), 30-50.

[13]J. P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1930-35).

[14]Paul Strohm, "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English Romaunce," Genre, 10 (1977), 1-28.

[15]John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English

Romance," Chaucer Review, 15 (1980), 44-62, 168-81.

[16]Finlayson, p. 178.

[17]Peter Haidu, "Introduction," in Approaches to Medieval Romance, Yale French Studies, N. 51, ed. Peter Haidu (New Haven: Yale French Studies, 1974), p. 3. For further discussion of romance as part of a larger social and intellectual change, see also Eugene Vinaver, Rise of Romance (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), especially pp. 1-14; W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance (London, 1896; rpt. New York: Dover, 1957), pp. 321-27; R. W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 219-57.

[18]George Kane, Middle English Literature (London: Methuen, 1951), p. 112.

[19]A. C. Gibbs, Middle English Romances (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1966), p. 151.

[20]E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Validity in Interpretation (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 74.

[21]John Reichert, "More Than Kin and Less Than Kind: The Limits of Genre Theory," in Theories of Literary Genre, ed. Joseph Strelka (University Park: Penn. State Univ. Press, 1978), p. 64.

[22]J. Burke Severs, ed., A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, Fascicule I (New Haven: Conn. Acad. of Arts and Sciences, 1967).

CHAPTER TWO

MEDIEVAL ROMANCE: ITS USUAL MEANINGS AND UNUSUAL MIDDLE ENGLISH MUTATIONS

Since the romance genre now includes works like Nathaniel Hawthorne's House of Seven Gables, Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, and the insipid, yet popular, Harlequin romances, all of which have been colored by the European movement of romanticism, as well as by the Gothic and sentimental novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is necessary to distinguish between medieval and modern romance. With at least five centuries of accretions, the modern notion of romance is naturally quite different from the medieval notion; medieval romance had its own criteria, expectations, and customary motifs, which are not today's. Thus, for this study of Middle English romance, it is essential to recapture the medieval sense of romance.

However, even within this more historical perspective, there are problems. Modern literary critics have questioned the legitimacy of medieval romance as a genre: "Romance is one of the most abused generic terms of medieval literature. For a good many scholars it serves as a commodious bottom drawer which will hold almost anything that could not be stored elsewhere."[1] Nonetheless, modern scholars have found

much to say about this genre despite, and probably because of, the problems inherent in classifying medieval literature.

An influential early study, W. P. Ker's now famous Epic and Romance, attacks the problem of classification and definition through contrast. For Ker, medieval romance could best be understood by an oblique approach through epic literature. Because he clearly favors the epic, Ker tends to define romance in negative terms, as literature marking a transition from the "heroic age" of the more noble epic.[2] Despite his bias, Ker does summarize some of romance's most notable traits: it emphasizes courtly elements and love motivation, conveys mystery and fantasy, and centers on the adventures of a lone knight who unexpectedly meets and fights another knight in the customary forest.[3]

Ker's approach to romance through epic quickly became the traditional one. R. W. Southern, another eminent scholar, continues Ker's methodology by approaching romance as a phenomenon of the chivalric age, which reflects "the spirit of the time."[4] He too focuses on the great intellectual changes from the heroic to the chivalric age, embodied best perhaps in the theological and philosophical thought of Sts. Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux with their emphasis on the individual and his solitary search for salvation. According to Southern, these prevailing religious and intellectual ideas were translated into the new romance movement in literature with the individual at its center and the quest as a secular substitute for the religious journey towards God.[5]

Even Eugene Vinaver, an authority on medieval French romance, echoes the words of Ker and Southern concerning the heroic and chivalric ages:

> Love interest and the pursuit of adventures unrelated to any common aim thus displaced the theme of the defence of Christendom and the preoccupation with feudal warfare; and the new genre, breaking decisively with all varieties of the old epic tradition, made the division between the heroic and the chivalric age.[6]

Charles Baldwin approaches the distinction between epic and romance in yet another way. He contrasts epic's impulse towards realism with romance's impulse towards idealism,[7] but this distinction raises more questions than it answers by introducing two additional controversial terms like "realism" and "idealism." Even despite this objection, Baldwin's contrast hardly seems appropriate since it is fairly easy to see idealizing impulses in the epic, especially in the treatment of the hero with his formalized, idealized qualities, and just as easy to see realistic tendencies throughout the romance in terms of character motivation, as well as in the concrete, pictorial, and realistic details drawn from contemporary life.[8]

Other critical approaches, still maintaining the dichotomy between epic and romance, emphasize the intended audience and certain plot elements. For example, Nathaniel Griffin distinguishes epic's credible martial story from romance's incredible amorous one. According to his perspective, epic with its essentially warlike theme is a virile narrative, fit for the mead hall, with love and adventure as incidentals to

the story's essentially serious nature. Romance, on the other hand, is feminine literature, fit more for a lady's bower, intended for the relaxation and amusement of mixed society.[9]

In a similar way, D. M. Hill notes the change from martial epic to amorous romance and argues that romance broadens the interests of epic and tests relationships between individuals in a greater variety of circumstances.[10] Bloomfield also recognizes this apparent shift in narrative emphasis:

> In subject matter, love is a driving force and a source of fascination in the romance, an element if not lacking, at least subordinate, in the epic. War and combat are the main concerns of epic, whereas in romance, this subject of perpetual interest is supplemented by love intrigues, especially in a courtly love context.[11]

Bloomfield, however, adds that the ultimate distinguishing feature of romance is its irrational, unmotivated episode, which is closely related to the sense of mystery, marvelous, and supernatural found in many medieval romances.[12]

From this brief survey of past scholarship, it becomes clear that critics have been preoccupied with a deliberate contrast between romance and epic, an approach that can be misleading. The forced opposition between the two genres leads to overstatement and oversimplification, as Eugene Vinaver's comment demonstrates:

> It is, of course, true that the heroes of romance "seek solitude for the exercise of their essential virtue" much in the same way as the Cistercians did; but it is also true that in Old French literature this solitary quest is not a prerogative of romance: it exists in such works as _The Life of St. Alexis_ and _The Voyage of St. Brendan_, as well as

> some of the epics. To say that epic heroes are "circumscribed by their ties of lordship and vassalage and by the sacred bond of comradeship" is to single out one of the features which may seem to distinguish them from the heroes of romance; in reality, the same "ties" and the same "bond" exist in the world of Arthurian chivalry.[13]

The two genres share other obvious similarities as well. Nathaniel Griffin points out that both are metrical narratives, both deal with heroic adventure and achievement, and both are conscious creations by professional court poets for an aristocratic audience.[14] Yet Griffin too overstates the similarities. Medieval romance was something new, something other than epic, which critics have finally begun discussing. For example, French and Hale, in their 1930 edition of Middle English romances, state that the peculiarities of medieval romance are:

> the presence of women as principal actors, the prominence of love as a motive for activity, the exaltation of honor and courage, an insistence on the superiority of courtesy to rudeness, a sentimental belief in the paradox of feudal loyalty, and a frank enthusiasm for the unreal and fanciful as it came to them from other literatures.[15]

W. T. H. Jackson also gives a definition of sorts:

> The romance as a genre developed a life of its own and certain rules by which its deliberately unreal life was to be governed. It also pursued as its principal motifs the pointless combat and love-service, both of no significance in a socially oriented genre. . . . the great writers of romance chose, for the most part, to study individual behavior by setting it in the unreal world of romance and showing how, by rising above the rules of the genre, the human being could fulfill himself, for the romance is a genre of the individual.[16]

Rather than dogmatically assert a rigid definition of the genre, Gillian Beer pinpoints the following cluster of

properties:

> the themes of love and adventure, a certain withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both reader and romance hero, profuse sensuous detail, simplified characters, a serene intermingling of the unexpected and the everyday, a complex and prolonged succession of incidents usually without a single climax, a happy ending, amplitude of proportions, a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply.[17]

Since complete and adequate definitions of medieval romance are rare, a sense of the genre may best be obtained by abstracting and consolidating the ideas most commonly expressed by modern critics. For the sake of convenience, these common elements may be classified as: (1) the existence of supernatural, marvelous, or exotic motifs, giving rise to a sense of unreality and mystery; (2) an interest in "courtly love," emphasizing the importance of women; (3) an adherence to the chivalric ethic, controlling the characters' moral sphere of conduct; (4) an emphasis on the individual, reflecting a new kind of protagonist--the romance hero; and (5) the use of the quest pattern, permeating the narratives as a basic structural principle. Although the choice of these five characteristics is to some extent arbitrary and they certainly overlap each other, these categories nevertheless represent a broad perspective on the genre. The first element, possibly the least important though one of the most talked about, deals specifically with literary motifs. The next three elements account for the genre's particular philosophical biases and principles, while the last element satisfies the structuralist's demand for a common pattern

underlying all members of a generic class.

If these five characteristics help define the genre of medieval romance, then the Middle English texts that are currently labeled "romance" should share these attributes. The rest of this chapter then focuses on each of the five elements separately and tests the Middle English works against each criterion to determine whether "romance" is a legitimate label for all these narratives.

EXISTENCE OF SUPERNATURAL, MARVELOUS, AND EXOTIC MOTIFS

M. A. Owing views these motifs as an extrinsic element of medieval narrative:

> There had to be elements of the unreal, the mysterious, the supernatural, in order to raise them to the level of romance literature. Consequently, the writers included elements designed to excite the admiration, to enhance the imagination of the reader.[18]

This seems curious, as though medieval romance writers possessed an uncanny prescience for Ideal Romance and then craftily grafted onto their plots the necessary elements to metamorphose their ordinary, mundane narratives into Wondrous Romance. Yet Owing is right in alluding to a sense of mystery somehow "inherent in the subject matter."[19] Often, the motifs in medieval narratives are foreign or exotic. In fact, many of the supernatural elements--magic rings and ointments, transformations of humans into animal shapes, fairy mistresses and journeys to the Other World--came directly or indirectly from Celtic or Eastern story materials.

Historically, the incidence of the supernatural and marvelous in French and English narratives can be explained by Western Europe's new contacts with exotic cultures through trade, wandering minstrels, religious pilgrims, and Crusaders.[20]

The marvelous, however, was not the exclusive domain of medieval romance, contrary to what many critics imply. Marvels abounded in other contemporary writing as well, especially in saints' legends, historical accounts, allegories, and folklore. Because the marvelous elements were well-known and well-liked devices available to all medieval writers, who seemed to take almost compulsive delight in exploiting them, marvels per se cannot help define romance.

Moreover, the marvelous took many different forms in romance. John Stevens differentiates four of them: the simply exotic (a remote, foreign, or strange setting or incidents), the purely mysterious (the unmotivated, inexplicable, or unexplained), the strictly magical (marvels controlled by man, such as magic rings, ointments, potions), and the truly marvelous (events controlled by God).[21] The separation of the exotic from the marvelous is especially important for the many Middle English writers who merely invest their narrative with an exotic background for its own sake. This "exoticness" is essentially different from the mysterious and marvelous in the best French and German romances.

Indeed, the "unreality" of Continental romances has been called "the first principle of the romance genre."[22] Paradoxically, this unreality becomes a way of dealing with

reality by removing experience from the ordinary world, by making the familiar unfamiliar.[23] W. M. Dixon, however, simplifies romance's use of unreality to a mere distancing technique: "The wonder and mystery of it, the secret of the charm hide in its remoteness from the world we know."[24] Although true, Dixon's claim stresses the simple and charming unreality of romance's fairy-tale world. More important is the serious nature of romance, perhaps best described as a pre-psychological method of measuring and defining man.[25] This special, almost ethereal quality is what Henry James identifies as experience liberated:

> The only general attribute of projected romance that I can see, the only one that fits all its causes, is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals--experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it. . . . The romantic stands, on the other hand, for the things that with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never <u>can</u> directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire.[26]

If the marvelous is essential to romance in allowing the play of imagination, in distancing the audience from reality and involving them in a remote world where human values are actually being tested, then many of the Middle English narratives are not romances. Middle English poets overwhemingly tend to "suppress entirely or subdue the play of illogical imagination found in the original."[27] As Dorothy Everett says, marvels are usually presented so matter-of-factly that any air of mystery and glamour is almost totally lacking.[28]

It even seems as though the power of some of the English works is directly tied to the intentional suppression of the supernatural elements as Anne Thompson Lee points out in connection with Le Bone Florence of Rome: "The added coherence and realism of the English version, which was gained through the deliberate suppression of supernatural elements, emerge with particular clarity."[29]

Table 1 presents the Middle English works according to the presence or absence of some of the most notable features of the marvelous. From this listing, it becomes apparent that there is no particular consistency in the medieval English treatment of the marvelous. There is no trace whatsoever of any of the elements in at least thirteen of the works (Table 1, A). Many others have a remote setting that distances the narrative from the audience (Table 1, B), although it is doubtful whether this remoteness alone should be considered "marvelous" since the setting is seldom exploited for its marvelous qualities. Usually, it is merely the battleground where militant Christians defeat the infidel dogs, or the land where strange and marvelous creatures exist. In these narratives, the use of setting is fairly consistent; authenticity or the aura of historicity is far more important than fantasy.

Like exotic settings, giants and dragons are commonplace in many of the narratives (Table 1, C), and, not surprisingly, their role is not an intrinsic part of the marvelous either. As foils to the hero's strength, prowess, and

Table 1

EXISTENCE OF SUPERNATURAL, MARVELOUS, AND EXOTIC MOTIFS

A. Works that contain no marvels or miracles:

1. Avowynge of King Arthur
2. Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment
3. Gamelyn
4. Horn Child
5. Ipomedon A
6. Ipomedon B
7. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne
8. King Horn
9. Lai le Freine
10. Sir Degrevant
11. Sir Triamour
12. Song of Roland
13. Squyr of Lowe Degre

B. Works that contain a remote, exotic setting:

1. Amis and Amiloun
2. Amoryus and Cleopes
3. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
4. Bevis of Hampton
5. Bone Florence of Rome
6. Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment
7. Destruction of Troy
8. Earl of Toulous
9. Emare
10. Fillingham Firumbras
11. Floris and Blancheflur
12. Guy of Warwick
13. Ipomedon A
14. Ipomedon B
15. King of Tars
16. Laud Troy Book
17. Lyfe of Alisaunder
18. Octavian
19. Otuel a Knight
20. Richard Coer de Lyon
21. Seege of Troye
22. Siege of Jerusalem
23. Sir Eglamour of Artois
24. Sir Gowther
25. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
26. Sir Tristrem
27. Sowdon of Babylon
28. Titus and Vespasian

Table 1 (cont'd.)

C. Works that contain giants and dragons:

1. Arthour and Merlin
2. Arthur
3. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
4. Bevis of Hampton
5. Fillingham Firumbras
6. Guy of Warwick
7. King Horn
8. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell
9. Laud Troy Book
10. Libeaus Desconus
11. Lyfe of Alisaunder
12. Morte Arthur
13. Morte Arthure
14. Octavian
15. Partonope of Blois
16. Richard Coer de Lyon
17. Roland and Vernagu
18. Romauns of Partenay
19. Sir Degare
20. Sir Eglamour of Artois
21. Sir Perceval of Galles
22. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
23. Sir Triamour
24. Sir Tristrem
25. Sowdon of Babylon
26. Turke and Gowin

D. Works that use the miraculous:

1. Prophecies:

a. Arthour and Merlin
b. Awntyrs off Arthur
c. Joseph of Arimathie
d. Morte Arthure
e. Octavian
f. Sege of Melayne

2. Intervention by God or angels:

a. Amis and Amiloun
b. Chevalere Assigne
c. Havelok
d. Joseph of Arimathie
e. Otuel and Roland
f. Richard Coer de Lyon
g. Roberd of Cisyle
h. Sege of Melayne
i. Sir Gowther
j. Sir Isumbras

Table 1 (cont'd.)

3. Miracles:

a. Amoryus and Cleopes
b. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
c. Athelston
d. Bevis of Hampton
e. Bone Florence of Rome
f. Chevalere Assigne
g. Fillingham Firumbras
h. Guy of Warwick
i. Joseph of Arimathie
j. King of Tars
k. Laud Troy Book
l. Lyfe of Alisaunder
m. Otuel and Roland
n. Richard Coer de Lyon
o. Roberd of Cisyle
p. Roland and Vernagu
q. Seege of Troye
r. Sege of Melayne
s. Siege of Jerusalem
t. Siege of Thebes
u. Sir Cleges
v. Sir Gowther
w. Sowdon of Babylon
x. Titus and Vespasian
y. Troy Book

E. Works that use the Other World:

1. Generides
2. Partonope of Blois
3. Romauns of Partenay
4. Sir Degare
5. Sir Launfal
6. Sir Orfeo

F. Works that use magic:

1. Carle off Carlile
2. Grene Knight
3. Libeaus Desconus
4. Sir Degare
5. Sir Perceval of Galles
6. Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle
7. Turke and Gowin
8. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell
9. William of Palerne

Table 1 (cont'd.)

G. Works that use the marvelous and mysterious:

1. Alexander A
2. Alexander B
3. Alexander C
4. Arthour and Merlin
5. Arthur
6. Awntyrs off Arthur
7. Carle off Carlile
8. Chevalere Assigne
9. Destruction of Troy
10. Eger and Grime
11. Emare
12. Generides
13. Grene Knight
14. Havelok
15. Laud Troy Book
16. Libeaus Desconus
17. Lyfe of Alisaunder
18. Merlin
19. Morte Arthur
20. Octavian
21. Partonope of Blois
22. Romauns of Partenay
23. Siege of Thebes
24. Sir Amadace
25. Sir Degare
26. Sir Eglamour of Artois
27. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
28. Sir Isumbras
29. Sir Launfal
30. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
31. Sir Tristrem
32. Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle
33. Turke and Gowin
34. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell
35. William of Palerne
36. Ywain and Gawain

bravery, they become simply another form of exaggeration. Just as only the most beautiful women are worthy of the hero's love, only the most formidable enemies are worthy of his wrath. Giants are bigger and stronger than any human adversary; dragons are more ferocious. Defeating such opponents elevates the hero above ordinary men. Thus giants and dragons for the most part are simply part of a story's machinery and serve no magical function. Even in Arthour and Merlin, where dragons are not combatants against a militant knight, but symbols by which Merlin establishes his authority as a prophet, they are still not an element of the marvelous that helps define romance.

In another set of narratives (Table 1, D1), prophecies or visions seem to be the sole indication of any mysterious elements, but these visions are not usually presented as marvelous or mysterious experiences. They serve a definite narrative function in helping the author create suspense or move the story's focus backward or forward. In Awntyrs off Arthur, however, Guinever's mother, a frightening apparition, conveys a sense of wonder, mystery, and awe as she delivers her prophetic message of the collapse of the Round Table. Thus this narrative does satisfy the first criterion of romance--the existence of supernatural, marvelous, or exotic motifs.

Other narratives include miracles or the direct intervention of God (Table 1, D2, D3). In all these religious narratives, the miraculous is a form of the supernatural,

i.e., God manifests his power and authority on earth through angels, miracles, and other heavenly signs, such as conversion of the heathens.[30] In two narratives, however, an angel or devil plays an essential role in the action and meaning of the story. In Sir Gowther, the devil impregnates the Duke of Estryke's wife and fathers Gowther, who then struggles against his fiendish patrimony. Only through religious conversion and penance does Gowther finally triumph. Similarly, Roberd of Cisyle also involves penance and forgiveness. King Robert, personally guilty of pride and doubting God's power, is stripped of his kingship by an angel, who assumes his identity and rule until he repents and is finally restored to the throne. Both these religious narratives go beyond the use of the supernatural merely as manifestations of God's will, presenting instead complex human drama interwoven with elements of the marvelous.

Just as these religious and didactic works use a dimension outside the realm of normal experience, other narratives use figures from the Celtic Other World (Table 1, E). The logic of the former set of works is God, who, according to his law, metes out reward, retribution, salvation, or damnation. In the latter works, however, there is no explanation, either human or divine. Strange or unusual events are truly marvelous precisely because there is no apparent motivation. In three of the works (Sir Launfal, Romauns of Partenay, and Partonope of Blois), the protagonist takes a lover from the Other World, which is essentially a dream fulfillment or

fantasy land. This popular motif of a fairy lover also seems to influence some of the narrative elements in Generides: a magic hart leads Aufreus to the castle of Sereyne, who resembles a fairy mistress with magical power. Although there are no direct references to the Other World, its magic and wonder cling to this narrative. In Sir Degare, a fairy knight ravishes a princess who happened to fall asleep under the fateful chestnut tree, but here he has few wonderful traits. He has no special power, no magic, and no real connection to the Other World. In fact, the motif is gratuitous, merely a convenient device for beginning the story's motley plot. Sir Orfeo changes the Other World motif even more. From the usual attractive haven for lovers, it becomes a prison separating Orfeo and Heurodis, the pair of true lovers.

Another narrative motif, the bewitching or magic spell, is explicit in nine works (Table 1, F). Usually, a character endures ordeals or passes tests, hints of old initiation rites. Indeed, in all these works, the hero's social or martial strengths break the magic spells.

Other kinds of magical or mysterious incidents, unrelated to religious miracles, the Other World, or enchantments, occur in many Middle English narratives (Table 1, G). In Havelok, for example, the marvelous, which consists of a miraculous light issuing from Havelok's mouth and his other royal marks, insures a specific end, Havelok's assumption of the throne. In Libeaus Desconus, on the other hand, magic seems incidental. The hero's year-long dalliance with the

lady of the Isle D'Or is excused simply because she worked her magic arts on him, and once the spell is broken, he returns to his quest with his original single-mindedness. The episode serves no recognizable purpose in the narrative and only attests to the popularity of magic as a crowd pleaser.

Chevalere Assigne, with its obvious religious overtones, uses mysterious, as well as miraculous elements. An aura of mystery surrounds the birth of Beatrice's septuplets with silver chains around their necks since the audience knows only that the births are a punishment for her claim that different men fathered a peasant woman's twins. The equally strange and inexplicable transformation of the children into swans also contributes to the fairy-tale atmosphere of this work.

In Ywain and Gawain, the fountain, magic ring, ointment, and the wonderful lion-companion are all elements of the marvelous. This narrative--along with several others, such as William of Palerne and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight--creates an aura of mystery and charm that characterizes the best French romances:

> Indeed the whole workmanship of Ywain and Gawain is smoothly directed in maintaining the spell which this romance casts from the first moment of the suspension of disbelief. That spell is also remarkable in this sense that, although it is unique in its nature among the English romances it nevertheless carries the suggestion that here we have the true and ideal effect of the romance kind.[31]

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight also casts a magic spell, despite the author's deliberate undercutting of his own creations and conventions. For example, he twists the

typical mysterious challenger, usually a rude knight or heathen, into the Green Knight, who combines elements of the Wild Man; the Green Man, who is a descendant of the Vegetation God; and the courtly chivalric knight.[32] In addition, the author converts the beheading, the typical convention for breaking an enchantment and ending a story, into a challenge at the story's beginning, and thus for an audience accustomed to this device, the beheading becomes even more mysterious and marvelous. Gawain's journey to the green chapel only hints at the Other World without ever developing the implications of that motif. The author again manipulates the audience's expectations by turning the "idea of the talisman of invulnerability inside out" as the girdle is "not the reason for his survival, but the reason for his injury."[33]

Although the Middle English narratives use the exotic, marvelous, and miraculous motifs in different ways, most of them do not convey any sense of wonder, awe, or mystery. In many, supernatural occurrences serve specifically religious or didactic ends; the miraculous is often exploited for didacticism rather than wonder. In yet other works, the supernatural or marvelous is excised. In the alliterative Morte Arthure, for example, the mystery of the trip to Avalon with all its mystic trappings is gone, and the poem instead ends with a description of Arthur's death and burial at Glastonbury. Even in the stanzaic Morte Arthur, in which Arthur is taken to Avalon, a knight later finds the king's body buried

in a chapel, and Lancelot remains with it until his own death many years later.

In the Arundel version of the Seege of Troye, the English adapter rationalizes the supernatural passages that other English versifiers leave intact--an extreme example of the typical English tendency to minimize the marvelous or irrational.[34] Similarly, the author of Le Bone Florence of Rome deletes all supernatural trappings, although he retains the essentially miraculous elements, such as the ringing of the church bells.

The mysterious is clearly not one of the essential attributes that define these Middle English works as a generic group. Many of them have no real sense of the marvelous, and those that do tend to minimize magical elements, exploit them for religious or didactic ends, or use them as attention-getting devices.

INTEREST IN "COURTLY LOVE"

"Courtly love" is a controversial term that has spawned many productive, as well as unproductive scholarly debates.[35] Many critics claim that it is the dominant force of romance, perhaps because it was a revolutionary idea or literary innovation:

> It is well known, of course, that the prevailing theme of the romances is love--and love of that courteous and revolutionary sort which the Provençal poets invented, which Andrew the Chaplain codified, and which Chrétien de Troyes and his

> successors established as characteristic of romantic fiction. The romances, indeed, were the obvious and natural home of courteous love, and the exhibition of it was perhaps their chief social function.[36]

Although Karl Young needlessly overstates his point, an interest in love, courtly or otherwise, is certainly evident in many of the most popular French romances, exemplified by a recent title, The Ways of Love: Eleven Romances of Medieval France.[37]

It is true that the twelfth-century Provençal lyrics followed by later French and German romances clearly demonstrate the literary language and idiosyncratic conventions of this new love code. Indeed, courtly love was not only a "European literary and rhetorical tradition from which the medieval writer could draw certain themes and stylistic devices,"[38] but also and more significantly "a comprehensive cultural phenomenon: a literary movement, an ideology, an ethical system, a style of life."[39] Its popularity and pervasiveness compelled all medieval writers to acknowledge it in some way. Yet even from the beginning, treatments of love in the romance literature reflect a self-consciousness, a quality close to irony or parody. At least one critic has accounted for this problematic treatment of courtly love in European romances as a problem inherent in form, a problem encountered when the courtly conventions were transferred from the lyric to the narrative:

> As we have seen, once that system is taken out of the lyric form and forced into a narrative genre, it begins to give way. It is based on a delicate

> balance of the lower and higher impulses of man's nature, a balance that can only obtain in his mind. . . . The lyric lover can vacillate forever between hope and despair, renunciation and desire, in the pursuit of an unattainable ideal, but the hero of romance must act--he must achieve his goals or be overcome in the attempt. He faces real problems, for which he must find a solution, real people to whom he owes service and loyalty.[40]

Joan Ferrante's analysis makes good sense of the literary phenomena: some naive, idealistic writers swallow the doctrine whole, seemingly unaware of its internal contradictions and ambivalences, whereas other writers, more intellectual or discerning, find abundant material for parody, criticism, or self-probing.

Courtly love is unquestionably an important medieval literary convention, exploited or manipulated by the author who wanted to be sure that his works were in vogue in the highest aristocratic courts of Europe. Chrétien de Troyes is an excellent example. Although he focuses on the love relationships between men and women in practically all his romances, he does not force each work into a mold prescribed by the courtly love code. Instead, Chrétien is "clearly preoccupied, in varying degrees, according to the romance . . . with natural human love, courtesy, chivalry and knightly prowess in the social life of the courts of his day."[41] Just as Chrétien examines love from many different perspectives, he probes other traditional motifs and conventions for his own moral, philosophical, spiritual, and comic purposes, often exploring the possibilities of his poetic medium for aesthetic perspectives and verbal irony.[42] In many romances,

irony in fact functions as an "invitation to self-examination."[43] Clearly then, medieval romance is not primarily or simply an anatomy of courtly love as is commonly believed. Instead, romance may be viewed as an exploration of relationships, offering sympathetic insight into all kinds of feelings, as Rosemond Tuve has suggested.[44]

Love conventions in medieval romance are a literary device for examining the individual psyche, probing emotions, and opening the individual to a newly discovered self-consciousness. And it is precisely this quality that has led many modern critics to say that medieval romance is the precursor of the modern novel. Certainly, this new feature is central to the romance genre. Raymond Cormier refers to romance's "themes of interiorization, of spirituality, and of sensibility,"[45] and John A. Yunck emphasizes this new introspection:

> And with love also comes--for the first time in a long vernacular narrative--introspection. The lovers probe their own psyches in interminable monologues analyzing the desires, the sentiments, the psychology, the principles, the powers, the observances, and the doctrines of love. This sort of introspective exposition became, as readers of the early works of Chrétien know, an essential part of the romance genre.[46]

The romance genre diverges from other medieval literary genres largely through its emphasis on the individual. Courtly love is an important aspect of this new emphasis in that "the romancers and lyric poets were no longer content merely to recount men's deeds; they made a serious, if somewhat awkward, attempt to analyse their feelings."[47] This

analysis of feeling, whether awkward or elaborate, might be one of the most salient features of French romance, but it is strikingly absent from many Middle English versions of known French or Anglo-Norman originals. Consistently and characteristically, the Middle English writers excised what--from the English poetic point of view--must have seemed an overextended, ultimately frivolous obstruction of a good, fast-paced story. Margaret Schlauch describes this typical English treatment of love:

> In brief, it may be said that English poets treating of the international love romances avoid the over-refined analyses of sentiment and behavior which were characteristic, for instance, of predecessors like Chrétien de Troyes in French. Instead, they more often stress action and adventure; they also concentrate less often on elegant adultery and more often have the stories culminate in the "happy ending" of a conventional marriage.[48]

Practically all critics have recognized this crucial difference between the English and French romance, but too often they attribute it to the less refined, cruder English writers, who were unable to understand or appreciate the courtly intricacies of their noble French examples. The position describing these English poems as "popular debasements" that "impoverish the philosophical ethos"[49] is unfortunately typical. To denigrate the English works because they are not courtly French romances is senseless. Since the English poets insistently delete introspection and a courtly ambiance from their works and carefully amend their texts to eliminate the courtly love doctrine, their treatment deserves careful analysis as a manifestation of a legitimate as well

as intentional philosophy separate and quite different from the French. When so many poets repeatedly pay attention to minute details in order to change their originals in a consistent way, then that approach can no longer be seen as haphazard, accidental, or unintelligent. There must be reasons beyond the alleged vulgarity, incompetence, and unsophistication of the English poets to explain their deliberate handling of this important theme.

In fact, these changes almost always reflect greater morality and didacticism, avoiding the immorality of a love relationship outside marriage. The affairs, adultery, and even amatory dalliance of the French works are replaced by the legal state of marriage with its serious social implications. "Avoidance of the extremes and exploitation of emotion in French romances is the consistent English response which clarifies and heightens moral awareness."[50] Even when English narratives retain some of the French courtliness, the movement is inevitably towards a socially acceptable, desirable end. Although women and love are often found in the Middle English works, passion and love sickness are not so essential as marriage, which replaces private pleasure with political and social responsibility.

Of more than eighty narratives, only twenty-four, about one-third, work with the conventions of courtly love. Of these, thirteen have known French or Anglo-Norman sources.[51] Two others, Generides and the Earl of Toulous, might have

been influenced by French works, although no French originals have ever been found. Eger and Grime parallels Chrétien's Iwain, both verbally and thematically, but there is no evidence that the English author used the latter as a direct model for his own work. The six remaining narratives (Squyr of Lowe Degre, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Torrent of Portyngale, Sir Degare, Sir Degrevant, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight) borrow motifs from many sources, including other romances, folklore, ballads, and saints' lives. (Table 2 presents the Middle English narratives that moralize and religionize courtly-love conventions.)

The two English versions of Ipomedon are especially interesting for the insights they provide into two different English methods of adaptation. The A version, from the fifteenth-century Chetham Manuscript, consists of 8890 lines in tail-rhyme stanzas and is a fairly close translation of Hue de Rotelande's twelfth-century romance Ipomedon of over 10000 lines. Even though much of the outward courtliness of the original is retained, especially in the psychological study of the woman as tormented lover, the English version loses some of the inner qualities of the characters, who

> move with courtly breeding and gallantry; and though their conduct does not seem adequately motivated . . . the characters give voice to their emotional conflicts and analyze their sentiments in soliloquy and lamentation.[52]

The B version, only 2346 lines in rhyming couplets, serves as an excellent counterpoint, exhibiting the more typical English treatment of love. The author cuts out much of the

Table 2

INTEREST IN COURTLY LOVE

A. Works that moralize courtly-love conventions:

1. Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment
2. Earl of Toulous
3. Eger and Grime
4. Floris and Blancheflur
5. Generides
6. Grene Knight
7. Ipomedon A
8. Ipomedon B
9. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell
10. Lai le Freine
11. Morte Arthure
12. Octavian
13. Partonope of Blois
14. Romauns of Partenay
15. Sir Degare
16. Sir Degrevant
17. Sir Eglamour of Artois
18. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
19. Sir Launfal
20. Sir Tristrem
21. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
22. Squyr of Lowe Degre
23. William of Palerne
24. Ywain and Gawain

B. Works that religionize courtly-love conventions:

1. Amoryus and Cleopes
2. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
3. Bone Florence of Rome
4. Guy of Warwick
5. Fillingham Firumbras
6. King of Tars
7. Morte Arthur
8. Sowdon of Babylon

dialogue and emotion of the original and reduces the conventions of courtly love to an almost comic level. Following a common topos of love, Ipomedon hears of the Duke's daughter, falls in love instantly, and vows he will die without her:

> When he herd of hir so speke,
> Hym thought, his herte wold to breke (ll. 141-42)
>
> And so he mornyth nyght & day (l. 147)
>
> I dye for hyr, with oute deley! (l. 178).

The lengthy laments, the self-indulgent introspection, and the detailed self-analyses of the French become mere snippets that barely suggest the weighty tradition behind them.

The thirteen works with known Anglo-Norman or French originals provide numerous opportunities for comparing the French and English treatments of courtly love. For example, the three Middle English versions of Marie de France's Lai de Lanval consistently eliminate details appealing to a courtly audience. Moving away from Marie de France's focus on courtly-love interests, the adapters are "concerned not with contemporary refinements,"[53] but with a systematic exploration of ethical problems, specifically that of falsehood and truth.[54]

The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell is a mere remnant of 504 lines without the picturesque detail and love language of the elaborate 8000-line French original. Such abridgement is also common among other English versions of French originals.[55] In Ywain and Gawain, for instance, the English adapter of Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion

downplays Chrétien's psychological study of the love between Ivain and Alundyne and transforms Yvain from an accomplished courtier-lover to a heroic fighting man.[56] While retaining the basic love story, the English version diminishes the passion of the two lovers and emphasizes instead the vow between them, as evidenced by the repeated substitution of the word "truth" for "amor" in the early lines of the poem.[57] In addition, the English poet reduces Yvain by one-third, mostly by deleting the introspection and elaborate courtly details that suffuse the French original with the niceties of courtly love and its conventional behavior.[58]

The author of William of Palerne treats his original in much the same way and "reduces but does not completely eliminate the extended monologues and debates concerning love."[59] As the author focuses on the devotion between the heroine and gallant young hero, he uses "as gracious ornaments some of the outward rituals of the courtly love tradition while rejecting its fundamental principles of service and adultery."[60]

The author of the Southern version of Octavian also "tends to condense or omit, especially the love-matter, the self-analysis, and the psychological introspection."[61] This method of eliminating the elements usually associated with courtly love also occurs in Sir Tristrem. In the English version, which barely presents the essentials of the tragic love story, the author manages a "drastic condensation of the story and the elimination of the debates and soliloquies

characteristic of the original."[62]

Floris and Blancheflur contains the courtly descriptions and aristocratic setting suggestive of courtly love; however, the young couple's relationship is not one of "passion, but of an idyllic love. Tender love and youthful innocence overcome all obstacles."[63] The Middle English Lai le Freine also presents some of the trappings, but not courtly love itself. In fact, this story may be interpreted as a triumph of marriage over amour courtois. Raised by an Abbess, the deserted girl Freine takes a secret lover--according to the rules of courtly love--until he acquiesces to his "vassals' demand that he marry a proper wife and beget a proper heir."[64] Freine's lover deviates radically from the typical portrait of the true courtly lover who is faithful to his beloved despite society's demands to conform:

> To amour courtois the rights of love were even more sacred than those of marriage, and for this reason an episode setting forth the emotional conflict of a man who was both husband and lover mande an especial appeal.[65]

Lai le Freine thus sidesteps this potentially appealing aspect of the story and presents a lover conforming to society. The didactic point is obvious, and the moral appeal of Marie de France's lai fit the English mold well.

Changes in the English version of Partonope of Blois also point to the English concern for morality. Although the plot follows the Old French source quite closely, attitudes towards women are quite different. Prizing female virtue and purity, the Middle English author describes a Melior far more

concerned with her reputation than is her French counterpart.[66] In addition, he changes the French author's criticism of a lady who rejects love to approbation for her refusal to behave dishonorably.[67]

The Romauns of Partenay is yet another example of the English mingling of courtly love motifs with morality. Despite the obvious courtly influence on the aristocratic setting, pictorial descriptions, and the lovers' behavior, the narrative nonetheless centers on Raymond's broken vow to his wife and its serious repercussions. The moral implications of their relationship and the consequences of his sin are explored, not the story's courtly aspects.

Another Middle English work, Generides, borrows some of the apparatus of courtly love without its philosophic basis. The characters display some typical courtly-love symptoms such as restlessness and lack of sleep, but seldom engage in introspection. George Kane points to this work as "an escape from reality into a well-bred world of courtly love where, if passion is wanting, at least the attitudes of passion are gracefully assumed."[68] Clearly, the motifs of the courtly-love tradition have been taken, but not the underlying doctrine. The treatment of character is flat with none of the spiritualization of the French courtly romance.

Courtly elements suffuse the Earl of Toulous: the Earl falls in love with a married Empress sight unseen and risks his life in enemy territory for one glimpse of his beloved. After finally seeing her, he is content. His uncourtly

behavior becomes even more blatant:

> When danger threatens her, unlike more passionate lovers for whom it is a principle of courtly love to make no question of right or wrong in regard to the Beloved, he pauses to assure himself of her innocence before attempting her defence.[69]

Even in this narrative in which so many courtly conventions are observed, morality creeps in. After the Emperor's convenient death, the lovers marry, a reward for their virtuous behavior.

Eger and Grime, another interesting work that presents both courtly and anti-courtly elements, begins with the protagonist Eger, setting out to fight Sir Greysteele to win the love of Winglayne, who wants only an unconquered knight for a husband. Instead of overpowering his foe like a typical courtly knight, Eger loses not only his horse and the fight, but also his little finger. Returning to his sworn-brother Grime, Eger complains about this unexpected turn of events. Winglayne, at first appearing the concerned, if haughty, lover, is unable to sleep worrying about Eger and listens at his door during the night--surely a hint of unladylike and uncourtly behavior. Instead of remaining true to Eger in his need, she shrewishly rejects him in a wonderful reversal:

> She loued his body mickle the worse.
> Wordys this lady wold not say,
> But turned her back and went awaye (ll. 374-76).

In contrast to Winglayne, Loospaine is the true courtly lady. Originally described in fey-like terms, especially in regard to her miraculous healing powers and bower (ll. 209-97) and her love spot (ll. 619-24), she heals Eger, aids Grime in

killing Greysteele, and marries Grime, the true knight of the tale.

Courtly details also appear in Squyr of Lowe Degre with its clearly aristocratic setting. Beginning with a poor squire in love with the King of Hungary's daughter, the story follows some of the conventions of courtly love, including the secret nature of their love necessary because of the disparity in their respective states. When the Squire is ambushed outside her door, the Princess refuses to let him in--the action that gives rise to the narrative's subtitle, "Undo the Door." In the ensuing fight, the Squire kills the treacherous steward, who is then left there in the Squire's clothes. The Princess, who finally does open the door, assumes that the corpse is the Squire's and treasures it for seven years. Meanwhile, the King releases the Squire from prison, sending him abroad for seven years in order to gain renown before returning to claim the hand of his daughter. In this story, the typical courtly love plot turns macabre.

Similarly, a man in love with a woman of higher station also figures in Sir Torrent of Portyngale and Sir Eglamour of Artois. Before the desired marriages are allowed, the women's fathers impose impossible tasks on both Torrent and Eglamour, who perform them against all odds. Despite this, the fathers exile the women and their newborn children. Eglamour actively seeks his lover and child, whereas Torrent goes to the Holy Land and is accidentally reunited with his family after a fifteen-year separation. Both narratives

begin with a courtly love situation, but twist the courtly-love elements to pietistic ends.

Sir Degare, a hodgepodge of unrelated themes and motifs, contains a brief courtly-love interlude embedded in strange events that range from Degare's mother being ravished by a fairy knight and deserting her love-child to an Oedipal marriage between Degare and his mother. The courtly-love scene occurs well into the narrative during Degare's quest for his father. Once he wins the lady of the castle, he leaves her to continue his search. After finding his father, Degare returns and marries the lady. Just one of Degare's adventures that delays the ultimate meeting of father and mother and son, the interlude at the castle has no real importance and sheds no light on the meaning of the narrative.

Another narrative similar to Sir Degare in combining motley motifs is Sir Degrevant, which emphasizes the love conventions. In fact, it is one of the few Middle English works that actually develop its courtly motifs:

> Elaborated are details of social life, the glowing beauties of costume and architecture, of embroidery, jewelwork, table-fittings, wall-paintings,--picturesque items which have delighted the literary critics and inspired graphic artists like William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites.[70]

The author stresses typical love symptoms, although Melior's response to Degrevant's wooing may suggest "common-sense morality rather than amour courtois."[71]

> Certis, sir, ef þou were a kyng,
> þou solde do me no swylke thing
> Or þou wede me with a rynge,
> And maryage full-fill (ll. 1533-36).

In this work, courtly and moral elements mingle once again:

> There is a striking and perhaps typically English mixture of courtly and moral elements. The author thinks it necessary to state emphatically that the lovers did not sin before their wedding-night although they were fond of each other (ll. 1559-60).[72]

The famous courtly description of Melior's chamber (ll. 1397-1464) depicts this fascinating mixture:

> The room is most splendidly adorned with paintings, statues, and embroidery, but it is rather unusual that the various pictures and portraits do not represent romance-heroes, as in similar descriptions in French romance, but Apostles, Saints and Fathers of the Church. . . . The whole scene is obviously indebted to the French courtly novel and any reader would, after the elaborate description of the chamber, expect a courtly love scene; on the other hand, the moral element is never absent and thus we are hardly surprised to see the lady reject the advances of the knight.[73]

Like Sir Degrevant, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight twists romance and courtly conventions.[74] The dangers that Gawain faces are not from the collision of the courtly and natural worlds, but from dangers inherent in the courtly-love game and its inherent values. Can Gawain play the love game without losing face as the most courteous knight of the Round Table and without being disloyal to his host? The usual love encounter between a knight and a married lady is transformed from a private relationship with significance for only the two partners into a testing of social relationships. Gawain's loyalty and truth--his most important virtues as a knight--are at stake. As in other Middle English narratives, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight places betrayal and breach of promise at the heart of the story.

These twenty-four works use the conventions of courtly love in various ways, often distorting or moralizing them. Eight other Middle English works, however, manipulate these conventions for specifically didactic purposes (Table 2, B). In these primarily religious narratives, love appears in interesting ways. Le Bone Florence of Rome describes Garcy, Florence's unwanted suitor (ll. 94-104) in a comic reversal of the usual courtly description of the chivalric lover. In addition, Florence, with her own flawless beauty, at first resembles the traditional heroine of courtly-love romance, but her external beauty is only emblematic of her inner virtue and exemplary nature.[75] Rather than the wife of a chivalric knight, Florence becomes a nun, performing miracles.

In Amoryus and Cleopes, the typical courtly love situa- quickly departs from the prescribed. At their secret rendezvous, Cleopes is frightened by a lion that wipes its bloody mouth on the handerchief she drops in her flight. Amoryus, thinking she is dead, kills himself, and Cleopes, minutes later, takes her own life when she finds him dead. This is the end, however, of the story's similarity to the Pyramis and Thisbe plot. A Christian hermit finds the bodies of Amoryus and Cleopes, restores them to life, and baptizes and marries them. The lovers' main function is thus specifically religious and didactic. A similar sense of religious intention seems to underlie Guinevere's choice of a penitent's life in the stanzaic Morte Arthur after her long adulterous relationship with Lancelot. She seems to achieve an essential

self-awareness of her personal failings and an acceptance of her responsibility that brings her to God in the fullest sense.[76]

The Sowdon of Babylon and Firumbras stories also twist courtly conventions by presenting the Saracen Floripas, who even as a heathen, conforms to some of the courtly codes. Certainly her love for Guy motivates her defense and protection of the French knights, but her love is not swooning or passive. Instead, it gives her courage to push her duenna out the window, dash out the jailer's brains with her key, and save them all from certain death. Despite her "masculine" activity, Floripas is an attractive and strong character, whose motivation is clear and whose fierce loyalty and courage are commendable. However, she is not a typical courtly-love heroine, inspiring the hero to deeds of valor, engaging in ritualistic social patter, or consumed by love sickness for her knightly lover.

Instead of manipulating the popular courtly conventions, other Middle English works do not focus on courtly love at all, but emphasize instead different kinds of love. For example, Athelston and Amis and Amiloun test the love and loyalty between sworn friends (Table 3, A). Both strongly didactic works illustrate loyalty rewarded only after great suffering. Another set of narratives focuses on constant love (Table 3, B). These works have nothing to do with the elaborate courtly-love code, but rather extol the strength of virtuous love against all tests--false accusations, exiles,

Table 3

ABSENCE OF COURTLY LOVE

A. Works that test loyalties between friends:

1. Amis and Amiloun
2. Athelston

B. Works that focus on constant love:

1. Bevis of Hampton
2. Emare
3. Havelok
4. Horn Child
5. King Horn
6. Sir Isumbras
7. Sir Orfeo
8. Sir Triamour

C. Works that have no love emphasis:

1. Alexander A
2. Alexander B
3. Alexander C
4. Arthour and Merlin
5. Arthur
6. Avowynge of King Arthur
7. Awntyrs off Arthur
8. Chevalere Assigne
9. Destruction of Troy
10. Duke Roland and Otuel of Spain
11. Gamelyn
12. Guy and Colbrond
13. History of the Holy Grail
14. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne
15. Joseph of Arimathie
16. Laud Troy Book
17. Libeaus Desconus
18. Lyfe of Alisaunder
19. Merlin
20. Otuel a Knight
21. Otuel and Roland
22. Reinbrun, Son of Giy
23. Richard Coer de Lyon
24. Roberd of Cisyle
25. Roland and Vernagu
26. Seege of Troye
27. Sege of Melayne
28. Siege of Jerusalem
29. Siege of Thebes
30. Sir Amadace
31. Sir Cleges
32. Sir Gowther
33. Sir Perceval of Galles
34. Song of Roland
35. Titus and Vespasian
36. Turke and Gowin

separations, and sometimes even unwanted suitors. In King Horn, the "love element is treated briefly and cursorily and the emphasis is on the adventure and fighting."[77] Sir Triamour, Emare, and Sir Isumbras focus on a wife separated from her husband and describe the trials, adventures, and suffering they udergo before their reunion. The love presented in these works is neither adulterous nor personally ennobling, but represents the ideal of constancy in marriage.

The remaining Middle English works, a significant group of thirty-six narratives, have no trace of a love element. Although Libeaus Desconus and Sir Perceval of Galles deal with the love affairs of their heroes, they are still included in this category because they reduce love to insignificance.[78]

Clearly, courtly love had its usefulness for many Middle English writers, but few explored its potential for probing the emotions and feelings of the lovers. When the Middle English authors appropriated its conventions, their overriding tendency was to moralize that love and place it firmly within the bounds of socially acceptable behavior. Thus, Middle English writers usually manipulated the popular conventions for their own didactic or religious intentions, not for the celebration of a philosophical doctrine of love. Despite the English disinterest in this philosophy, the writers did find much of the courtly machinery appealing, never hesitating to borrow any motif they felt would interest

their English audience.

ADHERENCE TO THE CHIVALRIC ETHIC

The chivalric ethic, the third feature commonly associated with romance, is one of those ubiquitous phrases that everyone uses but few define. In talking about chivalry, critics sometimes seem to refer simply to the aristocratic setting and all its chivalric trappings; at other times, however, they intend the specific system of conduct prescribed by the feudal system. To make matters even worse, the chivalric ethic and the Christian ethic often seem inseparable:

> The virtues demanded of the knight were essentially those demanded of every Christian, that is, the cardinal virtues, modified, or rather with special emphasis upon those aspects suited to a man of arms. John of Salisbury's definition of the duties of a warrior reflects this accurately enough. 'To defend the church, attack unbelief, venerate the priesthood, protect the poor from injury, keep peace in the state, pour out their blood for their brother.'[79]

Although no one would quarrel with John of Salisbury's definitions of knightly virtues--idealistic though they may be--the relevance of these abstract virtues to the actual portrayal of chivalric heroes in romance literature is questionable. Romance heroes rarely perform their knightly duties of venerating the poor, and when they do attack unbelief and try to keep the peace, these ideals often translate into bloody battles against infidels or long sieges against neighboring knights. Since such interminable battles and petty quarreling were the unquestioned facts of medieval life, it is not

surprising that many theorists tried to instill noble ideals into the knights, the otherwise uncontrollable, brutal, and destructive class of medieval society. Romance writers, ecclesiastics, and chroniclers alike tried to soften the callous mindlessness of the fighting men by inculcating ideals of conduct, which sprang from three different sources: feudal chivalry, religious chivalry, and courtly love:

> Feudal chivalry was simply the spontaneous development of the immemorial warrior virtues under the influence of mediaeval conditions. Religious chivalry grew naturally out of St. Augustine's conception of the Christian soldier. As complete concepts both were products of mediaeval life yet their component ideas were not new. Courtly love, on the other hand, was essentially novel.[80]

Feudal chivalry sanctions fighting to maintain the status quo, to prevent rebellions, and to keep the peace whereas religious chivalry sanctions bloodshed against the unbelievers. They glorify either the fight for country or for God. Léon Gautier quite rightly defines chivalry as a "Germanic custom idealized by the Church."[81] In courtly love, however, ideals of conduct move away from the good of society to the individual and his personal feelings. Curiously, this asocial ideal gained some status through the popular religious conception of Christ-as-lover:

> From the end of the twelfth century onwards there developed a perfect parallelism between the theological stress upon Christ's display of love on the Cross and the conception of chivalric conduct in the Arthurian romances, wherein a knight by brave endurance and heroic encounters would save the lady whom he loved from treacherous capture, thereby hoping to gain her favours, or might joust brilliantly in front of her, hoping by his prowess to win her love. This common theme of the romances had arisen from two causes: religious morality

> imposed upon feudal custom emphasized the duty of a knight to protect the helpless, such as women and the fatherless, whilst romantic love fusing with chivalric courtesy exalted battle on behalf of a lady as a means of gaining her love.[82]

Although the ideals of courtly love, relgious chivalry, and feudal chivalry vary, they do overlap and limit the kinds of militant behavior that medieval society considered acceptable. Naturally, the actual behavior of the knightly class seldom conformed to the theoretical ideas or their literary representation, but the belief in these ideals persisted for centuries and is critical to the ideology underlying romance literature:

> But there was in the romances of chivalry, especially in those of the thirteenth century, an important ideological content, which was not the doctrine of courtly love in its extreme form, but rather the doctrine of perfect knighthood, made perfect by a deepened sense of devotion, by the recognition of a freely chosen allegiance to what Malory was to call much later the High Order of Knighthood.[83]

That these chivalric ideals survived even into the fifteenth century is not altogether startling:

> In the fifteenth century chivalry was still, after religion, the strongest of all the ethical conceptions which dominated the mind and the heart. It was thought of as the crown of the whole social system.[84]

As a matter of fact, a distancing from reality seemed to add even more imaginative power to these ideals. In England during the fourteenth century, the old feudal structure was being displaced, and a different economic structure was appearing, yet the interest in chivalry persisted, even increased. W. T. H. Jackson focuses on this somewhat peculiar

phenomenon of retrospective idealism:

> The most exaggerated respect was paid to lineage, aristocratic bearing, courtly manner, and rich clothing by a society whose wealth was dependent less and less on land and more and more on trade and commerce. The new possessors of wealth were much concerned to imitate the ideals of gentility and, as far as possible, to identify themselves with the society they so much admired. The result was that the outward forms of "chivalry," as interpreted from the earlier courtly romances, were practiced more thoroughly than they had ever been in the period of the finest flowering of the romance.[85]

Certainly, in many of the relatively late Middle English narratives, the setting is aristocratic and the hero a fighter with the typical qualities of the perfect knight--loyalty, gentility, bravery, goodness, prowess, courtesy, and generosity. His world generally revolved around his various combats, and he gained renown and honor through his excellence on the battlefield, whether fighting for God, country, or love. Most Middle English works take chivalry and its ideals into account in some way, although a few narratives completely ignore the chivalric ethic. (Table 4 separates the works according to their use of chivalric ideals.)

The first two narratives, Havelok and Gamelyn, (Table 4, A) present heroes who live outside the aristocratic court; neither goes on a quest or wins the love of a woman whose station is higher than his own. Instead, both deal with non-chivalric life. Gamelyn, even more than Havelok, deals with the harsh realities of contemporary life. The youngest son is cheated out of his inheritance by an older brother, fights

Table 4

ADHERENCE TO THE CHIVALRIC ETHIC

A. Works that present a non-chivalric ethic:

1. Havelok
2. Gamelyn

B. Works that present a heroic ethic:

1. Alexander A
2. Alexander C
3. Amis and Amiloun
4. Arthour and Merlin
5. Athelston
6. Horn Child
7. King Horn
8. Libeaus Desconus
9. Lyfe of Alisaunder
10. Morte Arthure
11. Sir Orfeo

C. Works that present a militant Christian chivalric ethic:

1. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
2. Bevis of Hampton
3. Destruction of Troy
4. Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain
5. Fillingham Firumbras
6. Guy of Warwick
7. History of the Holy Grail
8. Joseph of Arimathie
9. Laud Troy Book
10. Merlin
11. Otuel a Knight
12. Otuel and Roland
13. Richard Coer de Lyon
14. Roland and Vernagu
15. Seege of Troye
16. Sege of Melayne
17. Siege of Jerusalem
18. Siege of Thebes
19. Song of Roland
20. Sowdon of Babylon
21. Titus and Vespasian
22. Troy Book

D. Works that present a chivalric ethic:

1. Awntyrs off Arthur (B)
2. Earl of Toulous
3. Generides
4. Guy and Colbrond
5. Ipomedon A
6. Ipomedon B
7. Octavian
8. Partonope of Blois
9. Sir Degrevant

Table 4 (con't.)

10. Sir Triamour
11. Sir Tristrem
12. Squyr of Lowe Degre
13. William of Palerne

E. Works that test a chivalric ethic:

1. Avowynge of King Arthur
2. Awntyrs off Arthur (A)
3. Carle off Carlile
4. Eger and Grime
5. Grene Knight
6. Morte Arthur
7. Sir Eglamour of Artois
8. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
9. Sir Perceval of Galles
10. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
11. Syre Gawene and the Carl of Carelyle
12. Turke and Gowin
13. Ywain and Gawain

F. Works that present a courtly ethic:

1. Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment
2. Floris and Blancheflur
3. Lai le Freine
4. Sir Degare
5. Sir Launfal
6. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell

G. Work that burlesques the courtly ethic:

1. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne

H. Works that present a religious ethic:

1. Amoryus and Cleopes
2. Bone Florence of Rome
3. Chevalere Assigne
4. Emare
5. King of Tars
6. Roberd of Cisyle
7. Sir Gowther
8. Sir Isumbras

I. Works that present no clearly defined ethic:

1. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell
2. Romauns of Partenay
3. Sir Amadace
4. Sir Cleges

with the sheriff, flees into the woods, becomes the leader of an outlaw band, finally makes a mockery of the law court, and punishes the bribed jury and corrupt officials. There are wrestling matches instead of jousts; wooden clubs instead of lances; and a forest with outlaws instead of an aristocratic court with gentle knights and ladies.

Havelok likewise focuses on life beneath the aristocracy:

> There is a respect for honest labor, the hero is associated most of the time with common people, and such people and their activities play a large part in the story. His great triumph is not in knightly competition but in putting the stone. The charm of his character is not revealed in courtly graces, but in homely and natural virtues--a cheerful, sunny disposition which makes the children and cook like him, a readiness to accept without question his humble lot as a fisher boy and scullery knave.[86]

The crucial difference, however, between Havelok and Gamelyn is that Havelok's life among the commoners is only an interlude, an apprenticeship among the people whom he will later rule. Although the poem does not actually portray Havelok as king, it can easily be read as a handbook for princes[87] or an exploration of the theme of theocratic and contractual kingship.[88]

King Horn, (Table 4, B) another narrative that contains little of the mystique of chivalry and courtly graces, has more in common with the tradition of Old English heroic battle poetry than with the chivalric, romance tradition. Even its theme of expulsion and return resembles much of the epic fiction of feudal and pre-feudal times.[89] Although Horn,

unlike Havelok and Gamelyn, moves in aristocratic or courtly circles, the atmosphere is closer to the old heroic courts of epic, not the chivalric courts of romance. The poet creates an "epic" society "where behavior is open and direct, where action follows hard upon impulse and the emotions are not concealed behind a ritual of polite conventions."[90] The poem's epic qualities are also responsible for the alternate title Geste of King Horn, which, according to W. H. Schofield, came to mean an epic poem.[91]

Like King Horn, Libeaus Desconus presents a heroic, rather than chivalric or romance world. Its heroic quality is "perfectly consistent with the constant emphasis that is placed upon the feudal bond that unites Lybeaus and Arthur."[92] This special bond between lord and subject is not usually stressed in courtly romances, except in a few Arthurian narratives where the bond of loyalty is essential to the inevitable sense of tragedy. The alliterative Morte Arthure is one of these. Its author intentionally reshaped the chronicle tradition to make Arthur into a heroic character of far greater complexity.[93] The poem celebrates many heroic ideals, as John Finlayson points out:

> The sentiments of our poem are almost purely heroic; the emphasis on the loyalty of his ment to Arthur, and of Arthur to them; the attitudes to war and battle, which are almost identical with those in Beowulf and the Battle of Maldon; the close relationship of Arthur to Gawain, which parallels Charlemagne's relationship to Roland. . . the stereotyped laments by Arthur on the death of Gawain, which closely resemble that of Charlemagne for Roland--these are all clear indications that we are in the heroic, not the romantic world.[94]

Other stylistic devices like the detailed descriptions and the endless series of battles emphasize the epic quality, the thematic sense of defeat, and the tragic sense of the disintegration of a society. This poem stands alone among the English metrical narratives in its movingly tragic outcome. While many other English works focus on betrayals and treachery that threaten the stability of society, that society is never destroyed. The main thrust of these works is towards the re-establishment of order and rightful rule after the triumph over negative, disruptive impulses. The Morte Arthure, however, ends with the destruction of a society and thus is closer to epic than romance.

Two other narratives, Athelston and Amis and Amiloun, also hark back to older, heroic virtues, not primarily chivalric ones. As A. Trounce says:

> I think that the poem of Athelston, along with Amis and Amiloun, earns an added spiritual dignity in reflecting though faintly the old heroic virtues and, as a literary form, has a particular interest because it combines with a romance theme hints of sterner tragedy.[95]

The central theme of Amis and Amiloun does concern the painful moral dilemma caused by a bond of friendship:

> The situation in which Amiloun is involved is, in the technical sense, a tragic one, and he makes his choice as the heroes of the old sagas, who with their "aesthetic view of conduct" preferred that their conduct should be dramatic rather than righteous.[96]

Sworn brotherhood is also at the heart of Athelston, but the poem turns on a false betrayer, an ordeal by fire (iudicium Dei), and eventual punishment of the false accuser:

> We have a story beginning with an act of treachery and falsehood ending in the punishment of the act, and taking a course between that beginning and end according to the example in the chansons.[97]

Certainly, the Old French epics with their traitors and interplay of Church and state are closer to Athelston than to romance and courtly traditions.

Other pseudo-historical works, the Alexander stories, resemble chansons de geste, emphasizing epic rather than courtly traditions. The Lyfe of Alisaunder-poet "dwells on the details of slaughter, the feats of specified knights, and the metaphoric comparisons that the battle or combatants might elicit."[98] Alexander C also shares this tendency towards the heroic, with its author stressing the epic potential of his stories.

The author of Arthour and Merlin describes battle scenes in great detail and with mindless gusto, but also consciously writes within an epic framework:

> In the descriptions of battles, too, there is, in spite of repetitive monotony, an obvious striving for rhetorical effects and stylization, mainly expressed in the stereotyped repetition of particular heroic deeds, the unvaried sequences of single fights and mass-encounters and the interminable lists of combatants (e.g. ll. 9329-48).[99]

Partly because of the long and venerable tradition of the Old French chansons de geste of Christian knights fighting against the unbeliever, partly because of the fervor generated by and for the Crusades with rhetoric about Christian chivalry, and partly because of the popularity of the romance, a large number of Middle English works focus on the Christian militant ideals (Table 4, C). Not surprisingly,

many of these poems are translations or adaptations of Old French epics or chronicles, such as the Pseudo-Turpin.

Of this group, Guy of Warwick, Richard Coer de Lyon, and Bevis of Hampton clearly focus on a chivalric world with a knightly hero with both secular and religious virtues. Guy first appears as the usual secular knight although he undertakes many of his early adventures "because of a genuine pity for the oppressed."[100] By the second part, however, he becomes a Champion of God with his mission as a militant Christian most apparent in his fight against Colbrond, which is told like a devotional tale.[101] The narrative moves away from its romantic, chivalric tendencies and ends on a homiletic note with Guy's burial at a hermitage, where miracles then occur. Richard, another champion of God, is more brutal and repulsive than Guy in his personal vendetta against the Saracens. The author partly justifies his militant Christian spirit:

> The heathens are no longer seen as human beings, but as personifications of all that is unchristian and of the malice of Satan. Their massacre is an act of Christian duty, approved by God; the savage brutality of this wholesale slaughter is evidently not felt by the author because of its exemplary, almost symbolic quality.[102]

Nonetheless, this poem remains one of the most unpleasant and savage of all the Crusading poems. Bevis of Hampton, on the other hand, most successfully combines the chivalric ethic with the militant Christian spirit. "Bevis is not only a valiant knight, but also a warrior of God who succeeds in decimating the heathens, freeing the Christians from wicked

enemies, and converting Josian to the Christian faith."[103]

In Sege of Melayne and many of the Charlemagne legends, which emphasize the military prowess of the Christians and the righteousness of their cause, heroic battles are as important as their didactic intention. It is chiefly "the militant and completely intolerant Christianity of the Charlemagne stories that interested the English adapters," yet at the same time these stories were "adapted to the style of the homiletic romances"[104] such as King of Tars, which is full of the crusading atmosphere. Joseph of Arimathie, another pious Christian poem, is filled with militancy in the name of religion, and its author is blatantly attracted to the many battle descriptions (ll. 484-614). A vigorous militant Christian ethic is also evident in Sowdon of Babylon, which "tells with compelling energy a story of fantastic violence, crusading indignation, noble devotion, courage and knightly performance in arms, with a gusto that compensates for its lack of polish."[105] All these narratives combine the best and worst of the romances, the chansons de geste, and the saints' legends, and this combination is responsible for a narrative like Siege of Jerusalem, which is a peculiar work describing a holy war waged as revenge for Christ's death.

In sharp contrast to these militant Christian poems, thirteen Middle English works evoke a courtly, chivalric world with all its pageantry, formal ceremonies, jousting, tournaments, entertainment, and sport (Table 4, D). Not

primarily concerned with religious preaching or Christian militancy, these works present the hero as a courtly knight of arms, engaging in adventures and battles for the damsel in distress, the wronged, or the defenseless. For example, William of Palerne defeats Saxons, who attack Rome and leads the forces for the Queen of Sicily, his mother. Gawain fights against a Scottish challenger and lives up to his reputation as a courteous, brave knight in Awntyrs off Arthur. Florentyn in Octavian saves Paris from the heathens whereas Sir Triamour and the Earl of Toulous are champions of other just causes. Even Sir Tristrem is a champion of his people against their Irish foes. The Squire of low degree wins renown in jousts and remains true to his one love, and Generides, Ipomedon, and Sir Degrevant save innocent women. Yet these heroes are not always engaged in battling; these narratives evoke the non-combatant aspects of chivalric life as well--sporting events, music and feasting, and other details of a full social life.

Other works, however, question the essence of this chivalric code and the ideals that it celebrates. Awntyrs off Arthur, for example, attacks chivalric conduct. Guinevere's mother warns of the sins and eventual downfall of the Round Table, stressing the need for controlling the "hauteur and heedlessness"[106] of the Arthurian society. One critic even sees the poem as an illustration of actual vices, luxuria and avaritia.[107] Most critics would at least agree that the poem has a primarily religious, didactic intention in

exposing the lack of spiritual values in the too-temporal ethic of the Round Table. Similarly, the stanzaic Morte Arthur condemns the values of King Arthur's court, and Velma Richmond argues that the poem fundamentally points to the spiritual and religious emptiness of the court which ignores man's reason for being.[108] It is certainly true that the forces of destruction are embedded in the structure of the chivalric society, and the author stresses the serious, perhaps even tragic, implications of the inadequacies of the chivalric ethic.

The author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight also reveals deficiencies and flaws in the courtly, chivalric world of Arthur. Obviously, Gawain's courtesy, truth, and loyalty towards his host and the sanctity of his vow are being tested at Bercilak's castle. But, on a larger scale, the very values of the court are questioned not only at the beginning but also at the end of the poem when the court paradoxically assumes Gawain's emblem of shame as an emblem of honor and a symbol of the renown and everlasting glory of the Round Table. The Gawain-poet tests courtly conventions in a subtle and elaborate way without resorting to the didacticism that other English authors apparently found either necessary or appealing.

This testing of courtly values occurs in other works as well, including Avowynge of King Arthur and Carle off Carlile, which overtly test a knight's loyalty and truth. In five other narratives, King Horn, Sir Perceval of Galles,

Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Torrent of Portyngale, and Eger and Grime, the hero is forced to perform impossible tasks in order to win renown and prove himself worthy of a woman's love. Ywain and Gawain is a variation on this theme. After Ywain's marriage to Alundyne, he leaves for one year, promising to return. Later breaking his vow, Ywain goes mad with grief, recovers, and tries to prove his worthiness. This testing of the hero against the values of the chivalric world is typical of all thirteen of these poems (Table 4, E).

Six other narratives, including Sir Degare, Lai le Freine, and Sir Launfal, present a courtly, aristocratic world with its delicate behavior and intricate conduct, without the militant aspect of chivalric life (Table 4, F). There are no jousts, no heroic fighting knights. In Floris and Blancheflur, the author creates a charming, idyllic atmosphere, fusing the mystery and exotic appeal of the Far East "with the sentimentality and chivalry of the West."[109] The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell also centers on love and chivalric sentiment instead of martial strength and deeds of arms; the loathly lady tests Gawain's kindness, gentility, and courtesy rather than his prowess.

The Jeaste of Syr Gawayne, on the other hand, focuses on the unchivalric behavior of Gawain and twists the familiar courtly conventions into a burlesque.[110] The hero ravishes a woman, is discovered by her irate father, and overcomes him and his two sons in battle. After another battle with the third son, which ends in a draw--highly unusual in a typical

romance--the two agree to continue fighting when they next meet. The battles resolve nothing. In fact, beaten by her brother before she disappears into the woods, the woman remains unvindicated and never returns to the narrative even though she is obviously in distress after Gawain's treatment of her. Not only is Gawain's unchivalric behavior never criticized, but the poem also ends strangely with the court's rejoicing over his good fortune in not encountering the third brother again. The author's main intention seems to be the presentation of a discordant picture of Gawain that would surprise a medieval audience and perhaps amuse them because of the reversal of the well-known conventions and expectations associated with Arthurian knights.

The chivalric ethic is relatively unimportant in several Middle English works, particularly Chevalere Assigne and Roberd of Cisyle with their pointedly didactic messages (Table 4, H). Although Chevalere Assigne does have a courtly setting, a single combat, and instructions on arms and their use; its context is not the idealized world where genteel people behave according to a chivalric code. Instead, the mother of the King of Lyon plots to murder the Queen's seven children. Discovering that her man has not drowned the children as ordered, the mother puts out his eyes and convinces her son to burn his innocent wife. Finally, however, her wickedness is uncovered, and she is burned at the stake herself. Besides this most uncourtly behavior, other events occur that are more reminiscent of religious stories or fairy

tales than of chivalric romances: bells ring mysteriously, angels appear, and fire and an adder spring from the shield of Enyas. In pointing out the "scenes of violence and brutality," Laura Hibbard Loomis concludes that the poem "is wholly without courtliness or chivalry."[111]

Roberd of Cisyle, also totally devoid of chivalric elements, presents instead a decidedly religious ethic:

> The outline of the plot at once makes it clear that this is a moral and didactic tale. The action is set in motion not by an intrigue or by some knightly adventure, but alone by the King's pride and God's decision to punish him for it.[112]

Clearly in the homiletic tradition, this poem ignores the possibilities for chivalric and courtly embellishments.

Although Le Bone Florence of Rome is also set within a religious context, it does contain some chivalric and courtly elements. Typical of these in the first part of the poem are "the arrival of messengers from distant lands; the detailed descriptions of journeys, clothes, armour, costly gifts, palace halls, and battle scenes; and the love between a conventional chivalric knight and lady,"[113] but these are all subordinate to the primarily homiletic message.

The last group of works (Table 4, I) is unlike all the previous ones. These narratives seem to have no clearly defined ethic and operate instead in a fairy-tale world where right and wrong are polarized, miracles often aid the protagonist, and the unusual and unexpected are everyday occurrences. The four tales are all based on well-known folk motifs: Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell on the

Eaten Heart, Sir Cleges on Unseasonable Blooming, Sir Amadace on the Grateful Dead, and Romauns of Partenay on the Child-birth Taboo and the Enchanted Wife. All except Romauns of Partenay stay close to their folk material, seldom straying to moralize, religionize, or embellish their basic folk tale. This one poem, however, is highly idiosyncratic. Much of it resembles simple folklore--the taboo, the enchanted mountain, the sparrow hawk castle, and the marriage between a fairy and mortal. Yet other parts seem to be infused with a religious intention, showing the serious consequences of Raymond's sin. It is best seen as a combination of many popular conventions and traditional themes with no clear, single informing principle.

The Middle English narratives do not treat the chivalric ethic with any consistency. Works with courtly settings often borrow elements from the religious and homiletic traditions while religious narratives adorn their moral intentions with chivalric and courtly elements. Courtly love, religious militancy, and heroic qualities are sprinkled throughout many of these works; some acclaim the chivalric values, others question them, and a few reject them. However, except for those firmly grounded in folk traditions or homiletic literature, most of the narratives do not ignore chivalry or the world it implies.

EMPHASIS ON THE INDIVIDUAL: THE ROMANCE HERO

The focus on the individual in romance literature is perhaps best reflected in its special kind of protagonist--a lone knight on a quest. Eugene Vinaver notes this as a new, significant literary phenomenon:

> it seems appropriate to pay attention to the appearance in the Middle Ages of a type of hero whose impact on European imagination was very great, but whose origins are not easy to determine: a knight who goes on a quest, and as soon as one quest is over undertakes another and again another.[114]

While the origins of this new hero might be uncertain, some of the reasons for his emergence are not. Early medieval writers faced the problem of reconciling the heroes of classical antiquity, of German epic poetry, and of Christian philosophy (imitatio Christi).[115] The heroic and religious ideals, however, prove more compatible than they at first appear for rather than rejecting the classical ideal, the romance hero transforms it. In fact, the Christian context adds a new dimension to the exploits of classical heroes by providing a belief in a life beyond the battlefield:

> Thus we see a successful transformation of pagan ideals; the thrills of human endeavor are maintained, but very comfortably accommodated through a recognition that these are not the totality of man's being.[116]

Romance writers certainly drew upon well-established notions of heroism for their conception of the hero:

> The chivalry of the Middle Ages itself inherited and absorbed older traditions of heroism, coming not only from the barbarian but also from the

> Greco-Roman worlds. Like Beowulf, the paradigm of Germanic heroes, the knight was expected to be a great and courageous fighter, a true master of the arms he wielded.[117]

Clearly, epic and romance heroes share important traits--they are both known for their prowess and loyalty and both engage in interminable battles. Yet, the hero of epic poetry displays his prowess and wins his glory for a cause not immediately determined by personal interest or love, and a special feature of heroic poetry is the "splendor which irradiates a hero in his hour of defeat or death."[118] The romance hero is different. Primarily concerned with himself, he is seldom defeated in the kinds of tragic circumstances that help define the epic hero:

> Unlike the knight of the chivalric theorists, who is ideally a force for justice and stability, the knight of the courtly romance, and in particular the protagonist of the courtly-love literature, is a solitary figure, whose primary concern is self-fulfillment without regard to the community at large.[119]

The romance hero's self-consciousness, his solitary condition, and his interest in love largely define his character and thus represent a shift from epic to romance:

> But it is in the romances of chivalry that the greatest changes in the complexion of the hero are discernible. Translated out of poetic history into realms of pure fiction, the knight strives to be as noble in love as he is in war.[120]

Raymond Cormier emphasizes a similar distinction: "But for the epic hero after all, heart's desire is not tender, reciprocal love, but action; not self-consciousness, but prowess; not meditation, but lasting glory through and in war."[121]

Despite this change in focus, the hero's traits never

changed drastically from epic to romance because of the medieval method of depicting character, an art dictated by rhetorical principles and meticulously studied by the learned medieval writer. The correct and best ways of depicting character were laid out in the ever-popular, but dull, rhetorical handbooks such as Matthew de Vendôme's Ars Versificatoria[122] and Geoffroi de Vinsauf's Poetria Nova and Documentum.[123] Certainly, the formalized characters in romance are striking to a modern reader who is accustomed to character development and complexity:

> Character is a concept we find difficult to suppress. In most Middle English narratives, on the other hand, our concept of character is irrelevant, not to say obtrusive or anomalous. . . . Delineation of character or progressive character development and change are foreign to most narratives in fourteenth-century England, and the narratives must be made with other materials. Those materials are fundamentally action and description.[124]

Walter Curry illuminates the use of physical description in The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty: "descriptions are largely of a set and formal character, and so stereotyped and conventional that we may almost say that there is no distinctive English ideal of beauty."[125] Romance does create highly formalized character portraits precisely because it focuses on the typical and the essential. Consequently, hyperbole and caricature are never far from the ideal, as Chaucer's description in Sir Thopas so clearly demonstrates.[126] Admittedly, this formalizing causes inevitable problems--all heroes tend to blur, and the individual gets lost in abstraction:

> The hero is "a very perfect gentle knight"; and his action consists in having many adventures. The heroine is a beautiful young lady, and needs no action at all. Both may be described at length without being individualized. . . . stock adventures can be assigned as well to one knight as to another.[127]

Fortunately, the romance has a built-in remedy for this danger: the monologues and introspection of the characters. "The 'character' of a romance-hero is rather a rehearsed interior monologue than a meaningful and unpredictable dialogue with the outside world."[128] Although John Stevens views this characteristic negatively, its positive value cannot be denied. In romance, characters are defined as much by what they say as what they do. "Facundia, the power of smooth and polished speech, is the very essence of the characters."[129] Speech, even when it becomes stylized and ultimately stereotyped as it does in romance, is still a way of defining the individual, exploring his states of mind, and probing his humanity.

Courtly romance literature, concerned "with the investigation of man's emotions and impulses,"[130] is thus firmly fixed on the individual and his feelings. These emotions are typically entangled in love relationships, which act as catalysts for adventurous conduct, endless introspection, and perhaps real danger:

> Love can provide a man with a new and nobler identity and inspire him to great deeds in the service of others, or it can cause a madness that cuts him off from the world and drives him into exile or madness.[131]

However difficult the obtacles or painful the suffering, the

romance hero almost always emerges triumphant. An idealized character embodying the medieval virtues of loyalty, truth, prowess, and generosity, he is usually tested against the chivalric code. In most romance literature, the hero's personal growth is measured by his progress from naivete or ignorance through introspection, self-awareness, and trials to his emergence into a state of increased knowledge. Table 5 lists the Middle English works according to the varieties of heroes.

A typical romance hero appears in only nine works, and even in these, the isolated hero is transformed into a more social protagonist (Table 5, A). Not surprisingly, most of these English heroes are patterned on French originals: Ipomedon (in both versions), William of Palerne, Ywain, Partonope, and Raymond. In Ipomedon A, the daughter of the King of Calabria swears she will marry only the bravest knight, yet she falls in love with Ipomedon, who shows no interest in chivalric activity in her court. After Ipomedon decides to leave, both he and his beloved agonize over their behavior and feelings towards each other, she for over one hundred lines (ll. 911-1036) and he more fitfully (ll. 1049 ff). In subordinating action to contemplation in this poem, the author delights in describing the changes brought about by love in the characters' perception of their world and their own individuality. In addition to this introspection and love interest, skill in tournaments and battles also marks

Table 5

VARIETIES OF HEROES

A. Works that present a romance hero:

1. Generides
2. Ipomedon A
3. Ipomedon B
4. Partonope of Blois
5. Romauns of Partenay
6. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
7. Sir Tristrem
8. William of Palerne
9. Ywain and Gawain

B. Works that present an idealized hero:

1. Awntyrs off Arthur
2. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell

C. Works that present a hero whose love is rewarded:

1. Eger and Grime
2. Horn Child
3. King Horn
4. Sir Eglamour of Artois
5. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
6. Squyr of Lowe Degre

D. Works that present an innocent, suffering heroine:

1. Bone Florence of Rome
2. Earl of Toulous
3. Emare
4. King of Tars
5. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell
6. Octavian
7. Sir Triamour

E. Works that present a militant Christian hero:

1. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
2. Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain
3. Fillingham Firumbras
4. Joseph of Arimathie
5. Otuel a Knight
6. Otuel and Roland
7. Richard Coer de Lyon
8. Roland and Vernagu
9. Sege of Melayne
10. Siege of Jerusalem
11. Song of Roland
12. Sowdon of Babylon
13. Titus and Vespasian

Table 5 (cont'd.)

F. Works that present a heroic character:

1. Alexander A
2. Alexander C
3. King Horn
4. Libeaus Desconus
5. Lyfe of Alisaunder
6. Morte Arthure
7. Sir Orfeo
8. Sir Perceval of Galles

G. Works that present a folk hero:

1. Gamelyn
2. Havelok

H. Works that present an exemplary religious character:

1. Roberd of Cisyle
2. Sir Gowther

I. Works that present characters for a didactic purpose:

1. Amis and Amiloun
2. Amoryus and Cleopes
3. Athelston
4. Bevis of Hampton
5. Chevalere Assigne
6. Guy of Warwick
7. Morte Arthur
8. Sir Amadace
9. Sir Cleges
10. Sir Isumbras

J. Works that present another kind of hero:

1. Avowynge of King Arthur
2. Floris and Blancheflur
3. Sir Degrevant

Ipomedon as a true romance hero.

William of Palerne is the only other English work at all like Ipomedon A in its exploration of the painful and disruptive energy unleashed by passion and love. Instead of marrying a Greek prince, Melior runs away with her lover William. Disguised in bear skins, they set out as exiles, encountering many hardships and ordeals, yet even though they are hunted by society, the poem depicts their idyllic love and devotion. William eventually becomes more than just Melior's protector and lover; in defending his patrimony and regaining the throne of Sicily, he attains the status of a true chivalric knight:

> William is deprived of his inheritance and grows up in simple surroundings, learning there the essential virtues of justice and loyalty, until at last he comes again into his deserved rank and seizes his inherited power as a particularly worthy ruler.[132]

The poem successfully combines an endearing picture of William as a courtly lover, valiant knight, and ideal ruler--a portrait more complete than any other in these Middle English narratives.

Unlike William of Palerne, Ywain and Gawain is not concerned with an ideal, exemplary hero, but with a flawed protagonist whose trials are caused by his own moral lapse. Ywain fails his test in a way typical of courtly romance, by breaking a vow:

> In contrast to Chrétien's hero, Ywain sins against Alundyne not so much by his lack of love and his failure to understand the nature of true communion with the beloved as by his breach of faith. This

> central episode is much simpler and at the same time has a more moral flavour in the English poem than in the French.[133]

The poem's exploration of truth and loyalty, not of courtly love, is even suggested by its title, which points to a social relationship, not the solitariness of the French Ivain. Despite this, Ywain's adventures, the test of his truth as a chivalric knight, and his progress from selfishness to awareness are all part of the make-up of a typical romance hero.

The vow as a test of the idealized romance hero, together with its social implications, is also a significant element in Partonope of Blois and Romauns of Partenay. Raymond's failure, however, causes repercussions different than those in a usual romance: his wife Melusine is forced to wander the earth as a specter. Instead of ennobling him or enligtening him about the nature of love and commitment, Raymond's suffering, loneliness, and grief cause him to reject earthly life and devote himself to prayer and repentance. The usual testing pattern is seriously modified by fairy-tale elements and a distinctly moral, religious focus. Partonope, on the other hand, ultimately wins back his wife after enduring hardships and even madness. His character is far more typical of the romance hero who is usually reunited with his lover after enduring a period of testing, solitary questing, and separation.

Sir Tristrem offers yet another twist to this basic theme. Although Tristrem and Ysonde are repeatedly separated and united, the story does not end with their final reunion,

nor does it follow the pattern of the French original with its tragic love story. Instead, the poem, which even excludes the heroine from its title, focuses on Tristrem and his chivalric adventures and military prowess:

> The meeting of the lovers is not told with any more sympathy or emphasis than Tristrem's fights against giants and dragons. By confining himself to the mere outlines of the plot and to a simple retelling of the events, the poet completely alters the character of the story. It becomes the history of a fatal error, by which a noble and promising knight is brought to misery.[134]

Even though the story sidesteps the implications and exploration of courtly love by its deletion of introspection, love analysis, and monologue, thereby diminishing Tristrem's stature, he nonetheless belongs to the romance tradition of a hero who is inextricably bound to a woman who determines his actions, his feelings about himself, and his social responsibilities.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight presents a hero different from other romance heroes; his adventures are not set in motion either by a woman's love or by his desire to prove himself worthy of her. Instead, by accepting the challenge to the honor of the entire Round Table by the Greeen Knight, whose sudden, inexplicable appearance disrupts the holiday festivities, Gawain plunges himself into unknown, frightening adventures. More than other heroes, he is a pathetic figure, venturing alone and apprehensive through a desolate landscape until he discovers human company and comfort at Bercilak's castle. His testing is also unusual. He mistakenly worries about his approaching encounter with the Green

Knight while he is unaware of the real test by Bercilak's wife, who succeeds in tempting him more because of his fears than her charms. By the end of the narrative, however, Gawain does gain some self-awareness and somewhat deeper understanding of virtue and truthfulness.

Another woman-seducer tempts the hero in Generides, but she fails completely. After passing this first test, Generides leaves the court, proves his worth by feats of arms, wins the love of Clarionas, and helps his father regain his throne. Although Generides resembles the romance hero in these ways, he is a flat character; the author attempts little characterization, hardly any analysis, and no sense of the protagonist's initiation into society.

Instead of focusing on the testing, initiation, or suffering of the hero, two works present an idealized picture of the chivalric, courtly knight (Table 5, B). Both Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell and Awntyrs off Arthur provide a picture of Gawain as the Ideal Knight. In the first work, Gawain is the epitome of a true knight in his fidelity to his liege lord and in other social graces. The military aspect of his chivalric behavior, glorified in Awntyrs off Arthur, extols Gawain's valor against the Scottish knight Sir Galeron. The unqualified, thoroughly idealized portrait of a courtly, chivalric hero in these two poems is highly unusual among Middle English narratives.

Far more typical is the knightly hero who must overcome obstacles and undergo trials before he and his loved one can

be happily reunited. Six works contain such a portrait of a hero who must prove his worth before he married the woman he loves (Table 5, C). In Eger and Grime, because a proud woman scorns any but the best knight as her suitor, Eger actively seeks renown. In Sir Eglamour of Artois and Torrent of Portyngale, cruel fathers impose tasks on the heroes before giving their daughters in marriage. In King Horn, the hero himself decides he must gain renown before being worthy of Rimenild, but he is later exiled by her angry father; in Horn Child, Rimenild persuades Horn to leave for a seven-year trial period. A similar test period is imposed on the Squire of Low Degree by the King of Hungary in a bizarre test of the Squire and the Princess. Despite the superficial differences, these six narratives are primarily concerned with a hero whose happiness is postponed until he passes certain tests. Because these tests are external, requiring no self-examination or re-evaluation of goals and ideals, the heroes require little beyond stamina, faithfulness, and prowess to succeed. None of these heroes is memorable for his depth of personality, introspection, or growth as a character--all elements of a typical romance hero.

Seven other narratives (Table 5, D) also depart drastically from the usual conception of a romance hero. Instead of focusing on a chivalric knight, these works center on an innocent, persecuted woman. Suffering hardships or undergoing ordeals usually caused by false accusations, these women also depart from the portrait of romance heroines

since they are primarily religious exempla of patience, faith, and innocence. Florence, for example, undergoes a series of ordeals: she is exiled, nearly raped, sold to merchants, and almost shipwrecked before retreating from the world as a nun and becoming a famous healer, who forgives her many false accusers.

The daughter of the King of Tars, another exemplary woman, marries a sultan in order to prevent him from killing her father's knights. She pays lip service to his gods while secretly maintaining her own religion, and finally converts the Sultan after miraculously changing their formless lump of flesh into a human child:

> The naive piety of the tale is perhaps its most striking feature. Indeed, piety seems to have been the author's chief concern, for he scatters religious allusions broadcast through the poem, emphasizes the heroine's saintly resignation and fortitude, contrasts the saving power of the Christian Triune God with the false helpless gods of the Saracens, and sets forth the articles of Christian faith in what is practically a sermon preached by the princess to her penitent husband.[135]

The religious tradition also affects the concept of the hero in many pseudo-historical narratives (Table 5, E). In all of these, the hero is a militant Christian with morally superior forces who fights against the heathens. In Joseph of Arimathie, an extreme example, the hero has divine sanctions and even receives heavenly aid in his battle against the King of Babylon. Naturally, these narratives have little use for a romance hero who is tested, goes off alone on a mysterious quest, is preoccupied with self-questioning, or is obsessed with love. Instead, these heroes are Christian

champions with a clear social and religious purpose.

Other works present a hero unlike the romance hero and unlike either the religious exemplar or champions of Christianity (Table 5, F). These pseudo-histories bring out the heroic, epic qualities of their protagonists. In the three Alexander narratives, the Middle English adapters try to transform Alexander into a heroic figure of epic stature. The hero is thus not a medieval knight representing the spirit of chivalry, but a heroic superman belonging to the epic tradition.[136] The heroic or epic hero dominates other narratives as well. The alliterative Morte Arthure, for example, is deliberately heroic in theme, sentiment, and structure[137] with Arthur as the Christian Warrior King conforming to the medieval conception of a tragic hero:

> The framework, the rise and sudden fall of a noble king, indeed agrees with the concept of the medieval tragedy of fortune, but the poem is undeniably epic in its breadth and heroic scale. Arthur is magnified so that he dominates the action, and the story is presented with a constant awareness of its grandeur in a succession of brilliantly dramatic scenes.[138]

Two other narratives in this group, Libeaus Desconus and Sir Perceval of Galles, present a perspective on the typical courtly romance hero different from that of their originals. The French sources clearly intend a portrait of a true romance hero: his growth as a knight through a maturation and initiation process. The Middle English versions, however, totally transform their originals into tales of adventure that illustrate only the valor and prowess of the heroes.[139] For example, the English author excuses Libeaus's dalliance

with the Lady of the Ile d'Or because he was waylaid, not by her physical charms, but by her magical charms: "Wiþ fantasme and fairie / þus sche blered hie iȝe / þat evell mot sche þrive!" (ll. 1522-24). The whole learning process and growth are turned upside down by such changes. This same kind of simplification transforms the Perceval story. His isolated childhood is not a

> meaningful development towards chivalrous perfection, but hardly more than a curious adventure which already throws light on the hero's undaunted spirit. His naive recklessness is only seen as the natural consequence of his peculiar upbringing, not as a first step in a complex process or maturing and initiation.[140]

More like Libeaus Desconus and Sir Perceval of Galles than true romance, King Horn portrays a hero lacking courtly graces, but demonstrating sheer energy and strength as a fighter. Both King Horn and Horn Child, which evoke the world of Old English battle poetry,[141] are closer to epic than romance. The hero of Sir Orfeo also lacks most romance traits and is more like an epic harpist than a courtly lover or questing knight. When his wife is abducted, he does not go to the Holy Land as a pilgrim or immerse himself in battles, but instead wanders in the woods for ten years, taming animals with this music. Even when he finally does enter the fairy kingdom, he wins Heurodis back through his music, not by feats of arms or tests of his chivalric virtue. He is a most untypical romance hero and is closer to folklore, Celtic myth, and epic.

Folklore also influences two other narratives, Havelok

and Gamelyn (Table 5, G), which bring humor, realism, and earthiness to their portraits of the hero. Gamelyn, in particular, is a popular folk hero, a Robin Hood character who regains his rightful inheritance and brings justice to the corrupt law courts. Havelok, living among the laboring classes, displays his superior strength in stone putting, not in jousting, and his generosity and loyalty to the lower classes, not to courtly knights and ladies. Both heroes champion the causes of the poor and become almost exemplary figures in their pursuit of justice.

The exemplary intention is much stronger in two religious tales, Roberd of Cisyle and Sir Gowther (Table 5, H). Gowther is usually seen as a male Cinderella, a type of saint, or an ideal model--all far removed from a chivalric knight:

> The evolution from devil to saint is a heightened exposition of the Christian belief in Redemption. However grievous his sins, any man may secure the blessings of heaven; he must simply choose God and so conduct his temporal life that he looks always to eternity.[142]

Roberd of Cisyle revolves around the figure of Robert the King, who becomes an exemplar for the necessity of humility and penance. Like Gowther, he belongs to a religious and hagiographic tradition, not to romance. His laments, prayers, and utter humility give poignancy to the poem's religious message: "one does not lightly forget the brief stern speech of the Angel to the raving king nor the plaintiveness of the poor fool's prayer."[143]

The sermonizing aspects, so overt in these religious

exempla, reappear in a slightly different guise in other, more or less didactic, homiletic works (Table 5, I). The heroes of these ten works are neither questing knights nor chivalric heroes engaged in endless battle or introspection, but figures used specifically for didactic ends. In Amoryus and Cleopes, for example, the secret love of the seemingly perfect hero and heroine moves onto a religious plane when the hermit brings the lovers back to life, baptizes them, and then converts the Persians to the true faith. The author manipulates the characters into a conversion story.

The author of Athelston is even more explicit about his conception of the hero. At the beginning, he disclaims any interest in courtly knights or their exploits and proclaims that his poem will center instead on "ffalseness, hou it wil ende" (l. 8). He returns to this theme at the end of his work as well: "Now Iesu, þat is Hevene-kyng, / Leve neuere traytour have betere endyng, / But swych dome ffor to dye" (ll. 810-12).

Didacticism also underlies the conception of the hero in Amis and Amiloun, which actually begins in a courtly setting with two incomparable knights and Ami's secret, adulterous love for the Duke's daughter. However, after the "romance" beginning, the narrative switches to a human and humane treatment of the bonds of loyalty and friendship between Amis and Amiloun, between Amiloun and the young boy who cares for him as a leper, and between Belisaunt and Amis, who agree to sacrifice their children for their friend Amiloun.

The stanzaic Morte Arthur also begins with a courtly setting and a romantic conception of character in Lancelot, the true chivalric knight, who maintains an adulterous relationship with Guinevere. The poet, however, transforms the adulterous lovers into religious exempla and thus seriously modifies the romance concept of the courtly hero and heroine. The poem culminates in the quasi-mysticism surrounding Arthur's trip to Avalon, Guinevere's assumption of holy vows, and Lancelot's becoming a hermit-priest.

This mingling of courtly and religious traits is also popular in other Middle English poems. Bevis of Hampton and Guy of Warwick are the classic examples of a typical romance hero transformed into a religious, exemplary character fighting the Saracens in the Holy Land and dying in sanctity at the narrative's end. Sir Isumbras also combines religious and chivalric elements in its portrait of the hero, beginning with a description of a typical romance knight:

> I will yow telle of a knyghte,
> þat was bothe hardy and wyghte
> And doghty man of dede.
> His name was called sir Ysumbras:
> Swilke a knyghte, als he was,
> Now lyffes nane in lede (ll. 7-12).

The next twelve lines supply even more details of his knightly qualities, and the author apparently wants to "interest his audience in the hero and at the same time to criticize traditional ideals of knighthood."[144] The narrative then turns didactic with the knight's humility tested and his pride punished. Even Isumbras's faith itself is tested when the Sultan tempts him with earthly goods to

renounce his faith, but Isumbras remains steadfast, working as a blacksmith for seven years, fighting the Saracens, and traveling to the Holy Land as a pilgrim: "The poem seems to combine two quite different patterns: the punishment and purification of a sinner and the prolonged demonstration of patience and constancy in adversity."[145]

Three other narratives (Table 5, J) are equally distant from the romance tradition with its typical chivalric knight as hero. Avowynge of King Arthur does center on the vows of four famous knights: Arthur, Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin although there is no real courtly romance hero. The portrait of Kay as a braggart, taunter, and inept knight is as delightful as the unromantic portrait of Arthur as "a sportsman, fond of conviviality and practical jokes."[146] The poem's author is not interested in portraying romance heroes or their typical activities or problems, but simply in borrowing some popular romance figures for a tale of almost pure entertainment. Floris and Blancheflur is even further removed from the romance tradition. In tone and characterization, this poem is close to the fairy tale with its magical fantasy, and its hero and heroine are simply innocent children whose idyllic love conquers all obstacles. Romance traditions are not significant or useful at all in understanding the treatment of character in this poem. They do, however, illuminate the hero of Sir Degrevant, which contains much of the typical love story of romance with all its convolutions. Not the usual swooning, love-sick knight, Degrevant is

light-hearted, flippant, playful, and teasing. He combines a fresh, down-to-earth vitality that few other heroes of medieval literature possess. Instead of engaging in solitary adventures, jousts with unknown opponents, and tests of his character, Degrevant is involved in a realistic feudal problem with a neighboring earl raiding his lands (ll. 1-528). The poem also continues beyond the marriage of the courtly-love romance, and its last fifteen lines summarize the lives of Degrevant and Melior: they have seven children and live happily for thirty years before the death of Melior and the murder of Degrevant by a sultan.

The heroes of Middle English metrical narratives range along a broad spectrum from the simple folk hero in Gamelyn to the courtly lover in Ipomedon A. Traits from the epic chansons de geste as well as religious exempla often color the narratives in varied ways so that the courtly hero shades into the epic hero or the religious chivalric knight in expected and unexpected ways. The Middle English poets practiced no single, clear-cut method in experimenting with the different conceptions of the hero. Sometimes their efforts produced complex, vivid heroes such as Degrevant, but more often, simple, uninspired characters like the Squire of Low Degree, Eger, or Tristrem.

The Middle English hero is, however, distinctive in his simplicity and flatness. Unlike his French counterpart, the English hero is not known for his self-awareness, his passion

and ennobling love for a woman, his introspection, his solitary quests, or his initiation into courtly society. Few of the Middle English authors use the hero as a vehicle for probing man's emotions and their place in a social world. The focus on the individual in the French romance has been displaced by the English emphasis on the moral and didactic implications of the story.

USE OF THE QUEST PATTERN

The fifth characteristic of romance, the quest pattern, is taken as a commonplace of romance literature, sometimes considered "too obvious to discuss."[147] However, many critics, including W. H. Auden, Eric Auerbach, and Eugene Vinaver,[148] do not share this reluctance to discuss the quest, and they assume what Robert Hanning states explicitly: "The form of chivalric romance made the quest of the single hero its organizing principle."[149] It certainly seems that much of the heroism in romance is inextricably bound to this quest pattern, in which a solitary knight journeys through unknown lands and faces unknown adversaries while still acting courteously and nobly at all times. Because the knightly hero is often ignorant of the identities of his opponents or their reasons for testing him, his movement through the haphazard perils, obstacles, and tests usually involves increasing awareness. Thus the hero's private experiences are at the heart of the narrative.

> This active acceptance of life as an adventure, rather than as a battle for endurance or an attempt to protect hard-won security in an enclosed place against threatening, unknown forces, leads the knight into situations which challenge his acceptance of social values and therefore offer an alternative to an identity defined by forces outside himself.[150]

The quest, whatever its immediate cause, usually provides a means for self-fulfillment or discovery of identity; it is always a private experience involving the changing consciousness of a chivalric knight. While still retaining these qualities, later romances, notably the Grail legends, turned the secular quest into a religious experience.[151]

If the quest, regardless of its secular or religious nature, is the main structuring principle of romance, then the Middle English works should follow this basic pattern if they are truly romances. However, few of them actually contain a quest. Instead, they follow other, related structural patterns: test/reward, sin/punishment, separation/reunion of loved ones, and exile/return. Table 6 separates the Middle English poems according to these familiar patterns. Although these five categories are broadly related, they are significantly different from the stereotypic quest of romance and point to basic and substantial changes among the groups of narratives in terms of emphasis, presentation and organization of similar material, and authorial intentions. The pseudo-histories do not fall into any of these categories because they are tied to their historical sources for the structuring of their material.

Table 6

QUESTS AND OTHER STRUCTURAL PATTERNS

A. Quests:

1. Unknown, mysterious quest:

a. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

2. Quest for renown or glory:

a. Eger and Grime
b. Guy of Warwick
c. Ipomedon A
d. Ipomedon B
e. Squyr of Lowe Degre
f. Ywain and Gawain

3. Quest for identity:

a. Sir Degare

4. Quest for a beloved:

a. Bevis of Hampton
b. Generides
c. Sir Eglamour of Artois
d. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
e. Sir Triamour

5. Quest for a stolen child:

a. Reinbrun, Son of Gij

6. Quest as rite of passage:

a. Libeaus Desconus
b. Sir Perceval of Galles

7. Quest as journey toward God:

a. Guy of Warwick
b. Richard Coer de Lyon
c. Roberd of Cisyle
d. Sir Gowther
e. Sir Isumbras

Table 6 (cont'd.)

B. Test/Reward:

1. Amis and Amiloun
2. Avowynge of King Arthur
3. Carle off Carlile
4. Earl of Toulous
5. Grene Knight
6. Roberd of Cisyle
7. Sir Amadace
8. Sir Cleges
9. Sir Eglamour of Artois
10. Sir Isumbras
11. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
12. Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle
13. Turke and Gowin
14. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell
15. Ywain and Gawain

C. Sin/Punishment:

1. Athelston
2. Chevalere Assigne
3. Gamelyn
4. Havelok
5. Octavian
6. Sir Triamour

D. Separation/Reunion of loved ones:

1. Bone Florence of Rome
2. Emare
3. Floris and Blancheflur
4. Horn Child
5. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne
6. King Horn
7. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell
8. Octavian
9. Partonope of Blois
10. Romauns of Partenay
11. Sir Degare
12. Sir Eglamour of Artois
13. Sir Launfal
14. Sir Orfeo
15. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
16. Sir Triamour
17. Sir Tristrem
18. Squyr of Lowe Degre

Table 6 (cont'd.)

E. Exile/Return:

1. Bevis of Hampton
2. Havelok
3. Horn Child
4. Sir Tristrem
5. William of Palerne

F. Pseudo-histories or legendary accounts:

1. Alexander A
2. Alexander B
3. Alexander C
4. Arthour and Merlin
5. Arthur
6. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
7. Destruction of Troy
8. Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain
9. Fillingham Firumbras
10. History of the Holy Grail
11. Joseph of Arimathie
12. Laud Troy Book
13. Lyfe of Alisaunder
14. Merlin
15. Morte Arthur
16. Morte Arthure
17. Otuel a Knight
18. Otuel and Roland
19. Roland and Vernagu
20. Seege of Troye
21. Sege of Melayne
22. Siege of Jerusalem
23. Siege of Thebes
24. Song of Roland
25. Sowdon of Babylon
26. Titus and Vespasian

G. Miscellaneous patterns:

1. Amoryus and Cleopes
2. Awyntyrs off Arthur
3. Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment
4. Guy and Colbrond
5. King of Tars
6. Lai le Freine
7. Romauns of Partenay
8. Sir Degrevant

A. Quest:

Of the Middle English narratives, only Sir Gawain and the Green Knight follows the classic quest pattern where a solitary knight sets out from the safety and security of society into unknown territory to face frightening adventures. Yet the Gawain-poet twists the idea of the unknown adversary by substituting a mere woman and the Green Knight, whom Gawain already knows, for the usual giant, dragon, or bold knight. Similarly, Gawain is not threatened by armed combat in a hostile wilderness, but by social intercourse in a seemingly unthreatening castle.

Nineteen other Middle English works involve some sort of quest, search or extensive journey (Table 6, A). Unlike many French romances, these works do not have a quest simply for the sake of adventure, but the quest for specific ends within the framework of the story. Some of the heroes search for glory or renown. Eger, Guy, and the Squire of Low Degree each leave the court specifically to win the hand of the woman he loves, and this also seems to be true of Ipomedon although his exact motivation is never made explicit. In all these poems, the quest is a form of testing in which the hero must prove himself.

An even more directed and specific quest inspires Sir Degare's adventures as he searches for his father and ultimately his own identity. Other narratives are similar in their purposeful search. Heraud's search for Guy's stolen child sets in motion the action of Reinbrun, and in Sir

Triamour, Sir Torrent of Portyngale, and Sir Eglamour of Artois, the hero searches for his lost love. The heroes of both Generides and Bevis of Hampton not only rescue the woman they love, but also travel to distant lands to defeat the enemy. These works are related through the hero's quest, which usually brings about the reunion of a family, the establishment of rightful rule, or the confirmation of a knight's worth. Both Libeaus Desconus and Sir Perceval of Galles modify the hero's quest for identity found in the French originals. Although these narratives still recount the hero's progress from youth to maturity, the underlying idea of initiation and the deliberate structuring principle have been lost.

The quest assumes a religious complexion in five other narratives. Both Guy of Warwick and Richard Coer de Lyon present exemplary figures; Guy's life represents man's journey from secular to religious ideals, whereas Richard's adventures are part of a Crusade rather than a quest, and he neither changes nor journeys closer to God, but merely continues killing Saracens. Sir Gowther, however, moves from seeming damnation to sainthood, and Robert of Cisyle progresses from sin through repentance to forgiveness. Sir Isumbras most explicitly combines the external adventures of a quest with the internal progress toward piety as his life becomes an allegorical quest for God.[152]

B. Test/Reward:

This structuring principle is central to the variants of the Gawain story, which retain the testing of Gawain without a quest (Table 6, B). The Grene Knight, however, only partially follows this pattern since Sir Bredbeddle's deliberate challenge of Gawain's virtue partially succeeds, and Gawain fails the test. Nonetheless, Gawain suffers neither anguish nor remorse, and the tale ends happily with Gawain and Sir Bredbeddle's return to the court. In the two narratives concerning the Carl of Carlisle, Gawain's courtesy is contrasted to Kay's and Baldwin's churlishness and results in the breaking of a magic enchantment, an act of salvation for someone else. Gawain himself reaps a reward for his courtesy and gentility in the Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell when his loathly lady becomes a beautiful woman.

The test/reward pattern also functions in Sir Eglamour of Artois and Sir Torrent of Portyngale, in which the two heroes are tested by cruel fathers. When they triumph, they are not immediately rewarded, but undergo many trials before being united with their loved ones. The Squyr of Lowe Degre also follows this pattern, and Sir Isumbras may be included since Isumbras's patience is tested and rewarded even though his sin of pride is also punished.

A humorous twist to the basic pattern occurs in Sir Cleges. The hero, whose poverty seems to be a test of his faith and patience, is rewarded by the miraculous appearance of cherries growing in his garden. Later, the three men who

each demand one third of Cleges' reward test him to see if he is true to his word. He is, and they share the twelve blows that Cleges has requested. Afterward, Cleges receives his legitimate reward, property and a stewardship.

A more serious exploration of the repercussions of keeping one's word is found in Sir Amadace and Amis and Amiloun, which both involve the possibility of human sacrifice. Having pledged one half of all he receives to a white knight who aids him, Amadace almost sacrifices his wife and child to fulfill his pledge, but is prevented by the knight who then commends his truth and honor. Amis and Amiloun provides an even more complete and painful testing story. Because of his loyalty to his friend, Amiloun becomes a beggar and leper, and Amis actually slits his children's throats in order to restore his friend's health. Although the children are later brought back to life, and the narrative ultimately ends happily, the story emphasizes the misery and suffering the characters endure before their reward. Roberd of Cisyle also focuses on the suffering and anguish of its hero. He is finally rewarded by regaining his throne, but only after harsh penance and deep sorrow. The Romauns of Partenay carries this tendency to focus on suffering to an extreme. The Count of Lusignan's broken vow causes misery that is never softened by his reunion with his wife or by any reward for undergoing anguish and penance. This work only partially fits the established pattern.

C. Sin/Punishment:

Since many Middle English works have a didactic tendency, the sin/punishment pattern is not surprising as an extension of the common moralizing impulse. Usually, a story moves towards restoration of the original order after a usurper or false accuser has dislocated the lawful state of affairs. In these six works (Table 6, C), justice is finally accomplished and the guilty punished, but only after many characters have suffered. Gamelyn, the only work not directly affecting the rulers of a state, relates the story of the youngest brother who regains his inheritance, which was appropriated by the oldest brother who is hanged at the end of the work. In Havelok, Godard, who usurps the power and tries to murder Havelok, is himself killed. Wymond, the false accuser in Athelston who causes all the near disasters and executions, is denounced, quartered and hanged. In two other narratives, an evil or cruel mother-in-law falsely accuses the Queen. In Chevalere Assigne, she tries to murder the seven children and burn the mother at the stake, but is found out and suffers that fate herself. After falsely accusing the wife of adultery and bearing bastards, the mother-in-law in Octavian plants a false lover so the innocent wife is then exiled. Only after a long separation is the wife vindicated and her false accuser burned. Another false accusation of adultery is committed in Sir Triamour. The false steward is killed by the dog whose master had tried to help the innocent wife. In all these narratives, a misdeed or

sin is the motivating factor for all subsequent action.

D. Separation/Reunion:

The separation/reunion of loved ones is one of the most popular structural pattern, occurring in fourteen of the Middle English works, with variations in four others (Table 6, D). In six poems (King Horn, Horn Child, Sir Triamour, Bone Florence of Rome, Emare, and Octavian), a false accusation leads to the exile of one of the lovers. In the first two, the man is exiled; in the remaining works, the innocent woman is outcast. In two other works, Sir Eglamour of Artois and Sir Torrent of Portyngale, while the heroes are away performing impossible tasks, their lovers are sent into exile with newborn children, but through various twists of plot, these families are finally reunited. Sir Orfeo is the only work in which the lovers are separated by an abduction, and the couple is not reunited until Orfeo slips into the fairy kingdom and wins her back through the granting of a wish. In Squyr of Lowe Degre, the Squire must endure a seven-year test in order to be reunited with his beloved. A broken promise causes the separation of the lovers in both Sir Launfal and Partonope of Blois. Launfal regains his fairy mistress only when he is about to be executed for failing to bring her before the court as a witness. Partonope, on the other hand, actively wins Melior back, but only after going mad, nearly starving to death in the forest, and defeating knights in feats of arms. Sir Degare, which entails the separation of a

mother from her son and both from the fairy knight-father, follows this structural pattern although other circumstances also complicate the story line. The last work that revolves around separation and reunion, Floris and Blancheflur chronicles the adventures of Floris in his search for Blancheflur, a captive maiden sold to Babylonian merchants. Finding her in the Emir's harem, Floris wins both her release and their marriage.

Four narratives, however, twist this popular plot. Like Partonope and Launfal, Raymond in the Romauns of Partenay breaks his promise to his wife, but unlike them, he remains separated from her for life. This is unusual for romance, which almost always ends happily with reunion and marriage. In another variation, Jeaste of Syr Gawayne burlesques this basic pattern as Gawain returns to the court while the woman he has ravished disappears into the woods forever. The narrative ends with no search for the separated lover, no further plot development, and obviously no reunion. The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell also begins with a separation, but ends with the deaths of the hero and heroine, not their happy reunion. Similarly, Sir Tristrem recounts various separations and reunions, but the final outcome is tragic.

E. Exile/Return:

Although this structural principle is a variation of the separation/reunion pattern, it is used in these five

narratives in connection with overt political intrigue (Table 6, E). Threatened by someone who has already killed his father the King or who tries to usurp control of the government, the young hero is saved by a faithful retainer, who then accompanies him into exile.[152] In all of these works except Sir Tristrem, which alters the pattern as it did separation/reunion, the rescue of the future king from his enemies sets in motion the long progress from an exiled prince to a ruling monarch.

F. Pseudo-histories:

Twenty-six narratives fall into the category of pseudo-histories or historical legends. While these poems are colored by motifs borrowed from popular works like romances, their intention remains clearly historical. Since they are translations or adaptations of historical works, they follow structural patterns determined by their source materials. The authors' intention is to preserve historical information, not to structure their sources for specific literary meaning or artistic value.

G. Miscellaneous patterns:

The remaining eight narratives do not fit easily into any of the popular patterns although some manipulate motifs found in many of the other works. Guy and Colbrond, for example, is a short stanzaic poem of 633 lines surviving in only one manuscript. Taken from the extremely popular Guy of

Warwick, this poem recounts the single combat between Guy and Colbrond, the Danish giant; the last third of the poem briefly relates Guy's decision to become a hermit and his message to his wife before he dies. Because the narrative is so short, its design is not elaborate, and it simply recounts one of Guy's most exciting exploits without intending to tell a complete story or develop any complex meaning.

The Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment of only 566 lines is related to the legends of Alexander the Great through its characters and setting in the besieged city, which are not, however, particularly relevant to the poem's Court of Love. In addition, approximately the last hundred lines switch to the besiegers' camp where Marceyn lectures Clarus on courtesy. Because of the poem's incompleteness and the abrupt change in the narrative, its meaning is impossible to determine; it may be primarily a historical account or essentially a didactic narrative.

The Awntyrs off Arthur, a curious conflation of two contradictory, unintegrated parts, is best viewed as two separate poems, as Ralph Hanna suggests: Awntyrs A, ll. 1-338 and 703-15, and Awntyrs B, ll. 339-702.[153] This division makes sense in terms of the meaning of each part. Awntyrs A is basically a version of the Trental of St. Gregory, which entails "the appearance of a female in torments, who has been punished for her want of chastity, pride, and vanity, and whose salvation is procured by a certain number of masses said for her soul."[154] Awntyrs B includes the Arthurian

court, a rude challenger, and a battle between a knight of the Round Table and the outsider.

> Awntyrs B, unlike Awntyrs A, places pragmatic value in the wealth of the Round Table and sees its civility as a powerful virtue; at the end of Awntyrs B, Galeron and his lady are included within the order of chivalry, where their undeniable bravery and beauty may be enhanced by the addition of more abstract virtues of gentility.[155]

Amoryus and Cleopes, John Metham's poem of 2211 lines, contains echoes of the Alexander romances, the Pyramus-Thisbe legend, and the stories of Troilus and Jason.[156] Its Persian setting is obviously borrowed from the heroic Alexander legends, but its intent is religious. The poem ends with the conversion of the Persians after a hermit miraculously brings the two lovers back to life.

The King of Tars also has a religious bias in its story of a Christian princess marrying a Sultan to save the lives of her father's soldiers. While combining exotic descriptions with other motifs from romance and folklore, the tale is didactic and religious and does not conform to any of the other typical structural patterns.

Sir Degrevant is a composite with many courtly elements such as the secret love between Degrevant and the Earl's daughter, the three-day tournament, the treacherous steward, the faithful servant, and elaborate descriptions and details, but there is no exile, no false accusation, no real testing. The Earl, Degrevant's enemy, permits the marriage without any of the obstacles, impossible tasks, exiles, or adventures that most heroes must endure. Instead of following typical

testing patterns for his plot, the author simply combines conventional courtly motifs with realistic details for a lively, entertaining story without any moral or didactic intention.

Lai le Freine, a 340-line fragment of the English version of Marie de France's story, combines familiar motifs, especially that of the child who is abandoned by her mother and eventually reunited with her family. The end of the story, missing in the English version, is the crux of the story: the knight, pressured by his vassals, deserts his lover Freine to take a proper bride who turns out to be Freine's sister. The mother recognizes her abandoned daughter, confesses all, and Freine and her lover-knight are reunited after his marriage is annulled. Thus, Freine's loyalty and fidelity are rewarded.

The last work, Romauns of Partenay, contains an extraordinary range of incidents encompassing three generations.[157] Part of the narrative deals with the broken promise that leads to perpetual separation, a twist of the separation/reunion pattern, but this is only one section of the work, which also includes a fairy mistress, enchanted mountains and castles, taboos, laments, prayers, pilgrimages to Rome, exploits of Raymond and Melusine's sons, and punishments. "Included also are descriptions of architecture and feasting and social conversation in the manner of a society novel."[158] A religious intention seems to permeate the whole poem, with Raymond declaring that the dreadful occurrences are due to

"my cruell sin And my wicked vice" (l. 4958). The work ends with a prayer for the continuation of Melusine's progeny (ll. 6385-91), as well as a whole other set of prayers (ll. 6434-6552), followed by the author's apology to the audience for his lack of artistic skill. Clearly, no single plot could orchestrate this sprawling composite, which reads more like a series of independent stories than a complex, interconnected whole.

Except for these eight narratives and the twenty-six pseudo-histories, all the Middle English works conform to a very small number of structural patterns: the quest, test/reward, sin/punishment, separation/reunion, and exile/return.

DISCUSSION OF THE ROMANCE CRITERIA

Through a close examination of the five characteristic elements of romance, it becomes clear that the pseudo-histories or legendary-historical accounts do not conform to the typical patterns of the romance genre and tend to form a separate group from the other Middle English works. These narratives characteristically use miraculous events and descriptions of marvelous creatures, seldom deal with courtly love, and touch only on those aspects of the chivalric ethic that concern Christian militancy. The typical romance hero is replaced by an essentially heroic, military figure whose exploits and conquests are enumerated and glorified. Because historical traditions are followed, typical patterns that

involve testing the romance hero are irrelevant. Since they have little to do with romance in these important respects, their classification as "romance" seems peculiar, arbitrary, and mistaken, especially since their French counterparts are classed as chansons de geste.

Clear-cut patterns are not so readily recognizable in the remaining narratives that combine motifs from romance, religious exempla, and folklore. No consistency emerges from an examination of the five criteria: existence of supernatural, marvelous, and exotic motifs; interest in courtly love; adherence to the chivalric ethic; emphasis on the individual as reflected in the romance hero; and use of the quest pattern. Some works, however, seem to comply with most of these requirements: Generides, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Torrent of Portyngale, Ipomedon A, Ipomedon B, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Ywain and Gawain, William of Palerne, Octavian, Partonope of Blois, Sir Degrevant, and Romauns of Partenay.

Yet there is one additional characteristic of romance, more difficult to discuss, but equally important. This might be called the "literariness" or bookishness of the genre--its self-consciousness, its adherence to decidedly artificial, literary conventions, its close attention to principles of rhetoric, and its delight in highly-formalized embellishments, elaboration, and pictorial and visual description:

> For romance was primarily a literary genre in the strict and perhaps somewhat narrow sense of the term; it was the product of trained minds, not of an uncritical and ingenuous imagination.[159]

Other critics also emphasize this literary quality in attempting to dispel the misconception that romance as a genre is as vapid as the Harlequin series:

> far from being either naive, sentimental stories akin to fairy tales or rather heavy moralizing allegories, [romance] can instead be seen as confident, complex, and most likely entirely self-conscious manipulations of the elements of fiction.[160]

Eugene Vinaver illuminates the sophisticated and elaborate techniques of romance, its entrelacement and its conjunction of sen and matière:

> What a good romance writer does, then, according to Gottfried von Strassburg and Marie de France, is to reveal the meaning of the story (its meine), adding to it such embellishing thoughts as he considers appropriate: in this way he raises his work to a level which no straightforward narrative could ever reach.[161]

Most Middle English poets tend to reverse this process of the learned romance writers and reduce the elaborate and literary romance to its basic story, stripping it of all the learning and embellishment that characterize the romance as an art form. However, a few of the Middle English works retain the descriptions and elaborate details from the aristocratic social life and are patterned on French examples. These works include Emare, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Squyr of Lowe Degre, Partonope of Blois, Ipomedon A, Sir Degrevant, the couplet version of Generides, William of Palerne, Sir Launfal, and Romauns of Partenay.

NOTES

[1]Ojars Kratins, "The Middle English Amis and Amiloun: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?" PMLA, 81 (1966), 347.

[2]W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance, (1908, rpt. New York: Dover, 1957), pp. 3-4.

[3]Ker, pp. 321-34, 344-62.

[4]R. W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), p. 2.

[5]Southern, p. 222.

[6]Eugene Vinaver, Rise of Romance (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 1.

[7]Charles Baldwin, Three Medieval Centuries of Literature in England 1100-1400 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1932),

[8]D. M. Hill, "Romance as Epic," English Studies, 44 (1963), 95-107. He comments that romance is "intensely realistic and matter of fact" (p. 107).

[9]Nathaniel Griffin, "A Definition of Romance," PMLA, 38 (1923), 55-56.

[10]Hill, pp. 104-5.

[11]Morton W. Bloomfield, "Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance," in his Essays and Explorations (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 97.

[12]Bloomfield, p. 106

[13]Eugene Vinaver, "From Epic to Romance," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 46 (1964), 478.

[14]Griffin, pp. 50-70.

[15]Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale, eds., Middle English Metrical Romances (New York: Prentice-Hall,

1930), p. 4.

[16]W. T. H. Jackson, "The Nature of Romance," in Approaches to Medieval Romance, Yale French Studies, No. 51, ed. Peter Haidu (New Haven: Yale French Studies, 1974), p. 25.

[17]Gillian Beer, The Romance (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 10.

[18]M. A. Owings, The Arts in the Middle English Romances (New York: Bookman, 1952), p. 138.

[19]Bloomfield, p. 101.

[20]Pamela Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 227.

[21]John Stevens, Medieval Romance (London: Hutchinson Univ. Library, 1973), pp. 97-109.

[22]Jackson, p. 15.

[23]Gradon, pp. 236-37.

[24]W. M. Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1912), p. 98.

[25]Helen Cooper, "Magic That Does Not Work," Medievalia et Humanistica, NS 7 (1976), 131-46.

[26]Henry James, Preface to The American (New York: Scribners' Sons, 1907), pp. xvi-xvii. See also Beer, p. 3.

[27]Owings, p. 164.

[28]Dorothy Everett, "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romances," 1929; rpt. in Essays on Middle English Literature, ed. P. Kean (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 10-11.

[29]Anne Thompson Lee, "Le Bone Florence of Rome: A Middle English Adaptation of a French Romance," in The Learned and the Lewed, ed. Larry D. Benson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), p. 351.

[30]Angels give advice, warning or directions in Joseph of Arimathie, Sege of Melayne, Sir Isumbras, Richard Coer de Lyon, Chevalere Assigne, Amis and Amiloun. Miracles can take the form of punishment as in Joseph of Arimathie and Roland and Vernagu. Miracles also confirm the truth of a doctrine or the genuineness of relics as in Joseph of Arimathie, Roland and Vernagu, and Siege of Jerusalem. Miraculous

assistance in battle is common in Joseph of Arimathie, Roland and Vernagu, Otuel and Roland, and Sir Isumbras. Miracles can also be answers to prayers as in Otuel and Roland and Sir Gowther. Other kinds of miracles appear in Sege of Melayne, Titus and Vespasian, Sir Gowther, Amis and Amiloun, Richard Coer de Lyon, and Chevalere Assigne. Conversion of heathens by signs from heaven occurs in Otuel and Roland, Amoryus and Cleopes, Siege of Jerusalem, and Titus and Vespasian.

[31]George Kane, Middle English Literature (London: Methuen, 1951), p. 80.

[32]A. H. Krappe, "Who Was the Green Knight?" Speculum, 13 (1938), 206; and W. A. Nitze, "Is the Green Knight Story a Vegetation Myth?" Modern Philology, 33 (1935-36), pp. 351-66.

[33]Cooper, p. 144.

[34]M. E. Barnicle, ed., Seege or Batayle of Troye, EETSOS 172 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1927), pp. xliv-xlv.

[35]See, for example, Roger Boase, The Origins and Meaning of Courtly Love, 1977; Alexander T. Denomy, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love," Medieval Studies, 6 (1944), 175-260, and The Heresy of Courtly Love, 1965; E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Myth of Courtly Love," Ventures, 5 (1965), 16-23; Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou, eds., In Pursuit of Perfection, 1975; Robert W. Hanning, "The Social Significance of Twelfth-Century Chivalric Romance," Medievalia et Humanistica, NS 3 (1972), 3-29; W. T. H. Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages, 1960; Henry A. Kelly, Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer, 1975; Helen C. R. Laurie, "'Eneas' and the Doctrine of Courtly Love," MLR, 64 (1969), 283-94; John Lawlor, ed., Patterns of Love and Courtesy, 1966; Moshé Lazar, Amour Courtois et 'fin'amors' dans la littérature du XII^e siècle, 1964; C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love, 1958; G. Mathews, "Marriage and Amor Courtois in Late Fourteenth-Century England," in Chaucer and his Contemporaries, ed. Helaine Newstead, 1968; John C. Moore, "'Courtly Love': A Problem of Terminology," Journal of the History of Ideas, 40 (1978), 621-32; F. X. Newman, The Meaning of Courtly Love, 1968; Derek Pearsall, ed., The Floure and the Leafe, 1962; Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, 1966; Carl D. Uitti, "Remarks on Old French Narrative: Courtly Love and Poetic Form," Romance Philology, 26 (1972-73), 77-93; Francis Utley, "Must We Abandon the Concept of Courtly Love?" Medievalia et Humanistica, NS 3 (1972), 299-423.

[36]Karl Young, "Chaucer's 'Troilus and Cressida' as Romance," PMLA, 52 (1938), 46.

[37]Norma Lorre Goodrich, The Ways of Love (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

[38]Roger Boase, The Origins and Meaning of Courtly Love (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1977), p. 109.

[39]Boase, pp. 129-30.

[40]Joan Ferrante, "The Conflict of Lyric Conventions and Romance Form," in In Pursuit of Perfection, ed. Joan Ferrante and George D. Economou (New York: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 173.

[41]A. H. Diverres, "Chivalry and fin'amor in Le Chevalier au Lion," in Studies in Medieval Literature and Language, ed. W. Rothwell et al. (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1973), p. 91.

[42]Robert Jordan, "Chaucerian Romance?" in Approaches to Medieval Romance, Yale French Studies, No. 51, ed. Peter Haidu (New Haven: Yale French Studies, 1974), pp. 226-27.

[43]D. H. Green, "Irony and Medieval Romance," Forum for Modern Language Studies, 6 (1970), 50.

[44]Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 375-97.

[45]Raymond Cormier, One Heart One Mind (University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, 1973), p. 63.

[46]John A. Yunck, ed., Eneas (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), p. 2.

[47]Marc Bloch, Feudal Society, trans. L. A. Manyon (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 106.

[48]Margaret Schlauch, English Medieval Romance and Its Social Foundation (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Nankowe, 1956), p. 175.

[49]A. C. Gibbs, ed., Middle English Romances (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 15, 22.

[50]Velma Richmond, The Popularity of Middle English Romances (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Press, 1975), p. 119.

[51]These works are Sir Tristrem, Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment, Morte Arthure, Octavian, Lai le Freine, Sir Launfal, Floris and Blancheflur, Ywain and Gawain, Partonope of Blois, Ipomedon, Romauns of Partenay, Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell, and William of Palerne.

[52]Lillian Herlands Hornstein, "Composites of Courtly Romance," in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English

1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven: Conn. Acad. of Arts and Sciences, 1967), p. 155; hereafter referred to as Manual.

[53]Elizabeth Williams, "Launval and Sir Landevale: A Medieval Translator and His Methods," Leeds Studies in English, NS 3 (1969), 96.

[54]Earl D. Anderson, "The Structure of Sir Launfal," Papers on Language and Literature, 13 (1977), 115-24.

[55]This tendency is especially true for Ywain and Gawain, Partonope of Blois, Octavian, Generides, Ipomedon, and William of Palerne.

[56]Albert B. Friedman, ed., Ywain and Gawain, EETSOS 254, (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. xvii.

[57]The French original reads: "Li un recontoient noveles, / li autre parloient d'Amors, / des angoisses et des dolors / et des granz diens qu'orent sovant / li deciple de son covant, / qui lors estoit mult dolz et buens; / mes or i a molt po des suens, / qu'a bien pris l'ont ja tuit lessier, / s'an est Amors molt abessiee, / car cil qui soloient amer / se feisoient cortois clamer / et preu et large et enorable / or est Amors tornee a fable / por ce que cil qui rien n'en santent / dient qu'il aiment, mes il mantent, / et cil fable et manconge an font / qui s'an vantent et droit n'i ont" (ll. 12-28) in Chrétien de Troyes, Ywain ou le Chevalier au Lion, ed. Jan Nelson and Carleton W. Carroll (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968). The English text, on the other hand, emphasizes truth: "Fast þai carped and curtaysly / of dedes of armes and of veneri / And of gude knightes þat lyfed þen, / And how men might þam kyndeli ken / By doghtines of þaire gude ded / On ilka syde, wharesum þai ȝede; / For þai war stif in ilka stowre, / And þarfore gat þai grete honowre. / þai tald of more trewth þam bitw[e]ne / þan now omang men here es sene, / For trowth and luf es al bylaft; / Men uses now anoþer craft. / With worde men makes it trew and stabil, / Bot in þaire faith es noght bot fabil; / With þe mowth men makes it hale, / Bot trew trowth es nane in þe tale" (ll. 25-40).

[58]Friedman, p. xvii.

[59]Charles W. Dunn, "Romances Derived from English Legends," in Manual, p. 37.

[60]Kane, p. 51.

[61]Hornstein, "Eustache-Constance-Florence-Griselda Legends," in Manual, p. 79.

[62]Helaine Newstead, "Arthurian Legends," in Manual, p. 128.

[63]Hornstein, p. 146.

[64]Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1924), p. 298.

[65]Loomis, p. 298.

[66]Richmond, p. 75.

[67]Ronald M. Spensley, "The Courtly Lady in Partonope of Blois," Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 74 (1973), 288-91.

[68]Kane, p. 33.

[69]Loomis, p. 41.

[70]Hornstein, p. 148.

[71]Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 95.

[72]Mehl, p. 97.

[73]Mehl, pp. 97-98.

[74]See Sacvan Bercovitch, "Romance and Anti-Romance in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," PQ, 44 (1965), 30-37; and John Finlayson, "The Expectations of Romance in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Genre, 12 (1979), 1-24.

[75]Carol Falvo Heffernan, ed., Le Bone Florence of Rome (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1976), p. 22.

[76]Richmond, p. 131.

[77]Bruce Dickins and R. M. Wilson, eds., Early Middle English Texts (Cambridge, England: Bowes and Bowes, 1951), p. 30.

[78]"Thus, not only the structure and the proportions have been radically changed, but also the exposition of the themes and the meaning" (Mehl, p. 72).

[79]W. T. H. Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), p. 15.

[80]Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1940), p. 93.

[81]Léon Gautier, Chivalry, trans. D. C. Dunning, ed. Jacque Levron, (Paris, 1883; rpt. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959), p. 57.

[82]Rosemary Woolf, "The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval Literature," Review of English Studies, NS 13 (1962), 95.

[83]Eugene Vinaver, "The Questing Knight," in The Binding of Proteus, ed. Marjorie W. McCune et al., (Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1980), p. 13.

[84]J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (1924; rpt. New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p. 57.

[85]Jackson, Literature of the Middle Ages, p. 59. See also Arthur B. Ferguson, The Indian Summer of English Chivalry (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1960); and Larry D. Benson, Malory's Morte Darthur (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972).

[86]Kemp Malone and Albert C. Baugh, The Middle Ages, Vol. I of A Literary History of England, 2nd ed., ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 177.

[87]David Staines, "Havelok the Dane: A Thirteenth-Century Handbook for Princes," Speculum, 51 (1976), 602-23.

[88]Sheila Delany and Vahan Ishkanian, "Theocratic and Contractual Kingship in Havelok the Dane," Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 22 (1974), 290-302.

[89]Schlauch, p. 177.

[90]Mehl, p. 49. Mehl also argues that the main purpose of King Horn is to praise "a hero of royal descent whose progress and whose heroic exploits are glorified" (p. 51).

[91]W. H. Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer (1906; rpt. London: Haskell House, 1968), p. 177.

[92]M. Mills, ed., Libeaus Desconus (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 62.

[93]George Keiser, "Narrative Structure in the Alliterative Morte Arthure, 26-720," Chaucer Review, 9 (1974), 130-44.

[94]John Finlayson, ed., Morte Arthure (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 11.

[95]A. McI. Trounce, ed., Athelston, EETSOS 224 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), p. 14.

[96]Trounce, p. 14.

[97]Trounce, p. 18.

[98]Luann Kitchel, "A Critical Study of the Middle English Alexander Romances," Diss. Michigan State Univ., 1973, p. 24.

[99]Mehl, pp. 240-41.

[100]Mehl, p. 223.

[101]Mehl, p. 224.

[102]Mehl, p. 245.

[103]Heffernan, p. 22.

[104]Kitchel, p. 22.

[105]S. J. Herrtage, ed., The Sege off Melayne, EETSES 35 (London: N. Trubner, 1880), p. xi.

[106]Ralph Hanna, ed., The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1974), p. 25.

[107]David N. Klausner, "Exempla and the Awntyrs of Arthure," Medieval Studies, 34 (1934-35), 307-25.

[108]Hornstein, in Manual, p. 146.

[109]Loomis, p. 243.

[110]Burlesque elements are deliberately used in the Middle English versions of Octavian, especially in the figure of Clement.

[111]Loomis, p. 243.

[112]Mehl, p. 124.

[113]Kane, p. 28.

[114]Vinaver, "Questing Knight," p. 126.

[115]Bernard Huppé, "The Concept of the Hero in the Early Middle Ages," in Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. Norman T. Burns and Christopher Reagan (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1975), pp. 1-26.

[116]Richmond, p. 57.

[117]David Herlihy, ed., The History of Feudalism (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 281.

[118]C. M. Bowra, Heroic Poetry (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 47.

[119]Joseph Edward Nelson, "Chaucer's Knight's Tale: A Vision of a Secular Ideal of Chivalry," DAI, 41 (1980), 242A (Univ. of Kansas).

[120]Bruce Wardropper, "The Epic Hero Superseded," in Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. Norman T. Burns and Christopher Reagan (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1975), p. 199.

[121]Cormier, p. 65.

[122]Matthew de Vendôme, Ars Versificatoria, in Les artes poétiques du XII[e] et du XIII[e] siècle, ed. Edmond Faral, (Paris: E. Champion, 1924), pp. 109-93.

[123]Geoffroi de Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, in Faral, pp. 197-262; and Documentum de Arte Versificandi, in Faral, pp. 265-320.

[124]Robert Stevick, ed., Five Middle English Narratives (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), p. xiv.

[125]Walter Curry, The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1916), p. 3.

[126]Fred N. Robinson, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

[127]Charles Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetics (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

[128]Stevens, p. 170.

[129]W. T. H. Jackson, "Problems of Communication in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes," in Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1970), p. 39.

[130]Joan Ferrante, Women as Image in Medieval Literature (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), p. 2.

[131]Ferrante, p. 65.

[132]Mehl, p. 250.

[133]Mehl, p. 183.

[134]Mehl, p. 177.

[135]Loomis, p. 47.

[136]J. P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in the Middle Ages, 2 vols. (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1930-35).

[137]Finlayson, ed., Morte Arthure, p. 15.

[138]Newstead, in Manual, p. 45.

[139]Mehl, p. 72.

[140]Mehl, p. 101.

[141]J. Caro, "Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild," Englische Studien, 12 (1899), x.

[142]Richmond, p. 68.

[143]Loomis, p. 68.

[144]Mehl, p. 133.

[145]Mehl, p. 133.

[146]Newstead, in Manual, p. 64.

[147]Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 345.

[148]W. H. Auden, "The Quest Hero," in Tolkien and the Critics, ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose Zimbardo (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968); Eric Auerbach, "The Knight Sets Forth," in Mimesis, trans. Willard Trask (1953; New York: Doubleday, 1957); Vinaver, "Questing Knight."

[149]Robert W. Hanning, The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), p. 3.

[150]Hanning, p. 3.

[151]Ferrante, Women as Image, p. 3.

[152]Laurel Braswell, "Sir Isumbras and the Legend of St. Eustache," Medieval Studies, 27 (1965), 128-51.

[153]Ralph Hanna III, "The Awntyrs off Arthure: An Interpretation," MLQ, 31 (1970), 275-97.

[154]F. Madden, ed., Syr Gawayne (London, 1839), p. 328.

[155]Hanna, p. 296.

[156]R. M. Lumiansky, "Legends of Alexander the Great," in Manual, p. 112.

[157]Richmond, p. 75.

[158]Hornstein, "Miscellaneous Romances," in Manual, p. 166.

[159]Vinaver, "Epic to Romance," p. 488.

[160]Peter Haidu, in Approaches to Medieval Romance, p. 3.

[161]Vinaver, "Epic to Romance," p. 490.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NARRATIVES NAME THEMSELVES

Since so few of the Middle English narratives conform to the criteria usually thought essential for romance, it is necessary to reconsider the validity of this label for the majority of these works. Before imposing more outside standards or modern theoretical conceptions on narratives written from 500 to 750 years ago, we should first look closely at the works themselves to try to capture any medieval sense of narration or genre through the names the authors applied to their own works.

If a consistent sense does emerge, then we should respect the medieval categories because they represent the authors' intentions in placing their works in certain identifiable traditions. For example, if an author repeatedly refers to his work as a "treatise" or a "life" when "romance" was an available or widely used label, it would seem clear that he did not think of his work as a romance, nor would he want his audience to associate it with other well-known romances.

However, several problems arise immediately. First, if several authors call their works by the same name, how can twentieth-century critics be certain that they see the same

similarities that medieval authors saw? Obviously, there is no guarantee that our analytical tools are the same, and, worse yet, there is no way of testing modern interpretations against medieval ones. Even though we can do little about this problem, we need to be aware of its existence.

The second problem is that many narratives have no names or labels. There are several reasons for this. A medieval author or copyist might not have labeled the narrative simply because he considered it neither necessary nor important. In other cases, labels or titles are missing because many medieval manuscripts survive only as fragments without the beginning and/or ending, the parts where the author was most likely to address his audience directly, clarify his intentions, or label his work. But even in those instances when the manuscript is complete with a title, incipit, and explicit, there is no way of knowing whether any given label is the author's own or was added to the manuscript by a scribe. If a descriptive word appears in the incipit or explicit, we can assume that it is the scribe's, but if it appears in the title or text, we can assume nothing. In fact, it is impossible to determine from the printed edition whether the title actually appears in the manuscript or was inserted by the modern editor. "The Geste Historiale of the Destruction of Troy" is an excellent example of a title invented by a modern editor. As our primary sources of information, the manuscripts must be our ultimate guide, and even descriptive words inserted by a scribe or compiler are important because

they at least reflect a conception of the work in the mind of an individual who lived and worked within medieval traditions.

All the descriptive labels found in the works themselves --in the title, incipit, explicit, and the poem--are tabulated in Appendices A and B. Appendix A is arranged alphabetically by work, Appendix B alphabetically by descriptive label. These labels are "book," "dite," "geste," "history," "lay," "plaint," "process," "romance," "saw," "song," "spell," "story," "tale," "treatise," "vita" (or the English "life"), and "work." The word "rhyme" is also included since the expression "in ryme" or "in my rime" seems to refer to the work itself as a metrical narrative, and "matter" appears even though it seems to refer more to the substance of the material than the work as a whole.

In Appendix C, I have listed four variables of composition about each poem to try to determine whether there is any consistent principle governing the use of these labels. A comparison of length, rhyme scheme, area and date of composition of all the works classified by each label should show whether these works are in some way similar. I have also examined the possibility that the scribe of a particular manuscript collection might have favored a certain descriptive label, a possibility that would have undercut my intention of using these terms in helping to define genre. However, no such pattern emerged from any particular collection of manuscripts.

Since most works contain more than one descriptive word, these labels were probably not intended as strict categories. For example, Romauns of Partenay refers to itself as "book," "dite," "history," "rhyme," "romance," and "work." Although this multiple labeling suggests complete chaos for generic classification, the labels should not be dismissed as totally meaningless or absolutely arbitrary until we first ascertain their general and specific meanings during the Middle Ages.

The word "book" is obviously an extremely broad designation that can refer either to the work itself or to a division or chapter of a complete work, as in the Destruction of Troy and History of the Holy Grail. The OED supports this vague usage: 1) "(written) narrative or account, record, list, register," 2) "written or printed treatise or series of treatises, occupying several sheets of paper or other substance fastened together so as to compose a material whole," and more specifically, 3) "a literary composition such as would occupy one or more volumes, without regard to the material form or forms in which it actually exists."[1] "Book" was also used in medieval times to designate a division, "a main division of the subject-matter of a prose treatise, or of a poem" (OED).

The seven Middle English works that call themselves books range from 2211 lines to 27852 lines; they were composed from ca. 1250 (Arthour and Merlin) to ca. 1500 (Romauns of Partenay). The rhyme scheme and area of composition also

appear unprofitable in the attempt to determine possible reasons for this common designation.

The Romauns of Partenay is the only narrative to use "dites" in its description. "Dite" is anything "indited or composed and put in writing; a composition; writing" or a "composition in poetic form or intended to be set to music; a song, a ditty" (OED). Both meanings were current in medieval times, although the first definition seems more applicable to this long-winded work, which would have been an unsingable song.

"Geste" probably came into use in English as a way of talking about narratives similar to the French chansons de geste, songs of heroic exploits or chivalric deeds. The OED defines "geste" as a "story or romance in verse: also simply (in later use), a story, a tale." Although the nineteen works with this label do seem to focus on the exploits of a hero, there is no consistency among them according to the four variables: they range from 541 to 12195 lines; rhyme schemes include tail-rhyme, alliteration, four-stress couplets, and octosyllabic verse; areas of composition range all over England, and the dates range from ca. 1280 (Havelok) to the 1400s (Partonope of Blois).

Three narratives refer to themselves as "history." This seems appropriate to Romauns of Partenay, which spans three

generations of one family and ends with the author's prayer for the continuation of Melusine's line. This is not the case, however, for Generides and Sir Isumbras. Although the Douce MS. says: "Here begynneth the hystorye of the valyaunte knyght syr Isenbras," the Thornton MS. substitutes the word "romance." As a designation, history does not seem especially suitable for either work unless it was intended to lend authority to a fictional story.

The word "lay," like "geste," also derives from non-English sources, and the authors of the six narratives that use this word consciously place their works in the tradition of the Breton lay, popular in French aristocratic courts. According to the OED, a lay is a "short lyric or narrative poem intended to be sung. Originally applied spec. to the poems, usually dealing with matter of history or romantic adventure, which were sung by minstrels." Indeed, five of the six poems are quite short, ranging from 340 to 1224 lines. Three of these have the twelve-line tail-rhyme stanza; the other two, the short couplet. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is the exception since it is longer, 2530 lines, and uses the alliterative line with the bob and wheel. Emare and Earl of Toulous are similar in date, geography, rhyme scheme, and length, but they do not appear in the same manuscript. Lai le Freine and Sir Orfeo share the same date, geography, and rhyme scheme and both appear in the Auchinleck MS. although Sir Orfeo is 602 lines and Lai le Freine only 340

lines (or 488 with Weber's ending to the fragment). Since the sampling is so small, no conclusions can be drawn, but it may be that the Breton lay enjoyed a popularity in England in the early 1300s in the Southeast and ca. 1400 in the Northeast Midlands.

"Matter" is used in ten works, usually meaning the topic or subject under discussion. The OED gives two relevant definitions: "Material for expression; something to say; fact or thought as material for a writing or speech" and "subject of a book or discourse; a theme, topic, subject of exposition." Except for three poems under 5600 lines (Ipomedon B, Joseph of Arimathie, William of Palerne), these works are long, ranging up to 27852 lines. The authors of these seven works, which are among the longest narratives studied, seem to have been especially aware of their large body of material and concerned with writing in a clear, understandable style.

The OED defines "plaint" under "complaint": "plaintive poem, a plaint. (Frequent as a title, but in later times chiefly descriptive)." "Plaint" is used only in the poem Emare, which clearly identifies itself: "Thys ys on of Brytayne layes / That was vsed by old dayes; / Men callys 'Playn þe Garye'" (ll. 1030-32). It is not clear why this one poem of all the Middle English narratives has this title since Emare's emotive quality is similar to others'.

The word "process" might strike us as an odd word for a story or narrative, but in medieval times it had that meaning as well as the more usual modern one. The OED gives two meanings: "course (of a narrative, treatise, argument, etc.); drift, tenor, gist," as well as "narration, narrative; relation, story, tale; a discourse or treatise; an argument or discussion." Only two of the five citations in Appendix B clearly mean the narrative as a story: "Now the proses is plainly put to an end" (the next to the last line in Destruction of Troy) and the similar "And thus I make an ende of this processe" (l. 6990 of Generides). The reference in Alexander A might refer to the work itself: "To profer þis process prestly too here / I karp of a kid king Arisba was his hote" (ll. 171-71). However, the reference in Amoryus and Cleopes is clearly to the working out of the story: "as tellyth the proces of this story" (l. 1156).

The word "rhyme" in the expression "in rime" occurs in six narratives that have little else in common. They range in length from 340 to 8890 lines and in date from the 1200s to late 1300s. Since all the works use other descriptive words that are not always the same, the label "rhyme" is not especially significant in helping to classify these works.

"Romance," the most important descriptive word, has been studied by Reinald Hoops[2] and more recently by Paul Strohm.[3] In his study, Hoops demonstrates that the term could mean

many different things at different times: a work in French or translated from French or a work in Latin or translated from Latin (works in romance languages or the old Roman tongue), a narrative poem, a narrative not necessarily in verse, or an authoritative source.[4] Even in medieval times, however, romance had the more restricted meaning of a "tale in verse, embodying the adventures of some hero of chivalry, esp. of those of the great cycles of mediaeval legend, and belonging both in matter and form to the ages of knighthood" (OED).

Although romance did have this narrower meaning, it is difficult to agree with Paul Strohm's conclusion that "the majority of the works designated in this way recount the chivalric (martial and occasionally amatory) deeds of a single notable hero."[5] In Hoops's list of the twenty-four medieval works that call themselves romances, the majority quite clearly do not conform to Strohm's description. In fact, only four (Bevis of Hampton, Richard Coer de Lyon, Sir Perceval of Galles, and Partonope of Blois) qualify. By stretching the criteria, Octavian, Sir Eglamour of Artois, and Sir Torrent of Portyngale might also qualify, and by wrenching them, possibly even Sir Gowther, Sir Isumbras, Earl of Toulous, and Lancelot of the Laik. But it is impossible to include the remaining thirteen works.[6] By ignoring the fact that "romance" was applied to such diverse works as an allegory, a passion poem, a saint's life, a mirror, fabulous histories, moral tales, and English epics, Strohm

seriously misrepresents the usage of such an important term.

I have found four more English works that refer to themselves as "romance" besides those in Hoops's list (which until now was considered complete): Amis and Amiloun, Guy of Warwick, Ipomedon A, and Lyfe of Alisaunder. Like the other labels, "romance" is not applied consistently in terms of length, rhyme scheme, area of composition, date, or manuscript collection (Appendix C).

Six narratives use the descriptive word "saw," which means a "story, tale, recital" (OED). Except for Richard Coer de Lyon, a narrative of about 7000 lines, the other works are all relatively short, less than 3000 lines. Although all these works were composed at an early date, the usage of "saw" was not limited to this period since notations in the OED extend from 1320 to 1460. The word, however, does suggest recitation or oral delivery as it is often accompanied by verbs such as "say," "tell," or "sing." The six poems are not related in any other discernible ways.

"Song" as a descriptive label appears in only two short works under 1500 lines, Emare and King Horn. The OED defines "song" as a "metrical composition adapted for singing, esp. one in rime and having a regular verse-form; occas., a poem." Both works are short, rhyming poems with many references to minstrels; King Horn even has a ballad-like quality,[8] and the author of Emare has been described as a "minstrel belonging

to the Mid-Yorkshire district."[9] However, the poems are different in other ways; King Horn is dated 1225 and Emare ca. 1400, and they are written in different rhyme schemes as well as in different dialects.

"Spell" describes seven Middle English works ranging from 852 to 18644 lines. The word can mean a "discourse or sermon; a narrative or tale" (OED). This definition, however, does not seem adequate for these works since it implies either a weightiness or seriousness of intent that these works do not possess. In fact, four of the poems are popular, oral tales, in which "spell" occurs in the expression "harken to my spell." From only six instances, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the precise nature of this word because the works vary considerably in length, rhyme scheme, date and area of composition, and manuscript collection.

Eighteen works call themselves "story," one of the most prevalent descriptive labels. Etymologically, it is related to the Old French, estoire and the Latin historia. Originally, the word did contain this historic sense and meant basically a "narrative, true or presumed to be true, relating to important events and celebrated persons of a more or less remote past; a historical relation or anecdote" (OED). The other meaning, a "recital of events that are or are alleged to have happened; a series of events that are or might be

narrated," is first cited from 1375 by the OED. The more general meaning of a narrative meant for entertainment is not given until ca. 1500 in Dunbar.

Seven of these works, however, are based on historical or pseudo-historical accounts. Lovelich's History of the Holy Grail, Laud Troy Book, Morte Arthure, Merlin, Siege of Thebes, Titus and Vespasian, and Lydgate's Troy Book all clearly fit the first definition, while four others, Bevis of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, Partonope of Blois, and William of Palerne are histories of people rather than events. In some of these works, the truth of the narrative is asserted, even if it is contained in near-meaningless tags such as "soþe for to telle," or "to tell the sothe." However, these narratives are not alone in asserting the truth or trustworthiness of their stories; this is a commonplace of medieval narration. Besides the expected verbs with "story" like "tell" or "rehearse," other verbs are frequently used: "testimony," "witness," "record," or "show truly," which stress the authenticity of the tale.

Other narratives calling themselves "story" do not follow this historical pattern. In Amoryus and Cleopes, Emare, Havelok, King of Tars, and Sir Triamour, "story" seems more a recital of events, used almost interchangeably with "book" or "tale." The only discernible difference is that these works could be stressing their remoteness from the present through the label "story."

"Tale" is another common word, describing twenty-nine works. In general, it can mean that "which one tells, the relation of a series of events; a narrative, statement, information" or a "story or narrative, true or fictitious, drawn up so as to interest or amuse, or to preserve the history of a fact or incident; a literary composition cast in narrative form" (OED). Since its meaning is broad enough from its first usages to include both interesting and amusing stories as well as more serious ones whose intentions are to preserve historical facts, it is impossible to separate the two overlapping categories in these Middle English works. Two additional poems use "tale" to refer to a particular section of the overall narrative. In Otuel and Roland, the line "Here bygynneyth a Rewful tale" seems to refer to the following story, not to the complete work. Similarly, in Destruction of Troy, "tale" seems to refer to specific sections of the whole since the author tends to use the word only at the beginning or ending of the different chapters. Besides these two, six narratives use "in this talking" or "in my talking" in much the same way that other works use the other descriptive labels. Since this expression always appears in texts with other labels, it alone never determines a generic sense.

The word "treatise" is found in only the incipit and explicit of two works, Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell and Libeaus Desconus, and not in the body of either one. The word did not always have its modern weighty

connotations. Originally "treatise" was "more widely used for a literary work in general"; it could be either a "story, tale, or narrative" or a "descriptive treatment, description, account" (OED). Clearly, no conclusion can be drawn from these two citations.

The Latin "vita" appears in the explicit of both Amis and Amiloun and Sir Gowther and in the incipit of Havelok and Richard Coer de Lyon. The English equivalent, "life," does occur in the incipit of Joseph of Arimathie as well as in two textual references: "Here endys þe lyfe" (l. 2205 of Libeaus Desconus) and "lythe and listenyth the lif of a lord riche" (l. 1 of Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell). Although in medieval times the word usually referred to a biography or a written account of a person's life, this definition does not seem to apply to Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell, in which "lif" has its more general meaning rather than any specific generic sense.

Only three poems refer to themselves as "work," which meant a literary composition as well as something accomplished or finished. In Destruction of Troy, the author refers to finishing his work, so perhaps he meant only his task or labor. The Troy Book, however, clearly uses the literary meaning.

The author of William of Palerne repeatedly uses the

word "lesson," which might be construed as a descriptive label. However, since the narrative calls itself a "tale" and a "story," it seems as though the author intended "lesson" to stress the connotations of instruction and education inherent in the story, and so I have not included it in my discussion of possible generic labels.

Even though some of these labels, especially "lay" and "history," seem more specific or restricted than others, none of them seems to have a strict generic meaning. No clear or consistent usage of the labels emerges with respect to the five possible variables although sometimes general patterns appear valid. For example, "lay," "saw," and "song" usually apply to short works while other labels occur without regard to length. Date, geographic area of composition, and particular manuscript collection have no apparent bearing on any of these labels. Furthermore, a work's use of multiple labels indicates that there was no strict generic sense or any clear-cut categories of medieval classification. The most striking fact that emerges from this survey of descriptive labels is the randomness and lack of consistency in their use. This conclusion is confirmed by variant readings in the manuscripts. Table 7 lists a sampling of variant readings, in which the descriptive words are freely substituted for one another in different manuscripts of the same poem with no apparent change in meaning.

Table 7

SUBSTITUTION OF DESCRIPTIVE LABELS

A. Geste = Romance

1. in Bevis of Hampton:

"Now begynnyth a yeste ageyn"
l. 3963, Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.

"Now begynnyth the romauns ffyne"
l. 3963, Chetham 8009 MS.

2. in Octavian (Northern):

"In yeste as we rede"
l. 1695, Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.

"In romance as we rede"
l. 1695, Thornton MS.

3. in Sir Eglamour of Artois:

"In Rome þys geste cronyculd ys"
l. 1339, Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.

"In Rome þys romance crouned is"
l. 1333, Thornton MS.

B. Geste = Spell in Seege of Troye:

"Her ys þe haluyndell of our geste"
l. 980, Arundel MS.

"Herkene now to my spelle"
l. 980, Thornton MS.

C. Geste = Story in King of Tars:

1. "In gest as it is founde"
l. 549, Auchinleck MS.

2. "In gest as y ȝou say"
l. 774, Bodl 3938 MS.

D. Romance = Book in Bevis of Hampton:

"þe romounce telleþ"
l. 1532, Auchinleck MS.

"þe bok telleþ"
l. 1532, Douce frag., Royal Library of Naples MS.

Table 7 (cont'd.)

E. Romance = History in Sir Isumbras:

"Here begynns the Romance off Syr Isambrace"
incipit, Thornton MS.

"Here begynneth the hystorye of the valyante knyght syr Isenbras"
incipit, Douce 261 MS.

F. Romance = Spell in Bevis of Hampton:

"In eni lede or in romans"
l. 2130, Chetham 8009 MS.

"In eni lede or eni spelle"
l. 2130, Auchinleck MS.

G. Romance = Story in Bevis of Hampton:

"Ryght as the romaynus tellis"
l. 1142, printed copy in Bodleian Library

"As the story of Beves tellis"
l. 1142, Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.

H. Rhyme = Gest in Amis and Amiloun:

"In ryme y wol rekene ryȝt"
l. 38, Egerton 2862 MS.

"In gest y wol yow telle al"
l. 38, Hale 2386 MS.

I. Rhyme = Romance in Bevis of Hampton:

"And in me rime riȝt wel ilaid"
l. 1216, Auchinleck MS.

"And ir my romauns riȝt wel ilaid"
l. 1216, Royal Library of Naples MS.

"And in my romaunce riȝt wel ilaid"
l. 1216, Douce frag., Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.

J. Rhyme = Story in King of Tars:

"In rime al so we rede"
l. 309, Auchinleck MS.

"In stori al so we rede"
l. 309, Bodl 3938 MS.

Table 7 (cont'd.)

K. Sawe = Tale in *King of Tars*:

"As y finde in mi sawe"
ll. 411, 1119, Auchinleck MS.

"As y finde in mi tale"
ll. 411, 1119, Bodl 3938 MS.

NOTES

[1]"Book," in The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, 1971. Hereafter, this work is cited as OED.

[2]Reinald Hoops, "Der Begriff 'Romance' in der Mittelenglischen Literatur," Anglistische Forschungen, 68 (1929), 1-98.

[3]Paul Strohm, "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English Romance," Genre, 10 (1977), 1-28.

[4]Hoops, pp. 34-36.

[5]Strohm, p. 13. See also John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance," Chaucer Review, 15 (1980), 43: "However, a closer look at Hoops's list reveals that a majority of them conform to a basic paradigm, namely, that they are concerned with an individual knight who rides out to seek or achieve an adventure (feat of arms), and some of these also show a concern for courtoisie and have an amatory element."

[6]These works include Romance of the Rose, Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ, St. Gregory, Miror of Lewd Men, Barbour's Bruce and Alexander, Minot's poems, Le Bone Florence of Rome, Arthour and Merlin, Laud Troy Book, Sowdon of Babylon, Romauns of Partenay, and Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain.

[7]Out of this new total of twenty-eight "romances," twenty are metrical and fall within the scope of this dissertation. By separating Octavian into Northern and Southern versions, I thus have twenty-one poems calling themselves romance.

[8]Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England, 2nd ed. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1954), p. 86.

[9]Loomis, p. 25.

CHAPTER FOUR

CALLING THE WORKS BY THEIR RIGHT NAMES

Clearly, medieval ideas of genre were vague and certainly less rigid than modern theoretical notions. There was no sharp distinction between fact and fiction, history and legend, chronicle and romance, but a medieval author could nonetheless align his work with a particular tradition if it suited his purposes. Medieval genres obviously overlapped and shared many of the same conventions, rhetorical principles, stylistic features, and loosely conceived elements of composition: elaboration, embellishment, digression, dialogue, character portraiture, repetition, claims of authenticity, and a fascination with the exotic or mysterious. A medieval author could dip into a large pool of motifs from biblical, classical, Arabic, Byzantine, and Celtic stories for materials for any kind of narrative, popular or scholarly.

Even though it might be difficult to differentiate a particular genre clearly from the more-or-less continuum of medieval genres, there are certainly distinctions among history, epic, romance, saints' legends, folklore, and ballads. Works from these different categories have different intentions, from recording facts for posterity to entertaining

with a good story. In addition, narrative emphasis, tone, and structure vary from genre to genre.

It is these differences that provide a means of distinguishing among the so-called Middle English romances. While not falling into sharply defined categories, these works exhibit tendencies and characteristics that range from chronicle and history to folklore and balladry. A classification of these Middle English narratives along this generic continuum is essential in providing a clearer understanding of each work's meaning and intentions, in clarifying the connections among these works, and in eliminating the unfulfilled expectations generated by the catchall term "romance."

I have separated all the Middle English metrical narratives into five basic categories: 1) Popularized Pseudo-histories, 2) Didactic and Pietistic Tales, 3) Romances, 4) Chivalric Adventure Stories, and 5) Minstrel Tales. Table 8 lists the works according to these categories.

POPULARIZED PSEUDO-HISTORIES

This first group of twenty-seven pseudo-historical writings or legends separate themselves from the remaining Middle English narratives. Most critics have commented on the differences between these works and the other so-called romances, but C. David Benson argues convincingly for a new perspective on some of them:

> The Middle English historians of Troy are not failed romance writers or simply mechanical

Table 8

RECLASSIFICATION OF MIDDLE ENGLISH NARRATIVES

I. POPULARIZED PSEUDO-HISTORIES

A. Legendary Histories:

1. Arthur
2. Destruction of Troy
3. History of the Holy Grail
4. Merlin

B. Moralistic Histories:

1. Alexander B
2. Morte Arthur
3. Siege of Thebes
4. Troy Book

C. Romantic or Epic Histories:

1. Alexander A
2. Alexander C
3. Arthour and Merlin
4. Laud Troy Book
5. Lyfe of Alisaunder
6. Morte Arthure
7. Seege of Troye

D. Militant Christian and Propagandistic Histories:

1. Ashmole Sir Firumbras
2. Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain
3. Fillingham Firumbras
4. Joseph of Arimathie
5. Otuel a Knight
6. Otuel and Roland
7. Roland and Vernagu
8. Sege of Melayne
9. Siege of Jerusalem
10. Song of Roland
11. Sowdon of Babylon
12. Titus and Vespasian

II. DIDACTIC AND PIETISTIC TALES

A. Constance Legends:

1. Emare
2. Octavian
3. Sir Eglamour of Artois
4. Sir Torrent of Portyngale
5. Sir Triamour

Table 8 (cont'd.)

B. Religious exempla:

1. Amoryus and Cleopes
2. Bone Florence of Rome
3. Chevalere Assigne
4. King of Tars
5. Roberd of Cisyle
6. Sir Gowther

C. Didactic Tales:

1. Amis and Amiloun
2. Athelston
3. Awntyrs off Arthur A
4. Sir Amadace
5. Sir Isumbras

D. Chivalric and Religious Composites:

1. Bevis of Hampton
2. Guy of Warwick
3. Richard Coer de Lyon
4. Romauns of Partenay

III. ROMANCES

1. Generides
2. Ipomedon A
3. Partonope of Blois
4. Sir Degrevant
5. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
6. Squyr of Lowe Degre
7. William of Palerne

IV. CHIVALRIC ADVENTURE STORIES

1. Awntyrs off Arthur B
2. Guy and Colbrond
3. Horn Child
4. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne
5. Libeaus Desconus
6. Reinbrun, Son of Gij
7. Sir Perceval of Galles
8. Ywain and Gawain

V. MINSTREL TALES

A. Folk Tales:

1. Avowynge of King Arthur
2. Floris and Blancheflur
3. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell

Table 8 (cont'd.)

4. Sir Cleges
5. Sir Degare
6. Turke and Gowin
7. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell

B. Political Moral Tales:

1. Gamelyn
2. Havelok
3. King Horn
4. Sir Orfeo

C. Breton Lays:

1. Earl of Toulous
2. Lai le Freine
3. Sir Launfal

D. Chivalric Ballads:

1. Carle off Carlile
2. Eger and Grime
3. Grene Knight
4. Sir Tristrem
5. Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle

> translators of Guido; instead they are skilled and intelligent craftsmen whose conscientious efforts to bring ancient history to an unlearned audience have been inadequately understood and insufficiently valued.[1]

Like the Troy legends, the other Middle English pseudo-histories, which are translations or adaptations of legendary material or historical events, are intended for a medieval audience that would otherwise not have access to such information. The Alexander stories in particular are deliberate attempts to present a picture of a great historical figure in a context palatable and understandable to medieval minds. For example, Alexander is "contemporized" and characterized "within the conventional framework of the idealized medieval hero."[2]

These popular pseudo-histories fall into four subgroups: (A) Legendary Histories, presented without any clear narrative or authorial point of view; (B) Moralistic Histories, offering history as an _exemplum_; (C) Romantic or Epic Histories, molding history into romance or heroic tradition, and (D) Militant Christian and Propagandistic History, presented as _chansons de geste_ with a militant religious spirit infusing the historical events.

A. Legendary Histories:

Only four works fall into this first grouping of legend without an imposed authorial point of view. These are all translations of French or Latin sources with no narrative bias and no specific intention other than transmission of

knowledge. Arthur, a 642-line poem, is a summary account of Arthur from his birth to death, including his founding of the Round Table, his conquest of Rome, and his treacherous murder by Modred. The author packed this short poem with a great deal of information. As a result, this condensed account of Arthur's life, composed without embellishment or elaboration, is little more than a bare outline, rather than a thoughtfully crafted narrative. Perhaps the most significant fact about this minor poem is its interpolation within a Latin chronicle in the Marquis of Bath's MS.[3] This is a clear indication that medieval manuscript compilers understood its essentially historical nature.

The long work, Destruction of Troy, an adaptation of Guido de Colonna's Historia Trojana, is the best example of a work concerned with "historical truth." The author's omissions and changes point to an "extraordinary care" and "shrewd intelligence" in making his source clearer and more consistent.[4]

> The poet's general practice is to separtate historical fact from decoration. Guido's moral and rhetorical additions to the story are eliminated almost at will, but any nuggets of genuine historical information contained in them, however small, are preserved.[5]

The poet strives to make the narrative more immediate and more interesting to his readers, often by changing indirect discourse to dialogue and by inserting his own artistic descriptions--all without tampering with the authenticity of his material or superimposing any moral or didactic interpretations:

> Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Destruction is its ability to vivify the often dull facts of Guido's eyewitness style. By giving the ancient story of Troy a powerful sense of immediacy, the author of the Destruction is true to his double office and becomes both poet and historian. Nowhere is this clearer than in his concrete visual descriptions of storm and battle.[6]

The last two narratives are Lovelich's long, often tedious works, the History of the Holy Grail, a close translation of the French Estoire del Saint Graal, and his Merlin, a translation of the French Vulgate Merlin. Both works repeatedly refer to their sources and seem little more than direct translations from French to English.

These four works form a natural group because they make no attempt to adapt or modify their sources for a specifically didactic end or for a particular literary rendering. They are simply accounts of legendary material based on historical or pseudo-historical sources, intended to be clear-cut records and not romances or heroic epics.

B. Moralistic Histories:

These histories are either original didactic accounts (such as Alexander B) or deliberate modifications of their sources with the specific purpose of showing certain patterns of behavior for the reader's inspection and possible edification. Alexander B recalls the ancient debate tradition in its series of five letters between Alexander and Dindimus, who debate the Brahman customs and their value in God's eyes. Yet the work as a whole seems less a debate than a vehicle of "moral and instructive material concerning the

two ways of life."[7]

Lydgate's two works, Siege of Thebes and Troy Book, are decidedly didactic in their deliberate, conscious presentation of historical information:

> History is of use in providing examples of moral and political action, and Lydgate here pays enough respect to the narrative to make it a true 'Mirror for Princes.'[8]

Lydgate himself explicitly states this intention in The Siege of Thebes: "And who so list a merour forto make / Of kyngly fredam lat hym ensample take / Of Andrastus the manly kyng famous" (ll. 2723-25). He freely abridges his sources and adds his own commentary, which, for the most part, consists of "moralisations of different kinds."[9] Robert Ayers describes Lydgate's self-imposed role as moral historian:

> It was, then, in performance of his moral office and as a chronicler of history and as a social critic--not as a purveyor of romantic or epic fiction--that Lydgate undertook the Siege of Thebes, and it was the use of the moral implications of the incidents for hortatory purposes that determined the organization and structure of the poem.[10]

Not surprisingly, Lydgate's high moral purpose also informs his treatment of the Troy legend. Walter Schirmer sees the Troy Book as an "historical work containing all the moral and political lessons which history was expected to teach"[11] and not as "a great romance, but an interpretation of life."[12] This non-romance, non-epic quality of the work is also noted by Derek Pearsall:

> The Troy Book is a homily first, an encyclopaedia second, and an epic nowhere. In it, Lydgate draws upon every resource of medieval rhetoric to amplify his treatment of the story, to broaden its scope and to drive home its moral lessons.[13]

John Studer's article "History as Moral Instruction: John Lydgate's Record of Troie Toun"[14] and Robert Ayer's "Medieval History, Moral Purpose, and the Structure of Lydgate's Siege of Thebes"[15] are indicative of the overwhelming critical consensus about Lydgate as a moral historian.

Similarly, the stanzaic Morte Arthur emphasizes the moral implications of the tragic outcome of Lancelot's involvement with Guinevere. Although some critics downplay the moral presentation and emphasize the tragic qualities of the story,[16] the design of the narrative obviously suggests a clear moral intention. The narrative strongly focuses on Lancelot, his relationships with the Maid of Astolat and Guinevere, and his feelings for Agravaine, Gawain, and Arthur. Instead of ending with the tragic death of Arthur, the poem continues on to the moving meeting between Guinevere, who has taken religious vows, and Lancelot, who later becomes a hermit-priest and remains at the site of Arthur's grave until his own death seven years later. The poem ends after visions revealing Lancelot's salvation and Guinevere's burial with Arthur at Glastonbury Abbey. This kind of religious ending softens the tragic fall of the Round Table by placing the work in a moral context where actions are judged by a religious, not a chivalric, code. Velma Richmond suggests an interpretation that treats the work as a clash between temporal and eternal claims, a clash resolved only through a knowledge of and value in penitence and dedication to God.[17]

C. Romantic or Epic Histories:

The authors of these seven works unabashedly embellish their primarily historical accounts with motifs and conventions from the epic and romance traditions. The two Alexander narratives are clearly different from their sources in portraying Alexander: "But while the courtly element is well-nigh non-existent in the narrative, Alexander is transformed into a medieval knight and feudal lord embodying the chivalric virtues."[18] In Alexander C, the poet acts as historian and "biographer of the epic Alexander,"[19] structuring his narrative to enhance the epic dimension of this warrior king.[20] Even the ten-line prologue to Alexander A points to the Germanic heroic code, and the battle descriptions scattered throughout have an epic flavor.

Lyfe of Alisaunder, while still basically a heroic narrative in the tradition of the Old French chansons de geste, contains some romantic elements. G. V. Smithers points out how the arts of Neptanabus, the mirabilia, Candace's amorous passion for Alexander and his acquiescence, the author's own vignettes of courtly life, and the sentiments sometimes expressed in the lyrical headpieces are "typically romantic, since they minister to the human faculty for wonder or the interest in romantic love."[21] Smithers further describes at length the elements of epic style found in the poem and demonstrates that the poet's alterations of his sources usually consist of embellishments and stylistic devices borrowed from epic and romance traditions.[22] Dieter Mehl also notes the

influence of the epic tradition on the historical material of this poem:

> The battle-scenes, in particular, with their almost identical sequence of events, the regular alternation of individual combats and mass slaughter, the rhetorical catalogues and the almost ritual listing of proper names, are clearly in the tradition of the Latin and Old French epic.[23]

The author of Lyfe of Alisaunder has been identified as the author of Arthour and Merlin although the claims for common authorship are neither clear nor convincing.[24] Nevertheless, Arthour and Merlin does display many of the same heroic and epic embellishments as Lyfe of Alisaunder, especially in the battle and feasting scenes:

> It is precisely the use of formulas and the frequent repetition of identical scenes which indicate that the author made an attempt, though not very imaginative, to write in the traditional epic style which would be unthinkable without Old French models.[25]

Likewise, the Seege of Troye exhibits epic tendencies in the numerous scenes of bloody battles, the infancy of the heroes, the joys of feasting and music, the heroic laments, and the sorrow and grief expressed at the death of a hero.[26]

The alliterative Morte Arthure has also been categorized as an epic as well as a medieval tragedy.[27] Both interpretations accurately describe the narrative structure and design, which has little to do with romance tradition besides its characters, usually thought to be at the heart of romance:

> The framework, the rise and sudden fall of a noble king, indeed agrees with the concept of the medieval tragedy of fortune, but the poem is undeniably epic in its breadth and heroic scale. Arthur is magnified so that he dominates the action, and the

> story is presented with a constant awareness of its grandeur in a succession of brilliantly dramatic scenes.[28]

William Matthews describes how the poem deviates from conventional romance,[29] and John Finlayson, differentiating between romance and epic, places the poem in the historical tradition along with the heroic chansons de geste:

> Morte Arthure, then, is deliberately heroic in its themes, sentiments, and structure, and cannot be judged according to the criteria used for evaluating and enjoying such poems as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Ywain and Gawain.[30]

Certainly the poem's scope and dramatic power justify calling it a masterpiece of medieval poetry in the heroic tradition.

The Laud Troy Book, the last work of this group, is a curiosity. Even though it is based on Guido's Historia like Destruction of Troy, its intention is markedly different. The author's "special contribution to the medieval history is to retell it using the forms and techniques of a popular genre, the Middle English romance."[31] Clearly the poet's omissions and expansions of his source are a conscious attempt to romanticize his historical materials and create a "Hector-romance."[32] Although the author tried to pass his poem off as a romance--it is, in fact, the only account of Troy or Thebes to call itself by this name--the work remains a history overlaid with techniques and conventions of romance.

D. Militant Christian and Propagandistic Histories:

Of the twelve works in this group, eight are translations of French chansons de geste. Sowdon of Babylon and both versions of Sir Firumbras derive from the Old French chanson de geste Fierabras. Otuel a Knight, Otuel and Roland, Roland and Vernagu, Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain, and Sege of Melayne are all based on or related to the French Chanson de Otinel or the French prose Estoire de Charlemagne.[33] Since their literary antecedents are quite clear, it is unnecessary and even misleading to classify these English versions as romances. They were not intended to be romances, nor do they resemble romances, except in those characteristics that both epic and romance share--chivalric background, focus on prowess, and a martial hero.

The exception to this in the Firumbras narratives is the major role of Floripas, which may have been affected by the romance genre's emphasis on women. Although developed beyond the usual minor role of women in epic, she has little in common with the swooning, introspective maiden of romance, who observes the conventions of courtly love.[34]

The fragmentary Song of Roland, which is missing both its beginning and conclusion, is tentatively included in this group of militant Christian poems because its author seems less concerned with the heroic, tragic consequences of Roland's demesure than with a hearty description of the battle scenes. The fragment emphasizes the battle between the Christian and Saracen forces as well as the temporary

triumph of the religiously inspired troops against the infidels.

Another fragment, Joseph of Arimathie condenses material from Estoire del Saint Graal:

> The poet has retold the story in his own terms and his own idiom, reducing the scale to the dimensions of the adventures at Sarras. The simplified treatment of the narrative consistently sustains the atmosphere of pious legend; even the generally admired battle scenes (vss. 489-614) are handled so that they are subordinated to the major themes of miracle and conversion.[35]

This poem clearly exemplifies Christian militancy in the battles and the propagandistic spirit in the conversions and miracles performed to help Joseph in his campaign against the non-believers.

The Siege of Jerusalem and Titus and Vespasian are versions of the same story involving a thoroughly medieval, anachronistic retelling of the life of Christ and the cure of Vespasian by Veronica's veil. In the alliterative version, the siege of Jerusalem, which takes up most of the poem, is carried out as a typically medieval siege with all the medieval apparatus of battle, whereas the couplet version contains more religious and hagiographic material. As George Kane comments, Titus and Vespasian are "crusading Christian knights, brave and capable general officers speaking a stilted and precious language."[36] Clearly, biblical history is presented as medieval legend, combining Christian militancy in battle descriptions with conversions. "These religious romances place in an atmosphere of chivalry the life, passion, and miracles of Christ, woven into stories of the

cure of Vespasian and the destruction of Jerusalem."[37] These two works are the most overtly religious of all the poems in this group.

All twelve narratives demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over other faiths with the triumphant Christian hero even converting the non-believers in several of the works. The crusading militancy, the propagandistic element of the eternal battle for Christian beliefs, and the focus on the righteous slaughter of the infidels all point to a tradition far different from romance with its self-ennobling ideals.

The twenty-seven narratives categorized as Popularized Pseudo-History have little connection with the romance tradition in either their literary lineage or their basic intentions. Even when romantic embellishments are added in popularizing these stories, they remain legends or histories with an intention and purpose alien to the romance with its conventions such as the testing of a knightly hero, the quest, the focus on the individual and his personal relationships, and the elaborate descriptions of courtly life. These works are not romance, but popular history.

DIDACTIC AND PIETISTIC TALES

This second major classification includes twenty Middle English works that are closely related by their moralistic

concerns and didactic elements. These narratives have often been compared to hagiography, and many scholars have even reclassified some of them to underscore their clear similarity to saints' lives. Hanspeter Schelp labels thirteen Middle English works as "Exemplary Romances";[38] Dieter Mehl discusses nine poems as "Homiletic Romances";[39] and Diana Childress identifies thirteen narratives as "Secular Legend."[40] Only five works, however, are common to all the studies, including mine: Bone Florence of Rome, Emare, Roberd of Cisyle, Sir Gowther, and Sir Isumbras. Despite the discrepancies among the works listed in these critical studies, scholars are at least willing to reconsider the problem of generic classification and try to establish more accurate labels for some of the works. Diana Childress sums up the general feeling that many of these Middle English narratives need redefinition:

> For by lumping romances and secular legends together we can only get a distorted view of what romance is--the role of the supernatural, for example, takes a different dimension--and we set up a standard against which the didactic works invariably seem "inferior."[41]

Part of the confusion stems from the many shared elements: a single protagonist as hero, an idealized experience, supernatural or mysterious motifs, a common verse form (octosyllabic couplets), the same audience, and similar narrative techniques.[42] However, in intention, emphasis, tone, and sometimes structure, the romance is distinct from hagiography as well as these didactic and pietistic tales. As Margaret Hurley says, "Romances have nothing to say about saving

souls, serving God, or taking up against sin. They promise only present delight and lessons of one's social relationships in this world."[43] Jeanne Martin further pinpoints the difference in the "temporal and eternal realms of existence" and the didactic narrative's insistence on presenting a protagonist who exemplifies man's relationship to God.[44]

These twenty narratives are certainly closer to hagiography than romance, especially in their overt moral and religious message that determines the structure and presentation of the story materials. Since the works do range from religious exempla to chivalric and religious composites, which transform romance material into didactic exemplary tales, they are further divided into four subgroups that highlight specific similarities among the works.

A. Constance Legends:

Five works, variations of the Constance story, share the basic separation and reunion structural pattern and focus specifically on a woman as the main character. The striking similarity in all five narratives is the exile of an innocent woman with her child or twins, which sets in motion the remainder of the narrative. The poems then work through the rescue of the mother and children, the upbringing of the sons, the father's adventures leading to the family's reunion, the sons' prowess, the father-son combat (in Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Torrent of Portyngale, and Sir Triamour), the reunion of the families, and the punishment of

the betrayers (except in Emare where the Emperor repents and is forgiven).

> The chronologico-literary relationships among these romances are difficult to reconstruct. In addition to other parallels with Eglamour, both Torrent and Octavian use the griffin as the robber beast and refer to their source as a "Buke of Rome" (but one need not seek such a source for poems composed of such familiar details). Eglamour and Octavian are further alike in combining the themes of the persecuted lady with the heroic exploits of her lover. Eglamour and Isumbras follow the same sequence of the stolen child and treasure. Eglamour and Emare show many verbal similarities. There is no unanimity of opinion about how or which specific influence of one romance operated upon another.[45]

Despite the individual variations and embellishments, these five narratives intertwine the same narrative threads that tie together many adventures and chivalric exploits. They differ from many other courtly, chivalric tales essentially in their lack of focus on a single knightly hero who undergoes trials and testing. Instead, these works contain a multiple point of view, linking the story of a mother's exile and suffering with her sons' childhood and their initiation into the knightly ranks to that of the father's adventures before the family is reunited and the wrongdoer punished. The same motifs and story development inform these works which share a common didactic tone.

B. Religious Exempla:

These six narratives stress the religious implications of their stories and include miracles, a guardian angel, religious conversions, pietistic expressions, a nun with healing power, priests, and hermits. Amoryus and Cleopes ends

with the miraculous resurrection of the two lovers who become Christians, followed by the conversion of the Persians after the hermit destroys the image of Venus and the heathens' magic sphere. The last book of this narrative is completely religious in emphasizing the power of the true faith.

The English version of Bone Florence of Rome transforms its highly romantic, supernatural source into a "narrative as sober and unromantically moral as possible."[46]

> The Middle English redactor of Florence was of a strongly religious cast of mind and he tells his story not for the sake of diversion, but for the picture it gives of Christian fortitude.[47]

Although Florence resembles some of the other long-suffering protagonists, her role is overtly religious: she becomes a nun famous for her healing powers. The poem's resemblance to a saint's legend is inescapable:

> The hagiographic tone, the delineation of the Seven Sins on the walls of the palace, the patient endurance of the heroine and her limitless kindliness and good nature, the pointed moralizing of the concluding lines blur the distinction between Saint's Life and Romance.[48]

Chevalere Assigne, a religious retelling of the beginning of the Knight of the Swan story, transforms this fairy tale into a pious story of God's intervention to save the innocent and punish the sinful. The tale begins and ends on a religious note. The first four lines introduce the pious story by stating the necessity of God's intervention at times:

> All-weldynge God whenne it is His wylle,
> Wele He wereth His werke with His owne honde;
> For ofte harmes were hente þat helpe we ne myȝte,
> Nere þe hynȝes of Hym þat lengeth in heufene.

The poem ends with the line: "And þus þe botenynge of God browȝte hem to honde." These are not simply conventional frames around a secular story, but the comments appropriate to a story that includes miraculous intervention: God sends a hind to suckle the children, an angel to instruct the hermit, a guardian angel to help Enyas in battle, and an adder and fire to blind Enyas's opponent.

The King of Tars, while resembling some of the other works centering on a heroine's faith and steadfastness, is quite clearly a religious work dealing with the miraculous powers of baptism, the conversion of a Sultan king, and even the articles of faith. The poet seems to subsume all the various motifs for his particularly religious purpose so that "details from history, folklore, and romance, transformed with pious consistency, intensify the religious feeling."[49]

Roberd of Cisyle is equally religious and may even be considered "an ecclesiastical legend,"[50] demonstrating the poet's clear and extensive knowledge of the church calendar and its liturgy:

> He stresses churchly seasons and Scriptural legends. It is on St. John's Night, Midsummer Eve, that the Angel comes; on Holy Thursday the Angel's splendid gifts are given in Rome. From some version of the Book of Judith, the poet paraphrases the story of "Sire Olyferne"; again he tells of that "Nabgodonosare" on whose shame Roberd meditates, and carefully quotes and translates the Latin text of the Deposuit.[51]

Beginning in the Vernon MS with the line "Her is of Kyng Robert of Cicyle, Hou pride dude him begyle," this poem is a spiritual journey from pride through grief and repentance to

understanding and salvation. This work is the most successful and poignant of all the religious works studied.

Sir Gowther recounts the same progression from sinfulness to salvation as Roberd of Cisyle, but without its single-mindedness and directness. Sir Gowther combines many motifs including the barren marriage, the supernatural (devilish) birth, the fool, the three days' tournaments, and the restoring of speech to a dumb princess--elements that have nothing to do with the basic theme of forgiveness. Despite all these, the author clearly intended his work as a religious story about Gowther, a revered saint who works miracles. One manuscript even ends with "Explicit vita sancti."

> The Middle English poet also states that after Gowther's death and burial at an abbey, where he was a "varre corsent parfytt" and where his shrine became a place of healing miracles, he was called Seynt Gotlake. This shows an evident confusion of the hero's name with that of St. Guthlac, founder of Croyland Abbey.[52]

All six narratives contain some of the same motifs and legendary material as other works, yet these consistently point to a religious significance either in conversions (Amoryus and Cleopes and King of Tars), in spiritual regeneration and repentance (Roberd of Cisyle, Sir Gowther, and Bone Florence of Rome), or in heavenly aid to the innocent (Chevalere Assigne and Bone Florence of Rome).

C. Didactic Tales:

The authors of these five works deliberately shape their material towards a didactic or moral purpose. All share a

lack of interest in courtly love and replace it with a strong moral structuring principle. Sir Isumbras, Sir Amadace, and Amis and Amiloun follow the test/reward pattern, and Athelston, sin/punishment. Awntyrs off Arthur A, which revolves around the meeting of Guinevere and her ghostly mother, is based on such religious sources as the Trental of St. Gregory and purgatorial material gleaned from the legends concerning St. Patrick[53] and blends religious and didactic messages into an exemplum on luxuria and avaritia.[54] All five narratives resemble pietistic tales and even saints' legends, yet they are filled with chivalric embellishment and stress didactic rather than explictly religious elements.

For example, Sir Isumbras shares many plot similarities with the St. Eustache legend, especially in an animal or bird as messenger from God, the separation of the family, and the protagonist fighting with his children instead of against them.[55] It is obviously a story of the patience and Job-like acceptance of Isumbras, especially in the middle section in which robber beasts carry off his children, a trial reminiscent of the Constance legends. The crucial difference is that Isumbras himself is responsible for the chain of events. Even Dieter Mehl and Hanspeter Schelp agree that this work should be called either "homiletic"[56] or "exemplary."[57]

Like Isumbras, Amis and Amiloun is a testing story whose connection with legendary or religious material is clear--one version of the story appears as a twelfth-century legend and another as a fourteenth-century miracle play.[58] In this

Middle English version, however, the heroes are not celebrated as martyrs, but as exemplary characters demonstrating true friendship and loyalty regardless of the personal sacrifices and painful repercussions. In some ways, this tale can be read as an anti-romance with its moral message that the bond of friendship takes precedence over personal fulfillment or private pleasure.

Athelston, another testing of sworn brotherhood, structurally follows the Emma legend; it emphasizes the vindication of Egeland and Edyff and the punishment of the traitor Wymond. Unlike a romance, this work has no real hero, no single protagonist who embodies all the superlatives of chivalry. Instead, it involves a clear didactic moral that emerges as the story works through the various complications of a plot filled with ordeals and punishment before the eventual triumph of justice.

Sir Amadace, a didactic reworking of folk motifs of the Grateful Dead and Spendthrift Knight, involves a promise that is tested. Laura Hibbard Loomis admits that this poem is "less a romance than a moral tale. Its moral purport, that kindness even to the dead does not go unrewarded, is reenforced by a simple piety of spirit."[59]

D. Chivalric and Religious Composites:

The authors of four narratives try to transform a tale of chivalry into a religious message with varying degrees of success. Bevis is the most successful hero, combining

vigorous fighting activity and far-flung traveling with his role as the pious Christian champion who calls upon God and Mary before his numerous battles. He even resembles his patron saint in his dragon-slaying adventure, which is told "almost in terms of a Saint's legend (ll. 2681 ff.)."[60] He fights against heathens, loves and converts the Saracen Josian, generally rights wrongs, assists in re-establishing justice, and finally retires to Mombrant where he dies a holy death with Josian.

Guy of Warwick is less successful in combining the popular chivalric hero with the religious hero, partly because the narrative supposedly presents a change in Guy's character from courtly lover-knight to religious exemplar: "Guy is not only a successful lover and a brave fighter, but he is above all a model of Christian piety and penitence."[61] Unfortunately, this change is handled awkwardly, almost mechanically when Guy suddenly realizes that he has neglected God. He then spends the second half of the poem exactly as he did the first, except that he no longer fights for his own glory, but God's. The poem's dual nature has been characterized as a secular pastiche of elements taken from the legend of St. Alexis,[62] and this could account for its problematic tone that vacillates between chivalry and religious piety. The religious quality, however, finally dominates the poem:

> It is rather significant and shows the markedly homiletic character of the novel, that Guy's story does not end with the happy union of the lovers, as most romances do, but in the solitude of a hermitage in the woods. Miracles take place near his

> dead body: a sweet perfume arises from the corpse, and even a hundred men cannot move Guy's body to take it away from the hermitage (A 294.I; C, ll. 10, 949 ff.). All this shows that the poem turns into a legend towards the end . . .[63]

The work progresses from a typical chivalric adventure and love story to a homiletic, religious tale with Guy, not as a militant Christian hero, but a hermit.

The exact opposite of Guy, Richard Coeur de Lion undertakes all his exploits with a ferocious single-mindedness associated with the holy Crusades:

> For all its fantastic trimmings, the poem shows an unmistakable similarity to Saints' legends. The novel does not so much want to present exotic adventures as to demonstrate the conquering power of the Christian faith as embodied in one of its most ferocious champions.[64]

Unlike the romance and fairy tale with their happy endings, this narrative ends with the death of the hero in a siege at the Castle Gaylard, not with his marriage or reunion.

Also containing the death of its protagonist, Romauns of Partenay combines fairy tale elements with chivalric and courtly motifs within a basically religious framework. Raymond betrays his wife, is absolved by the Pope during a pilgrimage to Rome, becomes a recluse in a foreign land, and finally dies after many years of prayer and penitence. The narrative is filled with prayers, litany, and a religious sense of "God's unfailing mercy and generosity."[65]

The four narratives in this group are more than casually involved with religious matters. Both Guy of Warwick and Romauns of Partenay deal with the religious choices of

a chivalric knight whose virtues shift from martial deeds to piety and repentance. In Bevis of Hampton, chivalry and religion are blended in an attractive, popular hero; whereas in Richard Coer de Lyon, the brutal militant Christian spirit is glorified. In all the works, the hero dies at the end; three of them retire from the world and die in quiet sanctity while Richard is martyred defending the faith.

ROMANCES

Seven narratives qualify as romance according to the modern criteria examined in Chapter Two: marvels or mysteries can be found, courtly love plays a role, a chivalric ethic is presented, the hero is either a courtly knight or a fighting hero who proves his worth, and he often engages in quests. Although the English treatment obviously modifies and moralizes the French romance tradition, these works nonetheless work in and through the established narrative tradition of the romance genre with its typical motifs, conventions, hero, style, and structural patterns.

These works also contain the artistic embellishments and rhetorical descriptions that are an integral part of the presentation of romance--its bookishness or literary quality. Significantly, this interest in descriptive technique and rhetorical ornamentation is found in only three of the remaining seventy-seven narratives not classified as romance.

CHIVALRIC ADVENTURE STORIES

Eight works seem to be primarily adventure stories, emphasizing combat and a hero who is an invincible military champion. Two are offshoots of the popular Guy of Warwick story: Guy and Colbrond, a short 633-line poem concentrating on only one especially exciting episode out of Guy's many adventures, and Reinbrun, Son of Gij, a 1524-line independent work that continues Guy's story through the adventures of his son. Although longer, the latter poem is no more developed than the former and presents a pastiche of courtly conventions and adventures in a very short space:

> The wholly unoriginal quality of Reinbrun is evident from this summary. The account of the merchants who steal the child and the tale of Heraud's long search for him are in palpable imitation of the Tristan legend. The selling of the boy to the Saracen king and the princess's care for him recall the story of Beves. The fights of Reinbrun first with his foster father and later with Heraud's son, are somewhat unhappily duplicated variants of the Father and Son Combat.[66]

There is no moral or didactic point and no clear narrative intent. The author seems to have pieced together a fast-paced tale of adventure containing a profusion of popular elements.

Horn Child, a version of the Horn story, has been accused of "unhappy genius for the concrete and trivial"[67] and of including battle scenes that are "disproportionately numerous."[68] Its poet does seem to concentrate on exciting episodes and adventures at the expense of a coherent and thoughtful story:

> . . . it soon becomes clear that the poet is neither concerned with political problems nor with the progress of an exemplary hero, but that he wants to tell a lively and adventurous story which he tries to embellish with realistic and sometimes rather trivial detail. It is difficult to see that he had any higher aim than that.[69]

Two other works, Libeaus Desconus and Sir Perceval of Galles, each approximately 2000 lines in length, are deliberate reductions of their French originals. They transform courtly stories of maturation into adventure stories leaving only a slight overlay of courtly conventions. In the Perceval story, a disinterest in the courtly, mystic, and religious significance of the Grail legend is striking:

> But if the author knew the courtly poems on that legend, he broke away from them, and emphasized the spectacular and picturesque elements in his material. He also preserved some primitive features not found in the courtly pieces.[70]

Courtly love is excised, the Holy Grail is not even mentioned, and any hint of mysticism has disappeared:

> The drastic abridgement and simplification of the story give greater unity to the poem and firmly put the hero in its center. The various adventures are not arbitrarily selected, but they form part of a larger episode: the ignorant child from the woods avenges his father and by his inborn prowess earns himself an honourable place among Arthur's knights.[71]

Libeaus Desconus is similar in its reduction of its source material in length, development, and especially meaning:

> Libeaus Desconus does not portray a significant development, but is a rather loosely constructed, though quite dramatic, story in praise of a particularly daring and at the same time virtuous knight.[72]

Similarly, Ywain and Gawain shares this drastic

abridgement, disinterest in courtly love and chivalric refinements, and absence of psychology. Instead of Chrétien de Troyes' elaborated, sophisticated courtly-love romance, this poem is reduced to an economical story of adventure and love. Thus, these eight narratives all depend on action and adventure to carry the story, sometimes at the expense of coherent meaning or deliberate narrative design.

MINSTREL TALES

Eighteen works may be classified as minstrel tales, marked by a style that is both popular and simple. They often contain jingling or easy rhymes to aid oral delivery, almost meaningless tags to fill out a metrical line, and a straightforward, unembellished method of narration. In tone, theme, and treatment, these tales differ from romance, religious exempla, and chansons de geste. Since they were chiefly intended for a non-aristocratic audience who demanded an interesting, fast-paced story, didacticism and literary embellishment were secondary to entertainment.

The heroes of these works are generally unsubtle, uncomplicated protagonists who engaged the popular imagination. They seldom languish in love or engage in extended monologue. Moreover, few of these works present the typical innocent sufferer of the religious exempla or the questing knight of romance. Instead, they range from folk tale to ballad and include some politically motivated stories.

A. Folk Tales:

Eight relatively short works, all from 335 to 1148 lines, are more similar to traditional folklore than to romance in their mode of narration, which demands a clear and simple story line uncluttered by literary subtleties or rhetorical embellishment. According to Baldwin, the "earliest form of romance and the most permanent is fairy story."[73] This may be partially true, but there are obvious differences between folklore and conscious literary works, as Archer Taylor demonstrates:

> . . . folklore uses conventional theme and stylistic devices and makes no effort to diguise their conventional quality while the literary artist either divests his work of conventional quality by avoiding cliches of either form or matter, or . . . charges them with new content.[74]

The English Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell and its 8000-line French source exemplify this distinction. The French author embellishes and transforms folklore into a complex, highly literate work of art; the English author strips away the ornament and restores the story to its simplest form. George Kane denounces the spareness and starkness of the simple English version, which is little more than a chivalric retelling of the original legend of the Eaten Heart:

> His work is bare of even the commonest evocative methods of the romances, such as the elaborate embroidery of detail or lavish description to appeal to the love of splendour for its own sake, or depictions of the familiar gracious attitudes of chivalry held just a little longer and more graciously than they would be in real life for the pleasure of contemplating them. This is a drab

> and colourless work, with many incredibly prosy lines.[75]

Such carping is meaningless with the realization that the Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell, along with other narratives, does not belong to the romance tradition at all; moreover, its faults become virtues in light of the simplicity required within folk tradition.

Avowynge of King Arthur develops according to the Law of Repetition, one of Axel Olrick's Epic Laws of Folk Narrative.[76] According to Olrick, repetition is the one method that folk narratives have for emphasis or plot complication:

> In literature, there are many means of producing emphasis, means other than repetition. For example, the dimensions and significance of something can be depicted by the degree and detail of the description of that particular object or event. In contrast, folk narrative lacks this full-bodied detail, for the most part, and its spare descriptions are all too brief to serve as an effective means of emphasis.[77]

Repetition in folklore is almost always in terms of threes: "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," "The Three Little Pigs," "The Three Feathers," "The Three Wishes." In the Avowynge of King Arthur, Arthur and his three companions make vows. Baldwin, who is more or less the central figure, takes a triple vow, is tested three times, and then tells three stories to explain his three vows. Unlike the typical romance with the testing of a solitary knight, this narrative proceeds through multiple characters and multiple tests.

Such repetition is even clearer in the testing of the three main characters in Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle. All three heroes are put to the same test; Baldwin and

Kay fail, only Gawain passes. Later, Gawain undergoes three more tests and eventually succeeds in freeing the Carle from his twenty-year enchantment. According to Kurvinen, the tale combines three popular motifs: The Imperious Host, Curoi's Castle, and the Testing or Challenge.[78] Clearly, the story is close to its sources with little attempt by the author to embroider the folk material.

Turke and Gowin, another tale without any development or rationale for its unnatural events, merely combines a challenge story, including a beheading, with "a different story of grotesque contests of strength between the hero and the king of a supernatural realm."[79] Like the two versions of the Gawain and Carle of Carlisle story, this tale ends with the disenchantment of a knight who returns to Arthur's court and enters into its courtly life. All three stories move beyond disenchantment and express the desire to bring all the unknown or potentially threatening outside forces within the known and established world.

The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell is a courtly retelling of the Loathly Lady legend. It coats the popular tale with chivalric and courtly elements, including Arthur's solitary hunting and his encounter with the hart, as well as the glorified picture of Gawain as the courteous, gentle, almost perfect knight. This story depends on the chivalric, courtly traditions for its setting and characters, but these do not change the basic legend.

The idyllic Floris and Blancheflur includes all the

necessary ingredients for a fairy tale: "fantasy, escape, recovery, and consolation."[80] Like the Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell, this poem condenses much of the ornate description and charged emotion of its French source:

> Throughout the poem, in fact, the speech of the characters is singularly fresh and natural, and the descriptive passages, though so much condensed, keep enough gaily colored detail to make them vivid.[81]

Although more detailed than some of the other tales, Floris and Blancheflur is still a simple story, and even the short rhyming couplets add to the briskness and simplicity of its style. An example of this plain style is the important scene in which the two lovers discuss the magic ring that can save only one of them:

> "Haue þis ryng, lemman myn;
> þou shalt not dye while it is þyn."
> Blaunchefloure seide þoo,
> "So ne shal it neuer goo
> þat þis ryng shal help me,
> And þe deed on þe see."
> Florys þat ryng hur rauȝt
> And she it him agayn betauȝt:
> Nouther ne wyl other deed seene;
> þey let it falle hem bytwene (ll. 968-77).

Style and presentation are far from the courtly or literary rhetorical ornamentation and ostentatious display of learning.

Sir Degare, often classified among the Breton lays, seems much closer to folklore with its jingling rhythms and simple style than to the Breton lay or short romance. Since it does not call itself a lay or place itself within that tradition, its setting in Brittany is hardly sufficient to

classify it with the Breton lays. Instead, it seems to be a composite, combining "an astonishing number of folklore and romance motifs."[82]

Noting this composite nature of Sir Degare, several critics trace the author's treatment of his sources and arrive at quite different conclusions. Slover, who refers to the author as a "medieval hack," outlines the steps in the author's attempt to piece together a coherent tale from the legendary life of Pope Gregory and from the Sohrab and Rustem story, which deals with a father-son combat.[83] Bruce Rosenberg, on the other hand, sees the story as a conflation of three folk tales: Aarne-Thompson (A-T) Type 706, The Maiden Without Hands," which accounts for the mother's problems with the seducer-father; A-T Type 931, "Oedipus," which gives rise to Degare's search for and near incest with his mother; and A-T Type 873, "The King Discovers his Unknown Son," which fits Degare's search for his father.[84] Regardless of whether either critic is correct in explaining the use of source materials, the author appropriates familiar folk motifs in composing what is clearly a composite work. With its simple, direct style and its treatment and presentation of the story, Sir Degare aligns itself with other folk tales and not with the more elaborate, embellished romances.

Sir Cleges, the eighth work in this group, is clearly a minstrel's tale with its tags like "Will ye lystyn and ye schyll here" and "Forsooth, as i you saye." It is a delightful little story combining the motif of the Spendthrift

Knight who sorrows over his losses, yet accepts God's will, with the homey picture of the loving wife and children gathered around him on Christmas Eve. Along with other folk motifs such as Unseasonable Blooming Fruit and Shared Blows and its popular style with almost ballad-like repetitions, the story combines "humor, piety, and romance"[85] in a charming, simplistic way. There is no hint of the themes or style of romance--no courtliness, no quest, no knighthood. The typical encounters with dragons, giants, and awe-inspiring knights from romance are replaced by the surly and greedy porter, usher, and steward. The tale's affinity is obviously with the fabliau and folk tale.

B. Political Moral Tales:

Although they embody some of the same popular style and presentation as the folk tales of the previous subgroup, these four narratives are far more than simply entertaining minstrel songs. They are longer, more complex works with moral or political significance.

Gamelyn, which begins with the common folk-tale situation of the youngest son suffering at the hands of the cruel oldest brother, presents the disinheritance theme in a spirited account that relies on the realities and injustices of the medieval law system. Its author

> has an unusually detailed knowledge of the terminology and customs of fourteenth-century laws, and his romance presents a crude but convincing demonstration of the clash between false legality and true justice. He is contemptuous of uncharitable

> members of the monastic and mendicant orders; specifically, he mentions abbots, monks, priors, friars, grey friars, and canons. The clergy, on the other hand, escape his indignation. His critical attitudes thus reflect the revolutionary spirit typical of his age.[86]

More than just a popular folk hero, Gamelyn is a Robin Hood figure whose activities go beyond the individual and implicate the corrupt social order. The story's moral point of justice restored must have been particularly attractive to a medieval audience that had witnessed the "notorious scandals of 1289 when the charges of bribery and corruption brought against certain chief justices and sheriffs led to a series of trials . . ."[87]

Like Gamelyn, Havelok is a simple, down-to-earth hero, and, unlike the conventional romance hero, he does not engage in mysterious quests, the wooing of a lovely lady, or self-introspection. But unlike Gamelyn, Havelok progresses from the popular folk hero to the ideal king as the author focuses on the social and political criticism implicit in the story:

> Whatever his sources may have been, however, he employed the material to make the romance genre the vehicle for the depiction of an ideal king; more importantly, at the same time he made this depiction the vehicle for a critical overview of the contemporary political situation and the desires and complaints of the lower classes.[88]

This dual nature of Havelok as both a minstrel and a moral tale is exemplified in its composition with short rhyming couplets, full minstrel prologue of twenty-six lines, and the repeated reminders to listen, in addition to the underlying seriousness of the story, which presents a "portrait

of the growth and education of the ideal king."[89] David Staines stresses that Havelok was "first and foremost an idealized biography cast in the form of a tale of action."[90]

While not as deliberately exemplary as Havelok, King Horn relates the story of a heroic character who must revenge his father's death in order to regain his rightful kingdom. Nevertheless, Dieter Mehl sees this tale as an exemplum in "the glorification of the hero and the description of a perfect prince."[91] In technique, however, the poem resembles the other minstrel tales with its "spareness and directness, its comparative freedom from elaborations, accretions and digressions."[92] In the conception of the lusty fighting hero, lack of interest in the romantic element, glorification of prowess, the simple and unsubtle characters, and the straightforward telling of the story, King Horn is far more reminiscent of folk narrative than of romance.

Sir Orfeo, with its emphasis on loyal stewardship, is a type of moral minstrel song that transforms the underlying classical legend into a Christian exemplum of fortitude and reward.[93] In its rhyme scheme and structure, it resembles the general form of the Breton lay. Nonetheless, this poem's serious intention, which has been described as a reflection of the uncertainty of the world and an affirmation of the power of love, self-sacrifice, and loyalty,[94] aligns it more closely with the other three political moral tales.

C. Breton Lays:

The next three works all claim to be lays and do in fact fall within the well-known tradition of the Breton lay, a type of narrative popularized by Marie de France in the twelfth century:

> In her hands the Breton lay is a short narrative poem of roughly a hundred to a thousand lines, in short couplets, treating in a single adventure and without digression some aspect of love. Since it ranges from realistic story to fairy tale, it is identified most readily by its prologue and epilogue; usually a Breton source is mentioned or the setting is given as ancient Brittany or Britain.[95]

Even though it is questionable whether this type of narrative constitutes a separate genre, references to the Breton lay are common, though at times they may be little more than "a trick of the poet to lend authority or the charm of age to his story."[96] Critics usually include eight poems under the designation: Chaucer's Franklin's Tale, Sir Launfal and its variants, Sir Orfeo, Lai le Freine, Sir Degare, Earl of Toulous, Emare, and Sir Gowther, but Mortimer Donovan excludes the last three from consideration in his study.[97] In this chapter, Emare, Sir Degare, Sir Gowther, and Sir Orfeo have already been categorized elsewhere, and so there remain only three poems in this classification, two of which are translations of Marie de France's lays.

In Lai le Freine, the setting has shifted from Marie de France's Brittany to the west of England; the basic story line, however, remains unchanged. It is a charmingly told tale, which combines "the motifs of the twin birth, the child separated from its parents and reunited, and the husband with

two wives."[98]

The other translation of a French lay, Sir Launfal, is an expanded version of the Lanval story, including two episodes not found in any of the sources of the poem: the tournament at Caerleon and the combat with Sir Valentine:

> Certain other passages, which treat Guinevere's infidelity and the ambitious Mayor, render plausible the claim that the poem suffers a shift in purpose and, while beginning somewhat realistically, ends as a fairy type of lay.[99]

This particular version by Thomas Chestre seems to rely on several typical chivalric and courtly themes, which he grafts onto the basic story to expand and popularize the material.

The last poem considered a lay is Earl of Toulous, a short poem of 1224 lines in twelve-line rhyming stanzas. It has a direct, fast-moving, dramatic style characteristic of the other lays, and its interest lies in the love element. Lacking the typical prologue, epilogue, or specifically Breton setting, the poem is not, however, a particularly good example of this narrative type. Moreover, it refers to itself as a lay only at the ending, almost as an afterthought. Certainly in its style and presentation, it is similar to the English versions of lays as well as to the folk tales, and its focus on the love of the Earl and the Empress of Almayne is typical of the love interest of the lays. Yet in its various episodes (disguise as a hermit, secret observation of a beautiful woman, treacherous ambush, false accusation of infidelity, planting an innocent boy as the supposed adulterer, trial by combat, innocence vindicated, and

the eventual marriage of the champion and the innocent woman), the tale is certainly reminiscent of many of the other chivalric narratives already discussed. Somewhat of a curiosity, Earl of Toulous does not fit readily into any category; it seems to lie somewhere between the lay and romance with many similarities to the folk tales.

D. Chivalric Ballads:

The four remaining poems are short, ballad-like chivalric tales. The closeness of balladry to folklore has often been discussed, and M. J. C. Hodgart draws attention to just a few of the many parallels:

> [Ballads] have in common with fairy tales the use of fixed formulas and of incremental repetition, particularly in groups of three, and a fondness for rich ornament in description of heroes and heroines.[100]

Ballads, however, often lack the happy endings and the implicit didacticism of many folk narratives. Despite these differences, similarities between these four poems and the ballad are unmistakable. David Fowler, in his illuminating study of the ballad, offers the Carle off Carlile, the Grene Knight, and Eger and Grime as examples of minstrel tales close to balladry:

> "Eger and Grime" is of course not a ballad; it is a romance. But in the Percy Folio MS version it has taken one important step in the direction of balladry, not indeed through a deliberate recreation by the folk, but rather through a deliberate structural change attributable to the narrative art of the minstrel.[101]

The use of parallelism, narrative speed and pacing, brevity

and conciseness, and repetition are all shared features between the minstrel tales and ballads.

In Eger and Grime, the structural parallels, the repetition of episodes, and verbal patterning all indicate its closeness to balladry:

> Through all my armour, lesse and more (l. 147)
> Through all my armour more and less (l. 177)
>
> Then of a castle I goot a sight,
> Of a castle and of a towne (ll. 206-07)
>
> And a lady came forth of a fresh arbor
> She came forth of that garden greene (ll. 212-13).

Earlier scenes are repeated later in the narrative almost verbatim; for example, ll. 263-70 reappear as ll. 851-56, and ll. 749-54 are repeated as ll. 881-86.

The Grene Knight is a shortened and simplified minstrel account of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, containing line fillers, stylized descriptions, and other minstrel devices that are "foretastes of what is to be thought of later as typical ballad diction."[102] Similarly, the language of Carle off Carlile echoes late ballad technique, especially in its parallelisms and descriptions.

With its compression, quick narrative movement and diction, Sir Tristrem shares the same qualities as the other three poems:

> "Sir Tristrem," considered in its formal aspect, holds a place midway between the metrical romance and the ballad. Its length, and the wide sweep of its narrative, make it resemble the metrical romance, while its strophic form, its rapid transitions, and its brief episodes, give it some kinship with the ballad.[103]

In its story material, Sir Tristrem borrows from the great

courtly romances, but in the telling of the story, the poem is clearly a minstrel tale quite similar to the ballad. It has been severely criticized for its popular style and stereotyped diction, but these are not necessarily faults if the ballad and minstrel traditions are used as measures of the tale's merits. Like most of the Middle English narratives, these works are not courtly romance and should not be judged by the criteria appropriate to that genre.

Of the eighty-two Middle English verse narratives, only seven conform to the style, intent, conventions, narrative techniques, and meaning of the romance genre. The remaining works fit better in different categories that more accurately reflect each work's intention, structure, meaning, and affinity with other, similar narratives. Only one work, the Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment, is omitted from the categories developed in this chapter. Its brevity and incompleteness prevent any logical or justifiable classification in this scheme. All the other so-called romances, however, readily fall into the four categories besides Romance: twenty-seven are best described as Popularized Pseudo-Histories, twenty as Didactic Pietistic Tales, eight as Chivalric Adventure Stories, and nineteen as Minstrel Tales.

NOTES

[1]C. David Benson, The History of Troy in Middle English Literature (Suffolk, England: D. S. Brewer, 1980), p. 35.

[2]Luann Kitchel, "A Critical Study of the Middle English Alexander Romances," Diss. Michigan State Univ. 1973, p. 56.

[3]Helaine Newstead, "Arthurian Legends," in A Manual of the Writings of Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven: Conn. Acad. of Arts and Sciences, 1967), p. 44; hereafter referred to as Manual.

[4]Benson, p. 42.

[5]Benson, p. 47.

[6]Benson, p. 57.

[7]R. M. Lumiansky, "Legends of Alexander the Great," in Manual, p. 108.

[8]Derek Pearsall, John Lydgate (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 155.

[9]A. Erdmann and E. Ekwall, eds., Siege of Thebes, EETSES 125 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1930), p. 12.

[10]Robert Ayers, "Medieval History, Moral Purpose, and the Structure of Lydgate's Siege of Thebes," PMLA, 73 (1958), 474.

[11]Walter Schirmer, John Lydgate, trans. Ann E. Keep (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1961), p. 44.

[12]Schirmer, p. 64.

[13]Pearsall, p. 129.

[14]John Studer, "History as Moral Instruction: John Lydgate's Record of Troie Toun," Emporia State Research Studies, 19 (1970), 5-13.

[15]Ayers, pp. 463-74.

[16]George Kane, Middle English Literature (London: Methuen, 1951), p. 69: "The many contradictions inherent in the accumulated material of the Arthur legend confuse the issues so completely in any case that no moral point of view could be consistently maintained with regard to it"; and Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 188: "Thus, the story is not based on an ethical conflict or Christian morality, but on a clash of loyalties which can only end in tragedy and which, with its sinister and unavoidable logic, rather suggests a Germanic and pre-Christian mentality."

[17]Velma Richmond, The Popularity of Middle English Romances (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1975), p. 29.

[18]Kitchel, p. 27.

[19]Kitchel, p. 87.

[20]Kitchel, p. 88.

[21]G. V. Smithers, ed., Kyng Alisaunder, EETSOS 237 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957), p. 28.

[22]Smithers, pp. 29-31,

[23]Mehl, pp. 231-32.

[24]E. Kölbing, ed., Arthour and Merlin, nach der Auchinleck H-S., Altenglische Bibliothek, 4 (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1889).

[25]Mehl, p. 241.

[26]M. E. Barnicle, ed., The Seege or Batayle of Troye, EETSOS 172 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1927), p. xxxiii.

[27]Larry D. Benson, "The Alliterative Morte Arthure and Medieval Tragedy," Tennessee Studies in Literature, 11 (1966), 75-87; and John Finlayson, ed., Morte Arthure (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), 1-20.

[28]Newstead, p. 45.

[29]William Matthews, The Tragedy of Arthur (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1960), 95-96.

[30]Finlayson, p. 14.

[31]C. David Benson, p. 67.

[32]Lumiansky, p. 117.

[33]H. M. Smyser, "Charlemagne Legends," in Manual, p. 81.

[34]Kane, p. 40.

[35]Newstead, p. 74.

[36]Kane, p. 59.

[37]Lillian Herlands Hornstein, "Miscellaneous Romances," in Manual, p. 160.

[38]Hanspeter Schelp, Exemplarische Romanzen in Mittelenglischen, Palaestra, 246 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

[39]Mehl, pp. 120-58. Mehl includes Sege of Melayne, which I have classified as "Militant Christian and Propagandistic History" because of its historical nature. We obviously agree, however, on its Christian pietistic impulses.

[40]Diana Childress, "Between Romance and Legend: Secular Hagiography in Middle English Literature," PQ, 57 (1978), 311-22. Her classification of nine works agrees with mine, but I have placed Roland and Vernagu, Otuel and Roland, Sege of Melayne, and Joseph of Arimathie under "Militant Christian and Propagandistic Histories." Schelp includes Havelok and Sir Cleges, which I have reclassified as "Minstrel Tales"; Siege of Thebes, which I have called a "Moral History"; and Alexander C and Morte Arthure, which I have designated as "Romantic or Epic Histories." Schelp perceives a much more clearly defined didactic intention in these four works than I do.

[41]Childress, p. 312.

[42]Derek Pearsall, "John Capgrave's Life of St. Katherine and Popular Romance Style," Medievalia et Humanistica, NS 6 (1975), 121-37; and Paul M. Clogan, ed., Medieval Hagiography and Romance, Medievalia et Humanistica, NS 6 (1975), 1-223.

[43]Margaret Hurley, "Saints' Legends and Romance Again: Secularization of Structure and Motif," Genre, 8 (1975), 63.

[44]Jeanne S. Martin, "Character as Emblem: Generic Transformation in the Middle English Saint's Lives," Mosaic, 8 (1975), 48, 60.

[45]Lillian Herlands Hornstein, "Eustache-Constance-Florence-Griselda Legends," in Manual, p. 125.

[46]Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England, 2nd ed. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1954), p. 16.

[47]Loomis, p. 15.

[48]Hornstein, "Eustache," p. 132.

[49]Hornstein, "Eustache," p. 131.

[50]Loomis, p. 58.

[51]Loomis, pp. 60-61.

[52]Loomis, p. 51.

[53]Ralph Hanna III, ed., The Awntyrs off Arthure at the the Terne Wathelyn (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1974), p. 24.

[54]David N. Klausner, "Exempla and The Awntyrs of Arthure," Medieval Studies, 34 (1972), 307-25.

[55]Laurel Braswell, "Sir Isumbras and the Legend of St. Eustache," Medieval Studies, 27 (1965), 128-51.

[56]Mehl, pp. 128-35.

[57]Schelp, pp. 53-64.

[58]Loomis, p. 65.

[59]Loomis, p. 74.

[60]Mehl, p. 216.

[61]Mehl, p. 227.

[62]David N. Klausner, "Didacticism and Drama in Guy of Warwick," Medievalia et Humanistica, NS 6 (1975), 103-19.

[63]Mehl, p. 224.

[64]Mehl, p. 245.

[65]Richmond, p. 80.

[66]Loomis, p. 141.

[67]Loomis, p. 97.

[68]Charles W. Dunn, "Romances Derived from English Legends," in Manual, p. 21.

[69]Mehl, p. 56.

[70]W. H. French and C. B. Hale, eds., Middle English Metrical Romances (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1930), p. 53.

[71]Mehl, p. 102.

[72]Mehl, p. 73.

[73]Charles Sears Baldwin, Three Medieval Centuries of Literature in England, 1100-1400 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1932), p. 51.

[74]Archer Taylor, "Folklore and the Student of Literature," 1948; rpt. in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 39-40.

[75]Kane, pp. 22-23.

[76]Axel Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narratives," 1909; rpt. in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 132.

[77]Olrik, pp. 132-33.

[78]Auvo Kurvinen, ed., Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle in Two Versions, Annales Academicae Scientiarum Fennicae, Series B, 71, pt. 2 (1951), 80-90.

[79]Newstead, p. 59.

[80]Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 149.

[81]Loomis, p. 187.

[82]Loomis, p. 302.

[83]Clark Slover, "Sir Degare, a Study of a Medieval Hack Writer's Methods," University of Texas Bulletin, Studies in English, 2 (1931), 5-23.

[84]Bruce Rosenberg, "The Three Tales of Sir Degare," Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 76 (1975), 39-51.

[85]Loomis, p. 79.

[86]Dunn, p. 32.

[87]Loomis, p. 162.

[88]David Staines, "Havelok the Dane: A Thirteenth-Century Handbook for Princes," Speculum, 51 (1976), 607.

[89]Staines, p. 602.

[90]Staines, p. 613.

[91]Mehl, p. 51.

[92]John Speirs, Medieval English Poetry (London: Faber

and Faber, 1957), p. 179.

[93]Thomas B. Hanson, "Sir Orfeo: Romance as Exemplum," Annuale Mediaevale, 13 (1972), 154.

[94]James Knapp, "The Meaning of Sir Orfeo," MLQ, 29 (1968), 263-73.

[95]Mortimer J. Donovan, "Breton Lays," in Manual, p. 133.

[96]Kemp Malone and Albert C. Baugh, The Middle Ages, Vol. I of A Literary History of England, 2nd ed., ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 196.

[97]Mortimer J. Donovan, The Breton Lay (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 234.

[98]Donovan, "Breton Lays," p. 135.

[99]Donovan, "Breton Lays," p. 139.

[100]M. J. C. Hodgart, The Ballads (London: Hutchinson Universal Press, 1950), p. 114.

[101]David Fowler, A Literary History of the Popular Ballad (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1968), p. 146.

[102]Fowler, p. 140.

[103]George P. McNeill, ed., Sir Tristrem, Scottish Text Society, 8 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1886), p. xlv.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

To my knowledge, the study carried out in the preceding chapters is the most thorough investigation of the Middle English verse narratives since the distinguished works of Loomis in 1924 and Mehl in 1967. While each of these studies discusses less than forty narratives in any detail, mine covers eighty-two works written between 1225 and ca. 1500. Before I survey the insights gained from this extensive examination, it may be useful to recall the motive behind the undertaking. The chief of these--the motive that moved all others--is the consistent and uncritical disdain with which scholars and readers have viewed these narratives since they have been made available by the editors of the past century. Velma Richmond has described this situation bluntly and succinctly:

> The Middle English romance has elicited throughout the centuries a curious mixture of indifference, hostile apprehension, and contempt that perhaps no other literature--except its most likely offspring, modern best-sellers--has provoked.[1]

With the exception of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and occasionally a few others, these pieces have ended in a sort of promiscuous discard bin, labelled loosely "kitchen romances," "minstrel romances," or some other equally demeaning

term. Consequently, they are all reduced to a level somewhere below mediocrity in a genre implying or stating that they are debased romance.

The most important reason for this overwhelmingly negative response, as I have pointed out, is the generic label. The problem began in the first period of modern scholarship in Middle English literature when Ellis and Ritson separately labeled them "romances," a most inaccurate term, which has distorted scholarship on the subject for well over a century. Both Loomis and Mehl were quite aware of this problem, but since their aims were broadly expository, they sidestepped the issue, and after some caveats, surrendered to the traditional terminology as the one most familiar and comfortable to their readers. But the term "romance" has produced, as this study has shown, the inevitable comparisons with narratives from a different century and a different country, notably twelfth-century France. Judged against a genre to which they did not belong, these works have been found to be debased, inadequate, clumsy--*romans manqués*.

It is true that many of the Middle English narratives rely on elements derived from romance: courtly and aristocratic settings, romantic love, Arthurian protagonists, and some familiar plot motifs; but when in Chapter Two, each work was tested against the five criteria established as fundamental to medieval romance, only seven of the eighty-two satisfied them completely. The other works were scattered along a broad continuum of overlapping genres from balladry and

folk tales on the one end to chronicle and history on the other. In between the two extremes lie the minstrel tales with their moral, political, or social significance; the saint's legends with their exemplary intent; the pietistic and didactic tales which combine entertainment and morality; the chivalric adventure stories, and the English chansons de geste that combine Christian militancy with religious enthusiasm. With the exception of some of the histories (most notably Arthur), a few adventure stories (in particular Guy and Colbrond and Jeaste of Syr Gawayne), and the ballad-like tales (especially Sir Tristrem), the majority of the Middle English works share a strong moral and didactic sense, which cannot be traced to French or Anglo-Norman originals.

The preceding chapters, then, have made clear that the only way to understand these Middle English works is to recognize their diversity, appreciate their differences, and evaluate them in their proper contexts which extend from folk tale to chronicle. This new perspective does not force a work to conform to patterns, conventions, and meanings alien to it, but allows it to speak for itself and its kinship with other narratives most like itself. These Middle English works no longer suffer from the blanket application of the term "romance," which has forced critics to misjudge their intentions and misgauge their meaning.

Of course, no one would claim that these poems are great works of art or literary masterpieces. Nonetheless, they deserve a fair appraisal as examples of medieval English

fiction. Such a large body of work, spanning several centuries certainly represents a significant segment of English literary history, which must be understood on its own terms. The narratives cover numerous genres other than romance, and much more work needs to be conducted on the interrelationships between the Middle English poems and sermon literature, hagiography, and balladry. Without an unjustified preoccupation with romance, critics will now be able to concentrate their future investigations on more relevant aspects of these works.

Within the framework suggested by this study, much of the critical dissent over Amis and Amiloun as "chivalric romance" or "secular hagiography"[2] would turn out to be much ado about nothing. Obviously the piece is "a highly unsatisfactory example of the genre of romance,"[3] but that does not in itself imply that the work must be a secular saint's life. Although clearly resembling both genres, it is just as clearly neither romance nor hagiography. Even worse than this sort of generic quibbling is the controversy about whether the sources are primarily heroic and primitive or primarily Celtic.[4] Rather than pigeon-holing, critics should try to understand the poem as a whole, which makes use of various motifs and diverse sources without being limited to a single tradition. Each critic is partially right in investigating the non-romance aspects of the poem, but also partially wrong in insisting that it fit into some specific, narrow niche.

Future studies in the realm of Middle English verse narratives may well center on the difficult problems of purpose and audience, which can perhaps be studied most objectively through a re-examination of manuscripts. It is significant, for example, that none of the works examined appears in collections with Chaucer, Gower, or other romance literature. Their placement in collections of devotional and didactic literature strongly suggests that in their own day they were considered as "legends or pious tales, similar to sermon exempla."[5] Joseph of Arimathie, King of Tars, and Roberd of Cisyle all appear in the Bodl. 3938 MS (Vernon MS), a "purely religious manuscript."[6] Another religious, homiletic collection, Additional 31.042 (Thornton MS), contains Sege of Melayne, Roland and Otuel, Richard Coer de Lyon, and Siege of Jerusalem.[7] A similar collection of didactic and religious works, Camb. Univ. MS, contains Earl of Toulous, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Triamour, Octavian (Northern version), Bevis of Hampton, Bone Florence of Rome, Sir Degare, Roberd of Cisyle, and Guy of Warwick. The second half of Cotton Caligula A.2 MS, which includes Emare, Siege of Jerusalem, Chevalere Assigne, and Sir Isumbras, is yet another collection of mostly moral and religious pieces.[8] Interestingly, Sir Isumbras appears between Chevalere Assigne and two devotional poems, "Quinque Vulnera" and "Quinque Gaudia."

The famous Auchinleck Manuscript is generally considered to be a collection of mostly religious and devotional works.

It includes four saints' legends, seven other religious narratives, two religious debates, three homiletic and monitory poems, three poems of religious instruction, one chronicle, one list of Norman barons, two humorous tales, three poems of satire and complaint, The Seven Sages of Rome, and seventeen so-called romances.[9] The nature of the King of Tars may well have determined its placement as the second item in the collection, preceded by a saint's legend and followed by eight religious or homiletic pieces, then Amis and Amiloun, five more religious pieces, and finally Sir Degare.

After the list of Norman barons, Guy of Warwick, Reinbrun, Son of Gij, Bevis of Hampton, and Arthour and Merlin immediately follow--a further confirmation of their affiliation with historical traditions. Even more interesting is the insertion of a fragment of Arthour and Merlin into a prose chronicle in the Harley 6223 MS and the inclusion of Richard Coer de Lyon in two historical manuscripts, Harley 4690 and College of Arms. Similarly, Arthur is inserted into a Latin chronicle on the kings of England in Liber rubeus Bathoniae.

The pseudo-historical works are most often associated with other historical accounts in the manuscripts, and the didactic and pietistic pieces are usually not differentiated from devotional material. In fact, the majority of these poems appear in manuscripts with unmistakable didactic leaning.

This didacticism, however, is not exclusive to these

Middle English works; it is a common element in varying degrees in much fiction. It does seem true though that the moral element in the literature of England became progressively more blatant up to the fifteenth century:

> Didacticism becomes more obvious in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but it had already been present, if not crudely obvious, in courtly literature, and its increasing importance is due at least in part to the revival of the stricter moral standards within the church and to the influence of scholasticism.[10]

In England in the fifteenth century, the bourgeois audience accounted for part of the great difference between the English works and the French courtly romances:

> . . . emphasis on morals had to do with the changing tastes of the ages, with the growth of a new bourgeois reading class who were less interested in the artificial conventions of love than in common-sense morality.[11]

This increase in didacticism, the change in audience, and the differences between France and England from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, all frequently noted in the past, are interesting problems, but peripheral to this study.

Instead, this dissertation confronts the problem of genre and demonstrates the need to eliminate the indiscriminate use of the term "romance" for the bulk of these Middle English verse narratives and to replace it with the terminology developed in Chapter Four. The traditional label should be restricted to the seven works that actually satisfy the criteria of the romance genre. Only in this way can the generic problem be resolved. Since these eighty-two narratives have been wrongly categorized, A Manual of Writings in

Middle English should be revised to reflect these more accurate generic classifications. Until we rid ourselves of the term "romance" with its associated preconceptions, we will be unable to evaluate these works adequately, perhaps even to understand them in terms of their own intentions and narrative techniques.

NOTES

[1]Velma Richmond, The Popularity of Middle English Romances (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1975), p. 1.

[2]Ojars Kratins, "The Middle English Amis and Amiloun: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?" PMLA, 81 (1966), 347-54.

[3]Kratins, p. 347.

[4]See Delmar C. Homan, "Old Gods in New Garb: The Making of Amis and Amiloun," Diss. Columbia 1964 for the Celtic theory and MacEdward Leach in his introduction to Amis and Amiloun, EETSOS 203 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937) for emphasis on the primitive and heroic qualities.

[5]Karl Brunner, "Middle English Metrical Romances and their Audience," in Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor A. C. Baugh, ed. MacEdward Leach (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1962), p. 225; and Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 126.

[6]Brunner, p. 225.

[7]Mehl, pp. 259-60.

[8]Mehl, p. 260.

[9]Derek Pearsall, The Auchinleck Manuscript (London: Scholar Press, 1977), introduction. The ordering of the manuscript is as follows: 1) saint's life, 2) King of Tars, 3) religious narrative, 4) & 5) saints' legends, 6) religious narrative, 7) religious debate, 8) & 9) religious narrative, 10) homiletic and monitory poems, 11) Amis and Amiloun, 12) saint's life, 13) religious narrative, 14) & 15) religious instruction, 16) religious narrative, 17) Sir Degare, 18) Seven Sages of Rome, 19) Floris and Blanchefleur, 20) satire and complaint, 21) list of Norman barons, 22), 23), & 24) Guy of Warwick and Reinbrun, Son of Gij, 25) Bevis of Hampton, 26) Arthour and Merlin, 27) & 28) humorous tales, 29) religious narratives, 30) Lai le Freine, 31) Roland and Otuel, 32) Otuel a Knight, 33) Lyfe of Alisaunder, 34) religious debate,

35) homiletic and monitory poem, 36) religious instruction, 37) Sir Tristrem, 38) Sir Orfeo, 39) homiletic and monitory poem, 40) chronicle, 41) Horn Child, 42) satire and complaint, 43) Richard Coer de Lyon, and 44) satire and complaint.

[10]W. T. H. Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), p. 60.

[11]Derek Pearsall, ed., The Floure and the Leafe and the Assembly of Ladies (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 41.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GENERIC LABELS: CLASSIFIED BY WORK

1. *Alexander A*:

"gestes"	title
"process"	l. 171
"tale"	l. 45

2. *Alexander B*:

"sawe"?	ll. 1033, 1109?

3. *Alexander C*:

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4. *Amis and Amiloun*:

"geste"	ll. 15 (Douce, Egerton, Hale), 38 (Hale), 157, 409 (Auchinleck, Douce, Egerton), 1501, 1917, 2173, 2343, 2436
"rime"	l. 38 (Egerton)
"romance"	l. 15 (Egerton)
"tale"	l. 441
"talkyng"	ll. 39 (Douce, Egerton, Hale), 409 (Hale), 484 (Auchinleck, Douce, Egerton)
"vita"	explicit

5. *Amoryus and Cleopes*:

"book"	ll. 57, 242, 2177
"process"	ll. 155, 162
"story"	ll. 51, 93, 106, 236, 1156, 2104, explicit

6. *Arthour and Merlin*:

"book"	l. 5647
"geste"	l. 7618
"matter"	l. 663

"romance" ll. 31, 626, 7271, 8227, 9405, 9657, etc.

7. Arthur:

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8. Ashmole Sir Firumbras:

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9. Athelston:

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10. Avowynge of King Arthur:

"tale" Stanza LXII, l. 1

11. Awntyrs off Arthur:

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12. Bevis of Hampton:

"geste" l. 3963

"rime" ll. 1216, 3963

"romance" ll. 1216 (Chetham 8009, Egerton, Naples), 1925

"spell" l. 1484

"story" l. 1142

"tale" l. 1

13. Bone Florence of Rome:

"romance" l. 2185

"story" l. 2175

14. Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment (no title, no heading, and imperfect beginning and ending):

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15. Carle off Carlile:

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16. Chevalere Assigne:

"sawe"	l. 2185
"tale"	l. 93

17. Destruction of Troy:

"book"	chapter headings
"matter"	l. 4278
"process"	ll. 9075, 13774, 14043
"story"	ll. 4028, 5551
"tale"	ll. 665, 747, 1508, 2094, 2724, 3731, 4278, 4458, etc.
"work"	l. 4

18. Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain:

"romance"	l. 37, heading, explicit

19. Earl of Toulous:

"geste"	l. 1219
"lay"	l. 1220
"romance"	title (Lincoln)
"tale"	l. 8

20. Eger and Grime:

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21. Emare:

"lay"	l. 1030
"plaint"	l. 1032
"song"	l. 24
"story"	l. 1029
"tale"	l. 948

22. Fillingham Firumbras:

"geste"	ll. 55, 1831, 1836

23. Floris and Blancheflur (beginning and ending missing):

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24. Gamelyn:

"talkyng" ll. 2, 140

25. a) Generides (Helmingham):

"book" l. 2550 (introduction)

"geste" l. 23

"history" incipit, explicit

"matter" l. 1993

"tale" ll. 30, 33, 2553, 3770, 10081

b) Generides (Trinity College):

"book" explicit

"process" l. 6990

26. Grene Knight:

"tale" ll. 282, 523

27. Guy and Colbrond:

"geste" l. 632

28. Guy of Warwick:

"geste" Stanza 35, l. 12; Stanza 44, l. 2; Stanza 255, l. 6; explicit (Caius)

"matter" l. 108

"romance" Stanza 1, l. 1

"spell" l. 4819

"story" l. 8654 (Caius)

29. Havelok:

"geste" l. 2984

"rime" ll. 21, 23, 2995, 2998

"story" l. 1641

"tale" ll. 3, 5, 12, 13

"vita" heading

30. History of the Holy Grail:

"book" Chap. 12, l. 336; Chap. 14, l. 48; etc.

"matter" Chap. 12, l. 336; Chap. 33, l. 541

"process" Chap. 56, l. 536

"story" Chap. 12, l. 336; Chap. 14, l. 48; Chap. 18, l. 11; Chap. 33, l. 541; etc.

"talkynge" Chap. 12, l. 1

31. Horn Child:

"geste" l. 1120

32. Ipomedon A (tail-rhyme):

"rime" l. 5337

"romance" l. 5337

"tale" l. 1258, heading

33. Ipomedon B (couplet):

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34. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne:

"geste" l. 537, heading, explicit

35. Joseph of Arimathie:

"life" title

"matter" l. 364

36. King Horn:

"song" ll. 2, 3, 1028

"tale" l. 1525

37. King of Tars:

"geste" l. 981

"sawe"? ll. 411, 1119 (possibly refers to source)

"tale"? ll. 411, 1119 (possibly refers to source)

38. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell:

"treatise" l. 504, incipit, explicit

39. Lai le Freine:

"lay" ll. 14, 22

"rime" l. 14

40. Laud Troy Book:

"matter" l. 168

"romance" ll. 18640, 18659

"spell" l. 104

"story" l. 73

"tale" ll. 5, 7

41. Libeaus Desconus:

"life" l. 2205 (Ashmole)

"tale" l. 4 (Additional)

"treatise" incipit (Lambeth Place)

42. Lyfe of Alisaunder:

"geste" ll. 30?, 2203, 2205

"romance" l. 1916

"tale" l. 2048

43. Merlin:

"book" ll. 10081, 16865

"matter" ll. 10077, 10255, 10545, 17159, etc.

"process" l. 16709

"spell" l. 9464

"story" ll. 1676, 1831, 3477, 4179, 4639, 5641, 6256, 7019, etc.

"tale" ll. 10522, 11789, 12869

44. Morte Arthur (stanzaic):

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45. Morte Arthure (alliterative):

"tale" l. 16

46. a) Octavian (Northern):

"romance" heading

"sawes" l. 7

"talkyng" l. 2

b) Octavian (Southern):

"geste" l. 488

"romance" l. 1811

"tale" l. 427

47. Otuel a Knight:

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48. Otuel and Roland:

"rime" l. 2187

"sawe" l. 1161

"tale" l. 1976

49. Partonope of Blois:

"book" ll. 60, 64

"geste" l. 458

"matter" ll. 478, 2350

"romance" l. 12195

"story" l. 2336

"tale" ll. 507, 4488, 10286

50. Reinbrun, Son of Gij:

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51. Richard Coer de Lyon:

"history"	incipit (Wynkyn's print)
"romance"	ll. 202, 7209 (Additional)
"sawe"	l. 5101
"story"	explicit (Wynkyn's print)
"tale"	ll. 5099, 6723
"vita"	incipit (Gonville and Caius)

52. Roberd of Cisyle:

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53. Roland and Vernagu:

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54. Romauns of Partenay:

"book"	l. 20
"dites"	l. 6413
"history"	ll. 156, 194
"romance"	ll. 6417, 6418
"work"	l. 207

55. Seege of Troye:

"geste"	l. 980 (Arundel)
"spell"	l. 980 (Lincoln's Inn)

56. Sege of Melayne:

"geste"	l. 7

57. Siege of Jerusalem:

"geste"	explicit (Cambridge Univ., Cotton Caligula, (Lambeth Place)

58. Siege of Thebes:

"story"	ll. 184, 874

"tale" ll. 176 (prologue), 180, 322, 1046, 1059, 2248, 2440, etc.

59. Sir Amadace (beginning missing):

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60. Sir Cleges:

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61. Sir Degare:

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62. Sir Degrevant:

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63. Sir Eglamour of Artois:

"geste" ll. 905, 1339

"romance" l. 1333 (Lincoln Cathedral)

64. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:

"lay" l. 30

65. Sir Gowther:

"romance" l. 537

"story" l. 746

"tale" l. 29

66. Sir Isumbras:

"history" incipit (Douce)

"romance" incipit (Thornton)

"story" l. 137 (Thornton)

67. Sir Launfal:

"lay" l. 4

"tale" ll. 23. 1039

68. Sir Orfeo:

"lay" l. 601

69. Sir Perceval of Galles:

"romance" incipit, explicit

70. Sir Torrent of Portyngale:

"romance" l. 2661

"tale" incipit

71. Sir Triamour:

"story" ll. 5, 11

72. Sir Tristrem:

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73. Song of Roland:

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74. Sowdon of Babylon:

"gestes"? l. 3274

"romance" incipit, explicit

75. Squyr of Lowe Degre:

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76. Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle:

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77. Titus and Vespasian:

"story" ll. 1630, 5172

78. Troy Book:

"book" Book 4, ll. 4636, 7092; Book 5, l. 3611; etc.

"story" l. 378 (prologue); Book 2, ll. 161, 177; etc.

"work" l. 59 (prologue), etc.

79. Turke and Gowin:

"tale" l. 330

80. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:

"lif"?	l. 1
"spell"	l. 18
"tale"	ll. 843, 849

81. William of Palerne:

"lesson"	ll. 1923, 1929, 1944, 3528, etc.
"matter"	l. 5032
"story"	l. 4806
"tale"	ll. 78, 161, 787, 1160

82. Ywain and Gawain:

"book"	rubric after l. 2428

APPENDIX B

GENERIC LABELS: CLASSIFIED BY DESCRIPTIVE WORD

BOKE

1. Amoryus and Cleopes:

   l. 1059 in 1st book, l. 1024 of prologue to 3rd book (Garrett Collection, Princeton University Library).

2. Arthour and Merlin:

   l. 5647 (Auchinleck MS.).

3. Generides:

   explicit: "the boke of Generides and of his faire lady Clarionas" (Trinity Camb 1283 MS.).

   l. 2550: "As ye may here in this boke see itt more pleinlie here after" (Helmingham MS.).

4, Merlin:

   ll. 10081, 16865 (Corpus Christi Coll Camb 80 MS.).

5. Partonope of Blois:

   ll. 60, 64 (Addit 35288 MS.).

6. Romauns of Partenay:

   ll. 20, 6415 (Trinity Camb 597 MS.).

7. Ywain and Gawain:

   rubric after l. 2428; "Her es þe myddes of þis boke" (Cotton Galba E.9 MS.).

DITE

1. Romauns of Partenay:

   l. 6413 (Trinity Camb 597 MS.).

GESTE

1. Alexander A:

   title: "The Gestes of Worthie King & Emperor" (Bodl 3832 MS.).

2. Amis and Amiloun:

   ll. 157, 409, 1501, 1917, 2173 (Douce 326, Harley 2386, Auchinleck MSS.).

3. Arthour and Merlin:

   l. 7618 (Auchinleck MS.).

4. Bevis of Hampton:

   l. 3963 (Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.).

5. Earl of Toulous:

   l. 1219 (Thornton MS.).

6. Generides:

   l. 23 (Helmingham MS.).

7. Guy of Warwick:

   Stanza 35, l. 12; Stanza 44, l. 2 (Auchinleck MS.); l. 11092 (Caius Camb 107 MS.).

8. Guy and Colbrond:

   l. 633 (Percy Folio).

9. Havelok:

   l. 2984 (Laud Mis 108 MS.).

10. Horn Child:

    l. 1120 (Auchinleck MS.).

11. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne:

    l. 537, explicit: "Here endeth the Jeaste of Syr Gawayne" (Douce 261 MS.).

12. King of Tars:

    l. 774 (Auchinleck MS.).

13. Lyfe of Alisaunder:

    ll. 30, 2203 (Laud Misc 622, Lincoln's Inn 150 MSS.).

14. Octavian (Southern):

    l. 488 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

15. Partonope of Blois:

    l. 458 (Addit 35288 MS.).

16. Seege of Troye:

    l. 980 (Arundel MS.).

17. Siege of Jerusalem:

    explicit (Lambeth 491, Cotton Calig A.2, Camb Univ Mm.5.14 MSS.).

18. Sir Eglamour of Artois:

    l. 1339 (Camb Univ 2.38 MS.).

19. Sowdon of Babylon:

    l. 3274 (Addit 37492 MS.).

HISTORY

1. Generides:

   incipit, explicit (Helmingham MS.).

2. Romauns of Partenay:

   l. 194 (Trinity Camb 597 MS.).

3. Sir Isumbras:

   incipit (Douce 261 MS.).

LAY

1. Earl of Toulous:

   l. 1220 (Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.).

2. Emare:

1. 1030 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

3. Lai le Freine:

11. 14, 22 (Auchinleck MS.).

4. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:

1. 30 (Cotton Nero A.10 MS.).

5. Sir Launfal:

1. 4 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

6. Sir Orfeo:

1. 601 (Auchinleck MS.).

MATTER

1. Arthour and Merlin:

1. 663 (Auchinleck MS.).

2. Generides:

1. 1993 (Helmingham MS.).

3. Guy of Warwick:

1. 108 (Caius Camb 107 MS.).

4. History of the Holy Grail:

Chap. 15, l. 2; Chap. 33, ll. 541, 546 (Corpus Christi Coll Camb 80 MS.).

5. Ipomedon B:

1. 1595 (Harley 2252 MS.).

6. Joseph of Arimathie:

1. 364 (Bodl Poet A.1 MS.).

7. Laud Troy Book:

1. 168 (Laud 595 MS.).

8. Merlin:

   ll. 13619, 13627, 15178, 17159, 17263, 17322, etc. (Corpus Christi Coll Camb 80 MS.).

9. Partonope of Blois:

   ll. 478, 2350 (Addit 35288 MS.).

10. William of Palerne:

    l. 5032 (King's Camb 13 MS.).

PLAINT

1. Emare:

   l. 1032 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

PROCESS

1. Alexander A:

   l. 171 (Greaves 60 MS.).

2. Amoryus and Cleopes:

   ll. 155, 162, 1156, 1571, 1773 (Garrett Collection, Princeton University Library).

3. Destruction of Troy:

   ll. 11772, 14043 (Hunterian 388 MS., Univ. of Glasgow).

4. Generides:

   l. 6990 (Trinity Camb 1283 MS.).

5. Merlin:

   ll. 16709, 17321 (Corpus Christi Coll Camb 80 MS.).

RIME

1. Amis and Amiloun:

   l. 38 (Douce 236, Egerton 2862 MSS.).

2. Bevis of Hampton:

ll. 1216, 3963 (Auchinleck MS.).

3. Havelok:

ll. 21, 23, 2995, 2998 (Laud Misc 108 MS.).

4. Ipomedon A:

l. 5337 (Chetham 8009 MS.).

5. Lai le Freine:

l. 14 (Auchinleck MS.).

6. Otuel and Roland:

l. 2187 (Addit 37492 MS.).

ROMANCE

1. Amis and Amiloun:

l. 157 (Egerton 2862 MS.).

2. Arthour and Merlin:

ll. 31, 626, 7271, 8227, 8585, 9405, 9657 (Auchinleck MS.).

3. Bevis of Hampton:

l. 1216 (Douce frag., Camb Univ Ff.2.38, Royal Library of Naples MSS.); l. 1925 (Chetham 8009 MS.).

4. Bone Florence of Rome:

l. 2185 (Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.).

5. Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain:

heading, explicit (Addit 31042 MS.).

6. Earl of Toulous:

heading (Thornton MS.).

7. Guy of Warwick:

Stanza 1, l. 2 (Auchinleck MS.).

8. Ipomedon A:

   l. 5337 (Chetham 8009 MS.).

9. Laud Troy Book:

   ll. 18640, 18659 (Laud 595 MS.).

10. Lyfe of Alisaunder:

    l. 1916 (Laud Misc 622, Lincoln's Inn 150 MSS.).

11. Octavian (Northern):

    heading (Thornton, Camb Univ Ff.2.38, Bagford Harley 5905 MSS.).

12. Octavian (Southern):

    l. 1811 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

13. Partonope of Blois:

    l. 12195 (Addit 35288 MS.).

14. Richard Coer de Lyon:

    ll. 202, 1947 (Addit 31042 MS.).

15. Romauns of Partenay:

    ll. 6417, 6418 (Trinity Camb 597 MS.).

16. Sir Eglamour of Artois:

    l. 1333 (Thornton MS.).

17. Sir Gowther:

    l. 537 (Royal 17.B.43, Advocates 19.3.1 MSS.).

18. Sir Isumbras:

    incipit (Thornton MS.).

19. Sir Perceval of Galles:

    incipit, explicit (Thornton MS.).

20. Sir Torrent of Portyngale:

    l. 2661 (Chetham 8009 MS.).

21. Sowdon of Babylon:

title, explicit (Garrett 140 MS.).

SAW

1. Amis and Amiloun:

l. 90 (Douce 326 MS.).

2, Chevalere Assigne:

l. 162 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

3. King of Tars:

ll. 411, 1119 (Bodl 3938 MS.).

4. Octavian (Northern):

l. 7 (Thornton, Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MSS.).

5. Otuel and Roland:

l. 1161 (Addit 47492 MS.).

6. Richard Coer de Lyon:

l. 5061 (Addit 31042 MS.).

SONG

1. Emare:

l. 24 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

2. King Horn:

ll. 2, 3, 1528 (Camb Univ Gg.4.27 MS.).

SPELLE

1. Bevis of Hampton:

l. 1484 (Auchinleck MS.).

2. Guy of Warwick:

   ll. 4794, 4819 (Auchinleck MS.).

3. Havelok:

   l. 15 (Laud Misc 108 MS.).

4. Laud Troy Book:

   l. 104 (Laud 595 MS.).

5. Merlin:

   l. 9464 (Corpus Christi Coll Camb 80 MS.).

6. Seege of Troye:

   l. 980 (Lincoln's Inn 150 MS.).

7. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:

   l. 18 (Rawlinson C86 MS.).

STORY

1. Amoryus and Cleopes:

   ll. 51, 93, 106, 236, 725, 1594, etc. (Garrett Collection, Princeton University Library).

2. Bevis of Hampton:

   l. 1142 (Auchinleck MS.).

3. Emare:

   l. 1029 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

4. Guy of Warwick:

   l. 8654 (Caius Camb 107 MS.).

5. Havelok:

   l. 1641 (Laud Misc 108 MS.).

6. History of the Holy Grail:

   Chap. 12, l. 336; Chap. 14, l. 48; Chap. 15, l. 468; Chap. 18, ll. 11, 18, 128, 135, etc. (Corpus Christi Coll Camb 80 MS.).

7. King of Tars:

   l. 774 (Bodl 3938 MS.).

8. Laud Troy Book:

   l. 73 (Laud 595 MS.).

9. Merlin:

   ll. 1831, 3108, 3477, 4179, 4637, 5641, 6256, etc. (Corpus Christi Coll Camb 80 MS.).

10. Morte Arthure:

    ll. 25, 7019, 7785, 15603, etc. (Thornton MS.).

11. Partonope of Blois:

    l. 2336 (Addit 35288 MS.).

12. Siege of Thebes:

    ll. 184, 874

13. Sir Gowther:

    l. 745 (Royal 17.B.43 MS.).

14. Sir Isumbras:

    l. 137 (Thornton MS.).

15. Sir Triamour:

    ll. 5, 11 (Thornton MS.).

16. Titus and Vespasian:

    l. 5172 (Addit 31042 MS.).

17. Troy Book:

    ll. 112, 378 of prologue (Cotton Augustus A.4 MS.).

18. William of Palerne:

    l. 4806 (King's Camb 13 MS.).

TALE

1. Alexander A:

   l. 45 (Greaves 60 MS.).

2. Amis and Amiloun:

   l. 441 (Douce 326 MS.).

3. Arthour and Merlin:

   ll. 29, 1707, 5076 (Auchinleck MS.); l. 1264 (Lincoln's Inn 150 MS.).

4. Avowynge of King Arthur:

   Stanza 62, l. 1 (Ireland Blackburn MS.).

5. Bevis of Hampton:

   l. 1 (Auchinleck MS.).

6. Chevalere Assigne:

   l. 93 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

7. Earl of Toulous:

   l. 8 (Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.).

8. Emare:

   l. 948 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

9. Grene Knight:

   ll. 282, 523 (Addit 27879 MS.).

10. Havelok:

    ll. 3, 5, 12, 13 (Laud Misc 108 MS.).

11. Ipomedon A:

    incipit, l. 1258 (Chetham 8009 MS.).

12. King Horn:

    l. 1525 (Laud Misc 108 MS.).

13. King of Tars:

    ll. 411, 1119 (Bodl 3938 MS.).

14. Laud Troy Book:

    ll. 5, 7 (Laud 595 MS.).

15. Libeaus Desconus:

    l. 4 (Addit 27879 MS.); l. 1271 (Lambeth 306 MS.).

16. Lyfe of Alisaunder:

    l. 2048 (Laud Misc 622 MS.).

17. Merlin:

    ll. 12, 869, 10522, 11789, etc. (Corpus Christ Coll Camb 80 MS.).

18. Morte Arthure:

    l. 16 (Thornton MS.).

19. Octavian (Northern):

    l. 2 (Camb Univ Ff.2.38 MS.).

20. Octavian (Southern):

    l. 427 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

21. Partonope of Blois:

    ll. 4488, 10286 (Addit 35288 MS.).

22. Richard Coer de Lyon:

    ll. 5099, 6723 (Addit 31042 MS.).

23. Siege of Thebes:

    ll. 180, 322, 1046, 1050, 2440, etc.

24. Sir Gowther:

    l. 29 (Advocates 19.3.1 MS.); l. 751 (Royal 17.B.43 MS.).

25. Sir Launfal:

    ll. 23, 1039 (Cotton Calig A.2 MS.).

26. Sir Torrent of Portyngale:

    l. 1 (Chetham 8009 MS.).

27. Turke and Gowin:

    l. 330 (Addit 27879 MS.).

28. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:

    ll. 843, 849 (Bodl 11951 MS.).

29. William of Palerne:

    ll. 78, 161, 787, 1160, etc. (King's Camb 13 MS.).

TREATISE

1. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell:

   incipit, explicit, l. 504 (Bodl print).

2. Libeaus Desconus:

   incipit (Lambeth 306 MS.).

VITA

1. Amis and Amiloun:

   explicit (Douce 326 MS.).

2. Havelok:

   incipit (Laud Misc 108 MS.).

3. Joseph of Arimathie:

   incipit (Bodl Poet A.1 MS.).

4. Libeaus Desconus:

   l. 2205 (Ashmole 61 MS.) ["life"].

5. Richard Coer de Lyon:

   incipit (Caius Camb 175 MS.).

6. Sir Gowther:

   explicit (Royal 17.B.43 MS.).

7. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:

    l. 1 (Rawlinson C86 MS.) ["life"].

WORK

1. Destruction of Troy:

    l. 4 (Hunterian 388 MS., Univ. of Glasgow).

2. Romauns of Partenay:

    l. 207 (Trinity Camb 597 MS.).

3. Troy Book:

    ll. 59, 70 of prologue (Cotton Augustus A.4 MS.).

APPENDIX C

FOUR VARIABLES OF COMPOSITION: CLASSIFIED BY DESCRIPTIVE WORD

Length	Rhyme	Area	Date
BOKE			
1. *Amoryus and Cleopes*:			
2211 ll.	rime royal	Norfolk	1448-1449
2. *Arthour and Merlin*:			
9938 ll.	four-stress couplets	Kent	1250-1300
3. *Generides*:			
a) 6995 ll.	rime royal	Midlands	late 1300s
b) 10086 ll.	couplets	Midlands	late 1300s
4. *Merlin*:			
27852 ll.	rhyming couplets	South or S Midlands	1425
5. *Partonope of Blois*:			
12195 ll.	couplets	South	1400s
6. *Romauns of Partenay*:			
6615 ll.	rime royal	NE Midlands	ca. 1500
7. *Ywain and Gawain*:			
	four-stress couplets	North	1300-1350
DITE			
1. *Romauns of Partenay*:			
6615 ll.	rime royal	NE Midlands	ca. 1500

GESTE

1. Alexander A:

1247 ll.	alliteration	Gloucestershire	1340-1370

2. Amis and Amiloun:

2495 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	late 1200s

3. Arthour and Merlin:

9938 ll.	four-stress couplets	Kent	1250-1300

4. Bevis of Hampton:

4620 ll.	tail-rhyme & couplets	Southampton	ca. 1300

5. Earl of Toulous:

1224 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400

6. Generides:

10086 ll.	couplets	Midlands	late 1300s

7. Guy of Warwick:

12000 ll.	octosyllabic couplets & tail-rhyme	Warwickshire	ca. 1300

8. Guy and Colbrond:

633 ll.	tail-rhyme		

9. Havelok:

3001 ll.	four-stress couplets	NE Midlands	1280-1300

10. Horn Child:

1136 ll.	tail-rhyme	Yorkshire	ca. 1320

11. Jeaste of Syr Gawayne:

541 ll.	tail-rhyme	South or S Midlands	1450-1500

12. King of Tars:

1122-1228 ll.	tail-rhyme	London	early 1300s

13. Lyfe of Alisaunder:

8021 ll.	four-stress couplets	London	early 1300s

14. Octavian:

1962 ll.	tail-rhyme	Southeast	ca. 1350

15. Partonope of Blois:

7096-12195 ll.	couplets	South	1400s

16. Seege of Troye:

2066 ll.	four-stress couplets	NW Midlands	1300-1325

17. Siege of Jerusalem:

1334 ll.	alliterative quatrains	NW Midlands	1390-1400

18. Sir Eglamour of Artois:

1335 ll.	tail-rhyme	North or N Midlands	ca. 1350

19. Sowdon of Babylon:

1842 ll.	six-stress couplets	E Midlands	1375-1400

HISTORY

1. Generides:

10086 ll.	couplets	Midlands	late 1300s

2. Romauns of Partenay:

6615 ll.	rime royal	NE Midlands	ca. 1500

3. Sir Isumbras:

372 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	early 1300s

LAY

1. Earl of Toulous:

1224 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400

2. Emare:

1035 ll.	tail-rhyme	Northeast	ca. 1400

3. Lai le Freine:

340 ll.	short couplets	Southeast (or possibly Westminster-Middlesex)	early 1300s

4. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:

2530 ll.	alliteration	NW Midlands	1375-1400

5. Sir Launfal:

1044 ll.	tail-rhyme	Southeast	late 1300s

6. Sir Orfeo:

602 ll.	four-stress couplets	Southeast	early 1300s

MATTER

1. Arthour and Merlin:

9938 ll.	four-stress couplets	Kent	1250-1300

2. Generides:

10086 ll.	couplets	Midlands	late 1300s

3. Guy of Warwick:

12000 ll.	octosyllabic couplets & tail-rhyme	Warwickshire	ca. 1300

4. History of the Holy Grail:

11892 ll.	short couplets	South or S Midlands	ca. 1450

5. Ipomedon B:

2346 ll.	four-stress couplets	E Midlands	before 1425

6. Joseph of Arimathie:

709 ll.	alliteration	W or SW Midlands	mid 1300s

7. Laud Troy Book:

18644 ll.	four-stress couplets	E Midlands	ca. 1400

8. Merlin:

27852 ll.	short couplets	South	1400s

9. Partonope of Blois:

12195	couplets	South or S Midlands	ca. 1425

10. William of Palerne:

5540 ll.	alliteration	Gloucestershire (SW Midlands)	1350-1360

PLAINT

1. Emare:

1035 ll.	tail-rhyme	Northeast	ca. 1400

PROCESS

1. Alexander A:

1247 ll.	alliteration	Gloucestershire	1340-70

2. Amoryus and Cleopes:

2211 ll.	rime royal	Norfolk	1448-1449

3. Destruction of Troy:

14044 ll.	alliteration	NW Midlands	1350-1400

4. Generides:

6995 ll.	rime royal	Midlands	late 1300s

5. Merlin:

27852 ll.	couplets	South or S Midlands	ca. 1425

RIME

1. Amis and Amiloun:

2495 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	late 1200s

2. Bevis of Hampton:

4620 ll.	tail-rhyme & couplets	Southampton	ca. 1300

3. Havelok:

3001 ll.	four-stress couplets	NE Midlands	1280-1300

4. Ipomedon A:

8890 ll.	tail-rhyme	N Midlands-Lancashire	late 1300s

5. Lai le Freine:

340 ll.	short couplets	Southeast	early 1300s

6. Otuel and Roland:

2800 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	1330-1340

ROMANCE

1. Amis and Amiloun:

2495 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	late 1200s

2. Arthour and Merlin:

9938 ll.	four-stress couplets	Kent	1250-1300

3. Bevis of Hampton:

4620 ll.	tail-rhyme & couplets	Southampton	ca. 1300

4. Bone Florence of Rome:

2187 ll.	tail-rhyme	N Midlands	late 1300s

5. Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain:

1596 ll.	tail-rhyme	North	ca. 1300

6. Earl of Toulous:

1224 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400

7. Guy of Warwick:

12000 ll.	octosyllabic couplets & tail-rhyme	Warwickshire	ca. 1300

8. Ipomedon A:

8890 ll.	tail-rhyme	N Midlands-Lancashire	late 1300s

9. Laud Troy Book:

18644 ll.	four-stress couplets	E Midlands	ca. 1400

10. Lyfe of Alisaunder:

8021 ll.	four-stress couplets	Gloucestershire	1340-1370

11. Octavian:

1629-1731 ll.	tail-rhyme	North	ca. 1350

12. Octavian:

1962 ll.	tail-rhyme	Southeast	ca. 1350

13. Partonope of Blois:

12195 ll.	couplets	South	1400s

14. Richard Coer de Lyon:

6380 ll.	couplets	mixed Midlands (London area)	ca. 1300

15. Romauns of Partenay:

6615 ll.	rime royal	NE Midlands	ca. 1500

16. Sir Eglamour of Artois:

1335 ll.	tail-rhyme	North or N Midlands	ca. 1350

17. Sir Gowther:

757 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400

18. Sir Isumbras:

794 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	early 1300s

19. Sir Perceval of Galles:

2286 ll.	tail-rhyme	North	1300-1340

20. Sir Torrent of Portyngale:

2668 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	ca. 1400

21. Sowdon of Babylon:

3274 ll.	four-stress couplets	E Midlands	ca. 1400

SAW

1. Amis and Amiloun:

2495 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	late 1200s

2. Chevalere Assigne:

370 ll.	alliteration	E Midlands	1350-1400

3. King of Tars:

1122-1228 ll.	tail-rhyme	London	early 1300s

4. Octavian:

1629-1731 ll.	tail-rhyme	North	ca. 1350

5. Otuel and Roland:

2800 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	ca. 1330

6. Richard Coer de Lyon:

6380 ll.	four-stress couplets	mixed Midlands (London area)	ca. 1300

SONG

1. Emare:

1035 ll.	tail-rhyme	Northeast	ca. 1400

2. King Horn:

1530 ll.	couplets	Southwest or S Midlands	ca. 1225

SPELLE

1. Bevis of Hampton:

4620 ll.	tail-rhyme & couplets	Southampton	ca. 1300

2. Guy of Warwick:

12000 ll.	octosyllabic couplets & tail-rhyme	Warwickshire	ca. 1300

3. Havelok:

3001 ll.	four-stress couplets	NE Midlands	1280-1300

4. Laud Troy Book:

18644 ll.	four-stress couplets	E Midlands	ca. 1400

5. Merlin:

27852 ll.	couplets	South or S Midlands	1425

6. Seege of Troye:

2066 ll.	four-stress couplets	NW Midlands	1300-1325

7. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:

852 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	ca. 1450

STORY

1. Amoryus and Cleopes:

2211 ll.	rime royal	Norfolk	1448-1449

2. Bevis of Hampton:

4620 ll.	tail-rhyme & couplets	Southampton	ca. 1300

3. Emare:

1035 ll.	tail-rhyme	Northeast	ca. 1400

4. Guy of Warwick:

12000 ll.	octosyllabic couplets & tail-rhyme	Warwickshire	ca. 1300

5. Havelok:

3001 ll.	four-stress couplets	NE Midlands	1280-1300

6. History of the Holy Grail:

11892 ll.	rhymed couplets	South or S Midlands	ca. 1450

7. King of Tars:

1122-1288 ll.	tail-rhyme	London	early 1300s

8. Laud Troy Book:

18644 ll.	four-stress couplets	E Midlands	c. 1400

9. Merlin:

27852 ll.	rhymed couplets	South or S Midlands	ca. 1425

10. Morte Arthure:

4346 ll.	alliteration	NW Midlands	ca. 1360

11. Partonope of Blois:

12195 ll.	couplets	South	1400s

12. Siege of Thebes:

4716 ll.	heroic couplets	London	1420-1422

13. Sir Gowther:

757 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400

14. Sir Isumbras:

794 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	early 1300s

15. Sir Triamour:

1719 ll.	tail-rhyme	North or NE Midlands	late 1300s

16. Titus and Vespasian:

5172 ll.	octosyllabic couplets	London	ca. 1390

17. Troy Book:

30110 ll.	couplets	E Midlands	1410

18. William of Palerne:

5540 ll.	alliteration	Gloucestershire (SW Midlands)	1350-1360

TALE

1. Alexander A:

1247 ll.	alliteration	Gloucestershire	1340-1370

2. *Amis and Amiloun*:			
2495 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	late 1200s
3. *Arthour and Merlin*:			
9938 ll.	four-stress couplets	Kent	1250-1300
4. *Avowynge of King Arthur*:			
1152 ll.	tail-rhyme	North	ca. 1425
5. *Bevis of Hampton*:			
4620 ll.	tail-rhyme & couplets	Southampton	ca. 1300
6. *Chevalere Assigne*:			
370 ll.	alliteration	E Midlands	1350-1400
7. *Earl of Toulous*:			
1224 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400
8. *Emare*:			
1035 ll.	tail-rhyme	Northeast	ca. 1400
9. *Grene Knight*:			
528 ll.	tail-rhyme	S Midlands	ca. 1500
10. *Havelok*:			
3001 ll.	four-stress couplets	NE Midlands	1280-1300
11. *Ipomedon A*:			
8890 ll.	tail-rhyme	N Midlands-Lancashire	late 1300s
12. *King Horn*:			
1546 ll.	couplets	Southwest or S Midlands	ca. 1225
13. *King of Tars*:			
1122-1228 ll.	tail-rhyme	London	early 1300s

14. Laud Troy Book:

18644 ll.	four-stress couplets	E Midlands	ca. 1400

15. Libeaus Desconus:

2131-2204 ll.	tail-rhyme	South	1325-1350

16. Lyfe of Alisaunder:

8021 ll.	couplets	Southwest or S Midlands	ca. 1225

17. Merlin:

27852 ll.	rhymed couplets	South or S Midlands	ca. 1425

18. Morte Arthure:

4346 ll.	alliteration	NW Midlands	ca. 1360

19. Octavian:

1731 ll.	tail-rhyme	North	ca. 1350

20. Octavian:

1962 ll.	tail-rhyme	Southeast	ca. 1350

21. Partonope of Blois:

12195 ll.	couplets	South	1400s

22. Richard Coer de Lyon:

7212 ll.	four-stress couplets	mixed Midlands (London area)	ca. 1300

23. Siege of Thebes:

4716 ll.	heroic couplets	London	1420-1422

24. Sir Gowther:

757 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400

25. Sir Launfal:

1044 ll.	tail-rhyme	Southeast	late 1300s

26. Sir Torrent of Portyngale:

2668 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	ca. 1400

27. Turke and Gowin:

335 ll.	tail-rhyme	North or NW Midlands	ca. 1500

28. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:

852 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	ca. 1450

29. William of Palerne:

5540 ll.	alliteration	Gloucestershire	1350-1360

TREATISE

1. Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell:

504 ll.	four-stress couplets	London	late 1300s

2. Libeaus Desconus:

2204 ll.	tail-rhyme	South	1325-1350

VITA

1. Amis and Amiloun:

2495 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	late 1200s

2. Havelok:

3001 ll.	four-stress couplets	NE Midlands	1280-1300

3. Joseph of Arimathie:

709 ll.	alliteration	West or SW Midlands	mid 1300s

4. Libeaus Desconus:

2232 ll.	tail-rhyme	South	1325-1350

5. Richard Coer de Lyon:

6380 ll.	couplets	mixed Midlands (London area)	ca. 1300

6. Sir Gowther:

757 ll.	tail-rhyme	NE Midlands	ca. 1400

7. Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:

852 ll.	tail-rhyme	E Midlands	ca. 1450

WORK

1. Destruction of Troy:

14044 ll.	alliteration	NW Midlands	1350-1400

2. Romauns of Partenay:

6615 ll.	rime royal	NE Midlands	ca. 1500

3. Troy Book:

30110 ll.	couplets	E Midlands	1410

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