

LIBRARY

Michigan State University

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

MSU is An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution

c:\circ\datedue.pm3-p.1

GENERIC PROBLEMS IN MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE:

A JAUSSIAN/BAKHTINIAN STUDY

By

Denise Ming-yueh Wang

A DISSERTATION

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1993

Mi

problem

definit

interch

romance

dissert

intende

deviati

of the

in its

rather

Middle

Hans-Ro

"metali

Chapter

definit

English

ABSTRACT

GENERIC PROBLEMS IN MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE: A JAUSSIAN/BAKHTINIAN STUDY

By

Denise Ming-yueh Wang

Middle English romances have been regarded as a problematic genre because they defy any clear-cut definition(s) and classification(s). We often see interchangeable generic elements among Middle English romance, chronicle, saint's life, and folktale. In my dissertation, I argue that Middle English romances were intended and expected to be a mixed "kind" of narrative. By deviating from an expected standard or familiar text, each of the English romances offers a unique aesthetic pleasure in its variability. In other words, "genre-deviation" rather than "genre-conformity" is an intrinsic feature of Middle English romances. To support my argument, I apply Hans-Robert Jauss's aesthetic theory and Mikhail Bakhtin's "metalinguistics" to my study of Middle English romances. Chapter Two challenges the logical status of genre definition and classification in modern studies of Middle English romances. Chapter Three focuses on

"dialog

Middle

generic

writing

Middle

saints'

romance

English

poetics

transfor

English

expectat

genre, f

new mean

expectat

step-by-

of new s

the aest

rules an

Denise Ming-yueh Wang

"dialogism/intertextuality" as the major generic feature of Middle English romance by examining its heterogeneous generic aspects: 1) Middle English romance and historical writings: the "historicity" of Middle English romances, 2) Middle English romance and saints's lives: secularized saints' legends or legendary romances? 3) Middle English romance and folk literature: the "popularity" of Middle English romances. Then, in Chapter Four, I propose a poetics of Middle English romance, discuss the formation and transformation of the genre, and conclude that medieval English romancers treated their audience's "horizon of expectations," formed by their perception of a certain genre, form, or mode, only as a starting-point to provide new meanings for their world. The readers' literary expectations are challenged, questioned, and transformed step-by-step so that readers can discover both the genesis of new significance in the enjoyment of formal variation and the aesthetic charm of an already ongoing game with known rules and still unknown surprises.

Copyright by

DENISE MING-YUEH WANG

1993

To My Parents

I

who have

developed

Lister

scholar

encoura

manuscr

gratefu

Peterso

also fo

the dis

Se

and fri

support

Everett

keen in

uncert

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my warmest thanks to all the people who have given me support of various kinds during the development of this dissertation. First of all, to Dr. Lister M. Matheson, whose work in related areas of scholarship inspired my own, I owe a special debt for encouragement all along the way, for reading the entire manuscript, and for offering me generous advice. I am also grateful to Dr. Donald M. Rosenberg and Dr. Douglas L. Peterson, not only for reading each of the chapters, but also for giving me valuable comments on the major themes of the dissertation.

Second, I am deeply indebted to my family, teachers, and friends in Taiwan for their continual encouragement and support. Finally, I especially want to thank Dr. and Mrs. Everett Emerson and Dr. Linda W. Wagner-Martin for their keen interest in my intellectual ability from its early and uncertain days when I was a graduate at the University of

North C

support

doctora

gratefu

North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Without these people's support and encouragement, I would not have accomplished my doctoral studies in the United States. I will always be grateful to them all.

Chapter

Chapter

Chapter

I

III

Chapter

I

II

III

Chapter

Bibliogra

A. Pri

B. Sec

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Classification of Middle English Romances: The Problem of Its Logical Status.....	21
A. The Englishness of Middle English Romances.....	28
B. The Cycles of Middle English Romances.....	34
C. The Metrical Forms of Middle English Romances..	36
D. The World of Middle English Romances.....	39
E. The Themes/Motifs of Middle English Romances...	45
F. The Marvels of Middle English Romances.....	46
Chapter Three: Dialogism/Intertextuality: Generic Aspects of Middle English Romances.....	56
I. Middle English Romances and Historical Writings: The "Historicity" of Middle English Romances...	60
II. Middle English Romances and Saints' Lives: Secularized Saints' Legends or Legendary Romances?.....	97
III. Middle English Romances and Folk Literature: The "Popularity" of Middle English Romances...	115
Chapter Four: Toward a Poetics of Middle English Romances.....	138
I. Middle English Romances and Genre Theory.....	140
II. The "Alterity" of Middle English Romances.....	161
III. The Formation and Transformation of Middle English Romances.....	171
Chapter Five: Conclusion.....	192
Bibliography	
A. Primary Sources and Texts.....	200
B. Secondary Sources.....	207

Wr

often f

wonders

apparen

create s

("Unders

Finlayso

modern d

that the

what ind

Middle E

the Dane

generall

are adve

Chaucer's

romances

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Writing of the genre of Middle English romance, critics often find it difficult and irritating. Derek Pearsall wonders "how a form [i.e. Middle English romance] so apparently amorphous and so resistant to definition can create so powerful an impression of homogeneity" ("Understanding" 105). Others such as Gibbs, Mehl, Finlayson, Gradon and particularly Strohm warn that our modern definitions of the term "romance" are so inclusive that they lead to confused or misleading assessment about what individual works intend to achieve.¹ Indeed, early Middle English narrative poetry such as *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Athelston*, *Floriz* and *Blauncheflur* and others, are generally classified as romances perhaps mainly because they are adventure stories. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* are both designated chivalric romances, but it is very doubtful that a knowledge of them

would

English

Degarre

Arthure

their f

form, t

another

definit

On

Middle

Pearsal

impress

105). 1

poetry a

forms.

chronic

hybridiz

generic

romances

superfic

popular

cases of

would illuminate for us the essential "type" of other Middle English romances such as *The Destruction of Troy*, *Sir Degarre*, the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Chaucer's *The Franklin's Tale*. A comparison of their formal qualities, such as subject-matter, style and form, tells us that they are basically different from one to another. In a way they seem resistant to a clear-cut definition.

One of the greatest difficulties facing critics of Middle English romance lies in the heterogeneity, or in Pearsall's words, the "amorphous [form]...yet powerful impression of homogeneity" among the texts ("Understanding" 105). Indeed, each "kind" of Middle English narrative poetry and prose includes many different kinds of literary forms. Middle English romance, like Middle English chronicles and Arthurian stories, is a genre of hybridization. They are seldom limited to one single set of generic elements. Particularly, in early Middle English romances, one often finds the romance elements are quite superficial. The romance elements include adventure (be it popular in the case of *Havelok the Dane*, or courtly in the cases of *King Horn*

and Sir

knight

other w

the was

about p

the cas

without

and fin

codes"

must ac

It

things

or she

disting

as gene

she can

nobleme

are rom

to desc

broad a

English

be usef

and *Sir Launval*), simplified characters (good and bad knights and beautiful courtly ladies), a setting of the other world (be it a dreamland, a magic kingdom, or simply the wasteland), passages of profuse sensuous *descriptio* about physical appearances (such as clothes, food, weapons, the castle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), incidents without explicit reasons and curiously inconclusive endings, and finally and most peculiarly, the so-called "chivalric codes" with which all the characters in the romance world must act in accordance.

It seems that a well-informed reader can do one of two things about the generic features of such narratives: 1) he or she can either easily continue to name other distinguishing qualities from the texts and conceive of them as generic elements of Middle English romance, 2) or he or she can simply conclude that all narratives dealing with noblemen and noblewomen that involve adventure and/or love are *romances*. For the former one, the lists are too trivial to describe the narratives, for the latter, as a loose, broad and inclusive way of classifying certain Middle English narrative poetry and prose, the definition seems to be useful in distinguishing them from chronicles, saints'

lives,

find th

as a ge

that ge

Chaucer

attract

treatme

predece

shows t

only in

moral v

large b

Mehl re

classif

willy-r

these r

therefo

Ar

is due

of roma

the de

meaning

lives, homilies, and folk tales. However, in many cases we find that the term *romance* seems to have been conceived of as a genre and at the same time as a particular treatment of that genre by medieval English writers. For example, Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* seemed to have been attracted by the idea that he could turn his hand to any new treatments of romance and each time challenge his predecessors and, even more radically, parody them.² It shows that the term *romance* for Middle English poets not only indicated a kind of literature but also a system of moral values and a way of literary treatment. Eventually, a large body of Middle English narratives which, as Dieter Mehl remarks, "nobody would think of classing together," is classified as "The Middle English Romances"(15)³ and we willy-nilly indulge ourselves in a wishful belief that all these narratives share some common features and can, therefore, be read according to the same criteria.

Another great difficulty facing Middle English scholars is due to the fact that we are uncertain of the real meaning of *romance*. Or to put it more precisely, the confusion of the definitions of the genre is due to the fact that the meaning of *romance* has developed and transformed in literary

histor

derive

transl

see ir

Chauce

allego

differ

Ages a

the ca

romanc

"centr

word.⁵

remark.

A.

narrat.

give sc

literat

history. Originally, the term *romance* signified a language derived from popular Latin and also referred to a translation from Latin into the vulgar tongue,⁴ as we may see in Wace's *Le Roman de Brut*, which is a chronicle, and Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, which is an allegory of courtly love. If we acknowledge that there is a difference between what was meant by *romance* in the Middle Ages and what is meant now in our time, we may infer that the causes of present confusion over the generic term *romance* rest partly in the concurrent "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces in the development of the usage of the word.⁵ As a recent writer on Middle English romance remarks,

...in England the term [*romance*] was used to distinguish Anglo-Norman or French from the native language and literature. From the thirteenth century on...the word came to be applied to a particular type of fictitious narrative in which the writers in romance languages, particularly the French, chanced to excel. (Finlayson "Definitions" 46)

Although Middle English poets often classify their narratives by a number of different generic terms, which give some indication that they did distinguish "kinds" of literature (consider, for example, the various references we

find to

seems to

mutual

clarifi

literar

that th

"romanc

English

raise f

narrati

the issu

English

claims a

based on

ourselve

of rathe

forced t

attempts

of Chine

simply s

claims a

well. T

find to *geste*, *roman*, *dit*, *conte*, and *lai*), nonetheless it seems that their criteria for such terms are often not mutually exclusive so that we cannot look to them for clarification. In their valuable studies of Middle English literary terms, Paul Strohm and Joanne Rice have pointed out that there is no consistent sense of generic terms such as "romance," "lay," "spelle," "storie," or "geste" in Middle English narrative poetry.⁶ However, their conclusions may raise further difficulties in our studies of these narratives. To be sure, it is important for us to deal with the issues of the problematic generic nature of Middle English romances. However, if we took Strohm's and Rice's claims and attempted a definition of Middle English romance based on the medieval poets' generic terms, we would find ourselves back in the position of proposing a generalization of rather different works as a definition of a genre and be forced to confront certain inherent contradictions. Such attempts are a series of explorations organized like a set of Chinese boxes, at times one within the other, at times simply set one after another. On the whole I believe such claims and attempts are limited in use and misleading as well. To avoid all these troubles is to historicize, or if

you will

expecta

English

Be

English

hybridi

romance

signifi

English

Chapter

Th

of the

romance

and his

you will, to theoreticize both our and the medieval poets' expectations of the "conventionalities" of certain Middle English narratives. Finlayson has correctly remarked that

The categorization "romance" originated in the enthusiastic work of early antiquarians and commentators, such as Hurd, Scott, and Ellis, whose Romantic background not only spurred their collecting, but also coloured their view of what they collected. It is clearly useful and meaningful only as a bibliographical classification, designating medieval, chivalric, fictitious narrative. To continue to take *romance* both as a comprehensive literary categorization and as a closely defined genre incorporating precise values and literary motifs is to invite continuing confusion in critical discussion of Middle English chivalric narratives.⁷ (50)

Besides, the problematic generic "shape" of Middle English romances, which has much to do with its generic hybridization--we find interchangeable elements among romance, chronicle, and saint's life--also reveals some significant epistemological and cultural aspects of Middle English literature. I shall return to these claims later in Chapter Four.

That not a single Middle English romance embodies all of the romance elements and that more often than not the romance elements are taken at face value by the English poet and his audience indicate that the literary conventions we

usually

generic

that M

feature

say, th

tendenc

narrati

1)

aims to

the "ot

medieva

is, the

Strohm'

they are

narrati

Renaiss

overwhe

cautious

those na

2)

analyze

determin

usually attribute to romance are general, not essential, generic elements of those narratives. It is fair to say that Middle English romances have relatively loose generic features as compared to those of the continental romances, say, those of Chrétien de Troyes. There are generally two tendencies in recent genre criticism of Middle English narrative poetry and prose:

1) The historicizing or medievalizing approach, which aims to describe the intrinsic forms of the narratives from the "other's" perspectives by a close investigation of medieval English poets' treatments of different genres; that is, the texts are apprehended as the "alterity." Thus, in Strohm's and Rice's studies of Middle English narratives, they argue that since a great variety of Middle English narratives did not arise from the classical (and, later, the Renaissance) unity of author and work,⁸ and also by the overwhelming obscurity of their origins, we should be cautious about our modern definitions and classifications of those narratives.

2) The cultural or postmodern approach, which aims to analyze the reading public's expectations of genres and to determine how a genre changes in time; that is, the medieval

texts

the ca

mediev

studied

concept

formal

might h

and use

Au

importa

more re

given s

transfo

have co

not onl

also in

compreh

genre c

generic

charact

likely

happen-

texts are apprehended as variable cultural products, as in the cases of Jauss's, Eco's and Zumthor's studies of medieval literature and Bakhtin's, Jameson's and Williams' studies of the modern novel--they challenge our modern conceptions of genres and propose that a modification of the formalistic conception of genres is necessary because it might help us to read narrative literature in a more proper and useful way.⁹

Auerbach in his *Mimesis* already emphasized the importance of the public's perspective on a literary work; more recently Bakhtin, Eco, Jauss, Hirsch, and Zumthor have given systematic reconsideration to the problem of genre transformation in relation to the reading public.¹⁰ They have cogently argued that the reader's notions of genre are not only crucial to his or her aesthetic experience, but also indispensable to render a literary work comprehensible.¹¹ In response to Hirsch's and Jauss's genre criticism, Paul Strohm declares that "from knowing the generic term by which a medieval literary work is characterized...we have a sense of where the narrative is likely to go, of what kinds of things are likely to happen--of the kinds of expectations with which a

conten

("Pass

I

as a v

compre

crucia

with wh

approac

histori

romance

And it

as sets

author

"proper

fact th

being,

pass in

perspec

often i

"chron

to achi

forms a

contemporary reader might have approached the work"
 ("Passioun" 165).

In brief, the reader's horizon of expectations serves as a vehicle of communication. This effort at comprehension, which Jauss calls *Rezeptionästhetik*, depends crucially on the reconstruction of the literary expectations with which an audience of a particular time and place approached a literary text. Indeed, removed from their historical milieu, medieval narratives like Middle English romances are likely to baffle our use of genre distinctions. And it is also true that once we accept the idea of genres as sets of intermediate rules or instructions which an author intentionally employs to assist his reader in "properly" interpreting his work, we have acknowledged the fact that generic concepts live in time--they come into being, sustain changes and modifications, and finally either pass into disuse or transform into other concepts. In this perspective, medieval texts have a kind of alterity which often invites a modern reader to place himself within the "chronotope" (literally, time-space)¹² of the texts so as to achieve more perceptive understanding of their intrinsic forms and purposes, be it aesthetic, religious, political or

whatso

theori

proble

approa

concep

Jameso

litera

formal

aesthe

or "li

"outwa

conten

is a s

"diach

the ev

attemp

of gen

unders

W

litera

format

whatsoever.

Another group of modern literary theorists, whose theories are also useful to our discussion of the problematic generic nature of Middle English romances, has approached modern as well as the medieval people's conceptions of genres from a cultural perspective. Bakhtin, Jameson, and Williams argue that the formalistic notions of literary genre are inadequate and misleading in that 1) the formalists limit their concept of literature to purely aesthetic interests; 2) in their idea of "poetic language" or "literariness" the formalists only pay attention to the "outward show" and "superficial appearance" of literary content; 3) they believe that the study of forms or genres is a self-sufficient system, a "synchronic" instead of "diachronic" analysis of the history of literary forms and the evolution of social life.¹³ These cultural critics attempt to propose a modification of the formalistic notions of genres by broadening them into an historical/sociological understanding of genres.

What is really fascinating about these theories of literary history is their proposal to deal with genre formation and transformation in terms of cultural studies.

Their

Rezept

of Mid

should

129) .

set of

and an

genres

history

flexibl

(Speech

type no

It is i

fusion

social

becomes

And in

symboli

intrins

Narrati

In

refashi

Their notions of genre criticism may supplement Jauss's *Rezeptionästhetik* and therefore contribute more to our study of Middle English narratives. As Bakhtin says, "poetics should really begin with genre, not end with it" ("Elements" 129). For these cultural theorists, each genre implies a set of values, a way of thinking about kinds of experience, and an intuition about the appropriateness of applying the genres in any given context. In Bakhtin's words, "a special history of speech genres reflects directly, clearly, and flexibly all the changes taking place in social life" (*Speech Genre* 65). For Williams, "genre is neither an ideal type nor a traditional order nor a set of technical rules. It is in the practical and variable combination and even fusion of what are, in abstraction, different levels of the social material process that what we have known as genre becomes a new kind of constitutive evidence" (*Marxism* 185). And in Jameson's view, "a genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or in other words, form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right" ("Magical Narrative" 141).

Indeed, when literary forms are reappropriated and refashioned in quite different social and cultural contexts,

the me

into n

change

of "es

of its

Jauss'

Jameso

Jameso

the di

transfo

ideolog

It

the var

exactly

deviati

centere

the mea

effect

charm c

resista

medieva

horizon

the message often persists and must be functionally changed into new form. In brief, literary genre changes. It changes, not because of what the formalists call the devices of "estrangement" ("making-it-strange"), but rather because of its "historical/sociological" nature. Together with Jauss's hermeneutic concept of alterity, Bakhtin's, Jameson's and Williams's cultural theories (in particular, Jameson's negative hermeneutics) offer us a rethinking of the dialectical operation of generic formation and transformation by looking at "deviation" as a process of ideological reappropriation at work in a narrative.

It can be argued that Middle English romances aimed at the variation and progressive concretization of significance exactly within a play of what Bakhtin calls "genre deviation" or "genre hybridization" from an obscure, de-centered, or *decadent*, if you will, pattern so as to enrich the meaning of the genre and to surpass it. The poetic effect of such everlasting deviations produces an aesthetic charm of variation from one romance to another--as the resistance to a definitive form of the genre indicates. The medieval English romance poets treated their audience's horizon of expectations, formed by their perception of a

certain

provided

reader

and the

genesis

variation

different

non-polar

worlds

F.

hybrid

that m

mode, c

our un

work i

enclos

its au

intert

reader

work i

ongoing

Th

certain genre, form, or mode, only as starting-points to provide new meanings for their world. That is to say, the readers' literary expectations are challenged, questioned, and transformed step-by-step so that they can discover the genesis of new significance in the enjoyment of formal variation, and at the same time become aware of the difference which always arises between the poetic and the non-poetic presentation of the *real* and the *imaginative* worlds.

From the English romancers' practice of genre hybridization or genre deviations in their work we may infer that medieval English understanding of a form, a genre, a mode, a type or whatsoever, was, surprisingly, similar to our understanding of postmodern literature--the singular work is generally viewed neither as a one-time, self-enclosed, and final form, nor as an individual production of its author, to be shared with no one else. In other words, intertextuality is constitutive,¹⁴ in the sense that the reader must negate the character of the individual text as a work in order to enjoy the aesthetic charm of an already ongoing game with known rules and still unknown surprises.

The assumptions of my theory are 1) since Middle

Englis

kinds

romanc

litera

litera

notion

our mo

to the

genre

Englis

among

the "d

will h

useful

I

repres

Englis

Green

as the

argume

and Mik

narrati

English narrative poetry and prose include many different kinds of literature, which we have later classified into romance, saint's life, allegory, chronicle, Arthurian literature, etc., and since our concepts of "kinds" of literature do not necessarily correspond to the medieval notions of different types of literature, a modification of our modern definitions of Middle English romance according to their "alterity" is necessary; 2) if genre deviation or genre hybridization is one of the major features of Middle English romances--we find interchangeable generic elements among romance, chronicle, religious hagiography--a study of the "dialogism/intertextuality" of Middle English romance will help us to approach its textual genericity in a more useful way.

In terms of research methodology, I focus on several representative texts which are usually accepted as Middle English romances.¹⁵ For instance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Chaucer's romances have long been regarded as the best of Middle English romances. To support my argument, I will apply Hans-Robert Jauss's aesthetic theory and Mikhail Bakhtin's "metalinguistics" to my study of these narratives. Chapter Two will challenge the logical status

of genre definition and classification in studies of Middle English romances. Chapter Three will focus on "dialogism/intertextuality" as the major generic feature of Middle English romance by examining its heterogeneous generic aspects: 1) Middle English romance and historical writings: the "historicity" of Middle English romances, 2) Middle English romance and saints's lives: secularized saints' legends or legendary romances? 3) Middle English romance and folk literature: the "popularity" of Middle English romances. Then, in Chapter Four, I will propose a poetics of Middle English romance, test some of the English romances such as *Havelok the Dane*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* against the "dialogic/intertextual" elements among different "kinds" of Middle English narrative poetry and prose so as to determine the textual genericity of these Middle English narratives we conventionally label as "romances," and to see how the genre emerged within the framework of medieval romance in its literary history, developed in the course of time, and, finally, transformed into an unique means of expressing a medieval English worldview.

1.

English

15; John

44-62;

Strohm,

1-28.

2.

Chaucer

223-34

3

confus

romanc

simply

See hi

Fourte

4

Origin

5

NOTES

1. For detailed discussions, see A. C. Gibbs, *Middle English Romances* 1-3; Dieter Mehl, *Middle English Romances* 15; John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance" 44-62; Pamela Gradon, *Form and Style* 269-72; and Paul Strohm, "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English Romance" 1-28.

2. See the *Riverside Chaucer* and many other editions of Chaucer. Also see Robert Jordan, "Chaucerian Romances?" 223-34.

3. Mehl seems to be so frustrated with the many confusing definitions and classifications of Middle English romances that he proposes to put all of them aside and simply make a distinction between shorter and longer works. See his *Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, particularly chapters 1 and 2.

4. For more detailed discussion, see Paul Strohm, "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English Romaunce" 1-28.

5. I use these terms in the sense in which they are

employ

See Ba

"Pass

Middle

Origin

Englis

in the

Romaun

Englis

Englis

State

7

Middle

the Th

discus

contai

disagr

8

refer

their

genres

employed in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of "metalinguistics."
See Bakhtin, *Problems* 181-269.

6. For more detailed discussion, see Paul Strohm, "Passioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende: Some Generic Terms in Middle English Hagiographical Narrative" 62-75, 154-71; "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English Romance" 1-28; "Middle English Narrative Genres" 379-88; "Some Generic Distinctions in the *Canterbury Tales*" 321-28; "Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives" 348-59; and Joanne Rice, "Middle English Verse Romances: A Problematic Genre" diss., Michigan State Univ., 1981.

7. See also A. C. Baugh, "Convention" 123-46; Gibbs, *Middle English Romance* and Mehl, *Middle English Romance of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. Finlayson's discussion of the definition of Middle English romances contains many valuable remarks on the genre, though I disagree with many of its conclusions.

8. In a series of articles, Strohm has shown, by close reference to what Middle English writers themselves called their works, that medieval conceptions of different literary genres do not correspond to our modern terminology based on

Renaiss

9

modern

Jameso

genres

and de

1

Speech

Robert

Interp

1

prelim

everyt

Interp

proper

expect

direct

186).

1

"the i

relati

("Form

Renaissance critical theory. See note 6.

9. For instance, those concepts of genre proposed by modern literary theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Fredric Jameson, and Raymond Williams have broadened our notions of genres into a cultural understanding of the transformations and developments of a literary form through history.

10. See Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*; Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*; Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*; Hans-Robert Jauss, *Question and Answer*; E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*; and Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*.

11. E. D. Hirsch argues that "an interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything that he subsequently understands" (*Validity in Interpretation* 74). Hans-Robert Jauss also asserts that to properly read a text is to "place oneself within the expectations implied by the text, and recognize in which direction the rules of the genre are pointing" ("Alterity" 186).

12. "Chronotope" is a term Bakhtin uses to refer to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationship that are artistically expressed in literature" ("Forms of Time" 84).

Const

"Inter

Dialog

1

texts

litera

poetry

13. See Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Elements of the Artistic Construction: The Problem of Genre" 129-41.

14. See Bakhtin, *Problems* 101-80; Tzvetan Todorov, "Intertextualité" 95-115, and Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" 34-61.

15. By "representative texts," I am referring to those texts which are often included in textbooks of medieval literature and anthologies of Middle English narrative poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

CLASSIFICATION OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES:

THE PROBLEM OF ITS LOGICAL STATUS

After what has been said in Chapter One, one can see that the question of Middle English romance as a genre is fairly tangled. Almost all the definitions and classifications of the genre we have so far seem to be failures.¹ Perhaps an analysis of such failures from a Jaussian/Bakhtinian point of view can lead us to see certain crucial factors of the problematic generic nature of the texts we conventionally label as "romances."

I

Two of the crucial factors are the "alterity" and "diversity" of Middle English texts. It is important to note that heterogeneity is an intrinsic feature of all kinds of Middle English literature, particularly, the romance. Any strict generic definition and classification inevitably

demand

hybrid

generi

classi

too gr

definit

the tex

between

modern.

of Mide

concept

analys

names a

However

concei

kinds

conform

set of

Ev

very o

narrat

distinc

demands order and, therefore, neutralizes the diversity or hybridization of Middle English romance's textual genericity. The failures of modern definition and classification are results of attempts to impose order on too great a variety of works, believing that some kind of definition(s) and classification(s) can serve to interpret the texts. This conception of the interpretive relation between one particular text and certain genre(s) is quite modern. Many recent scholars have pointed out that studies of Middle English romances according to the modern conceptions of genre are of little or limited use in the analysis of these medieval texts.² To be sure, generic names and generic distinctions existed in the medieval era. However, medieval generic notions seem to be essentially conceived of as criteria of critical discrimination among *kinds* of literature. At best, they served to judge the conformity of a work to a norm, a kind, a type, or rather a set of formulae of literature.

Evidence from medieval manuscripts shows that there are very often more than a single generic name used in one narrative. Besides, there are no clear-cut generic distinctions among the generic names the poet used. For

exampl

only t

being

well a

regard

such a

questi

relati

more in

reader

ontolo

embodin

and at

modern

"alter

"kinds

in our

M

histor

becaus

Renais

did no

example, phrases like "in romance as we rede" too often mean only the writer's French source, or "tales like the one being told." The word "romance" refers to a language as well as a source or a certain kind of subject matter, regardless of the language in which they were written. In such a descriptive-normative conception of genre, the question of conformity or deviation of a given text in relation to a set of literary conventions was likely to be more important and interesting to a medieval writer, scribe, reader, or hearer than the problem of the categorical and ontological status of the genre, as well as that of their embodiment in the text. In short, medieval conceptions of, and attitudes to, literary genres were different from our modern conception of genres. Therefore, an awareness of the "alterity" of medieval definitions and classifications of "kinds" of literature can help one to temper the "modernity" in our studies of Middle English romances.

Modern studies of Middle English romance, whether historical, new-critical, or structural, seem inadequate because they imply a reification of the genre based on Renaissance critical theory. Medieval writers and audiences did not, of course, have the benefit of such modern theory.

This

consc

class

ideal

a text

is a n

defini

Englis

arbitr

they w

notion

order/

betwee

the ge

the pr

Englis

Th

fragmen

approx

counts

This reification takes two forms. One is to simplify, consciously or unconsciously, the logical status of generic classifications, giving either an abstract essence or an idealistic description of the generic model and saying that a text "belongs" to the model (for example, *Le Morte Arthur* is a romance). The other is to broaden the generic definitions and institute them, after noticing that Middle English generic names, particularly the term "romance," were arbitrary and interchangeable among other generic terms when they were used. Both forms are dominated by a formalistic notion of genre, which emphasizes the importance of order/form and focuses on the interpretive relationship between form and text. These two forms of reification of the genre will be briefly discussed when we further examine the problem of classification and definition of Middle English romances later in the present chapter.

II

The total number of extant Middle English romances and fragments (excluding the tales of Chaucer and Gower) is approximately 105 before 1500, or approximately 116 if one counts the last few written in the first three decades of

the s

Engli

"tales

verse

litera

only a

accord

choose

to som

litera

comment

view of

clear-c

the exp

Th

therefo

classi

subject

simply

observa

differe

literat

the sixteenth century.³ More inclusive studies of Middle English romances⁴ show that the diverse natures of these "tales," which ranged from short fairy tales to novel-in-verse "histories," do not appear to "belong to" a single literary form, namely, romance. It is easy to argue that only a small number of them deserve the classification according to a formalistic conception of the genre, to choose works which fit a definition, and to consign the rest to some "hybrid" which manifest other *kinds* of medieval literature.⁵ Such an approach is implicit in most commentaries on the Middle English romances.⁶ Indeed, in view of the diversity of Middle English romances a "fixed" clear-cut definition and classification is possible only at the expense of the hybrid nature of the genre.

The logical status of such classification is, therefore, dubious. George Kane explicitly rejects any classification for the romances, whether according to their subject, kind, form or manner, because, he argues, they simply refused "to run true to form" (9). Kane's observation of the genre is partially true. The attempts to differentiate them from other kinds of Middle English literature and to classify them into numerous subtypes or

subge

out p

featur

Englis

the rd

texts

resolv

attach

not co

compar

irritat

to the

easily

therefo

analyze

In

this pr

defini

compro

"homile

romance

"minstr

subgenres, are bound to remain unsatisfactory. As pointed out previously, generic heterogeneity is an intrinsic feature of all kinds of medieval English literature, Middle English romances not excepted. However, Kane's approach to the romances is not plausible either. To argue whether the texts are "masterpieces" of literature or not does not resolve their generic problems.⁷ The generic label attached to such "hybrid" texts has been so long, although not comfortably, accepted that it is difficult not to compare and contrast them to romance. Although it is irritating because most do not conform to form, their claim to the title has been too well documented to be discarded easily. The generic problems of Middle English romances, therefore, deserve recognition and must be more fully analyzed.

In view of the rather undecided state of scholarship on this problem of classification, Mehl concludes that any definition and classification can only be in the way of compromise between various possibilities (36).⁸ We have "homiletic romances," "tail-rhyme romances," "Charlemagne romances," "Arthurian romances," "clerical romances," "minstrel romances," "courtly romances," "popular romances,"

"lege

roman

roman

classi

partia

unders

romanc

groupi

attemp

another

nature

T

Englis

and 2)

(Mehl

classi

rather

romanc

classi

precis

narrat

"legendary romances," "chivalric romances," "historical romances," and of course, the most famous four "matières" of romances and so on and so forth. Indeed, any definition and classification, however convenient for critical purposes, is partial, limited, and therefore inadequate to our understanding of the textual genericity of Middle English romance. Therefore, it is important to note that any groupings of the romances are incomplete and that every attempt to define and classify the romances in one way or another only provides at best a limited view of the hybrid nature of the genre.

The facts that 1) the large number of extant of Middle English romances makes some kind of grouping very desirable and 2) many possible groupings are at best "compromises" (Mehl 36), or in Rice's word, "failures" (2-5) to define and classify the narrative poems indicate that heterogeneity rather than conformity is the nature of Middle English romances. A brief critique of some modern definitions and classifications of the genre can perhaps bring us to a more precise understanding and a more proper description of the narratives.

than t

by the

and Ge

deriva

were t

entert

study

romanc

in the

T

romanc

and co

Troyes

court

the En

during

which

produc

contin

A. The Englishness of Middle English Romances

Middle English romances were written very much later than their counterparts in French and German. It was only by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when the French and German romances had given way to new forms and clearly derivative kinds of works that in England the "romances" were taken up by poets and newly adopted and adapted to entertain their audiences. Laura H. Loomis's elaborate study of the sources and analogues of Middle English romances suggests that the English audiences were flexible in their expectations and appreciations of "romance."⁹

The influence of continental romances on the English romances was significantly little or limited both in form and content. For instance, the influence of Chrétien de Troyes was not very far-reaching. Chivalry, tournament, courtly love and the like were quite lightly presented in the English romances, particularly those that were written during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a period in which most of the extant English romances were probably produced. Many of the distinctions which separated continental literary strains did not survive the process of

Engli

court

Thebes

called

d'Angl

sprawl

seen a

audier

categ

sense

short

their

(over

the 1

chang

elemen

in t

in a

Midd

work

that

English translation and adaptation. Chrétien de Troyes's courtly Arthuriana (*Lancelot*), classical stories (*Roman de Thebes*, Benoit de Sainte-More's *Roman de Troie*), the so-called family romances or *chansons de geste* (*Guillaume d'Angleterre*, *Gui de Warewic*), Breton lais, and the sprawling Vulgate cycle, perhaps, by 1250, could have been seen as quite different genres by early continental audiences. But in England, by the fourteenth century, categoric names like *chanson de geste* lost their generic sense; moreover, the stories themselves were very often shortened, twisted, reshaped and even totally cut off from their continental roots. For instance, Mestre Thomas' *Horn* (over 5000 lines) became *King Horn* (about 1550 lines), and the lengthy seriousness of continental Perceval romances is changed into the petty *Sir Perceval of Galles*. Romance elements like "trawth" and "courtly love" were indispensable in the English romances, but they were often presented only in a superficial way (consider, for example, the early Middle English romances like *Havelok the Dane* and later works like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*).

Indeed, it seems that the "prototype" of the genre, that had evolved in France, only provided a very vague model

for th

works

like o

Englis

these

"tales

from F

variet

have b

saints

fablia

challe

Indeed

Middle

tellin

form,

T

failur

romanc

social

Discus

by who

for the English adapters. Whatever their original form, works translated and adapted into English were made to seem like one another by the changes and additions required by English tastes. Audiences would have been impelled to view these diverse works as romances by virtue of their all being "tales in romance," namely, "secular narratives translated from French." Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* reflects the great variety of literary forms in Middle English. He seems to have been quite free to adopt and adapt his sources, from saints' legends to courtly romances, from *exempla* to *fabliaux* and each time he tries to out-wit his audience by challenging their expectations of a "well-told" story. Indeed, if one could at all claim the "Englishness" of Middle English romances, it would have to be the manner of telling a story, rather than its subject-matter, metrical form, motifs, and the like.

This astonishing diversity of generic elements and the failures to produce something like a model in Middle English romances can partly be explained by reference to the English social and political background and its literary history. Discussions such as for what audiences (courtly or popular), by whom (wandering minstrels or professional writers), and

under

are 13

accour

life-s

see th

specul

Colema

issues

remark

F

same e

in Fra

in nar

scale.

other

versio

could

superf

not at

Se

fourtee

people

under what external conditions the romances were written, are likely to be vigorous¹⁰; however, if we take into account the coexistence of French and English romances in a life-span of two hundred years (1300-1500) in England, we see that such discussions are too complicated and speculative to produce an all-inclusive answer. As Boitani, Coleman, Mehl, and others have cogently discussed these issues in some detail in their studies, a few general remarks will suffice.

First, since knighthood in England never achieved the same exclusive, closed courtly status in society as it did in France, many portrayals and idealizations of knighthood in narrative works accordingly remained on a more modest scale. Courtly ceremonies, entertainments, tournaments, and other courtly etiquette were often omitted in the English versions, and if they had not been omitted altogether, they could have impressed English audiences mainly by their superficial or even artificial romance qualities, which were not at all the cases in the continental versions.

Second, Middle English romances emerged in the fourteenth century, the same period that the continental people saw the steady decline of the knight. Although

knigh

Englis

nostal

the ch

past r

the rd

Englis

becaus

eldirs

T

uncour

romanc

contin

seems

tales

contac

Englis

in dis

Rymanh

direct

kingdo

the pi

knighthood itself was kept alive only artificially in the English romances, it produced a distinctly archaic and even nostalgic character, which is quite "English." As it is, the charm of a remote, almost unreal and fairy-tale-like past makes the English romances unique and outstanding among the romances. This is perhaps why, from the beginning, the English romances and the fairy-tales were so closely related because they were all stories about a distant past, "of eldirs, þat byfore vs were" (*Sir Ysumbras* line 2).

Third, the relatively "democratic" kingship and uncourtly adventures of the knights in Middle English romances also mark them as quite different from their continental counterparts. Based on the manuscripts, it seems that the English audience was much attracted to these tales in which the King in disguise comes into direct contact with some of his subjects. For instance, in the English version of *King Horn*, the episode in which King Horn in disguise (twice!) in the nick of time saved his mistress Rymanhild is obviously "romantic," however, the whole direction of the narrative is towards Horn's recovery of his kingdom and marriage. Whether Horn is a good king or not is the pith of the story. Also in *Havelok the Dane*, Havelok is

an id

The m

show

fishi

Horn,

dispos

advent

worth

Havelo

connec

Englan

noble

I

differ

contin

histor

Englis

beyond

an ideal hero of the people rather than of the aristocrats. The most vivid passages in the narrative are those which show Grim and Havelok going about their everyday business, fishing and selling fish in the market-place. Like *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane* tells the story of a king who is dispossessed in youth and then through a series of wandering adventures regains his kingdom and wins a bride. It is worth stressing that in the English versions of *Horn* and *Havelok*, the stories are realized in a world which has many connections with the everyday life of thirteenth-century England. Food and money are important to all including the noble king-to-be. Havelok remarks explicitly:

Swinken ich wolde for mi mete.
It is no shame forto swinken;
The man that my wel eten and drinken
Thar nought ne have but on swink long;
To ligen at hom it is ful strong. (798-802)

Indeed, as Mehl remarks, the reasons for these differences between the English romances and their continental counterparts probably lie in the socio-political history of England as well as in the character of the English people. A thorough investigation of the reasons is beyond the scope of present study. It is, however, evident

that

non-1

class

Engli

polit

gener

primar

T

classi

to the

based.

Specim

classi

twelft

the th

Rome 1

has be

Pearsa

that Middle English romances were deeply influenced by such non-literary factors.

In brief, Englishness can never provide a basis for classification. If one could at all claim for any Middle English romance its Englishness, the socio-historio-political factors must be taken into account,¹¹ and its generic problems will be left as secondary issues since the primary ones are those related to its nationality.

B. The Cycles of Middle English Romances

The most famous yet probably the least useful classification of Middle English romances is that according to the different cycles of stories on which the romances are based. It was first propounded by George Ellis in his *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romance* (3-4). Ellis's classification was justified by reference to Jean Bodel's twelfth-century classification for medieval French romances: the three great *matières*, "de France, et de Bretagne, et de Rome la grant" (7). The inadequacy of this classification has been commonly acknowledged among critics (Wilson 123-4; Pearsall 96; Mehl 31; Rice 2; and Barron 63). In the first

place

two d

of st

wider

conti

Engla

class

the E

called

"the r

Englis

poor w

class:

necess

cannot

l

provid

Nevert

system

introd

reason

taken

place, the English romances were written in England one or two centuries later than the European romances. The range of stories in Middle English romances was constantly widening. Finally, many native subjects were added to the continental cycles so that a fourth *matière*, the matter of England, had to be invented to salvage Bodel's classification. But the problem of such classification of the English romances remained. No matter whether it is called "the matter of England," "the non-cyclic," or simply "the miscellaneous" or what have you, to class all the English romances under any of these headings seems rather a poor way out. Mehl has cogently disproved the classification. He points out that "these poems have not necessarily anything in common beyond the fact that they cannot be fitted into any of the *matières*" (31).

It is quite clearly that "story-cycles" alone can never provide a basis for coherent generic classification. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this "story-cycle" system has often been adopted in modern reference books and introductions to Middle English romances.¹² Perhaps one reason is that this principle of classification had been taken for granted by a generation of scholars who were

pre

sou

ger

Mic

cou

the

imp

tho

thi

Eng

mat

une

Alt

suc

was

dis

the

aga

preoccupied with the history of plot-motifs and the study of sources and analogues. Consequently, they complicated the generic definitions and instituted them, after noticing that Middle English romances were so much different from their counterparts in medieval French and even German. Thanks to their preoccupation with comparative studies, we have today important editions of Middle English texts and the most thorough investigation of their literary background. For this reason, plain and simple, the classification of Middle English romances according to the three or four great *matières* came into being and has been generally, though uneasily, accepted by most scholars.

C. The Metrical Forms of Middle English Romances

Another classification is on the basis of meter. Although grouping based on such external formal criteria succeeds to a certain extent in imposing some order on the mass of Middle English romances, it does not resolve all the disparities which appear as the texts are investigated. On the other hand, if we try to measure the English romances against the continent's formal achievements, we find that it

revol

the "

never

Engla

the I

fift

conv

roma

the

the

each

Tro

All

bas

sub

ger

pa

fo

on

fi

revolves around completely different poles. For example, the "octosyllabic couplet," a typical French romance form, never took root in England, while tail-rhyme was popular in England as a romance meter--a popular metrical form used by the English poets from the late thirteenth century into the fifteenth.¹³ The English romances have been conventionally divided into three classes by rhyme-scheme: romances in rhyming couplets, romances in tail-rhyme, and the so-called "alliterative romances."¹⁴

Such classification in some cases may be useful because the English romances can then be profitably compared with each other. Oakden's study of the alliterative romances, Trounce's of the tail-rhyme romances, and Everett's of "the Alliterative Revival" are examples of how an outline survey based on metrical forms can show the orderly grouping(s) or subgrouping(s) of Middle English romances. However, the generic problems of Middle English romances are ignored or pass into silence when one emphasizes their most obvious formal "outward show," namely, the meter.

This classification has further limitations. It not only means leaving the prose romances, which are a fifteenth-century literary production in England, out of the

reck

not

poem

Chro

also

rhyr

form

of t

clas

stud

and

many

sing

or g

Midd

clas

"Mid

and

poem

work

Puri

reckoning, it also means a formal classification which does not apply to romances only. Other kinds of Middle English poems, like La3amon's *Brut*, Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *Chronicle*, saints' legends, shorter lyrics or drama, were also composed in couplets, alliterative lines, and tail-rhyme stanzas (Mehl 34-35; Gibbs 23). Thus, the metrical forms of Middle English romances do not aid full exploration of the nature of the English romances in the way the classification is said to do.

On the whole, such classification is borne out by a study of the existing couplet romances, tail-rhyme romances, and alliterative romances, and it is interesting to see how many critics either limit themselves to studies of one single group of works or subgroups, like Oakden and Trounce, or grant themselves the liberty to include other *kinds* of Middle English literature in the name of such classification. Dorothy Everett's essay on the so-called "Middle English Alliterative Revival" talks about La3amon and the *Pearl* poet. Although it is surely true that the poems do have many formal features in common, it is odd that works such as the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, *Patience*, *Purity*, *Pearl*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* belong to

the same

Oakden v

allitera

fragment

allitera

Alexande

of the w

knights

supermer

classifi

metrical

Middle E

One

romance

adventur

such as

"ring" a

beyond s

fabula o

the same genre. The difficulty is most clearly faced by Oakden when he classifies the *Destruction of Troy*, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and the three Alexander fragments as "chronicles in the epic manner" because "the alliterative poems dealing with the legends of Troy and of Alexander the Great are not romances in the ordinary sense of the word, and...the central figures are never medieval knights representative of the spirit of chivalry, but heroic supermen of the heroic type" (24). In short, this classification of the texts into airtight categories of metrical forms only provides a partial and lopsided view of Middle English narrative poetry.

D. The World of Middle English Romances

One may well say, with Auerbach, that the "world" of romance comes into being when "The knight sets forth" to his adventures (123-42). Although there are tangible objects such as forests, monsters, giants, knights, ladies, the "ring" and so forth, the atmosphere of the romance world is beyond space and time--a world ruled absolutely by the *fabula* of the distant and remote past. This is the

"romantic" atmosphere in which *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Sir Orfeo*, *Sir Degrevant*, *Floris and Blancheflour*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* move. Precise political conceptions such as kingship, knighthood and marriages are altogether transported into a metahistorical universe, which is precisely that of romance. In this world, the landscape, the sea, and the years function only as *silhouette*. They provide a special atmosphere where elements of social reality and the unnatural commingle. Time and place are of little importance. Nor is it necessarily important to authenticate the story in terms of actual political, geographical, or economic conditions: the hero meets giants and encounters miracles without ever seeming to find them disturbing or unnatural. Explanation of action/plot belongs to the world of *romance*, not the world of nature and probability or history. All these features are surely true to the "world" of the English romances. Characters in such a "romantic" world could have been "modern" or contemporaneous in their manners, dress, and architecture, but their actions were totally outside of real time and place. In brief, the romance world could be "modernized" or "medievalized,"¹⁵ but its "historicity" was beyond the



the
in
is
re
or
p
s
M
s
c
F
t
r
P
th

question. I shall return to the topic of medieval English people's conception of historicity in Chapter Three.

When we discuss the "world" of Middle English romances, it is worth stressing that the English romances are later than the French ones. If we remember that most of the best Middle English romances were produced in the second half of the fourteenth century,¹⁶ and that in the second half of the twelfth century Chrétien de Troyes was already writing his works, which perhaps constitute the highest point reached by the continental romance. In the end of the thirteenth century when more English poets began to write poetry in their native language, in France, the great prose cycle of the Arthurian Vulgate had been produced. As a successor, if not an absolute imitator, the "world" of Middle English romances was ideally, and very often, superficially "romanticized." That is to say, it was particularly related to the "world" presented in Old French or Anglo-Norman *romans*. This habit of referring to works as *romaunces* in order to emphasize their Old French connections is clear in many of the English narratives. For instance, in the Auchinleck *Richard Coer de Lyon*, the poet mentions the French romance and says that romances deal with knights

"in destaunce" who died "purch dint of sward":

Romaunce make folk of fraunce
 Pat of knights pat were in destaunce,
 Pat dyed purch dint of sward. (II.10-12)

In his list of romances most favored by the audience, the poet of the *Cursor Mundi* listed the stories of "Alisaundur þe conquerour," "Iuly Cesar þemparour," "grece and troy the strang strijf," "brut," "kyng arthour" and "þe ronde tabel," "charles kyng and rauland," "tristrem," "Ioneck," "ysambrase," "ydoine," "amadase," and of "princes, prelates and kynges" (lines 2-22). This list confirms that the "world" of romance was associated with certain knightly characters in certain historical periods--the world of antiquity, Carolingian Europe, and the Arthurian world.

However, the references cannot serve as independent evidence concerning the definition and classification of romance. For example, the *Laud Troy Book* starts with a catalogue of heroes of other romances (lines 11-26), perhaps mainly for the purpose of claiming like virtue or fame for its own protagonist (Hume 159; Mehl 16-17; Strohm 13). The poet notes that romances deal with men "that were sumtyme doughti in dede," and "that now ben dede and hennes

wen

Ric

Mun

sev

par

Sir

amu

seve

part

roma

"wor

wente"(line 12 and line 14). He then, like the poet of *Richard Coer de Lyon* (lines 6723-41) and the poet of *Cursor Mundi* (lines 1-26), uses the rhetoric device of listing several other famous romance heroes to render "romanticism":

Off Bevis, Gy, and of Gauwayn,
 Off kyng Richard, & of Owayn,
 Off Tristram, and of Percyuale,
 Off Rouland Ris, and Aglauale,
 Off Archeroun, and of Octouian,
 Off Charles, & of Cassibaldan,
 Off Huelok, Horne, & of Wade. (19-21)

The clearest evidence of such rhetoric flourish particular to Middle English romances is found in Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*. Chaucer and his audience must have been rather amused when Chaucer the pilgrim compares Sir Thopas with several other famous heroes. The excessive praise of particular heroes is, of course, ridiculed in a parody of romance:

Men speken of romances of prys,
 Of Horn child and of Ypotys,
 Of Beves and sir Gy,
 Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour--
 But sir Thopas, he bereth the flour
 Of roial chivalry! (VII. 897-902)

Two things can be concluded from these lists: 1) the "world" of the English romances often implied some remote

and

who

writ

be d

They

for

dist

Greg

loca

hagi

hero

Midd

home

full

diff

Midd

chro

hero

ofte

sens

very

and distant past, and 2) it involved some particular hero who was "doughti in dede" and in whose praise the story was written/read. Indeed, most of the English romances seem to be devoted to the glorification of some particular hero. They are in a way "secular biographical stories." Except for the obvious religious tone, there is hardly real distinction between *Guy of Warwick* and the legend of Saint Gregory in the Auchinleck MS.

In short, the "world" of Middle English romances can be located within the limits of "history" and "secular" hagiography. In the "romantic" dimensions, the hero/background relationship¹⁷ does help explain how Middle English romances could have been viewed as a homogeneous form, but it cannot be pressed into service as a full definition of the genre. This brings us back to the difficult question of the definition and classification of Middle English romances. Folk tales, saints' lives, chronicles and fabliaux can all be dissected in terms of hero and backdrop, and the hero/background relationships are often identical to those found among the romances. In this sense, the "romantic" hero and the "romantic" world are not very useful means of classifying the English romances.

of

co

Cl

"R

an

of

ot

"S

"T

bee

ot)

not

ger

ron

lit

uns

lit

man

E. The Themes/Motifs of Middle English Romances

Some other classifications based on the themes/motifs of the romances are perhaps more useful than the constructive formal elements we sketched above. Classifications like "Romances of Trial and Faith," "Romances of Legendary English Heroes," "Romances of Love and Adventure"(Loomis), "Romances of Friendship," "Romances of Love"(Rickert), "Moral and Pietistic Tales"(Rice), and others based on themes/motifs such as "The Beheading Game," "Seduction," "Exchange and Winning," "Exile and Return," "The Loathly Lady," and so on and so forth can be useful because they point to important similarities among some otherwise very different poems. However, themes/motifs are not usually the determining factors in defining literary genres, and this is particularly true for the English romances, which share so many common features with folk literature.

As a generic criterion, theme/motif is relatively unsatisfactory because it is finally reducible to non-literary quantities. This is true whether we speak of manifest themes/motifs, such as knighthood, love, kingship

or

se

ge

qu

Ho

"E

or

or

di

se

ch

at

de

ar

in

Th

kr

re

or war or of latent thematic messages, such as moral quest, self-realization, or life-renewal. Certainly, such a generic criterion does not provide a full response to the question about the whole picture of Middle English romances. However, compared with other generic criteria such as the "Englishness," the "cycles," the "metrical forms," which can only be loosely applicable at best and which can provide only simple, broad, and therefore, loose literary discriminations for the genre, the "themes/motifs" criterion seem to provide more detailed accounts of the literary character of "romantic" narratives because those thematic attributes express the elusive, constantly shifting, deviating energies of Middle English romance.

F. The Marvels of Middle English Romances

It has been argued that most of Middle English romances are characterized by an abundant wealth of plot and incident. Adventure, then, is the real core of romance. The emphasis rests, then, on the exploits of the hero--"The knight rides out alone to seek adventure." This basic romance paradigm is most clearly evident, for example, in

the alliterative *Morte Arthure*: "Thane weendes owtt the wardayne, Sir Wawayne hym-selfen,/Alls he þat weysse was and wyghte, wondyrs to seke" (lines 2513-14) and in Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*: "Sire Thopas wolde out ride/He worth upon his steede gray..." (VII. 750-51). They often give an impression that the poet wished to tell as much as possible within the shortened, if not altogether reshaped, versions of his French sources. This appeal to a more concise mode of narration is clearly revealed in the speed of the movements of the plot, which was, of course, well-noted and parodied by Chaucer in *Sir Thopas*.

Along with the predominance of plot and action, the rather episodic structure of most of the English romances marks another important feature of the genre. Robert Guette argues that the aesthetic charm of the obscure, the still-unsolved ("symbolisme sans significance") was the primary attitude implicit in the medieval romance and that the medieval audience had a conscious delight in discovering and re-discovering variations (Jauss, "Alterity" 184). Jauss also remarks that since Middle English romance stands in a fluid tradition which cannot be traced back to the closed form of a work or original, and to impure or corrupt

va

an

th

In

of

th

ma

gl

pr

co

re

te

wh

di

an

ro

st

or

"m

di

ma

variants, the ever-expanding cyclical movement yields yet another feature of the genre, namely, to make the limits of the work appear as flexible and incidental ("Alterity" 189). Indeed, it could have been the "marvels" of the variation of, or deviation from, the generic "norms" that appealed to the medieval English public. The history of medieval manuscript traditions, of adaptations and translations, of glosses, of late modifications and introductions added to a previous text, of all those common medieval practices of compilations and interpolations, reveals that the medieval reception, comprehension, and appreciation of narrative texts were ever "in-the-making." This can perhaps explain why many of the definitions and classifications we have discussed in the present chapter are only partial, limited, and therefore inadequate to apply to all the English romances.

Thus, at best, the abstract result of formalistic studies of the genre could be the establishment of an organized network of "ideal types," of partially overlapping "models." A close look at the ever-in-the-making, dialogical, or "marvelous" narratives in medieval manuscripts can enlarge our angle of vision and at the same

tin

wi

Mi

la

ev

to

ro

to

di

time maintain the factor of "dialogism/intertextuality" without which no further questions of the generic nature of Middle English romance can ever be asked; without which, for lack of logic, no proper descriptions of the narratives can ever be constituted. I shall therefore in next chapter try to define the intertextual relationship among Middle English romances and other "kinds" of Middle English literature and to see whether it is possible to draw lines of generic distinctions among them.

rom

or

eit

ind

def

Stu

Zum

to

13-1

Medi

the

Engl

and

Prob

NOTES

1. See Rice 2-5. That almost all the studies of romance definition and classification begin with an explicit or implicit rejection of previous groupings of the texts either by subject matter, story type, motifs and so on indicates that Middle English romance is, after all, an ill-defined genre.

2. See *Approaches to Medieval Romance*, Yale French Studies 51 (1974), esp. the essays of W. T. H. Jackson, Paul Zumthor, and Robert Jordan.

3. See Helaine Newstead, "The Romances Listed According to Probable Chronology and Dialect of Original Composition" 13-16.

4. For example, A. B. Taylor's *An Introduction to Medieval Romance*, Dorothy Everett's "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romances," Dieter Mehl's *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* and Joanne Rice's "Middle English Verse Romances: a Problematic Genre." Particularly praiseworthy and

in

de

of

Mi

po

3)

ta

to

ge

ex

no

pa

ro

cl

an

al

re

an

wo

co

interesting are Mehl's and Rice's studies, which attempt to describe the total form of Middle English romances in terms of its generic position in relation to certain other genres.

5. For example, Joanne Rice divides the works we call Middle English romance into five categories. They are: 1) popularized pseudo-histories, 2) moral and pietistic tales, 3) romance, 4) chivalric adventure tales, and 5) minstrel tales. It is interesting to note that only six out of the total of eighty-one tales she investigates deserve the generic title "romance." The rest embody other genres, for example, legend, chronicle, and folk tales; therefore, it is not proper to name them "romance." See her dissertation, particularly Chapter Four.

6. For reviews of modern criticism on Middle English romance as a genre and on the problem of its definition and classification, see Rice 2-7, Finlayson 45-50, Mehl 30-38, and Hume 158-159. Critics like Mehl, Hume, Rice and others also belie their own words when they propose a reclassification of the genre. Each critic's endeavor after an all-inclusive classification of a large body of diverse works we label as Middle English romance is briefly commented on later.

on

En

in

th

pr

ae

im

kn

hi

th

th

mas

the

our

(Sp

onl

stu

sti.

wor

"Sho

7. Paul Zumthor's comment on "masterpiece" throws light on the "blind spots" of Kane's theory of studies of Middle English romances: "The 'masterpiece' is like the 'great man' in traditional historiography. To confine our studies to the 'museum without walls' gradually constructed by our predecessors is to condemn them forever to that idealist aesthetic according to which 'great art' is always immediately present....Therefore, within its own order, no knowledge could possibly define the masterpiece: it is a historically radical impossibility. Who, however, and in the name of what prohibition, will ever prevent us from thinking, from saying, of a certain text, 'this masterpiece'? The source of all these ambiguities lies in the fact that when we pronounce this phrase, we situate ourselves in the order of pleasure, and of pleasure alone" (*Speaking* 44-45).

8. Admittedly, though, Mehl rejects all classifications only for his purpose of evaluation, not in general. His studies are quite comprehensive and lucid. However, he still retains the generic label. He carefully divides the works under the generic title, namely, romance, into "Shorter Romances I," "Shorter Romances II," "Homiletic

Ro

Th

th

ov

do

of

se

St

Me

Ja

Bo

Fo

Me

an

Ki

Mi

in

En

Romances," "Longer Romances," and finally "Novels in Verse." The criteria are size and chronological order. Although this classification may at first sight appear oversimplified, he claims that it is the best so far he can do with the works on this point.

9. For more discussion on the imitation and variation of the English romances and their continental counterparts, see Laura Hibbard Loomis, *Mediaeval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-cyclic Metrical Romances*.

10. All these questions are discussed in some detail in Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers 1350-1400*, Piero Boitani, *English Medieval Narrative in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, and Karl Brunner, "Middle English Metrical Romances and Their Audience" 219-27.

11. On the closer connection between the aristocracy and the populace, between the town and country, between the King and his subjects, see A. R. Myers, *England in the Late Middle Ages* 40-65.

12. For example, J. E. Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400*, A. C. Baugh, *The Middle English Period (1100-1500)*, and W. R. J. Barron, *English*

Medieval Romance.

13. Very often, the tail-rhyme romances are highly alliterative, and preserve many of the words and tags of the Old English poetic tradition. *Sir Degrevant* and Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* are two romances that rely on a conventional poetic tradition. The alliterative *Morte Arthure* is one which catches a vague echo of La3amon's formal approach in *Brut*.

14. On the alliterative tradition see J. P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English* 85-111, and Dorothy Everett, "The Alliterative Revival" 46-96. On tail-rhyme romances, see the articles by A. McI. Trounce, "The English Tail-Rhyme Romances" 1 (1932): 87-108, 168-82; 2 (1933): 34-57, 189-98; 3 (1934): 30-50. Also, see A. C. Gibbs, *Middle English Romances* 23-27.

15. On the tendency of medieval writers to medievalize (that is, to render "contemporary") all material, see C. S. Lewis, "What Chaucer Really Did to *Il Filostrato*" 56-57.

16. For a chronological listing of Middle English romances, see Newstead 13-16. It is important to note that despite the apparent precision of such chronological listing, many of the works can only be uncertainly and

imprec

1

Nature

Hume,

of the

These

legend

distin

the pr

the ex

Charle

classi

hero/ba

difficu

imprecisely dated.

17. For more details, see Katherine Hume, "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance" 158-80. According to Hume, the hero/background relationship is a decisive factor of the form of some type of Middle English romance (Type B). These romances are "secular vitae," while the saints' legends are "sacred vitae" (172). She argues that the distinguishing features are the secularity or sanctity of the protagonist's aims and the handling of death. However, the existence of such distinctions are not absolute. Much Charlemagne material, for example, is problematical. A classification of the English romances according to the hero/background relationship is therefore not free from its difficulties.

disc

crit

In o

"ext

feat

list

audi

of v

dial

surpr

the g

and r

often

there

CHAPTER THREE

DIALOGISM/INTERTEXTUALITY:

GENERIC ASPECTS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES

Judging from its problematic generic nature, the discourse of Middle English romance seems to be a dialogic critical discourse which never concludes in terms of genre. In other words, Middle English romance as a genre has an "extra-literary" element which Bakhtin calls "dialogism"--a feature of literary discourse which sharply senses its own listener, reader, and critic, and reflects in itself the audience's anticipated objections, evaluations, and points of view. The English romance writers could have used this dialogic discourse in various ways so as to satisfy or, even surprisingly, to challenge the audience's expectations of the genre(s), and by doing so, their dialogic work reflects and refracts people's perception of the world. Thus, we often find alongside the discourse of Middle English romance there is/are (an)other literary discourse(s), other "images

of la

diffe

and f

visua

reali

other

the s

Englis

penetr

discou

presen

could

into h

the "i

that t

task c

consis

"disco

graspi

of lit

dialog

of language" (Bakhtin "Discourse" 413) which belong to different literary forms, such as chronicle, saint's life, and fairy tale.

As Bakhtin remarks, genre is a specific way of visualizing a given part of reality: "Genre appraises reality and reality clarifies genre" ("Elements" 136). In other words, genres are forms of thinking. In this sense, the significance of the dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English romance is enormous. Dialogism/intertextuality penetrates from within the very way in which the romance discourse conceives its subject matter and its means for presenting diverse "images of language." The romance writer could have welcomed this dialogical/intertextual element into his work. It is in fact out of this stratification of the "images of language," namely, its generic diversity, that the romance writer constructed his style. The real task of stylistic analysis of the romances therefore consists in uncovering all the available orchestrating "discourses" in the composition of Middle English romance, grasping the varying angles of *refraction* of different *kinds* of literary forms within it and understanding their dialogic/intertextual relationships among one another. This

may ex

Englis

further

Zumtho

In

a conce

play an

argues

with it

of valu

a judge

any giv

essent

is imma

right"

In

may explain why a narrowly formalistic approach to the English romances as a genre is almost incapable of reaching further than the periphery of literary form. As Paul Zumthor remarks:

A dialogic critical discourse...A narrative never concluded. Is it not in these terms that writers of the Middle Ages spoke of ancient texts (in the same position for them as the medieval texts for us)? Copying, rewriting, glossing, moralizing by means of the multiple analogies through which that world represented itself, in a commentary that was incessant, open, perpetually reopened onto an actual and changing audience, simultaneously playing several games on several levels. (90)

In brief, Middle English romance as a genre "lays bare" a concept of "dialogism/intertextuality" as an open-ended play among texts of diverse artistic forms. As Bakhtin argues, "poetics should really begin with genre, not end with it" ("Elements" 129) because each genre implies a set of values, a way of thinking about kinds of experience, and a judgement of the appropriateness of applying the genres in any given context. And in Jameson's words, "a genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, in other words, form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right" ("Magical Narrative" 141).

Indeed, Middle English genres contain a kind of

fl

Ma

ma

ar

pr

En

tl

na

ha

pe

k

o

t

i

a

o

t

E

c

d

flexibility, and major works exploit it. To borrow Matheson's term, "cross-fertilization" was common among major Middle English chronicles, romances, saints' lives, and folk tales ("King Arthur" 260). Therefore, it is practical and important to examine the position of the English romances in Middle English literature and to study their dialogic/intertextual relations to other "kinds" of narrative poetry and prose in Middle English. It is, however, perhaps less important to decide whether it is possible to draw exact lines of demarcation between these kinds of literature than to arrive at a better understanding of their textual genericity and some of the textual features they have in common, which will in turn give us a clearer idea of the "alterity" of Middle English narrative poetry and prose and a better understanding of Middle English modes of perception of the world. In the previous chapter, we saw the problems of definition and classification of Middle English romances since there is so little they all have in common. In the present chapter, we begin with the dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English romances.

d

t

r

v

i

G

t

B.

or

Ma

pl

ch

Ar

su

St

fo

Gl

Middle English Romances and Historical Writings:

The "Historicity" of Middle English Romances

First, the dialogic/intertextual relationships among different kinds of Middle English literature can be seen in the interweaving of "romantic" materials both in the romances and in the chronicles. For example, all other versions of the *Havelok* story except the *Lai d'Haveloc* (and its English versions) occur in chronicles. One is found in Gaimar's Anglo-Norman *L'Estorie des Engleis* in the early twelfth century, one in the Anglo-Norman and Middle English *Brut*, also one in Lambeth Palace MS. 84, an expanded *Brut*, one interpolated in Lambeth Palace MS. 131 of Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle of England*, one in the Anglo-Norman prose chronicle *Le Petit Brui*t, and in other Latin chronicles.¹ The *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* adds Arthurian material unknown to earlier Arthurian chronicles such as Uther Pendragon's burial at Glastonbury rather than Stonehenge and Lancelot's building a castle at Nottingham for Guenevere and offering to defend her honor at Glastonbury. Kennedy points out that the appearance of the

romance character Lancelot is unusual in a chronicle (2623). Mehl remarks that the *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* leaves one in doubt as to whether one should classify it a romance or a chronicle (21).² The Middle English verse *Arthur* is interpolated in an incomplete Latin chronicle in a Longleat MS. (ca. 1425). It gives a brief account of Arthur's life, his begetting and birth, his coronation, the establishment of the Round Table, his conquest of the Romans, the treachery and death of Modred, and the transportation of Arthur to Avalon. Newstead says that the poet's version of the Arthurian story is probably Wace's in *Roman de Brut*, which version comes from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (44). Kennedy, in his survey "Chronicles and Other Historical Writing," comments that "The verse narrative known as *Arthur*, sometimes classified as a romance, sometimes as a chronicle, is included in the chapter on romances" (2599).³ The difficulty in properly classifying a "romanticized" historical work like *Arthur* either as a romance or a chronicle indicates that there is a close affinity between the two genres.

The association of the romance stories of Guy of

W

E

e

l

H.

W.

Ch

"P

Mc

is

Ar

de

in

ro

Hi

of

th

The

th

"wr

Col

Warwick with the chronicle writers is also telling. The English chronicles make frequent allusion to Guy and especially to his fight with the Danish giant Colbrond. A list of the chronicles includes Gerard of Cornwall's *Historia Regum Westsaxonum*, Thomas Rudborne's *Historia Wintoniensis*, Knighton's *Chronicon*, John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, and many others (Loomis 130-31; Dunn 30; Matheson "King Arthur" 260). It is noteworthy that the alliterative *Morte Arthure* draws heavily on earlier chronicle sources and is now often classified as a chronicle (Matheson "King Arthur" 260).

The various descriptions of the siege and the destruction of Troy also occupy a curious position somewhere in between the chronicles and the romances. The sources of romances of the so-called "Matter of Rome," such as *The Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy*, *The Seege or Batayle of Troye*, and the legends of Alexander the Great, indicate that they are all closely related to historical writings. The *Laud Troy Book* is a work which has been influenced in this way. According to Paul Strohm, the *Laud Troy Book* was "written against a background of *historiae* (like Guido della Colonna's *Historia Destructionis Troiae*), *estoires* (like

B

i

l

ec

De

Le

a

or

n

na

De

st

Tr

Te

cr

co

me

Tr

ch

hi

of

Benoit de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, which presents itself as a roman only in regard to its vernacular language), and *stories* (like the narrative which modern editors have fancifully titled the *Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*)" ("Origin" 13). As Strohm argues, the *Laud Troy Book* is a *romaunce* (lines 18640, 48, 59) based on a *storie* (lines 73, 106) ("Origin" 13).⁴ In another essay on Middle English Troy narratives, Strohm concludes that "the terminology of the authors of the Middle English Troy narratives suggests that the *Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy* and Lydgate's *Troy Book* were regarded as *stories*, the *Seege of Troy* as a *spelle* or *geste*, the *Laud Troy Book* as a *romaunce*, and *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Testament of Cresseid* as *tragedies*" ("Storie" 358). Some critics prefer to classify the legends of Troy as *historia* concerned with real events (*gestes*) (Barron 109-31). For medieval English writers, scribes, readers, or hearers these Troy narratives were without doubt closely related to the chronicles.

It has been argued that the two long poems on the history of Troy, the *Laud Troy Book* and the *Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, are rather bookish compilations

and ca

do not

most o

advent

seem f

histor

of the

to tel

on the

though

Troy-b

(

perhaps

manusc

writin

Arunde

amplif

Regum

appear

Robert

another

after M

and cannot properly be described as romances. First, they do not have a particularly impressive central character like most of the romances; second, there are no romantic adventures and little courtly love, and third, the authors seem far more concerned with portraying a certain period in history than telling a good story. Thus, at the beginning of the *Gest Hystoriale*, the poet claims that he is not going to tell any invented stories, but that his account is based on the testimony of eye-witnesses. Undoubtedly the poet thought that he was writing true history. So did other Troy-book authors.

Of all the Troy-books *The Seege or Batayle of Troye* is perhaps the most romance-like. Its appearance in manuscripts tells how closely related it is with historical writings. In one manuscript at least (College of Arms MS. Arundel 22) it appears as a historical work and serves as an amplified introduction to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.⁵ One copy of *Richard Coeur de Lyon* appears as a part of a historical compilation made from Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* in College of Arms MS. 58; another copy in B.L. MS. Harley 4690 occurs immediately after Maundevyle's *Brut* translation (Matheson "King Arthur"

260-61). Such evidence in the manuscripts suggest that there is a close connection between the romances and the chronicles. Indeed, after the studies of Loomis, the "Auchinleck romances" (*Roland and Vernagu*, *Richard Coeur de Lyon*) and the chronicles such as the *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* in the Auchinleck MS., suggest that it seems impossible to draw rigid lines of demarcation between the two genres.

A. Arthurian Literature and Middle English Chronicles

Conversely, the romance poets often set their stories within a framework of history. The fall of Troy was widely considered to be a kind of prelude to the history of England (consider, for example, the beginning of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). Often in Arthurian literature, we see the poet self-consciously set his heroic or romantic stories, as a conventional device, within a broad framework of history of British Kings among which, of course, King Arthur was always the most prominent. The breadth of this appeal to Arthur as the most heroic king is reflected both in the Arthurian stories in the number and variety of the surviving

Middl

parti

"wond

knigh

somewl

is no

partic

of his

Geoffr

La3amc

7

occur

is sig

narrat

betwee

chroni

sight.

past e

a fair

heroic,

warrior

in arms

Mehl 20

Middle English chronicles and romances as well, particularly, the so-called "Matter of Britain." Thus, the "wonderful hystories and adventures" of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table occupy a curious territory somewhere in between the chronicles and the romances. There is no doubt that romances of "the Matter of Britain," in particular, should be viewed firstly against the framework of history of Britain provided in the chronicles such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*⁶, and La3amon's *Brut*.

That detailed "romanticized" stories of King Arthur occur in most of the chronicles as historically true stories is significant to genre studies of Middle English narratives, both in verse and in prose. The distinction between the Arthurian materials in romances and those in chronicles is not as clearly shown as it may appear at first sight. The chronicles are generally considered records of past events presented in chronological sequence and covering a fairly long period of time. Their predominant tone is heroic/political. They deal with the qualities of the warrior class--a combination of God and King--such as skill in arms, loyalty, courage, and generosity (Kennedy 2598; Mehl 20; Finlayson 52-53).

the va

of Mic

inaded

Accord

suitak

in Eng

the ba

the to

cerenc

King B

Warwic

Arthur

"famil

survey

claim

in the

histor

exploit

3218]]

I

Mathes

and hi

W. P. Ker saw the essence of heroic poetry as lying in the values associated with war (292-95). Such definitions of Middle English chronicle are arbitrary and therefore inadequate to provide a full descriptions of the genre. According to Kennedy, "the term 'chronicle' is not a suitable term for much of the historical literature written in English after 1400--the accounts of single events like the battles of St. Albans or Tewkesbury, for example, or of the tournaments and coronations described in the section on ceremonies" (2598). It has been argued that romances like *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Beues of Hamptoun*, *Guy of Warwick* and some Arthur-poems such as the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Malory's *Morte Darthur* belong to the category of "family chronicles" because the narratives try to give a survey of a certain period in their national history and claim to be read as true historical accounts (for instance, in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* the poet acknowledged the historical nature of his "storie" when he wrote of the exploits of "this comlyche kynge, as cronycles tellys" [line 3218]).⁷

In "King Arthur and the Medieval English Chronicles" Matheson gives a brief survey of narratives of King Arthur and his reign which occur "in the majority of historical



chronicles dealing with the general history of England that were written in England between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries" (248-49). The Arthurian stories are included in 1) Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, 2) Wace's *Roman de Brut*, an expanded Anglo-Norman paraphrase of Geoffrey's *Historia*, 3) La3amon's *Brut*, which in turn is a recreated chronicle based on Wace's *Roman de Brut*, 4) Robert of Gloucester's *Metrical Chronicle*, 5) Pierre de Langtoft's *Chronicle*, 6) Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *The Story of England*, 7) Thomas Bek of Castleford's Middle English verse *Chronicle of England*, 8) the *Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*, 9) the anonymous *Prose Brut*, 10) Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, 11) Sir Thomas Gray's Anglo-Norman prose *Scalacronica* and 12) John Hardyng's northern verse *Chronicle*.⁸

Matheson's survey indicates an intertextual relationship between the chronicles and the Arthurian romances. The Arthurian stories in the romances and the chronicles indicate a "cross-fertilization" between the two genres (Matheson "King Arthur" 260). As Matheson has aptly pointed out, those Arthurian materials between the chronicles and the romances had provided the medieval English people with a comprehensive and flattering account

of their nationality. The chronicles provided an "authentic" historical framework and cultural context in which the Arthurian stories could operate, while the romances offered detailed stories and the political, moral and religious implications of an ideal kingship and knighthood (Matheson "King Arthur" 265-66).

What, then, are the criteria by which we can distinguish between romances and chronicles, particularly the Arthurian material? It should be noted immediately that the romances and the chronicles often, if not always, appear to have much in common regarding subject-matter, themes, political concerns, and literary devices such as meter, motif, structure, etc. In both "kinds" of narrative, the hero tends to fight in defence of his lord or society, or, in the furtherance of political ends, the narratives deal with feasts, combats, and chivalry. Heroic qualities of the warrior class, such as skill in arms, loyalty, generosity, *comitatus*, valor, and courage are all frequently illustrated through the medium of war by the chronicle authors as well as the romance poets. The difference seems to lie in the degree of emphasis placed on these heroic qualities, on the political ends which they are made to serve, and on the contexts within which they operate. Thus, in the following

passages, I will first discuss the different political treatments of and attitudes towards the legendary history of King Arthur in La3amon's *Brut*, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and then I will examine the concerns of "national consciousness" and "historicity" in these Arthur-poems, together with other narrative poems such as John Barbour's *Bruce*, and the *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle*.

Since no two narratives are exactly alike regarding their generic preoccupations and techniques, and since the narratives under discussion catered for a wide variety of needs and tastes, it is more likely that when a medieval English writer, scribe, reader, or hearer was in the process of "hearing" a story, he was aware of the complexity of his use of language, of tradition, and, especially, of the many resources of genres. Having responded to the rich potential of other works he had read, the author could cultivate the ability to sense whether his own text has rich potential for meaning in unforeseen circumstances and whether such changes were likely to make his text richer or poorer in potentials. Thus, we find that medieval English writers and audiences were free to adopt and adapt the stories of others, making them both familiar and resourceful at once. This sense of

"d.

muo

his

con

his

bec

mat

bet

Art

Sax

cour

"dialogism/intertextuality" could have guided their work as much as their desire to express specific interpretations of history and reality.

i. The Arthurian Stories in La3amon's *Brut*

Like most medieval chronicles, La3amon's *Brut* compounded many various sources, as the poet described in his introduction:

La3amon gon lipen wide 3ond pas leode,
 and bi-won þa aepela boc þa he to bisne nom.
 He nom þa Englisca boc þa makede seint Beda;
 an oper he nom on Latin þe makede seinte Albin,
 and þe feire Austin þe fulluht broute hider in;
 boc he nom þe þridde, leide þer amidde,
 þa makede a Frenchis clerc, Wace wes ihoten,
 þe wel coupe writen, and he hoe 3ef þare aepelen
 Aelienor þe wes Henries quene, þes he3es kinges.
 (1-67)

It is important to note the sources of La3amon's *Brut* because La3amon's adoption and adaption of the Arthurian materials reveal a close dialogic/intertextual relationship between chronicle and romance. Where Geoffrey imagined Arthur as a hero of a composite people, uniting the Britons, Saxons and Normans and provided a proud heroic past for his countrymen in the form of chronicle, the Norman poet Wace

tr

ti

Th

Br

he

ch

mc

dc

th

to

di

ge

(2

(2

Br

a

Me

Ta

It

li

Art

translated Geoffrey's *Historia* into French verse with the title *Le roman de Brut* and adapted it into a *roman courtois*. Then, La3amon recreated the Arthurian stories in Wace's *Brut*, which was written in the romance style, in the epic-heroic chronicle.⁹

For example, the Arthurian section in La3amon's epic chronicle focussed strongly on the figure of Arthur as the most formidable of all warrior-chieftains, especially in his domestic wars against invaders and rebels. Arthur dominates the action as a romance hero in La3amon's chronicle: coming to the throne at fifteen, Arthur immediately begins to display royal qualities--he is generous to his warriors, his generosity is an essential attribute of Germanic kingship (20046-189), his personal prowess in the Battle of Bath (21291-422), and in the superhuman fight with the giant of Brittany/Mont St. Michel (25641-26146) shows that Arthur is a romance hero who is never afraid to fight.

Moreover, La3amon added a long confirmatory prophecy of Merlin, mingling forewarning of the downfall of the Round Table with hope of Arthur's eventual return to his kingdom. It is also noteworthy that La3amon introduced the romance-like story of Arthur's passing into his heroic chronicle--Arthur's departure in a boat accompanied by two queens to

"A

pl

En

Az

hi

ki

th

En

la

th

"a

co

gr

it

no

an

in

de

"Aualun" to be healed of his wounds by Argante, and Merlin's prophecy of Arthur's survival and expected return to the English people (28450-651).

La3amon's treatment of and attitudes toward the Arthurian stories in *Brut* show that he views the subject of his narrative as a national chronicle glorifying the ideal kingship of Arthur. The Arthurian stories in La3amon's *Brut* throw a sort of light on the future development of Middle English Arthurian narrative poetry. About two centuries later, around the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the full flower of the so-called "alliterative revival," the alliterative *Morte Arthure* concentrated precisely on the rise and fall of Arthur--his greatness, his fall, and his death. Although conventionally it has been treated as a romance, the alliterative poem is now often classified as a chronicle because of its breadth and heroic scale (Matheson "King Arthur" 260). This again indicates the difficulty in drawing a clear line of demarcation between romance and chronicle.

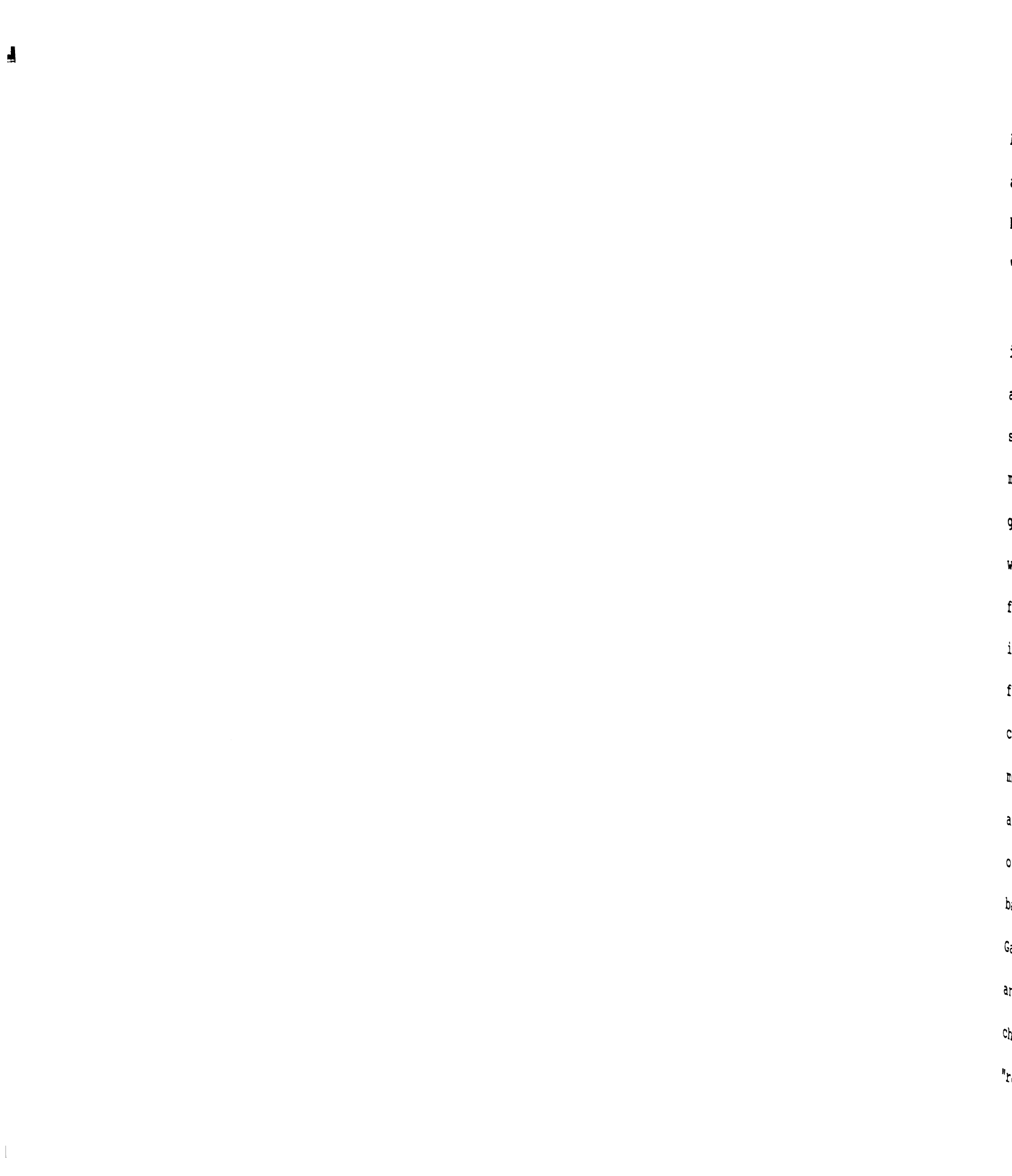
ii. The Alliterative *Morte Arthure*

Like La3amon, the poet of the alliterative *Morte*

Arthure shared something of his Anglo-Saxon heritage,
 treated the theme of Arthur as a national hero in 4346
 alliterative long lines. The epic-heroic theme dominates
 from the outset, reflected in many of the elements which
 La3amon used for the same purpose in his chronicle. For
 instance, he concludes the poem by referring to the Trojan
 ancestry of King Arthur:

Thus endis King Arthure, as auctors alegges,
 That was of Ectores blude, the kyng son of Troye,
 And of Sir Pryamous the prynce, praysede in erthe;
 Fro thythen broghte the Bretons all his bolde
eldyrs
 Into Bretayne the Brode, as þe Bruytte tellys.
(4342-4346)

Like many chroniclers, the poet sets the history of
 Arthur and his reign within the framework of history of
 Britain that his Arthurian stories could be viewed as parts
 of a national history rooted in some flattering version of
 the chronicle tradition. According to Newstead, the poet's
 principal source seems to have been a version of Wace's
Brut, but he also drew liberally upon the Alexander legends,
 especially *Les voeux du paon* and *Li fuerres de Gadres*, as
 well as other sources, all of which he handled freely. The
 poet was also inspired by the military campaigns of Edward
 III, especially the sea battle of Winchelsea, known as *Les*



Espagnols sur mer (Schmidt 45-46). In fact, the poet acknowledged the historical nature of his "storie" (i.e., historically true story) when he wrote of the exploits of "this comlyche kynge, as *cronycles* tellys" (line 3218).

The narrative tends to satisfy an audience who are interested in national history but not to the exclusion of all else. For instance, in the poem we find "romantic" stuff such as land and sea battles, banquets and speeches, marvellous meadows, mountains and forests, monsters and giants, and, above all, dreams with visions. In other words, it is "historical" as well as "romantic"--Arthur's first dream of a fight between a bear and a dragon and then, in his second dream, of finding himself in a forest where fierce beasts lick the blood of his knights from their chops, then of flying to a beautiful meadow surrounded by mountains with vines of silver and grapes of gold, all these are indeed romance material. Arthur's fight with the giant of Mont St. Michel, his battle with Emperor Lucius, the sea battle, and the moving scene in which Arthur discovers Gawain's body and his lament for the dead hero are political and heroic acts on the part of Arthur as a historical character and the exploits "historical" as well as "romantic" as far as the generic nature of the poem is

concerned.

Chronologically, the subject of the rise and fall of King Arthur and his reign was first introduced by Geoffrey in his Latin prose chronicle, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which was translated and adapted again freely by Wace into a French courtly romance, *Le roman de Brut*, that provided La3amon a basic source for his national chronicle in the epic-heroic manner. The figure of Arthur as a national hero in the supposedly "authentic" history of Britain recorded in the chronicles was more freely treated by romance poets. They offered not only the heroic character of King Arthur but also detailed accounts of his noble knights such as Gawain and Lancelot, their exploits, and the moral and religious implications thereof. For instance, the theme of ideal kingship and knighthood undermined by human fallibility as widened from the regnal focus of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* to the inner conflict of the Round Table in the stanzaic *Morte Arthure*, is still widened further in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* to show the pursuit of worldly fame and glory as the source both of the rise and the fall in the whole history of King Arthur's reign.

and

str

pow

in

his

chi

dow

Mer

bro

dea

swo

reb

ord

tre

int

nati

the

chro

iii. Three Tales from Malory's *Morte Darthur*

That the subject of Malory's *Morte Darthur* is the rise and fall of a noble national hero is apparent in the overall structure of his work. He begins with Arthur's rise to power and his imperial wars in Tales I and II, demonstrates in the middle books the great variety of chivalry on which his worldly glory rests and, from the limitations of that chivalry shown in the Grail Quest in Book VI, traces the downward turn of Fortune's wheel in the last two tales.

Malory's source for his opening tale is the *Suite de Merlin*, which he takes up at the birth of Arthur, who is brought up in secret during the anarchy after his father's death, establishing his right to the throne by drawing the sword from a stone, compels the recognition of his rebellious barons, and reorganizes the Round Table as an order of chivalry dedicated to peace and justice. Such treatments of the rise of King Arthur indicate the poet's interest in the political side of the figure of Arthur as a national hero-king in domestic affairs, just as La3amon and the poet of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* did in their chronicles.¹⁰

The chivalric values observed by King Arthur's court

are embodied in the oath sworn by Arthur's knights in

Malory's "The Tale of King Arthur":

...never to do outerage nothir mourthir, and
allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym
that askith mercy...; and allwayes to do ladyes,
damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes socour:
strengthe hem in hir rygthes, and never to enforce
them, uppon payne of dethe. Also, that no man
take no batayles in a wrongfull quarell for no
love ne for no worldis goodis.

Throughout the book, Malory strives to maintain this chivalric idealism, which is apparently "romantic." With such interests in the theme of an ideal kingship and knighthood as expressed in La3amon's *Brut*, the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and the stanzaic version, Malory introduces the dramatic subject of the downfall of King Arthur in his last tale, "The Tale of the Death of Arthur." Increasingly realistic descriptions of the fall of the chivalric ideal system mark the closing pages of Malory's book at two different levels: on the one hand, there are reflections of Malory's England in the division of the Round Table into warring factions, the usurpation of a regent, rebellion against a legitimate monarch, and the chaos of a nation in civil war; on the other hand, there is the development of the chivalric idealism embodied in individuals such as

La

tr

at

and

who

Ma

in

and

chy

was

lad

been

i

Lancelot and Bors. The former has much to do with the tradition of chronicle and the latter, romance.

In the Arthurian stories, Malory seems to acknowledge at once the power of chivalric idealism over worldly fame and glory and the socio-political reality of an iron age whose nostalgia was mingled with a sense of tragic loss. Malory's ambivalent attitudes toward the Arthurian stories in his book can be seen in the amalgamation of "hystories" and "noble and renommed actes of humanyte, gentylness, and chyualryes" (Caxton's Preface). Perhaps, after all, Caxton was right. He "humbly bysech[es] al noble lordes and ladyes, wyth al other estates of what estate or degree they been of, that shal see and rede" in Malory's book that:

they take the good and honest actes in their remembraunce and to folowe the same, wherein they shalle fynde many ioyous and playsaunt hystories and noble and renommed actes of humanyte, gentylness, and chyualryes. For herein may be seen noble chyualrye, curtosye, humanyte, frendlynnesse, hardynesse, loue, frendshyp, cowardyse, murdre, hate, vertue, and synne. Doo after the good and leue the euyl, and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee. (Caxton's Preface, emphases are mine)

iv. Sir Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

In the Arthurian stories, the figure of Sir Gawain is

closely associated with Arthur as a kinsman and a member of the royal household. In the tradition of chronicle, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace assign him a prominent role in their accounts of Arthur's Roman war and celebrate his prowess. This noble concept of Gawain as the paragon of Arthurian chivalry not only predominates in Middle English chronicles but also in the English romances.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the poet was very familiar with the Arthurian materials both in the chronicles and the romances. In fact, he was extremely skillful in manipulating the generic preoccupation and technique of both genres. His poem operates within a framework of the history of Britain. The opening lines, for example, suggest chronicle by evoking the Trojan ancestry of Western chivalry; but ambivalently, reminding readers that the archetypal ancestor Aeneas was famed for the trickery by which he saved Polyxena from the Greeks while also notorious for his treason in betraying Troy to them:

Sipen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye
 Þe bor3 brittened and brent to brondez and askes,
 Þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wro3t,
 Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe;
 Hit watz Ennias þe athel, and his highe kynde,
 Pat sipen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicom
 Welne3e of al þe wele in þe west iles,
 Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,

With gret bobbaunce þat bur3e he biges vpon fyrst,
 And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;
 Ticius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes;
 Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes vp homes. (1-12)

Then, the focus narrows to the history of Britain, a nation equally ambivalently characterized as a place "where werre, and wrake, and wonder/Bi sypez hatz wont þer-inne,/And oft boþe blysse and blunder/Ful skete hatz skyfted synne" (ll. 16-19). Finally in his proem, the poet announces that the subject of his poem is that of "laye" and "stori"--"an outtrage awenture of Arthurez wonderez"(lines 29-36). Indeed, in his proem, the Gawain poet's political treatment of and attitudes towards the Arthurian stories in chronicles and in romances are subtly artistic and complex.

That Gawain has to fight with countless monsters on his solitary journey to the Green Chapel (lines 715ff.) is only mentioned as an indispensable element of romance. The poet's cataloguing of Gawain's fights could be viewed as his ironic comment on the conventional clichés in other versions of the Arthurian stories. Neither does courtly love play a significant part in the poem. It only makes its appearance in the speeches of the lady, whose real motive is not love but to seduce the knight to fail his "trawþe." The ambivalent references to Aeneas and the land of Britain in

his proem and the closing lines of the poem mentioning the "Brutus bokez" (line 2524) reveal that the poet is quite aware of the conventional *matière* in the Arthurian stories both in the chronicles and the romances. Like the poet of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the *Gawain* poet attempts in his own manner to use Arthurian material for the exposition of a Christian ideal of knighthood. It is in the subtlety of the poet's treatments of his Arthurian stories that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is markedly distinguished in its moral seriousness from other Arthurian stories in Middle English chronicles and romances.

In addition to these highly "romanticized" versions of Arthurian stories both in the chronicles and the romances, the preoccupation with the Arthurian legend as part of the nation's historical consciousness also manifests itself in other "kinds" of Middle English narrative poetry and prose. For instance, there are two ballads in the Percy Folio MS.: *King Arthur's Death*, which covers Arthur's last battle in 155 lines, and *The Legend of King Arthur*, in which Arthur recounts his whole story in 100 lines. *Lancelot of the Laik*, a Scottish dream-vision, incorporates a critique of Arthur's regnal failings, and *Sir Lancelot du Lake*, a ballad, deals with one of the hero's duels. There is no way

of telling how the Arthurian stories could have been treated if we do not take the feature of dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English narratives into account.

B. King Robert Bruce in John Barbour's *Bruce*

The dialogical/intertextual relationship between chronicle and romance is much more interestingly shown in John Barbour's *Bruce*, written around 1375. Based on the authority of Wyntoun,¹¹ a contemporary of Barbour, John Barbour was the author of the *Bruce*, the *Brut*, and the *Original of the Stewartis* (a chronicle-genealogy of the Stewart family). The narrative poem is constructed, like a "romanticized" chronicle (for example, La3amon's *Brut* and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*), around great figures of national heroes--King Robert Bruce and his knights, Sir James Douglas, Sir Thomas Randolph, the Earl of Murray, etc., and it is dominated by a political consciousness of Scotland, whose people in the name of nationality and liberty proudly resists English attempts at conquest. At first sight, the poem seems to be a chronicle of the Anglo-Scottish events between 1305 and 1332; like most chronicles, it comes to an end, though a rather sudden one, with the

account of the deaths of King Bruce, Sir Douglas and Earl Murray--"The lordis deit apoun this viss" (20.611).

The heterogeneous generic nature of Barbour's *Bruce* is obvious. According to Skeat, the very first line of Barbour's *Bruce* is quoted from an old ballad.¹² Fables and proverbs are adduced here and there (Skeat liii). Lines 37-444 form a sort of prologue in the literary convention of romance. In fact, immediately after the prologue Barbour claims for his narrative the title of a "romanys"--

"Lordingis, quha likis for till her,/The romanys now begynnys her"(1.445-46). Thus, Barbour intends to treat his poem as a romance and the contents of the narrative poem seem to justify his claim. For example, there are allusions to the story of Troy (1.395 and 1.521), the celebrated romance of Alexander (1.533, 3.73, 10.706), the story of the death of Julius Caesar (1.537, 3.277), the story of King Arthur, which "The broite beris tharoff wytne" (1.548-60), the famous story of Thebes (2.528, 6.183) and many others.

It is very interesting to note that in Book Three, King Bruce with his knights "Wandryt emang the hey montanys" (3.371), cross Loch Lomond in a small boat which Sir James Douglas found (it is so little that "It/Mycht our the wattir bot thresum flyt" [3.419-20]), and on their journey to

"Cantire," King Bruce reads to his company on the little boat "Romanys off worthi ferambrace" (3.437) to comfort them. And in Book XII and XIII, Barbour devotes about 1000 lines to the battle of Bannockburn, the battle which, on Monday 24 June 1314 won for the Scots two hundred years of liberty and independence from England (7.407-588, 8.1-744). The Battle of Bannockburn and other battles, such as the duel between King Bruce and De Bohun and the siege of Perth (9.324), are presented in a heroic manner. Thus, one can describe the poem either as a chronicle filled with "romantic" tales about the great perils and adventures of King Robert Bruce and his knights, or as a romance constructed in the form of chronicle.

This difficulty in properly classifying the poem indicates that there is an intertextual relation between the chronicle and the romance. The Battle of Bannockburn forms the climax of the *Bruce*. Undoubtedly, like the war in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the battles and adventures of King Bruce are treated as a dimension of history. However, as Skeat remarks, one can hardly "regard it in the light of exact history" (lv), Barbour is "at his best in his picturesque and spirited anecdotes, where he is evidently bent on telling a good story" (lvii). Indeed, Barbour

obviously enjoys the "carping" (1.6). In his poetics, there is a double pleasure in reading and hearing stories:

Storyss to rede ar delitabill,
 Supposs that thai be nocht bot fabill;
 Than suld storyss that suthfast wer,
 And thai wer said on gud maner,
 Hawe doubill pleasance in heryng.
 The fyrst pleasance is the carpyng,
 And the tothir the suthfastnes,
 That schawys the thing rycht as it wes;
 And suth thyngis that ar likand
 Tyll mannys heryng, ar pleasand.
 Tharfor I wald fayne set my will,
 Giff my wyt mycht suffice thartill,
 To put in wryt A suthfast story,
 That it lest ay furth in memory,
 Swa that no [lenth of tyme] It let,
 Na gar it haly be for3et.
 For aulde storys that men redys,
 Representis to thaim the dedys
 Of stalwart folk that lywyt ar,
 Rycht as thai than in presence war. (1.1-20)

In brief, Barbour's *Bruce* is constructed like a chronicle but called a romance. It, like many of the Arthurian chronicles and romances, manifests a dialogical/intertextual relationship between the two genres. In the light of the dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English romance, it shows how vast could be the scope of the chronicle and romance.¹³

C. *An Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle*

The *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* is another example that shows the vast overlapping scope of the English chronicle and romance. Like Barbour, the poet of the *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* intended to put romance into a chronicle form. Its subject is English history, of course, but it also contains many episodes and uses literary devices which we find in romances as well. It gives a short account of English history in about 900 lines from the time of the arrival of Brutus in England to that of its composition soon after the death of King Edward I in 1307.¹⁴

Although the account is general since the poet seems to intend to offer a rapid survey of English history, some details in his chronicle are not found in any other known sources. His sources may have included the chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth, La3amon, and Robert of Gloucester, as well as the brief *Livre de Reis de Brittanie* and the *Gesta Regum* of William of Malmesbury. The poet handled his sources freely and did not hesitate to "fill" additional material into the framework of historical facts that earlier chronicles provided. For instance, Zetl suggests that the poet's account of Hengist's reign (A version, lines 651-872) "has no more in common with the Hengist of any other known

chronicle than the name and that he was a *conquerour*" (lviii). The description of Hengist's character is given in very general and "romantic" terms: the Hengist in the chronicle is the ideal figure of a knight and king of medieval romance, while the one in Geoffrey of Monmouth and La3amon is a barbarian chieftain (A version, lines 661-70). The poet also adds Arthurian material unknown to any earlier chronicles. For example, the account of Uter's reign and his wish to be buried near Hengist in Glastonbury instead of Stonehenge (A version, lines 987-1004), and the caves under Nottingham Castle which Lancelot builds for Guenevere (A version, lines 1074-81) are nowhere mentioned in the Arthurian chronicles (Zettl lxi and lxiii, Kennedy 2623).

Besides, the chronicle contains not only historical stories but also legendary stories as well, such as the romance of Guy of Warwick's combat with the giant Colbrond at Winchester (A version, lines 1659-65) and accounts of saints' lives (A version, lines 1123-50). These details reveal that the redactor of A version of the chronicle was not only familiar with the Arthurian stories in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace and La3amon, with the romances *Guy of Warwick* and *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and with the legend of the consecration of Westminster by St. Peter and other legendary

matter, but also interested to make his brief account of English history as resourceful as possible within its narrow limits.

Perhaps, the reason for including episodic details to the chronicle is no different from John Barbour's "doubill pleasance in heryng [stories]" (Bruce 1.5)--"carping" and "sothfastnes." Thus, any critical study of the *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* has to take into account the dialogic/intertextual discourse of the poem. The poem is historical as well as romantic. Its influence on later historical works is noteworthy. Quite a number of medieval chroniclers and romancers found the chronicle worth their while to copy, enlarge, and continue its account of the history of England; for example, details were re-interpolated into prose chronicles such as the *Brut* (see Zettl's note, cxxxiv). It indicates that the *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* embodies potentials of "genre-hybridization" for the future development of Middle English narrative poetry and prose.

In brief, by exploiting the resources of the past, the medieval English poets, both the chroniclers and romancers, accumulated forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of their world. This brings us to the question of

the "historicity" of Middle English romance.

During the past decade, quite a number of medieval scholars have been interested in medieval people's perception of truth and fiction.¹⁵ Many critics have pointed out that the terms "romance" and "legend" suggest non-historicity to us but such was not the case from the medieval point of view (Strohm "Storie" 348-52; Matheson "King Arthur" 259-66; Fleischman "History" 278-310; Clopper "Form of Romance" 124-25). The foregoing investigation of the intertextual relation between Middle English chronicle and romance indicates that both genres have something in common. Perhaps, the "something" is that they were all perceived and intended to function as historically true stories. That is, the "historicity" of Middle English chronicle seems to be no different from the "historicity" of Middle English romance.

Consider, for example, the chroniclers' and romancers' treatments of the Havelok story. Just as detailed stories of King Arthur and his knights occur in most of the major chronicles as historical narratives, so the story of Havelok is found in Gaimar's Anglo-Norman *L'Estorie des Engles*, in the Middle English *Brut*, in Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle* (including the one interpolated in the Lambeth Palace MS.

Bot I haf grete ferly þat I fynd no man,
 Þat has written in story how Hauelok þis lond wan.
 Noþer Gildas, no Bede, no Henry of Huntynton,
 No William of Malmesbiri, ne Pers of Bridlynton,
 Writes not in þer bokes of no kyng Athelwold,
 Ne Goldeburgh his douhtere, ne Hauelok not of
 told,
 Whilk tyme þe were kynges, long or now late,
 Þei make no menyng wean, no in what dat.
 bot þat þise lowed men upon English tellis,
 Right story can me not ken, þe certeynte what
 spellis.
 Men sais in Lyncoln castelle ligges 3it a stone,
 Þat Hauelok kast wele forbi euerilkone.

& 3it þe chapelle standes þer he weddid his wife,
 Goldeburgh þe kynges douhter, þt saw is 3it rife.
 & of Gryme a fisshere men redes 3it in ryme,
 þat he bigged Grymesby, Gryme þat ilk tyme.
 Of alle stories of honoure, þat I haf þorgh souht,
 I fynd þat no complioure of him tellis ouht.
 Sen I fynd non redy þat tellis of Havelok kynde,
 Turne we to þat story þat we writen fynde.
 (Quoted in Skeat and Sisam's introduction to *The Lay of Havelok the Dane* xvi)

Robert Mannyng says that none of the chronicles he knows has mentioned Havelok or King Athewold but there are a ryme of Gryme and a story about Havelok's casting a stone in Lincoln castle. Though he does not come across Havelok's "storie of honoure" in any historical accounts, he simply records the fact that there are stories of Havelok and Grim told among "lowed men."

Then, there is one version of the story of Havelok interpolated in MS Lambeth Palace 131 of Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle*. That the interpolator felt no compunction about omitting and replacing Robert Mannyng's comments on Havelok not only indicates that he obviously had access to sources of which Mannyng knew nothing about but also shows that he was willing to assimilate romances and legends into the scheme of history. This is very evocative for our understanding of the Middle English chroniclers' perception of the meanings of "truth" and "history" and of the

functions of "romantic" tales like that of Havelok and King Arthur in chronicles. The theory and justification behind the interpolator's practice appears to be that Mannyng's *Chronicle* provides the framework of history, but other romances and legends can fit into the gaps of that framework without violating the interpolator's sense of historicity.

Conversely, the theory also supports the romance poets' frequent references to chronicles, such as the *Brut* and their insistence that their tales are "histories." The *Havelok*-poet, like most Middle English romancers, assumes that the materials in his tale are factual and true. That is, his tale performs functions similar to those of other versions of the tale found in chronicles. When he uses medieval generic terms, such as "geste," and "storie," to describe his narrative, the *Havelok*-poet is affirming and supporting his belief in the material's factuality. A comparison of the ways the story of Havelok is handled in *Gaimar*, the *Lai*, and *Havelok the Dane* shows that the chroniclers and romancers all insisted on the tale's historicity. For instance, there are a large number of expressions in *Havelok the Dane* that indicate that the poet, like the chroniclers, has a strong interest in kingship and national history. Kingship is seen throughout the poem not

in terms of chivalric or courtly love, but in strictly political terms: an ideal king as leader and protector of the people brings justice, peace and loyalty to his people, a bad one brings the opposite and causes destruction. In *Havelok the Dane*, the personality of the king is crucially important to his people because he is the guardian of law and order, and, as the idealized pictures of *Apelwold* and *Birkabeyn* show, the exemplar of what a Christian community expected and required a king to be.

In his lucid and thorough examination of the Arthurian stories of Lambeth Palace MS. 84, Matheson points out that the basic text of the manuscript is that of a Middle English *Brut*, to which the compiler has added passages translated from Ranulf Higden's Latin *Polychronicon* and from other chronicle sources, and he has also interpolated material from romance sources, such as the story of Merlin's birth from the verse romance *Of Arthour and of Merlin* ("Arthurian Stories" 79). In another essay, Matheson comments on the "cross-fertilization" between chronicle and romance that "the Lambeth compiler's practice shows a willingness and an ability to assimilate romances and legendary tales into the scheme of history...it is clear that many romances were accepted as historical, and that some so-called romances

might be better considered as chronicles or biographies instead" (Matheson "King Arthur" 262-63).

Another example is William Caxton's prologue to *King Arthur*. Factuality was apparently so much an issue that Caxton seems to have felt that he could not publish Malory's *Morte Darthur* without affirming and supporting the authenticity of the Arthurian stories. Thus, skepticism concerning the existing of King Arthur is discussed and rejected in his prologue. Caxton's comments in his prologues to various works he translated and published can be taken as representative of what a fairly well-informed medieval Englishman considered to be the range of acceptable historical works. He apologized for not stuffing more tales into "history" in his epilogue to *Liber Ultimus*. He writes:

And where as ther is fawte, J beseche them that shal rede it to correcte it. For yf J coude haue founden moo storyes, J wold haue sette in hit moo, but the substaunce that J can fynde and knowe, J haue shortly sette hem in this book, to thentente that such thynges as haue ben done syth the deth or ende of the sayd boke of *Polychronycon* shold be had in remembraunce and not putte in oblyuyon ne forgetnge. (Blake Caxton's *Own Prose* 133)

Moreover, the *Golden Legend* and Higden's *Polychronicon* are equally described by Caxton as "historye," containing within them "many noble historyes" and "many wonderful

historyees".¹⁶ In this sense, the category "history," as perceived by Caxton, would include reliable or possibly reliable accounts of events or biographies. Chronicles like the Middle English *Brut*, narratives on the Trojan War, accounts of miracles and legends, collections of moral tales and biographies of romance heroes like King Horn, King Havelok, King Arthur and Sir Gawain, all belong to this category.

In conclusion, Middle English romances share with the chronicles a preoccupation with the material's factuality. The dialogic/intertextual relation between chronicle and romance reveals that Middle English poets' conception of and attitude toward the "historicity" of stories were quite different from ours. Perhaps it is this "alterity" of Middle English literature that baffles us in comprehending the generic nature of these narrative poetical and prose works we call romances. Middle English narrative poetry and prose contain a kind of genre flexibility, which the dialogic/intertextual relation between major Middle English chronicles and romances manifests and exploits.

II

Secularized Saints' Legends or Legendary Romances:

Middle English Romances and Saints' Lives

The dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English romances can be further seen in the "interactions" between romance and hagiography. Both genres share a good deal of common ground. The close generic interactions between Middle English romance and hagiography have often been noted (McKeehan 383-91; Pearsall 121-22; Mehl 17-26, 120-28; Gerould 48, 133, 157; Wolpers 259).¹⁷ Like other major "kinds" of Middle English literature, the Middle English collections of saints' lives contain a rich diversity of literary forms. Many of the saints' lives follow the conventional pattern of romance. And conversely many Middle English romance writers adapted hagiographical materials in their tales.¹⁸ Gordon Hall Gerould in *Saints' Legends* defines hagiography:

The saint's legend is a biographical narrative, of whatever origin circumstances may dictate, written in whatever medium may be convenient, concerned as to substance with the life, death, and miracles of some person accounted worthy to be considered a leader in the cause of righteousness; and, whether fictitious or historical true, calculated to glorify the memory of its subject. (41, emphases are mine)

Note that such a definition can be easily applied to Middle English romance. The affinity between these two genres shows itself not only in their moral and often didactic tone but also in the story-motifs they share from folk culture. Consider, for example, the Eustace-Constance-Florence-Griselda legends. Many Middle English romances are biographical narratives, devoted to the glorification of a particular hero or heroine and celebrating an ideal and liberated experience, disengaged from the demands of reality. There is in this respect no real generic difference between Middle English romances and saints' lives. As Derek Pearsall remarks in his study of the influence of popular romance style in the *Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria*, "the blurring of form which so perplexes the modern scholar, preoccupied with matter of generic definition, is the precise goal of these writers, whether they be entertainers with a touch of piety or hagiographers with an eye for their audience" ("John Capgrave" 121). Some critics go further and argue that saints' lives should be regarded as a form of romance, for they deliberately substitute convention for realistic narrative so that the audience derives pleasure from the manipulation of convention to be found in any example (Jones

51; Olsen 425). Mehl remarks:

Although the homiletic romances do not portray any canonized Saints, they are sometimes related to such Saints, as *Athelston*, or they describe biographies which are very like those of Saints (cf. *The King of Tars*, *Emare*, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*). Apart from that, there are many story-motifs which...are usually treated in a more pointedly religious manner, such as the sufferings of an innocent lady (*The Erl of Tolous*, *Octavian*, *Emare*, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*), the impoverished knight (often by his own liberality), such as Sir Launfal, Sir Cleges, Sir Amadace and Sir Ysumbras, or a longer stay in the Holy Land or in Rome (*Sir Eglamour*, *Torrent of Portyngale*, *Octavian*, *Emare*)....One could describe these works, therefore, as either secularized Saints' legends or legendary romances because they occupy a position exactly in the middle between these two genres. (120-21)

Indeed, the tenuousness of the border between romance and saint's life can be explored by a study of the influence and imitation of stylistic devices, themes/motifs, matter and form of one on the other. Perhaps the difficulty in drawing a line of demarcation between these two genres lies in the vagueness of the generic terms "legend" and "romance" and the complex genre-interactions of Middle English narratives, historical, hagiographical, and "romantic." The comprehensive "cross-fertilization" among Middle English romances and saints' lives, just as among Middle English romances and chronicles, indicates an "alterity" of Middle

English perceptions of the world, namely their mode of conceptions of history, sainthood, imagination, and moral values.

As Strohm, Matheson, and many other critics have pointed out, the term "legend" was historical in the medieval sense, although it is not in our modern sense of the term. The historicity of Middle English saints' lives can be seen in the dialogical/intertextual relationships among romance, chronicle and saint's life. All medieval English hagiographers shared one purpose, which was to write what Bede has described as works "de historiis Sanctorum" (*Historia* vol. 3, 316).¹⁹ Strohm concludes in his investigation of generic terms in Middle English hagiographical narratives that:

Within a *Legenda*, one might find individual narratives labeled (in very rough order of frequency) *vita*, *passio*, *miraculum*, *translatio*, *inventio*, *gesta*, and occasionally *historia*, *sermo*, *visio*, and *legenda*. The practice of authors and scribes in choosing from among these terms is at times idiosyncratic, but each retained its unique associations and range of meaning for the late medieval reading public. Within a single *legenda* (or a vernacular equivalent like the *South English Legendary*) the late medieval audience could encounter the whole range of generic possibilities represented in hagiographical narrative.

("Passioun" 72)

This close affinity among romance, chronicle, and saint's life is also revealed in the manuscripts. For example, the highly literate compiler of Lambeth MS. 84 has interpolated much material from literary sources into the prose *Brut*, such as the legend of Constance from both Gower and Chaucer and the "tails of ray" story of St. Austin (with subsequent miracles) from Lydgate's poem *The Legend of St. Austin at Compton* (Matheson "King Arthur" 261). Matheson remarks that "other hagiographic stories and miracles of Sts. Alban, Kenelm, and Thomas a Becket were probably also derived from literary sources....Such additions are often marked in the margin with the words 'Bona narracio'" (Matheson "King Arthur" 261). The phrase "Bona narracio" indicates that the medieval scribe, compiler, or reader might have enjoyed not only the hagiographical stories but also the way they were told. It reminds one of John Barbour's poetics: the "doubill pleasance in heryng" (Bruce 1.5), namely its "suthfast" and "carping."

The Lambeth 84 compiler's practice shows that he perceived romance and legend as true stories and therefore he was willing to incorporate them into the scheme of history. In other words, from his point of view, romance, saint's life, and chronicle shared common ends: they were

stories "that suthfast wer,/and thai wer said on gud maner" (Barbour Bruce 1.3-4). Conversely, romance writers and hagiographers shared with the chroniclers the same assumptions about their work: for it to teach a moral or to demonstrate some truth, it had to be true itself. This affinity among chronicle, saint's life, and romance may partly explain why *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* occurs among saints' lives in Laud Misc. 108.

In a series of studies, Katherine Hume argues that the distinguishing features between romance and legend are the secularity or sanctity of the protagonist's aims and the handling of death ("Middle English Romance" 172). Like her, Dorothy Everett argues:

the differences between the two [genres] are really obvious enough. The legend is written with didactic intent, the romance chiefly to give pleasure....It is characteristic, too, that in *Sir Isumbras* the reunion is followed by a long and happy life,...whereas in the legend of Eustace the reunion is followed by a further trial of faith and eventually by martyrdom for the whole family. ("Characterization" 15-16)

Such statements exemplify several common but erroneous

modern conceptions of romance and legend: that romance and legend are two literary forms, that romance is essentially secular while legend is by nature religious, and that the endings of an ideal hero or heroine are happy in romance and solemn in saints' lives. An investigation of the dialogical/intertextual relationships among Middle English romance, chronicle, and saint's life shows that these criteria seem to be superficial and partial, and, therefore, unnecessary. They do not suffice to provide a proper description of these narratives because these elements are in most cases not mutually exclusive in all these genres. Consider, for example, the so-called "variants" of the Eustace-Constance-Florence-Griselda legends.

However, to argue that "the line of demarcation between hagiography and romance, in terms of content, is faint indeed, if not nonexistent" (Lagorio 100) does not solve the generic problem of Middle English romance and legend, either. A fruitful approach to Middle English romance and saints' lives, perhaps, is one which accepts the dialogic/intertextual relationships between the two genres, judges the merits of a particular Middle English narrative by its "centrifugal" force in deviating from conventional use of imagery and themes in romance as well as in

hagiographical narratives. Moreover, we will see how "dialogism/ intertextuality" contributes to the medieval audience's generic expectations and perceptions of their world. Apparently, for medieval English writers, scribes, readers, or hearers these "secularized" Saints' legends or legendary romances were without doubt closely related to the hagiographic tradition.

A critical procedure is to recognize what Jauss calls the "alterity" of medieval literature and to reconstruct the medieval mode of perceptions, be they theological, political, or aesthetic. In seeking to reconstruct the medieval English "horizon of expectations," we cannot ignore the "genre-deviation" or "genre-hybridization" of Middle English narratives. Rather than seek to differentiate the romance from the saint's life by saying, for example, that didacticism is not overt in romance, or it is not its primary intention, we might more accurately note that the hagiographical elements are in fact the warp and woof of romance, just as the historical element in Middle English romances is intrinsic.

Regarding authorship, it is also noteworthy that hagiographers and romancers were frequently one and the same. Thus, for example, the Gawain-poet composed the

allegorical dream vision *Pearl*, the homiletic poems *Purity* and *Patience*, and most significantly, the romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. John Lydgate not only wrote a *Troy-Book*, a *Siege of Thebes*, but also a version of *Guy of Warwick*.²⁰ Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales* and the *Legend of Good Women*.²¹

The association of biographical narratives in manuscripts is perhaps one of the simpler ways in which the generic interaction of romance and saint's life can be explored. For example, the first part of the Auchinleck MS. (ff. 1-78) contains chiefly legends (among which romances like *The King of Tars* and *Amis and Amiloun* are grouped) as well as didactic and devotional poems. From f. 78b onwards begins a varied mixture of different kinds of narratives: romances and hagiographical works. The romances includes *Sir Degarre*, *The Seven Sages of Rome*, *Floris and Blancheflur*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Reinbrun*, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, *Arthour and Merlin*, *Lai le Freine*, *Roland and Vernagu*, *Otuel*, *Kyng Alisaunder*, *Sir Tristrem*, *Sir Orfeo*, *Horn Childe*, and *Richard Coeur de Lion*.²² The romances are not completely separated from other kinds of narratives. All in all, in the Auchinleck MS. eighteen romances are joined by eight saints' lives, two pious tales, and one

visit to the otherworld, as well as other overtly didactic pieces of works (Reiss 116).

The mixing of romance and saint's life can also be seen in other Middle English manuscript collections. The two Thornton MSS. are good examples. One is the famous Lincoln MS. (Lincoln Cathedral Library A. 5.2) which contains in the first part a number of romances together with saints' lives, the prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune, and popular medical works, and in the second part it contains above all religious and devotional works by Richard Rolle and the *Liber de diversis medicinis*. The other Thornton MS. (B.L. Additional 31042) contains mainly devotional works and meditations. It also includes romances like *The Sege off Melayne*, *Rowlande and Ottuell*, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, and *The Siege of Jerusalem*. That romances and hagiographic works are grouped together in this Thornton MS. indicates that the compiler perceived the romances in this collection to be homiletic and religious in nature and not different from the purely hagiographic narratives (Mehl, "Note" 259-60 and 266, n. 47).²³

One of the most evident cases is probably the unity of the collection found in British Library Cotton Nero A. x., which includes *Pearl*, *Purity*, *Patience*, and *Sir Gawain and*

the Green Knight. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* not only occupies a key place in the manuscript, but its interpretation needs to be assessed in the context provided by the overtly religious works included in the manuscript. The hagiographical elements in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* will be more fully discussed later.

The manuscript collections show that medieval English audiences considered the category of devotional literature to include paraphrases of the Bible (for example, *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*), apocryphal legends (for example, *The Childhood of Christ*), saints' legends (for example, *The South English Legendary*), and "penitential romances" (for example, *Sir Ysumbras* or *Le Bone Florence of Rome*) (Matthews 205; Mehl 20). Thus, the *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*, which the poet claims to "telle wip carful romaunce" (line 1697), is preserved together with two other religious poems, *The Charter of Christ*, and *The Dialogue between the Virgin and St. Bernard* in one manuscript, B.L. Additional 11307 (D'Evelyn viii). In the Auchinleck MS., *The King of Tars* occurs in the first part of the collection, between the legend of Gregory and Adam and Eve. It is also preserved in the Vernon MS., which is a collection of devotional texts. It is very likely that the

compilers of the two manuscripts perceived *The King of Tars* as a secularized legend. The cases of *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* in Harley 2253 and in Laud MS. 108 are probably similar.

B.L. Harley 2253 and Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 108 are both presumably of clerical origin. *Havelok the Dane* appears in the last part of Laud Misc. 108, along with a text of *King Horn* written in the same hand of the early fourteenth century.²⁴ Laud Misc. 108 contains *The South English Legendary*, preceded by *The Life and Passion of Christ*, *The Infancy of Christ*, and followed by *The Sayings of St. Bernard*, *The Vision of St. Paul*, and *The Debate of the Body and the Soul*. The part that contains *Havelok the Dane*, *King Horn*, and other saints' lives such as *The Life and Passion of St. Blaise*, *The Life and Passion of St. Cecilia*, and *The Life of St. Alexius*, is separated from the preceding parts in the manuscript. The fact that romances like *Havelok* and *King Horn* are preceded and followed by a number of saints' lives again suggests that they were regarded as the same category of texts as the saint's life. If the genre "saint's life" refers to a biographical narrative of an exemplary religious life, *Havelok* and *King Horn* as "romances" might have been regarded as secular

counterparts of the so-called "saint's life." In other words, romances are biographical narratives of exemplary secular lives.

More significantly, there is a Latin heading at the top of the first page of *Havelok the Dane* in Laud Misc. 108. It says "Incipit Vita Havelok quondam Rex Anglie et Denemarchie." The naming of Havelok as a former king of England suggests that the poem had been linked with *King Horn* as a narrative on a subject drawn from English history. And the term "Vita" shows particularly an attempt (whether that of the *Havelok*-poet, the scribe, or the compiler) to link the poem with the saints' lives. The term "vita" had religious associations in that this hagiographical genre focused on exemplary ways of religious living.²⁵ If the title is the writer's, it strengthens the likelihood of clerical authorship. It also suggests that the purpose of the poem is to praise God by showing the power of goodness and the triumph of right over wrong. In this sense, *Havelok* might have been regarded by a medieval English audience as a Christian hero and the theme of the story religious.

The hagiographical elements in romances are more than a matter of including phrases like "so Crist me blesse," or swearing by saints, or beginning and ending with a prayer.

For example, in *King Horn*, when Godhild leaves court to become a religious recluse, her holiness is given particular significance because of the pagans' prohibition of Christianity:

Per heo seruede Gode
 A3enes þe paynes fobode
 Per he seruede Criste
 Þat no payn hit ne wiste. (79-82)

Her action thus reinforces the Christian dimension of the romance, in which her child, King Horn, not only regains his kingdom and revenges himself on those who have persecuted him and killed his father, but also works to do God's will. At the beginning of the romance, the Saracens tell King Murray that they will kill all Christians:

Þi lond folk we schulle slon,
 And alle þat Crist luueþ vpon
 And þe selue ri3t anon. (47-49)

Later when Horn kills the Saracens and a Saracen giant, he is doing God's work. In a sense, the romance hero's action is more than one of heroic revenge--it is to defeat the enemies of God. This may explain why *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* occur before and after a number of saints' lives in *Laud Misc.* 108.

Hagiographical details are hardly limited to romances like *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*. In fact, they fill the most homiletic romances and make clear their religious dimension. *Sir Ysumbras*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *Libeaus Desconus*, *Octavian*, for instance, all show the hero fighting Saracens, giants and/or dragons. Similarly, miracles also fill the romances. They are not only the basis for the ending of *The King of Tars*, but also the impetus to action in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, and the solution in *Amis and Amiloun* and *Robert of Sicily*. *Sir Ysumbras*, *Sir Triamour*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *Sir Torrent of Portyngale*, *Octavian*, *The King of Tars*, and *Le Bone Florence of Rome* have been classified as a subgroup of Middle English romance entitled "the Eustace-Constance-Florence-Griselda Legends" by John W. Wells because they embody variants of the St. Eustace or Placidus, Constance, Florence, and Griselda story-motifs and themes (Wells 112-14).

In terms of motifs/themes, the close alliance of saint's life and romance is perhaps nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the accretive legend of St. Joseph of Arimathea. *Joseph of Arimathe*: otherwise called *The Romance of the Seint Graal*, or *Holy Grail* is an alliterative Middle English narrative which is probably a version of *The*

History of the Holy Graal, one of the five Arthurian romances edited by Sir F. Madden in his *Syr Gawayne*.²⁶ According to W. W. Skeat, the contents of f. 403 and of part of f. 404 of the Vernon MS. are stories of the adventures of Joseph of Arimathea at the court of Evalak, king of Sarras, with the episode of King Evalak's shield. *Joseph of Arimathie* begins just where *Piers Plowman* ends, and ends where a poem called "Judas" begins on the second column of the back of leaf 404 of the Vernon MS. (Skeat vii).

Joseph of Arimathie has been called a homiletic romance because the poet not only combined themes/motifs and literary devices taken from both romance and hagiography, but also imposed a distinctive moral and religious interpretation on the content (Lagorio 92). Valerie Lagorio has shown that a comparison of the English romance with its French sources such as *La Queste del Saint Graal* and the *Estoire del Saint Graal* reveals that the English poet attempted to impart an English "sens" to the French *matière* on the life of Joseph.²⁷ In general, the *Estoire* was written as a retrospective sequel to the Vulgate *Queste*, that is, its tripartite purpose was to present a wonder-filled account that would integrate the Holy Grail into the Arthurian romance cycle, while *Joseph of Arimathie* was

primarily concerned with the hero as an exemplar of Christian zeal and fortitude. In Lagorio's words, the *Estoire* is more a secular romance while *Joseph of Arimathie* is more an hagiographical narrative. This perhaps explains why a Middle English alliterative romance like *Joseph of Arimathie* appears in the predominantly religious Vernon manuscript.

More significant is that in *Joseph of Arimathie* the shield given to Evalak by Josaphe, son of Joseph of Arimathea, plays an important part in the legend of St. Joseph of Glastonbury. The story of Joseph was recounted to Galahad by the White Knight in the poem because of its association with this shield. From here there developed legendary accounts of Galahad's adventure with the holy, bleeding lance, his achievement of the Saint Graal, and his death at Sarras.²⁸ The real subject of the poem is therefore the adventures of Joseph of Arimathea at the court of Evalak, king of Sarras, with the episode of King Evalak's shield. Though mainly following the French version of the story of St. Joseph, the poet of *Joseph of Arimathie* seems to have been attracted to the pleasure of "carpyng" as he translated as much of the legend of St. Joseph as most pleased his imagination.

A similar fabulous account is found in John Hardyng's *Chronicle*.²⁹ For example, in Hardyng's *Chronicle* an historical account is related to Glastonbury's dual claim to King Arthur, Britain's hero king, and to his saintly ancestor, Joseph of Arimathea, Britain's own apostle. It is also noteworthy that the Arthurian stories and the Holy Grail quest in Hardyng's *Chronicle* later served as sources for Malory's *Morte Darthur*.³⁰

We may now return to the hagiographical elements in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* occupies a key place in British Library Cotton Nero A. x. It is tempting to make a case for the dialogic/intertextual relationships among the allegorical dream vision *Pearl*, the homiletic narratives *Purity* and *Patience*, and the romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which are included in the manuscript. Although in terms of genre, the four narratives are different, it seems that for the *Gawain*-poet, they were unified not only in terms of stylistic devices but also in terms of theme. It has been argued that the romance needs to be assessed in the context provided by the overtly religious narratives included in the manuscript (Reiss 117). Five saints of the Christian calendar are mentioned in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

They are the Virgin Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Peter, St. Giles Aegidius, and St. Julian the Hospitaller.³¹

Thus, one can see that the associations of texts in many medieval English manuscripts reveal the overlapping and wide range of Middle English hagiographical and "romantic" narratives.

III

Middle English Romance and Folk Literature:

The Popularity of Middle English Romance

Many literary historians of Middle English literature have argued that the English romances are less formal and elevated in style than their continental counterparts, such as the French and German romances, but usually closer in style and episodic development to analogous folktales (Boitani 58; Rosenberg 61-84; Bettridge 153-208; Utley 596-607).³² Boitani remarks that:

The [English] romances...transpose the motifs of French courtesy into an English key, but at the same time they move away from the formalism of the French models and introduce elements of English

"realism"...they use "folk" material, traditional stories, popular tales....For all these reasons, the romances, like the religious narrative, comprise a "mixed" body of material, and this is reflected in their style. ("World of Romance" 58)

The close relationship between Middle English romance and oral tradition can be seen in the similarities of narrative motifs, formulas of structure, characterization, and themes in many romances and folktales. For all the romances' indications of oral performance (tags like "Listen lordings that be here!" and "Alle beon he blipe/pat to my song lype"), the romance writers also reveal a concern with the narrative as a "written" composition of popular tales. For example, at the beginning of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the poet suggests that what he offers in his poem is a "laye" (line 30) of "aunter" (line 27 and line 29). He says that the romance is about "an outtrage awenture of Arthures wonderez" (line 29) with a long oral and written tradition:

I schal telle hit, as-tit, as I in toun herde,
with tonge;
As hit is stad and stoken,
in stori stif and stronge,
With lel letteres loken,
In londe so hatz ben longe. (31-36)

That is, he promises his readers or hearers that he

will reflect the "laye's" existence as it is told "with tonge," as it is fixed in history "stif and stronge," as it is fastened together as a written work "with lel letteres loken," and as it has remained in both oral and written tradition for a long while. This passage refers less to the narrative materials which the poem derives from than to the generic nature of the story which is being told.

The generic nature of Middle English romance, therefore, can be further seen by exploring its dialogic/intertextual relationship with folktale. Folklorists have found that many Middle English romances share with folktales common features such as story-motifs, structure, and plot-patterns. Bruce A. Rosenberg suggests that Middle English romances lend themselves readily to folktale morphological analysis. Rather than "Matters," he classifies the romances into three structural types according to the system formulated by Vladimir Propp to analyze the popular tale. The three types are stories of crime and punishment (*Havelok the Dane, Athelston, Gamelyn*), of lovers united after one or more separations (*King Horn, Sir Launfal, Sir Eglamour, Bevis of Hampton, Guy of Warwick*), and of tests posed and successfully passed (*Sir Ysumbras, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Wedding of*

Gawain and Dame Ragnell, William of Palerne) (Rosenberg "Morphology" 63-77). By shifting from "Matters" to folkloric structural types, Rosenberg argues, one can achieve distinctive evaluation and understanding of medieval English romances (81). William Bettridge's study of the *Griselda* legends and Turkish folktales reveals that the romances were closely related to folktales (153-208). Francis Lee Utley's analysis of Chaucer's use of folklore motifs in the Clerk's Tale and the Miller's Tale has also shown how close the affinity is between romance and folklore (Utley "Arthurian Romance" 596-607). In fact, the Arthurian stories have been approached from their relation to the Celtic tradition and other international folktales (Loomis "Arthurian Tradition" 1-25; Utley "Arthurian Romance" 596-607).

The folklorists' studies of Middle English romances draw our attention to similarities in the characters of both genres, and more importantly, they reveal that folktales and romances are genetically related. The convincing steward, the greedy guardian, and the treacherous companion knight whom we find in many of the English romances have folktale counterparts. The wicked stepmother or mother-in-law and the lecherous father are characters from both "kinds" of

narratives.

Many English romances incorporated folkloric materials. As a matter of fact, folktales have been adapted by a considerable number of romance writers. For example, *Havelok the Dane*, *King Horn*, *Athelston*, and *Gamelyn* all have plots compounded of familiar folkloric motifs. It has been argued that *Havelok the Dane* is "a folktale thinly disguised as a romance" (Boitani 51) and a "local boy makes good kind of folk-tale" (Gibbs 31). *King Horn* is a male-Cinderella story, a folk-tale of the exile-and-return type (Garbáty 142), and a story derived from a folktale told by people of Norwegian descent in the west of England (Legge 96-104). Indeed, both *King Horn* and *Havelok the Dane* are immediately recognizable as folktales because the narrative cluster of both romances are the exile-and-return and the male-Cinderella motifs, a widespread combination very prevalent in Western folklore, involving the familiar motifs of revenge, recovery of the patrimony, and the winning of a bride.

In general, the characteristics of these romances are those of folktale: rapid narration unencumbered by detail which does not serve a thematic purpose, episodes following one another with a repeated pattern, a natural or

supernatural world, merely as a backdrop to action, all in the service of a conflict of black and white values embodied in stereotyped characters.

The structure is obviously that of folktale--an episodic story which several times repeats the same basic pattern of incidents: the victim-hero suffers a misfortune or experiences a lack of something in him, leaves home, is tested by adventures involving a villain, emerges victorious to return home in disguise and be recognized by some token of test, only to recommence the pattern of events as the result of some new misfortune, villainy, or continuing lack. The repeated pattern stands out clearly in *King Horn*. It is also evident that there is a similarity of story-pattern of the deprived boy winning back his heritage between folktale and *Havelok the Dane*.

The underlying theme is always that of the maturation of an individual, which is again obviously related to folklore: the various kings are representatives of the father-figure from whose control the hero struggles to free himself; the good and bad companions are aspects of his personality which further or inhibit his half-realized desire to rival his father and grow to full adult power and independence (Wilson 59-62; Brewer 64-65). The search for

identity, the attempt to find one's self, may be what these folklore romances are actually about in their various accounts of adventures and of the reunion of lovers in marriage. Many of the heroes, not only Libeaus Desconus, are "the fair unknowns" seeking recognition; and their several disguises, as in *King Horn* (Horn as a beggar), *Havelok the Dane* (Havelok as a kitchen boy), *Sir Isumbras* (Isumbras as a smith's apprentice), *Guy of Warwick*, and *Sir Orfeo*, all these disguises function merely as vehicles for discovery. In fact, all these romances are about children: *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Floris and Blauncheflur*, *Arthur and Merlin*, *Sir Tristrem*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *Guy of Warwick*, and *Bevis of Hampton*. Brewer describes these romances as "essentially stories about growing up to adulthood, both literary and symbolically" ("Nature" 37).

Indeed, the nature of Middle English romances can be more properly described if we take into account the close genetic relationship between Middle English romance and folk tale. Critics of Middle English romance recognize, for example, that in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the poet uses many folkloric motifs, such as the beheading game, the temptation, and the exchange and reward. Conventional romance elements, such as adventure and courtly love, were

treated in a superficial manner, while the folkloric materials were the remarkable traits in the cluster of the poem.

The humorous romance of Gawain's wedding with the loathly lady is one of several analogues--like Gower's *Tale of Florent*, Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*--all of which have the folklore motifs of the loathly lady, the wooing lady, and the riddle asked and answered. The Breton lays and the Tristan romances owe obvious debts to folktales--the challenge, the solitary quest, the wayside ordeal, the combat against superhuman odds, the winning of a bride are all closely resemble the experiences of folk-heroes. The patterning of the heroes' adventures by repetition and variation, parallelism, and inversions seems to be mirrored in familiar folktales (Barron 177-79).

Athelston and *Gamelyn* suggest how the adventures of Robin Hood may have been treated in romance. In *Athelston*, the shadow of English history hovers behind a plot, for which there is no known source, compounded of familiar folklore motifs of sworn brotherhood, false accusation, and trial by ordeal. It finds another expression in *Gamelyn*, a compilation of stock wildwood theme, apparently without any

French source. Both romances mirror the exploits of noble outlaws as readily as they glamorize the social standing of humbler ones, just as the variants of the Robin Hood folktale do.

The plot of *Libeaus Desconus* (or *The Fair Unknown*) blends the Irish story of the "Fier Baiser" with the folklore motif of a woman transformed into a serpent. That of *Floris and Blancheflur* compounds folklore motifs of the incestuous father, faithful servitor, evil stepmother, suitor tests, perilous riddle, etc. It has been argued that the romance was originally an Arabic folktale (Loomis 189). In *William of Palerne*, William is presented as a folk-hero, the narrative materials suggest that it is a folktale of the male-Cinderella type incorporating the motif of the helpful beast and much folklore on werewolves (Barron 197).

Thus, it is clear that there is a dialogic/intertextual relationship between romance and folktale. Both genres embody the same episodic structure, story-pattern, and theme. The sphere of action in both genres is not entirely different. In folktales, the hero's or heroine's adversaries are also monsters, dragons, giants, and demons, which are, like those in romance, taken as symbolic representations of a variety of vicissitudes in the real

world. Both "kinds" of narrative reinforce an essential and universal story-pattern of self-fulfillment. They often begin with the hero's or heroine's journey into the world, with one or several adventures, and in the end the hero or heroine invariably accomplishes his or her quest, kills dragons, giants, trolls, and then lives happily ever after (Rosenberg "Medieval Popular Literature" 61-84). Indeed, the adventures of the hero or heroine are noticeably similar from one "romantic" story to another folktale, and often the story-motifs, structure or episodic pattern can be used interchangeably.

That folklore motifs appear here and there in Middle English romances indicates that the generic nature of Middle English romance cannot be fully explored without examining its dialogic/intertextual relationship with folklore. Indeed, some romances are said to be "patchworks" of folklore motifs. For instance, the second part of *Sir Eglamour* has been so analyzed:

The second part--the adventures of the cast-out Christabelle--is a "patchwork" of equally well-worn incidents: the calumniated wife (see Chaucer, *Man of Law's Tale*; *Emare*; *William of Palerne* [Guillaume d'Angleterre]), the loss of children (see Eustace legend, above) by robber animals (see *Isumbras*, *Torrent*, *Octavian*, *Valentine and Orson*, *Bevis*), the griffin as robber beast (*Octavian*,

Torrent), the recovery of treasure (*Isumbras*), the recognitions (*Torrent*). *Sir Degare* may have given the hint for the Oedipus-like episode; and a popular theme (*Sohrab and Rustum*) inspired the combat of father and son. (Hornstein "Eustace" 124-25)

Hornstein's analysis, relating the folkloric motifs in *Sir Eglamour* to other romances, confirms that there are similarities among these romances in terms of "well-known" incidents. However, it is important to note that the similarities lie in the fact that Middle English romances make use of narrative materials common to folktales, and vice versa. Narrative materials, style of presentation, structure, and plot-pattern in both genres are often compatible that it is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the two genres.

Besides, acknowledging that there is a dialogic/intertextual relationship between Middle English romance and folktale, we can see why the great bulk of the English romances are noncyclic, folkloric, and "popular": *King Horn*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Gamelyn*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *Octavian*, *the King of Tars*, *Sir Triamour*, *Sir Degare*, *Floris and Blancheflur*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *Sir Orfeo*, *King Robert of Sicily*, *Partonope of Blois*, and *Ipomedon*. Perhaps, it is

mainly due to their close affinity to folktales that these romances were very popular.

As with folktale, the episodes and motifs in these romances are those which have already acquired conventionality. Much of the audience's pleasure of reading or hearing the romances comes from the fulfillment of expectations, the ritualistic working out of formulae, with the comforting assurance that this is how the world works and the vague approval of some moral values, such as individual freedom, social justice and democracy. As critics have pointed out, in these folktale-like romances, the persistence of folklore motifs and story-patterns such as the career of a male Cinderella suggests that Middle English romances like *Havelok the Dane*, *King Horn*, and *William of Palerne* encode a message of the inevitable triumph of humble ability and an implication that such ability is rooted in nobility of nature reassuring to all classes in any age of social stratification. Middle English romance shares with folktale a great deal of common ground; it exploits these folklore messages and implications, and as a result, like folklore, it enjoys a widespread and long-lasting appeal to its audience (Wittig 179-90).

The popularity of these romances is shown in many lists

of romance heroes found in Middle English narrative poetry.³³ In fact, *Horn*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, and *Libeaus Desconus* are four of the most popular subjects of Middle English romances. That several of these folktale-like romances have multiple versions also indicates their popularity. For example, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Octavian*, *Partonope of Blois*, and *Ipomedon* all have variant versions. There are four versions of the *Horn* story (three independent variants of *King Horn* in three manuscripts, and *Horn Child*) and the *Launfal* story (*Sir Landeval*, *Sir Lambewell*, *Sir Lamwell*, and Thomas Chestre's *Sir Launfal*), two romances about Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle (*Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle* and *Carle off Carlile*) and two about Gawain and Dame Ragnell (*The Marriage of Sir Gawaine* and *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*).³⁴ These different versions offer further proof of the eclectic, popular, and broadly based generic nature of Middle English romances.

The popularity of these folkloric romances can further be seen in the frequency of printings during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Crane 4-6). William Caxton's successors, Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pynson, and William Copland, published in the late fifteenth

and early sixteenth centuries popular romances such as *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Eglamour*, *Sir Triamour*, *Degare*, and *Generides*.

It is genetically significant that few of these folklore romances conform to the conventions of "romance," but rather they deviate from the audience's generic expectations. Like folklore story-tellers, the romance writers may have been concerned with playing their individual treatment against a standard or familiar version of story which they could count on their readers or hearers to know. Like folklore story-tellers, they may also have been attracted to the idea of making their story at once familiar and novel. On one hand, the audience's expectations of the narrative motifs were fulfilled. On the other hand, the expectations were challenged, disappointed, and re-formed by the writers' artistic treatments of dialogism/intertextuality of the genre.

NOTES

1. See W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, 2nd ed., rev. K. Sisam, xi-xx.
2. See also the edition by E. Zetzl, EETS 196 (1935).
3. See also *Manual*, vol. 1, I[15].
4. See also G. Hofstrand, *The Siege of Troye: A Study in the Intertextual Relations of the Middle English Romance* and E. B. Atwood, "The *Excidium Troie* and Medieval Troy Literature" 115-38.
5. See the edition by M. E. Barnicle, EETS 172 (1927): ix; Matheson, "Historical Prose" 210-33; and Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* 21.
6. The whole life of King Arthur was first outlined by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, composed in Latin prose about 1136. The career of Arthur is the central section of the *Historia* and its climax. For more detailed discussions of Geoffrey's political treatments of his sources and his Arthurian stories, see

Robert Huntington Fletcher, *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, Especially Those of Great Britain and France* 43-115.

7. See M. D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* 139-75 and R. W. Ackerman, "The English Rimed and Prose Romances" 480-519.

8. See a series of essays by Matheson on historical writings and Arthurian stories: "King Arthur and the Medieval English Chronicles" 248-74; "Historical Prose" 210-33; and "The Arthurian Stories of Lambeth Palace Library MS. 84" 70-91.

9. For a comparison between Wace and La3amon, see Robert Huntington Fletcher, *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, Especially Those of Great Britain and France* 127-66. Fletcher pointed out that a fundamental difference between Wace's general conception of Arthur and his knights and that of La3amon depended upon the poets' nationality.

10. Some critics point out that in this account of Arthur establishing his identity as a national hero-king in domestic strife, Malory seems to reflect upon similar political events during the Wars of the Roses and that the Roman Wars in Book II, derived from the alliterative *Morte*

Arthure, which ends triumphantly in the crowning of Arthur as emperor while Modred's treachery was postponed until the end of King Arthur's reign, was colored by memories of the Continental campaigns of Henry V (Wilson, Barron).

11. According to W. W. Skeat, Andrew Wyntoun was a Canon regular of the priory of St Andrews, and subsequently Prior of the monastery of St. Serf's Inch in Loch Levin. He was born about A.D. 1350, and died between 1420 and 1430. He wrote a metrical history entitled the *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* (ca. 1420). Concerning Barbour's literary work, we learn something from his *Bruce*, and from Wyntoun's references to him in his work. For more detailed discussion of the authorship of *Bruce*, see EETS, ES 55, ed. by W. W. Skeat, xxxv-lii.

12. See Skeat's note to line 37, EETS, ES 29, 544.

13. It is significant to note that Sir Walter Scott not only studied Barbour's *Bruce* closely, but also borrowed from it several striking incidents in his historical novels, such as *Castle Dangerous* and *Tales of a Grandfather*.

14. In approximately complete redactions the *Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle* is preserved in five manuscripts. The length of the narrative ranges from about 1000 to about

2400 lines. For more information, see the detailed study of Zettl in EETS 196, xlvi-ci. Although the B version has been regarded as the *original* version of the chronicle, all the references are from the A version because the redactor seems to have appealed to many "kinds" of Middle English literature and shows, to a certain extent, an acquaintance with the conventions of romance.

15. For studies of the relationship between truth/fiction, fact/fable, and history/legend in Middle English literature, see Paul Strohm, "Middle English Narrative Genres" 379-88; Ruth Morse, "'This Vague Relation: Historical Fiction and Historical Veracity in the Later Middle Ages" 85-13; Suzanne Fleischman, "On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages" 278-310; Joseph M. Levine, "Caxton's Histories: Fact and Fiction at the Close of the Middle Ages" 19-53; and Lister Matheson, "King Arthur and the Medieval English Chronicles" 248-74.

16. See the edition of N. F. Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose*.

17. I. P. McKeegan remarks that "it is practically impossible to draw a clear line between saints' legends and romances. A difference in atmosphere, in style, in method

of treatment, is usually, though not always, apprent, but the story-stuff is identical" (391); see I. P. McKeehan, "Some Relationships between the Legends of British Saints and Medieval Romance" 383-391. Similar remarks are made by T. Wolpers, Derek Pearsall, G. H. Gerould, and Dieter Mehl; see T. Wolpers, *Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters* 188-197, 234-258; Mehl, 17-20, 26-32 and Chapter 5 "Homiletic Romances" 120-58; Pearsall, "John Capgrave's *Life of St. Katharine* and Popular Romance Style" 121-38; Gerould, *Saints' Legends*.

18. The story of Saint Eustace and the legend of Saint Joseph of Glastonbury are good examples; see Laurel Braswell, "Sir Isumbras and the Legend of Saint Eustace" 128-51; Thomas J. Heffernan, "An Analysis of the Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace" 63-90; and Valerie M. Lagorio, "The Joseph of Arimathie: English Hagiography in Transition" 91-101.

19. For more discussion, see Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, "'De Historiis Sanctorum': A Generic Study of Hagiography" 407-30.

20. See A. C. Baugh, "The Authorship of the Middle English Romances" 13-28; also Baugh, "The Middle English

Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation" 1-31; Katherine Hume, "Formal Nature" 170, 177; and Edmund Reiss, "Romance" 116.

21. For the general conception of the legends, Chaucer was indebted to the saints' lives. On Chaucer's use of hagiographic models, see Lisa J. Kiser, *Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women* 101-11.

22. See L. H. Loomis, "The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330-1340" 595-627; A. J. Bliss, "Notes on the Auchinleck Manuscript" 652-58; Dieter Mehl, "A Note on Some Manuscripts of Romances" 257-58; Edmund Reiss, "Romance" 116.

23. For more description of the manuscript, see *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years 1876-81* 148-51; Karl Brunner, "Hs. Brit. Mus. Additional 31042" 316-27.

24. For accounts of the Laud MS., see *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues, II: Laudian MSS Codices Miscellanei*, no. 108; C. Horstmann, "Die Legenden des MS. Laud 108" 395-414; and Skeat-Sisam, Introduction, viii-ix.

25. See Paul Strohm, "Middle English Literary Genres" 379-88; and "Passioun, Lif, Miracle, Legende: Some Generic

Terms in Middle English Hagiographical Narrative" 62-75;
154-71.

26. See Skeat's preface, xiv, and note 1.

27. For a good illustration of many evident differences between the English and the French versions of the story of St. Joseph, see Valerie M. Lagorio, "The Joseph of Arimathie: English Hagiography in Transition" 91-102, particularly, 93-97.

28. See Skeat's preface, xiv-xv, xli; and also Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Book XVII.

29. The legendary and "romantic" materials in Hardyng's *Chronicle* are of interest. Hardyng showed as much enthusiasm for Arthur's reign as any romance writer, and as much faith in the Joseph of Arimathea legend and Galahad's Grail quest as any legendary poet. For Hardyng's fabulous treatment of Grail romances and Glastonbury legends, see extracts of his *Chronicle*, edited and commented on by Skeat, xli-xliii.

30. For the complex historical, political, and ecclesiastical considerations promoting the cult of Joseph in England, see Valerie M. Lagorio, "The Evolving Legend of St. Joseph of Glastonbury" 209-31.

31. For fuller discussion of the Gawain-poet's choice of these saints, see Ronald Tamplin's "The Saints in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" 403-20. Tamplin's investigation provides insight into the themes and intellectual setting of the romance; however, the allusions to saints' legends are never limiting in the other three narrative poems included in the manuscript. The saints' lives introduced in *Sir Gawain* intersect all the major themes and atmospheres of *Pearl*, *Purity*, and *Patience*.

32. For studies of folktale, see Stith Thompson, *The Folktale*; Stith Thompson and Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale*; and also Valdimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*. Fifteen of the most common variations of folktale are briefly discussed in Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* 436; also see *The Motif-Index of Folk Literature*.

33. As we have previously discussed, the list in the romance *Richard Coer de Lyon* includes, along with the well-known heroes of antiquity and of Charlemagne and Arthurian cycles, such figures as Bevis, Guy, Octavian, Partonope, and Ipomedon (lines 6725-34). In the *Laud Troy-Book*, we find, again along with the classical, Arthurian, and Carolingian figures, Bevis, Guy, Octavian, Havelok, Horn, and Richard

(lines 11-26). At the beginning of *Cursor Mundi*, the poet cites, along with figures from the Arthur and Charlemagne romances, Isumbras and Amadace (lines 1-20); and in *The Parliament of the Three Ages* the poet gives a comparable list including Amadace, Ipomedon, Generides, and Eglamour of Artois (lines 614-29).

34. For detailed discussion, see Edmund Reiss, "Romance" 108-30, esp. 112-14.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARD A POETICS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE

If the discourse of Middle English romance has taken its dialogic/intertextual shape from its critical emphasis on genre deviation and genre hybridization, as the previous chapter has shown, then we can assume that Middle English romances have no homogeneous essence probably because they were not intended and expected to be an homogeneous "kind" of literature. In other words, the English romance might have not been perceived by a medieval audience as a monolithic genre but a hybrid. The astonishing dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English romance not only reveals the medieval English conception of the nature of the genre but also indicates the English public's conscious pleasure in variation--a delight which comes from the reader's perception of difference, of an ever-different deviation from or hybridization of certain "kinds" of literature.

In fact, from the time of Chrétien de Troyes in the

late twelfth century to at least that of Sir Thomas Malory three hundred years later, genre deviation or genre hybridization had played an important role in the formation and transformation of the English romance. The heterogeneous textual genericity of these Middle English narratives may be problematic to modern readers; however, it was not to the medieval English reader/listening public. Perhaps the texts were governed by an English *Rezeptionästhetik* which was not the same as modern "horizon of expectations."

With this we may turn from the generic problems of the English romance to the poetics of Middle English romance. In Chapter Three, we investigated the complex dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English romance in relation to chronicle, saint's life and folktale. The investigation shows that the English romancers might not have intended to reproduce something like a comparatively uniform genre, as in French and German. Thus, the textual genericity of Middle English romance has to be further examined in the light of its "alterity" so that we can more fully understand the medieval English aesthetic attitude towards such a novel "kind" of literature.

Middle English Romance and Genre Theory

If we agree that heterogeneity is the generic essence of Middle English romance, then we can assume that medieval English conceptions of and attitudes toward "literary genres" were very different from modern formalistic notions of genre. Recent history, romantic and post-romantic, of genre theories has granted genre definitions and classifications a status of universality. The difficulty of defining and classifying Middle English romances arises from a misconception that textual definitions and classifications form genres. That Middle English romances defy specific generic distinctions shows that any modern genre theories which endorse clear-cut genre definition and classification cannot provide us a proper understanding of Middle English romance as a genre. I propose here to take the measure of the generic problems of Middle English romance and to indicate a few ways out by reconstructing a poetics of these texts. The blind spots in formalistic genre theories are briefly examined so that we may recognize what is lost in formalistic notions of genre can be at least counterbalanced

by a poetics which offers, I hope, greater descriptive exactness of these Middle English texts we conventionally label as "romance."

The way in which studies of Middle English romance ascribed the generic name "romance" to these narratives in Middle English since the 19th century is closer to generic notions based on Renaissance critical theory than to textual investigation of these texts. Medieval English writers, scribes, readers, or hearers did not have the benefit of Renaissance genre theory. It may cause many difficulties for us to understand the "alterity" of Middle English conceptions of textual genericity of romance if we take it for granted that our conceptions of literary genres share alike with the medieval English ones.

With the increasing awareness of the difficulty to define and classify Middle English romance, some critics have been driven to the conclusion that differentiation of "kinds" of literature may be "foreign to the medieval understanding of romance" (Reiss 109) and "the term 'romance' itself has no clear generic meaning in Middle English" (Burrow *Medieval Writers* 71). In formalistic notions of genre, definition and classification create a

genre. That is exactly what has happened with the generic problems of Middle English romance; the very fact of reading these texts according formalistic conception of the nature of genre has led us to think we ought to find a corresponding entity which would be added to the English narratives and would be the essence of their generic relationships among one another.

Generic names and generic questions, of course, existed in England during the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. However, specific definition and classification of different literary forms were not as clearly shown as formalist theorists expect them to be. In fact, many Middle English generic terms were stretched out of shape or otherwise "misapplied" in the fifteenth century (Strohm "Origin" 28). In a series of studies Strohm has shown us that the origin and meaning of Middle English "romaunce" are closely related to "geste," "lay," "storie," and other generic terms ("Middle English Narrative Genres" 379-88; "Origin" 1-28).

In fact, we find that Middle English romance poets usually used a number of different generic terms, whose criteria are not mutually exclusive, to describe their work.

For example, in his prologue and epilogue, the poet of *Havelok the Dane* uses generic terms such as "tale," "rym," and "gest" to describe his narrative:

Herknet to me, godemen,
Wiues, maydnes, and alle men,
Of a tale þat ich you wile telle,
Wo-so it wile here and þer-to duelle.
Þe tale is of Hauelok imaked. (1-5)

Here y schal begynnen a rym;
Krist us yeve well god fyn!
The rym is maked of Hauelok. (21-23)

Nu haue ye herd þe gest al þoru
Of Hauelok and of goldeborw. (2805-06)

And forþi Ich wolde biseken you
Þt hauen herd þe rim nu,
Þat ilke of you, with gode wille,
Seye a Pater Noster stille
For him þat haueth þe rym maked. (2815-19)

It is clear that the *Havelok*-poet uses these three generic terms interchangeably to describe his narrative. For him, it is not problematic at all that different generic terms could be at once applied to his narrative. He also calls his narrative "spelle," and "storie":

Say we nou forth in hure spelle!
In þat time, so it bifelle
Was in þe lond of Denemark
A riche king, and swyþe stark.
Þe name of him was Birkabeyn. (338-42)

þat sholen ye forthward ful wel heren,
Yif þat ye wile þe storie heren. (1461-62)

Of þe mete forto telle,
Ne of þe metes bidde i nout dwelle;
þat is þe storie for to lenge,
It wolde anuye þis fayre genge. (1552-56)

Again, it is hard to tell the generic differences among the various terms by which the *Havelok*-poet calls his narrative. By close reference to what Middle English writers called their work, we may say, with Strohm and Schmidt, that when the *Havelok*-poet uses the term "storie," he seems to stress more the term's reference to the mode of narration ("spelle," "tale," "rym," and "gest") than its relationship to the historicity of his story ("storie" ["ystoria"], and "fable") (Strohm "Origin" 22; Schmidt *Medieval English Romances* 184). It is not to say that the poet does not intend to impose a certain degree of authenticity or historicity into his work or that he does not have any tidy sense of different literary forms among which he can select or which he can emulate. It is very significant to our understanding of medieval English conception of the genre when we find the poet deliberately contrasts "gest" with "romanz":

Romanz-reding on þe bok;
 Þer mouthe men here þe gestes singe,
 Þe glevmen on þe tabour dinge. (2148-50)

The contrast seems to be one between literary works "read out aloud" (probably "romans" in French) and those "sung" by the gleemen who strike the tabor (probably "gest" in the language of the ordinary people). As we have previously noted, the poet calls his narrative a "gest" (line 2805), not a romance.

The distinctions among these generic names are far from clear according to the *Havelok*-poet's practice. Different terms could be applied to his narrative, probably because they suggested, both to the writer and the audience, a range of generic possibilities within which the writer might operate, to point various directions to his audience to "properly" read/hear/interpret his version of the story of *Havelok*. In this sense, the generic problems of Middle English romance can only be solved by approaching the genre from a medieval English point of view. That is to say, genres may have been crucial to the aesthetic experience of a medieval writer, scribe, reader, or hearer not because they are sets of intermediate rules or forms but because they provide kinds of possible literary expectations with

which the English writers and audiences approached their narratives.

Thus in medieval England generic notions of romance, chronicle, saint's life, folktale and other "kinds" of literature were essentially conceived as criteria serving to enrich the aesthetic charm of a narrative. In such a hybrid conception of genre formation and transformation, the question of conformity, or more precisely, deviation of a given narrative in relation to a standard or familiar version of the story, gains the advantage over the problem of genre definition and classification.

For medieval English romancers, the drive to define and classify a narrative seems to be less vigorous than the desire to provide an ever-different deviation, or variant of older versions of romance tales, historical stories, or sacred biographies. The generic feature of "dialogism/intertextuality" in the English romances reveals that genre-conformity always comes second to genre-deviation, a simple consequence of the fact that the narratives are purposeful productions of genre-hybridization. We can find an indication of it in the fact that intertextual elements remain highly prominent in the

English narratives.

It stands to reason that clear-cut or strict systems of genre differentiation were beyond the horizon of Middle English expectations of romance. Medieval English conceptions of romance are, therefore, not homogeneous but, on the contrary, the criteria of the genre tend to be heterogeneous so as to welcome as many as possible dialogical and critical voices into the texts.

The functioning of generic conceptions as critical criteria is tied closely to medieval English writers' attempts of imitating, copying, glossing, rewriting of their French models, versions, and sources. That the French models are "ideal" is only a contingent trait, since it is not shared by all medieval English romancers, as the eclectic instinct of many English romancers in reproducing only superficial characteristics of the medieval romance has shown; but that their continental counterparts are objects of imitation and emulation is a common notion and practice that all the English writers, scribes, redactors, compilers, readers, or hearers shared alike.

The poetics of Middle English romance, then, comes from a problematic of imitation. It is governed not by stable

rules abstracted from the French romances but rather by an ever decentering effort to deviate from the "standard," or familiar, pattern. This means that the discourse of Middle English romance is basically dialogical, intertextual, and therefore critical, directing medieval English writers' and audiences' expectations and conceptions of the genre toward new generic possibilities.

As we have previously discussed, Middle English poets often classify their narratives with a number of different terms whose criteria are not mutually exclusive. For example, in *Havelok the Dane*, the *Havelok*-poet uses several interchangeable terms to describe his story: "tale," "rym," "geste," "spelle," "storie," and "romanz." That several different generic terms could be at once applied to his narrative yet not a single one sufficed to describe its form suggests that both the poet and the audience expected internal shifts of generic concepts in the narrative.

Theoretically speaking, a close examination of the generic terms which Middle English poets applied to their narratives and the texts may, to be sure, tell us much about their sense of literary genres. As our primary sources of information, the Middle English manuscripts are our ultimate

texts, including the descriptive words inserted by a scribe or a compiler. All the descriptive labels found in the manuscripts themselves--the title, incipit, explicit, and the poem are important because they reflect some generic sense in the mind of a medieval writer, scribe, reader, or hearer. In the cases of narratives which have no names or labels, we may assume that the medieval English readers (including the poets as readers) did not give a generic name to such works simply because it was not necessary. Perhaps it was just too obvious to tell, just as we modern readers often identify a piece of literary work as a novel without the writer's confirmation because we share common literary expectations of the genre.

In this sense, medieval English audience's expectations of romance and their perceptions of the *sens* (in Chaucer's words, "the moste sentence and best solace") must have depended much on the expected "conventionality" of the romance *matière* and the poets' manners of treating such rituals and formalities.

If we take Chaucer's tale of *Sir Thopas* as a parody of romance, we are certain that by the late fourteenth century in England the writers and readers had at least an implicit

recognition of what a *romance* was. Chaucer the storyteller knows what his *matière* is: "The Knight rides forth to seek adventure,"

He priketh thurgh a fair forest,
There-inne is many a wild best,
Ye, bothe bukke and hare;
And, as he priketh north and set,
I telle it yow, him hadde almost
Bitid a sory care. (64-69)

Sir Thopas happened to wander (and wonder, too) in the "contree of Fairye," fight against Sir Olifaunt, the great giant for the "elf-queen." The love motif, the encounter with the supernatural, and the stock modes of expression, the *descriptio* are obvious stock romantic elements.

However, Harry Bailey, one of his romance-audience serving as host for the story-telling contest, is not happy about the manner in which Chaucer tells his romance. He interrupts Chaucer when his expectations of romance are deeply frustrated because of the tale's "drasty speche" and lack of *sens*:

"No more of this, for Goddes dignitee,"
Quod oure hoste, "for thou makest me
So wery of thy verray lewednesse
That, also wisly God my soule blesse,
Myn eres acken of thy drasty speche,
Now swiche a rym the devel I biteche!

This may wel be rym dogerel," quod he.
 "Thy drasty ryming is nat worth a tord;
 Thou doost nought elles but despendest tyme,
 Sir, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme,
 Lat see wher thou canst tellen aught in geste,
 Or telle in prose somewhat at the leste
 In which ther be *som mirthe or some doctryne*."
 (229-245)

Note that it is not simply the form and the rituals of romance themselves, but rather the non-functional display of the rituals and the failure of a pleasant form ("ryme dogerel") that irritate Harry. Thus, *Sir Thopas*, because of its imperfection of meeting its audience's expectations of romantic conventions and their appropriate use, is a valuable witness to what the medieval audiences would have recognized as the major features of romance. Certainly, *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and the episode where Harry "stinteth Chaucer of his tale" can be seen as Chaucer the poet's artistic design to parody the style and the stock elements of romance. Later, Chaucer again deliberately ridicules his "daungerous" reading/listening audience by twisting their expectations of romance into an extremely dull tale of superficial romantic rituals and formalities. In both *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and *The Tale of Melibee*, the poet's practice of romance suggests that hybridization or

deviations rather than conformities are one of the major features of Middle English romances.

All Middle English romances of the so-called "Matter of England" have such features: *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, and *Athelston* certainly do.¹ That all of them present only superficial romantic elements shows that the major features of Middle English romance are derived not from their conformities to what by received standards we call romance but rather from the medieval English poets' different manners of treating or perceiving such stock romantic elements, transporting them to a familiar and historical context (within a remote otherworldly past or dream world prevalent in English folklore and Celtic mythology) and twisting them into unexpected surprises and amusements, as we find in *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and the early Middle English romances.

In a sense, the formation of Middle English romance might very well have been developed along with the romance poet's and his audience's perceptions of what a romance was likely to be. As Matheson has pointed out, it is perhaps better to approach Middle English romance not merely from our modern point of view but also the medieval point of

view, since the medieval expectations of the genre did not necessarily correspond to ours ("King Arthur" 274).

Furthermore, our pleasure of reading Middle English romance can spring, as it already did with the medieval audience, from an attitude which does not presuppose a self-submersion in the unique world of a single text, but which rather presupposes an expectation which can only be fulfilled by the step from text to text, for in Middle English romance the artistic pleasure is provided by our perception of differences, of an ever-deviating variation on an obscure, or even de-centered pattern. Reading Middle English romance is similar to what Wallace Stevens says in his poem, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Bird"--an ongoing game to perceive the work from a *plurale tantum* structure of reception.²

Contrary to a "fixed" formalistic conception of genre, the medieval English generic notions are therefore always turned toward the unknown future, the unexpected "marvels"; what is of consequence to the essence of Middle English romance is an intrinsic feature of genre-deviation or genre-hybridization, which by nature never concludes and is always in the making.

In brief, the crux of the generic problems of Middle English romance lies simply in the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of superimposing a comprehensive definition(s) and logical classification(s) on their essentially dialogic/intertextual nature. If we approach the English romances with a formalistic conception of the genre, we cannot but wonder "how a form so apparently amorphous and so resistant to definition can create so powerful an impression of homogeneity" (Pearsall "Understanding" 105).

In this perspective, a poetics of Middle English romance must not neutralize the powerful dynamics of genre-deviation or genre-hybridization of the texts, because "dialogism/intertextuality" is the English romance's textual genericity. In other words, the question we confront in the generic nature of Middle English romance is not that of its generic definition or classification, but that of its shaping force, its dialogic/intertextual tendency that is precisely the essence of the texts.

The absence of a generic center, or, the process of ever deviating from any generic model, which we find in many Middle English romances, is linked to medieval English

perception of different "kinds" of literature. Whereas its dialogic/intertextual elements share certain recurrent genetic characteristics that are sufficient to identify it as belonging also to other cultural traditions, say, history, hagiography, courtly love-poetry, folklore, etc., the formation and transformation of numerous "shapes" of Middle English romance do not disclose genre-deviation or genre-hybridization as its textual genericity.

Consequently, the different texts that medieval English romancers integrated into their work are often interchangeable in terms of generic characteristics: they do not all necessarily share the same recurrent generic characteristic(s), but a given Middle English romance always shares some characteristics with some romances, and some other characteristics with some other genres, such as saint's life, chronicle, folktale, ballad, or whatsoever.

In other words, Middle English romance as a genre is far from forming a univocal class. Rather, it is full of dialogic, critical voices, formed of several "kinds" of literary forms that, through a process of genre-deviation or genre-hybridization, formed and transformed the genre in its ever-changing variability.

The preceding considerations of the generic problems of Middle English romance imply neither a condemnation of genre definition and classification nor a rejection of naming the English romances "romances." They merely show that formalistic notions of the genre are limited, partial, and therefore, inadequate to our understanding of the textual genericity of Middle English romance. These limitations paradoxically help us to see clearer the heterogeneity of the texts.

Thus, when a medieval English romancer incorporated other cultural forms into his narrative, he changed the "definitional" aspect of the medieval romance. For example, the *Havelok*-poet could just as well have introduced a different generic name to call his poem, but he did not do so; on the contrary, he used many different generic names at once to describe his poem. When the compiler of *Laud Misc. 108* placed *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* among *The Sayings of St. Bernard*, *The Vision of St. Paul*, *The Debate of the Body and the Soul*, *The Life and Passion of St. Cecilia*, *The Life of St. Alexius*, and many other saints' lives, he has shown his perception of the generic nature of romance and saint's life as belonging to the same class. It is then not

surprising to find a Latin heading added at the top of the first page of *Havelok the Dane*. It says "Incipit Vita Havelok quondam Rex Anglie et Denemarchie" ("Here begins the life of Havelok, formerly king of England and Denmark"). These treatments of the text not only affected its textual genericity, but they also reshaped the readers' conceptions and expectations of the genre, transforming the "romantic" elements into exemplary and historical. The naming of Havelok as a former king of England suggests that the medieval English public might have regarded *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* as narratives drawn from the history of England. Yet the term *Vita* shows particularly an attempt (whether that of the *Havelok*-poet, the scribe, or the compiler) to link the poem with the saint's life.

A poetics of Middle English romance must be, then, a study of the dialogic/intertextual relationships among the narratives. A reconsideration of the generic nature of the English romances must be preceded by the study of the dialogic/intertextual relationships and the generic names used and perceived by medieval English reading/listening public.

It is necessary, therefore, to start from the fact that

the existence of Middle English romances as a genre is first of all that of a variety of generic conceptions coupled to the texts. Any generic designation, either by the medieval writer, scribe, reader/listener, or modern critics and genre theorists, cannot stand as being both the universal and the sufficient descriptions of the genre. This obviously rejects formalistic genre theories that claim to see in the English romances a conformity to the medieval romance, and the *ratio essendi* of the texts taken in their "individuality."

It also explains the paradoxical situation in which critics of Middle English romance find themselves of having to over-determine their generic definition and classification of the texts in order to be able to maintain their formalistic notions of the genre. For example, some critics have reduced the English narratives to such generalization as "narrative designed for entertainment" (Pearsall *Old English* 145) or "a good story" (Mehl 17). Some with formalist notions of genre link pure aesthetic value with deviation and innovation in the English romances (Kane *Middle English Literature* 1-103; Baugh "Convention" 123-46). Although critics of Middle English romance,

implicitly or explicitly, begin their discussion with the genre's heterogeneity, few of them recognize genre-deviation or genre-hybridization is the nature and accomplishment of the English narratives. To reject *Sir Isumbras* as simply "bad," as having "a tone of flat mediocrity," or *Sir Degare* and *Libeaus Desconus* as "unremarkable even in their failures," or *Robert of Sicily* as "crude, sprawling and morally unimpressive," or *The King of Tars* as "thoroughly pedestrian," is hardly to deal with their significance as cultural products in the literary history of Middle English literature.³

Finlayson summarizes aptly our modern confusion and misconception of the essence of the genre:

It is this curious mingling of a recognition of the difference between the actuality of medieval romance and the nineteenth century's vision and expectations of it and a regret that it is not something other than it is, which seems to have bedevilled discussion of the Middle English romance. ("Definitions" 48)

We may draw two conclusions from our discussion of the generic problems of Middle English romance. The first is that the medieval English perceptions of, and attitudes toward genre-conformity and genre-deviation are crucial to

the formation and transformation of Middle English romance. The richness of "dialogism/intertextuality" introduced into the "amorphous" mass of Middle English romances is an index of the medieval English writers' and audiences' "horizon of expectations." It inherits the cultural traditions that precede it. In this perspective, it is also an "ideologeme" which grants the English romances an "alterity" that has much to do with the reading public's *Rezeptionästhetik*.

The second conclusion is that it is vain to expect the textual genericity of Middle English romances to correspond to our modern formalistic notions of the genre. The modern formalistic attempt to impose a systematic and orderly definition and classification on an essentially hybrid genre like the English romance is a poor way out of the generic problems of the genre. The enumeration of different generic names used by Middle English romancers to describe their work and the large number of descriptive generic names modern critics ascribe to the texts indicate that Middle English romance is heterogeneous in nature. On the formal level, the English romances sets of stylistic devices, that were, however, paralleled in other "kinds" of literature. On the thematic level, the question of the generic nature is

scarcely univocal; the so-called "romances of love," "romances of friendship," or "homiletic romances," were thematically different from one another, yet they share a great deal of common ground in terms of stylistic devices and story-motifs. That medieval "horizon of expectations" and notions of genre definition and classification differed greatly from later ones explains to a large extent why Middle English romances give a simultaneous impression of unity and disunity to modern readers.

II

The "Alterity" of Middle English Romance

When Middle English romances participated in the evolutionary process of medieval romance, they immediately deviated from its genre characteristics, incorporated with other "kinds" of literature, and produced from such a variety of narrative forms a new literary genre of its own. With its intrinsic generic nature--dialogism and intertextuality--the English romance deviated from its French model, developed in the course of two hundred years and in the interim transformed into a new form of narrative

texts. In this sense, Middle English romance as a genre should be judged by other standards than the French "originals." Moreover, owing to its intrinsic generic principle of ever-deviating and ever-dialogizing, Middle English romance as a genre never concludes its process of evolution in literary history.

The medieval English audience's attitudes toward the aesthetic charm of a romance might have less to do with the romancer's fulfillment of their expectations of "romantic" elements than the romancers' different manners of treating their expectations of otherwise elements within the framework of romance. More often than not we find the English romancers transported their narrative materials derived from various oral and written sources to a historical, religious, and familiar context, challenged the audience's expectations of romance, and twisted the romance characteristics into unexpected new "sens."

However, it would be incomplete or at least oversimplified to continue to regard dialogism/ intertextuality as merely a generic feature of Middle English romance and nothing more. More importantly, the dialogic/intertextual discourse of Middle English romance

provides us with an alternative discourse that can move closer to explaining medieval English modes of perception. The English romancers, consciously or unconsciously, responded to their audience's worldview by purposefully mixing different cultural forms in the texts, such as chronicle, saint's life, and folktale, each of which represents a different form of thinking, a different worldview, and a different set of moral values.

In fact, the English romances offer a crucial testimony on contemporary perception, ideology, belief, and, above all, on the "structure of feelings" within which medieval English audiences conceived and expected the value of such narratives. The English romance poets wrote their work within such a shared knowledge so that the narratives could be fully or properly understood. In this sense, our aesthetic pleasure of reading these texts we conventionally call "Middle English romances" will be deeper and richer if we can reconstruct a poetics for the texts' *plurale tantum* structure of reception--the kinds of perceptions, responses, and generic expectations a medieval writer, scribe, reader or hearer might have had when they approached a "romance."

By reconstructing the medieval English "horizon of

expectations," it may allow us to describe the nature of Middle English romances more precisely, to see that they may not be "typically" romance simply because they were never intended to be, and to realize that the English romance poets' superficial treatments of *fine amor* and chivalric codes do not indicate that they were less sophisticated or inferior to their French predecessors, but rather that their independent treatments of romance conventions in the poems reflect and refract medieval English attitudes towards and conceptions and perceptions of aesthetic pleasure, which as a whole reveals a system of values and worldview.

As we know, Middle English romance defies to be tied to a strict literary form. At the level of perception, the aesthetic shapes and experiences which the heterogeneous narratives developed belong more to the English worldview, their way of thinking and imagination, than to genre deviations and innovations of stylistic device, to the text's "alterity"--the way it opens new possible experiences and modes of perception, rather than its conformity to form. At the level of "literariness," such dialogic/intertextual texts achieve a kind of ideality which often encourages more perceptive understanding of their heterogeneous forms and

aesthetic effects.

The generally recognized corpus of Middle English romance is the result of scholarly consensus. We know that not all the narratives included command equal support so that the overall total number of the English romances remains uncertain. Furthermore, there is no way of telling what proportion the present corpus represents the original one, nor how representative the surviving texts may be.⁴

Based on the authority of the *Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500: I Romances*, we also know that the corpus of Middle English romance includes: 8 texts from 1225 to 1300 (*King Horn*, *Floris and Blancheflur*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton* and others), 19 texts from 1300 to 1350 (*Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Orfeo*, *Sir Isumbras*, *The Seege of Troye*, *Hold Child*, etc.), 36 texts from 1350 to 1400 (the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Sir Launfal*, *Ipomadon A*, *The Laud Troy-Book*, *Le Morte Arthur*, etc., excluding the work of Chaucer and Gower), 42 texts from 1400 to 1500 (Lydgate's *Troy-Book*, *Ipomydon B*, *the Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*, Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, Caxton's *History of Jason*, *Lancelot of the Laik*, etc.), and 11 texts after 1500

(De Worde's edition of the prose *Lyfe of Joseph*, Pynson's edition of *Here Begynneth the Lyfe of Joseph*, Lord Berners' *Arthur of Little Britain*, etc.) (Newstead 13-16).

The total of approximately 116 texts, however, takes no account of variant versions of some romances. In fact, some of them are so distinctive that it has been argued that they should be regarded as separate works. Consider, for example, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, the *Seege of Troy*, and *Ipomydom* have multiple versions; others such as the Horn story, the Launfal story, the *Libeaus* story, and the Charlemagne romances known as the *Ferumbras* group and *Otinel* group, as well as the several lives of Alexander, could be counted as separate versions.⁵ Copying, translating, glossing, and rewriting seem to have been such common practices of Middle English romance poets that any story derived from Latin, French or their native literary tradition was open to divergent redactions and re-interpretations. The different versions of certain stories not only offer further proof of heterogeneity as an intrinsic feature of Middle English romance, but they also indicate an unique aesthetic ideology. Here we catch sight of an essential aspect of the "alterity" of Middle English

romance.

The "alterity" of Middle English romance is most clearly shown in its negation of conformity both in form and in content. Its aesthetic charm for a medieval English reader/hearer seems to spring from an attitude which does not presuppose formalism but rather presupposes a generic expectation which can only be fulfilled by the reader's/hearer's recognition of its dialogism/intertextuality, for in this "kind" of literature, the pleasure of reading/hearing a romance is provided by the audience's perception of "alterity," of an ever-different deviation from a standard or familiar pattern. The essence of Middle English romance as a genre is therefore not constitutive of superficial romance elements, but rather, dialogism/intertextuality is constitutive, in the sense that a medieval English writer, scribe, reader, or hearer must negate the formalistic character of a romance in order to enjoy its aesthetic charm of unexpected genre-deviation and genre-hybridization. Reading the variant versions of some Middle English romances such as the story of Horn, the story of Launfal, the story of Guy of Warwick, and others, we encounter this dialogic/intertextual form of aesthetic

experience which is obviously very popular and appealing to the medieval English reading/listening public.

The aesthetic ideology lurking beneath the dialogic/ intertextual discourse of Middle English romance can be seen, first, from the way the texts were preserved in the manuscripts and, second, from the romance poets' treatments of its dialogism/intertextuality. In the absence of direct information on who constituted the reading/listening public of the English romances, the romance manuscripts offer suggestive evidence. The British Library MS. Harley 2253 (1330-40) contains, in addition to some ecclesiastical matter in Latin, equal bodies of French prose and verse and English poems, religious and secular, complaints and satires, courtly love-lyrics, and the romance of *King Horn*. More characteristic is the Auchinleck MS. (1330-40), according to Loomis, apparently the product of a London bookshop engaged in the copying of material likely to appeal to the newly literate bourgeoisie, anxious for edification but also for the type of entertainment favored by their social superiors (Loomis "Auchinleck MS" 595-627). It contains a mixture of didactic and devotional poems, satires, and fifteen romances among which a treatise of

religious instruction was interpolated into the adventures of *Guy of Warwick*, which foregrounded the hero's reputation as pious pilgrim and hermit. The two Thornton MSS.(1440) also reveal the medieval audience's "taste" for romance.⁶

The survival of so many Middle English romances in such compilations at least reveals some significant ideological facts about the reading/listening public. It indicates that the reading/listening public might have been attracted to a hybrid form of literature. This emphasis on genre-deviation or genre-hybridization--the romancers' reliance on superficial treatments of romance conventions and purposeful mixtures of diverse cultural forms, explains why the English romances preserved in these surviving manuscripts are so much colored by other "kinds" of literature.

In England the evolutionary process of medieval romance was more complicated than the French process perhaps mainly by this apparent appeal to a text's "dialogism/ intertextuality." The result is an astonishing diversity of form and content, deviating from their French "origins," defying definition, classification, and evaluation on the basis of romance conventions, metrical form, length, the hero and background, story-matters or the history of a

society.⁷ As mentioned earlier, the variety of forms incorporated in Middle English romances have been noted by critics--the narratives have been compared and contrasted with epic, *chanson de geste*, *roman courtois*, saint's life, chronicle, folktale, and courtly love-lyrics (Hill; Bloomfield; Mehl; Gradon; Everett; Finlayson; Rosenberg; Strohm). Some of the conclusions offered by these critics have been discussed for they draw attention to the "alterity" of the English romance. It is important to note that some critics tend to abandon the generic problems by judging individual works according to their "literariness," with the consequent risk of undervaluing or overlooking the distinctive feature of Middle English romance. It is no wonder that Pearsall wonders "why poems that are so bad according to almost every criterion of literary value should have held such a central position in the literary culture of their own period" ("Understanding" 105).

Intrinsically, as far as the literary history of Middle English romances is concerned, the superficial presence or even absence of romance conventions in a particular Middle English romance may reflect at least the reading public's (including the writers, scribes, and redactors as readers)

perception of the nature of the genre. As the highly heterogeneous shapes of Middle English romance offer us a better guide to the essential nature of Middle English romances, we might better note how the English romance evolved along with superficial repetitions of narrative or stylistic clichés of the classic *roman courtois* and developed its own intrinsic form as a new genre--a new form of thinking that is essentially dialogical, intertextual, and therefore open-ended, and ever-changing. Rather than concentrating attention upon the accidental romance elements in the English texts, we might better note how the variety of forms incorporated in the texts contributed to the medieval English public's appreciation of the texts' aesthetic achievements.⁸

III

The Formation and Transformation of Middle English Romance

It is important to note that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the majority of literary works produced in England was written either in Latin or in French. The

English romances stand in a fluid triple tradition which cannot be traced back to a closed form of an original. When Middle English romance emerged to be an independent form, its French counterpart, model, and frequent source had already diversified in the course of two hundred years, passing from the *chanson de geste* to the *roman d'aventure*, to the *roman courtois* and the lay. If we remember that Middle English romance developed almost two centuries after the French romance, it is natural that the English romancers could have had at least a vague idea of what kind of literature a romance was likely to be. When French influence declined, the English romance's independent shape began to emerge and develop into a new genre.

Quite apart from any inherent tendency towards romance in its pre-Conquest literature, England had been culturally involved in the evolutionary process of medieval romance from the beginning as translator, adaptor, redactor, consumer, and producer. It was in the second half of the fourteenth century that most of the English romances were composed. English was only a secondary literary medium for poets during the period. With Chaucer, of course, English became the chief literary medium. The extent to which

Middle English romance emerged and participated in the process of genre transformation should be judged by its intrinsic forms, in which hybrid elements from other literary sources are conjoined to achieve an aesthetic effect that is unique in Middle English romance.

As we saw in Chapter Three, romance elements were diffused not only in Middle English "romances" but also in other "kinds" of Middle English texts: chronicle, in which chivalric idealism could be projected upon the martial deeds of ancestors; saints' lives, whose heroes displayed their spiritual charisma in adventures often indistinguishable from those of popular romance; courtly love-lyrics, where the image of language and relationships of *fine amor* are applied to the celebration of both sacred and divine love; folktale, which nourished the new genre's familiar themes and motifs of exile and return, challenge and reward. The result of such an interaction among genres in the English narratives is a new form of expression, defying any clear-cut and rigid systems of genre differentiation.

The variety of expression given to the "dialogic/ intertextual" discourse of Middle English romance is wide, ranging from the inherent contradiction between chivalric

codes and human folly in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to the Gawain romances in which Gawain escapes the malignity of some Imperious Host by using all the wit and muscle of a folk-hero; from the comprehensive view of Malory's *Morte Darthur* relating the triumphs and failures of chivalry to the fate of a dynasty to Gamelyn's growth to manhood through family squabbles over a yeoman's will. These limited signs of coherence are more evident in its heterogeneous nature as a hybrid.

In so far as the English corpus continues to disappoint modern critics it is because the dialogic/intertextual texts do not constitute a tradition or follow an obvious evolutionary process of genre transformation like the French corpus. In other words, they do not in themselves define the kind to which they belong or constitute subtypes within it, they do not maintain homogeneous generic nature which would allow the texts to be judged as a monolithic genre. Failing that, Middle English romances have been often judged in relation to their French counterparts and in general found inferior to the relatively consistent, coherent, and progressive literary tradition of twelfth-century France. Yet the very variety of narrative sources from which

medieval English romancers drew indicates that the French romance tradition was only part of a larger whole, more varied in generic nature, historical, religious, folkloric, and therefore, the texts had achieved a new art form.

The generally unfavorable comparison of English romances with the French corpus, rooted in the assumption that they were actually trying to reproduce the genre in their native tongue, ignores the possibility that they were actually seeking to express their own conception and expectations of the genre. Attention has been distracted from that possibility by the superficial treatments of romance elements in the English romances. In fact, the dialogic/intertextual discourse of the English romance manifests self-conscious genre-deviation or genre-hybridization from its French sources. The English romancers and readers might have had a different appreciation of the nature of their texts, different "horizons of expectations" of the genre characteristics appropriate to them.

The popularity of the English romances indicates that medieval English romancers and audiences had perceived the genre relevant to their time, probably due to their

convictions of its historicity and the variety of ways of thinking and perceiving the world provided by native folklore, saints' lives, courtly love-lyrics and other literary forms exploited in the texts. The range of significance they found in the genre can be seen in its dialogical, intertextual, and critical discourse, as we saw in Chapter Three. It seems that coming to all these "kinds" of literature as their own literary heritage, medieval English romancers were willing to assimilate history, hagiography, and folklore into their work.

Thus, for example, the campaigns of Charlemagne have become the general cause of Christendom versus Islam. The heroic values once associated with their French counterparts have faded to generalized truisms. In *Otuel and Roland* and *The Sege of Melayne*, Charlemagne's Lombardy campaign is no more than a backdrop to demonstrate the power of Christian chivalry. Particularly, *The Sowdon of Babylon* reflects the English romance's generic feature of genre-deviation or genre-hybridization. The opening section (lines 1-938) was derived from the *Destruction of Rome*, describing how the Sultan of Babylon and his son Ferumbras plunder the city and carry off the relics from St. Peter's; Charlemagne, summoned

by the Pope, arrives too late but pursues them to the Saracen capital in Spain. A linking passage (lines 939-1050), compiled by the English redactor, makes apparent use of a passage from *Piers Plowman* in a conventional invocation to Spring, of Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* in a Saracen prayer for victory addressed to Mars, and of much information not found in the French texts, such as their pagan rites and army of different tribes. The third section (lines 1051-3274) was derived from *Fierabras*.⁹ The real interest of *The Sowdon of Babylon* for the medieval English public seems to be at once war, history, love, religion, and most of all, a mass of incident, exotic in setting and varied in kind, to be enjoyed both for its deviation from the expected narrative material and its hybridization of different "kinds" of literary form.

By similar process, in Middle English romances the heroic elements in the French texts have been very largely resolved in a nostalgic glorification of feudal solidarity and Christian militancy. The legends of Troy, of Alexander the Great, and of King Arthur were perceived as historically true stories and as subjects for religious and moral messages. In the English transmission the historical core

of these "historical romances" had been overlain by legend and folklore, romanticized by the influence of continental romances, medievalized, and Christianized.

"Dialogism/Intertextuality" of the English romances therefore provides medieval English writers and readers a decentered, if not vague, romantic aura of momentous events in remote and exotic settings. The result is a historical perspective on contemporary systems of values clarified by distancing yet exposed to moral judgement. Thus, for the English romancers and readers, the careers of King Charlemagne, King Arthur, King Alexander not only exemplified timeless chivalric virtues but also signified pagan vulnerability to fate and human folly.

All these interchangeable generic elements from various inherited written and oral traditions are exploited in Middle English romances. In both *Alexander A* and *Alexander B* romantic love is incidental to the hero's chivalric career. The serious interest of the French versions of the story have left little trace. The English romancers (and their audience) radically abbreviated the French story in favor of adventure rather than chivalric codes, revealing in it the English romance of heroes grappling with fate, human

fallibility, and the mutability of life.

In the Arthurian romances, the central ideal of King Arthur and his court, first established by Geoffrey of Monmouth as a necessary romanticized fact in English history, is colored with an historical awareness of regal ambition, war and domestic treachery. La3amon's *Brut* strengthens the historical awareness by recasting Wace's story in terms likely to evoke the audience's conviction of its historicity.

The surviving English Arthurian romances also show that medieval English romancers and audiences might have been attracted by the texts' apparent dialogic/intertextual elements. For instance, throughout the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the poet's political treatment of and attitudes toward the Arthurian stories are reflected in the poem's strong focus on the figure of Arthur as a Christian king, who is conscious of his imperial duty to his nation and spiritual responsibility for the protection of Christendom, and as a knight, a commander-in-chief of a chivalric order, vowed to personal prowess in defence of right, as King Charlemagne and Roland stand for in the history of France.

In the alliterative *Morte Arthure* the poet not only

indicates the historicity of his narrative but also adds the fact that Arthur's vaunting ambition leads him to expose human fallibilities and Gawain's chivalric urge to personal prowess leads him to expose the mutability of life.

Arthur's struggle against the tyrant Lucius who allies himself with "Sowdanes and Sarazenes" and his triumph over the wicked giants and witches testify to his personal prowess as an instrument of Christian justice. This is constantly emphasized by his own manifest piety (lines 1218-21, 2410-16, 3212-17), by the prophetic dream which promises him victory over Lucius (lines 756-831), the prayers of the giant's victims at the moment when the struggle turns in Arthur's favor (lines 1136-39) and his triumph "thurgh þe crafte of Cryste" (line 1107).

The poet of the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* shared with La3amon and the poet of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* an attempt to find meaning in the ideal kingship and knighthood in King Arthur's court by integrating dialogic/intertextual elements into his poem. His treatments of and attitudes towards the Arthurian stories are radically different. He has been said to so freely adapt the Arthurian stories from a version of the French prose *Mort Artu* that his version is

quite different from its source.¹⁰ The Arthurian stories in *Mort Artu*, such as its version of the downfall of the Round Table in which the French chronicler accounts the challenge from abroad and treason at home together with the inherent conflict between feudal duty and chivalric virtue, are omitted. The omission is a thematical bias to shift the focus from Arthur as a noble heroic king, representative of the nation, to Lancelot, the embodiment of ideal knighthood. Its hero is not "the noble kyng," but "the best knyght...That evyr in stoure by-strode a stede" (stanza 489, lines 3-4). But the central concerns are to imagine the golden history of a nation in King Arthur's era in the light of human fallibility and the mutability of life.

The poem recounts Lancelot's experience with the hapless Maid of Astolat, his defense of the Queen against a false accusation of poisoning a knight, the treachery of Modred and Agravain against Lancelot and the Queen, and the fateful sequence of events leading to the death of Arthur and Gawain. Where the *Mort Artu* effectively ends with the death of Arthur, the poet of the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* adds a last meeting between the two lovers at Amesbury where Guinevere has taken the veil. Lancelot and Guinevere

resolve to atone for their "synnys" by "penance" and, having been the cause of so much of the "warre and stryffe and batyle sore" of "thys world" to "suffre for God sorow and stryffe" (stanza 465). As in Shakespeare's romances, the suffering of the hero is, in the end, redemptive.

The comprehensive view of history presented in Malory's *Morte Darthur* also celebrates the triumphs of worldly chivalry as well as its failures. William Caxton remarks in his prologue to his edition of Malory's *Morte Darthur* that the Arthurian stories in Malory's book are historically true. But, he also urges his reader to make their judgement. What is important is that:

But al is wryton for our doctryne and for to beware that we falle not to vyce ne synne, but t'excersyse and folowe vertu, by whyche we may come and atteyne to good fame and renomme in thys lyf, and after thys shorte and transytorye lyf to come unto euerlastyng blysse in heuen, the whyche He graunte vs that reygne in heuen, the Blessyd Trynyte. (3)

Caxton's statements provide witness to medieval English perception and expectations of romance. The focus is now not only upon the hero-king that Arthur represents but also upon the adventures themselves and the patterns of human behavior and their moral and religious implications.

On the other level, folkloric motifs/themes seem to have been most appealing to medieval English romancers and readers. For instance, in the poet's radical reinterpretation of *Sir Perceval of Galles*, Chretien's concern with chivalric codes has largely been ignored in favor of the underlying ideal of a naive hero whose virtue of innocence has been made as an instrument of divine justice. The romancer thus offers his audience different directions towards the meaning of his version of the story by incorporating folkloric and theological elements into his work. Although *Ywain and Gawain*, *Golagrus and Gawain*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* feature Arthurian personages, most frequently Gawain, and Arthurian settings, they are merely compilations of folklore motifs/themes in which Gawain submits to trial by supernatural powers, winning honor for the society he represents. Despite occasional patches of courtly-love and chivalric morality, these English romances are indeed very much like folk tales. The English romancers apparently felt no need to reinterpret their version of Arthurian stories in terms of "pure" romance codes and values.

In the so-called romances of the "Matter of England,"

the romancers' treatments of romance conventions and folkloric motifs/themes also show the medieval English public's perception of the hybrid nature of the genre. In general, the romancers prefer to sketch a faint background of national history, to acknowledge contemporary social conditions and to evoke law and divine justice in confirmation of the moral values they express in their work. In *King Horn* and *Havelok the Dane*, Horn and Havelok are folk heroes as well as royal kings; their polity is that of ideal kingdom expressed in terms of firm law and stern justice. The poets of *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* endow Guy and Bevis with the basic virtues of folk heroes who struggle for equity and justice within and beyond the law. In *The Tale of Gamelyn*, Gamelyn is a yeoman hero. The internal conflicts of chivalry and courtly love expressed in Chretien's romances are indeed hardly seen in these English narratives.

It seems that medieval English romancers and readers had little difficulty of appreciating the heterogeneous story-motifs and themes expressed in the texts. In some surviving examples of Middle English corpus, we come much nearer to the "dialogism/intertextuality" of the genre. For

example, in *Floriz and Blauncheflur*, the setting was chosen probably simply because of its exotic and "romantic" quality. The poem deals with young lovers under trial, triumphing over self-interest, bigotry, separation, and the threat of death for friendship. It says little about feudal chivalry, and even the love described in the narrative has nothing to do with *fine amor*.

Floriz and Blauncheflur represents an early stage in the formation and transformation of Middle English romance. Obviously, the poet (and his audience) accepted the "romantic" aura of the distant and exotic as appropriate to the story of two children in love fighting against an adult world. A later stage in that process is exemplified by *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo*. The various English versions of Marie de France's *Lanval* show similar interests in the power of love; however, particularly in Thomas Chestre's *Sir Launfal*, much of the sophistication of Marie's treatments of the story-motifs, with its Arthurian setting and courtly detail is absent from the English romancer's story of a knight driven from court by the enmity of the Queen but rewarded by the love of a *fée* who vindicates him by proving his boast of her beauty above the Queen's and forgiving his

breach of "trowth."

In *Sir Orfeo* the transformation of Middle English romance is even more evident. The English version of the Orpheus story absorbed folkloric elements of Celtic tradition, took the form of a *lai*, and, passing through the versions of Virgil, Ovid, Boethius, and probably a lost French *Lai d'Orphey*, became one of the most complex and highly dialogic/intertextual narratives in Middle English. Although it has a "romantic" atmosphere, the English version is brought into a medievalized setting, in which Thrace is identified with Winchester and Parliament is summoned to appoint a successor to Orpheus. Although the hero and heroine experience threats of death and separation in the course of the story, the theme of the story has less to do with chivalric values and ideals than with the power of human will inspired by marriage, love, and law to resist malign Fortune. The courtly overtones of the narrative do imply the conventional romance motif of the abducted lady rescued by her lover; however, Sir Orfeo's progress through expiation in the wilderness as a pilgrim to ultimate redemption and his steward's "trowth" suggest the didactical value of the romance. Like *Floriz and Blauncheflur* and *Sir*

Launfal, it relies on basic dialogic/intertextual principle rather than the sophisticated conventions of any specific genre.

The eclectic instinct of the English romancers and audiences in creating their own means of artistic expression and perception by intentionally blurring the line of demarcation among different literary forms is clearly illustrated in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Chaucer's "romances." If we remember that many of the genre distinctions made by the English romance poets were flexible, incidental, and loose, as the studies of Strohm have shown, then we are not surprised to find that even in the "sophisticated" texts, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Chaucer's "romances," romance conventions were treated in a superficial way. Gawain fought with countless monsters on his way to the Green Chapel. Sir Thopas fought with Sir Olifaunt for a fairy queen in the "contree of Fairye." The subject of courtly love is illustrated in both romances. However, none of the conventional romance elements play significant parts in the poems to glorify the idealism of King Arthur's kingship and the knighthood. Mehl comments on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that "*Sir Gawain*

is quite unique in its effortless combination of courtly, Arthurian knighthood, a tolerant and realistic sense of humor and uncompromising religious seriousness. By using diverse narrative techniques, the *Gawain* poet achieves at the same time the stylized artistry of a courtly novel and the down-to-earth, unidealistic directness of a Christian homily" (200).

Thus, when Harry Bailey "stinteth Chaucer of his tale" (*The Tale of Sir Thopas*), he is looking for something more than just "a narrative poem dealing with the adventures of a chivalric hero" (Strohm "Storie" 354). Indeed, the very presence of Chaucer's romances, in all their complexity, serves to illuminate the overall historical development of Middle English romance and its textual genericity. *The Merchant's Tale* and *the Manciple's Tale* deal with "knightly adventures and love," but they are not usually regarded as romances, *The Man of Law's Tale* and *The Clerk's Tale* deal with the legends of Constance and Griselda and therefore they are widely regarded as romances, but obviously they have nothing to do with knightly elements. The other romances, such as *The Knight's Tale*, *The Franklin's Tale*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*, all show

that Chaucer is, like the *Gawain*-poet and many other medieval English poets, interested in probing his readers/hearers' perception and conceptions of romance by elaborating dialogic/intertextual elements for moral, philosophical, religious, and aesthetic purposes. Perhaps, to a much greater extent than other English romances, Chaucer's "romances" exploit most the generic possibilities of the English romance, thus expanding the potential meaning of the genre by introducing multiple viewpoints and exposing conventional perception and expectations of the genre to a variety of new interpretations and explorations.

NOTES

1. In Garbàty's words, "*King Horn* is the romancer's romance. It is, with *Havelok the Dane*, the first poem of this genre in English, [*King Horn* around 1250, *Havelok* around 1285]....The central theme of *King Horn*, as also of *Havelok*, are the Exile and Return and the Male Cinderella motifs, a widespread combination very prevalent in Western folklore" (142).

2. Hans-Robert Jauss uses the term to describe how we can approach the intertextuality of Middle English literature in a fruitful way. For more discussions of Jauss's reception theory, see Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* and *Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding*.

3. The evaluations are from George Kane, "Middle English Metrical Romances" 13-14, 19.

4. For all the work done on these surviving romance manuscripts, Lillian Hornstein's 1971 list of what we do not know is still pertinent. See Lillian Hornstein, "Middle

English Romances" 64.

5. This list might easily be extended. See Edmund Reiss, "Romance" 113-14, especially 129, note 24; and W. R. J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* 53.

6. For an outline analysis of romance manuscripts see Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* 257-62; see also Derek Pearsall, "The Development of Middle English Romance" 91-116; *Old English and Middle English Poetry* 120-32, 143-49; and L. H. Loomis, "The Auchinleck MS and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330-1340" 595-627. On the implications for the social status of the intended readership see Karl Brunner, "Middle English Metrical Romances and Their Audience" 219-27; and Piero Boitani, "The World of Romance" 36-70.

7. See Chapter Two.

8. This is also what Mehl and Reiss suggest. See Mehl 20; Reiss 109.

9. See *The Sowdone of Babylone*, EETS, ES, 38, ed. E. Hausknecht.

10. See J. D. Brock's preface to his edition of the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, EETS, ES 88. Also see Helaine Newstead, "Arthurian Legends" 51-53.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Although modern readers may have trouble understanding the hybrid generic nature of Middle English romances, medieval writers, scribes, readers, or hearers apparently did not, for the romances seemed to be free from any formalistic definition, delimitation, and differentiation. The preceding chapters have made it clear that "Genre-deviation," or "genre-hybridization" is an intrinsic feature of Middle English romances. Some English romances were perceived as "historical" by the medieval English audience (*The Destruction of Troy*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, *King Alexander*, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*), others are exemplary (*Amis and Amiloun*, *King Robert of Sicily*), and still others are saints' lives (the Eustace-Constance legends), folk tales (*Havelok the Dane*, *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Degare*), and ballads (*Horn Child*, *Sir Cleges*, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*).

In the search to find order within the approximately 116 texts conventionally labelled as Middle English romances, medieval scholars have attempted various systems of definition and classification of the narratives: according to the four great "Matters," the "legends," the folkloric motifs/themes, the narrative structures, the metrical forms, the literary techniques, and even the lengths. Rewarding as some of these studies have been, scholars may well have done all they can with the "amorphous" form of the English romance. Pearsall, Finlayson, Mehl, Rice and many others are surely right when they point out the problematic generic nature of Middle English romance. Rice has concluded bluntly and succinctly:

...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. ("Middle English Verse Romances" 190)

Within the dialogic/intertextual framework suggested by the present study, the rather undecided state of scholarship on the essence or generic nature of Middle English romance

would be largely dissolved. The English romances may lead us through a complex maze of genre-deviation or genre-hybridization; however, they obviously did not provoke an anxiety over the maze for their contemporary reading/hearing public. This indicates what Jauss calls the "alterity" of medieval literature. Almost always the English romances were intended and expected to be a mixed "kind" of narrative. And by ever deviating from a standard or familiar text, each of the English romances offers a unique aesthetic pleasure of variability. This is perhaps why the English romancers often claimed their works also as "storie," "geste," "lay," "vita," "tale," "spelle," and "tragedie."¹ The result is an astonishingly large body of heterogeneous texts, "cross-fertilizing" one another.

Although many of the English romances are not "authentic" romances according to any formalistic definition of the genre, their deviating from, rather than conforming to, its French origins, indicates their generic nature and the accomplishment of Middle English romance. Particularly, like folklore literature,² they modify, adopt and adapt other stories, and eventually, change into a form of hybridization. These narratives incorporated folklore and,

like folklore, they penetrated into different "kinds" of literature.

Rather than seek to remove these "hybrid" romances from the canon of "authentic" romance,³ we should recognize, by examining the dialogism/intertextuality of Middle English romance, that the English romance as a genre is a purposeful mix of literary forms. The English romancers intentionally welcomed dialogism/intertextuality into their work. It is in fact out of this stratification of different, dialogical "images of language," namely, its generic diversity, that an English romance writer constructed his style.

We should recognize that the generic label "romance" attached to such "hybrid" texts has been so long, although not comfortably, accepted for almost two centuries since Ellis and Ritson separately labeled them "romances."⁴ Therefore, it would be practically difficult not to compare and contrast them to romance. Although the generic label is irritating because most of the English texts do not conform to a single form, we should remember that their claim to the title has been too well documented to be discarded easily.

The preceding chapters show that by deviating from its origins and combining otherwise different "kinds" of

narratives, Middle English romance is at once historical, religious, and folkloric. It is in this sense that, when we approach these English texts, we must consider the "interaction" of genres within them. In other words, any kind of formalistic poetics which tends to suppress the competition, dialogization, and conflictual interaction of genres of Middle English romances only works toward a dead end. This kind of genre criticism of Middle English romances emphasizes, to borrow Bakhtin's metaphor, a "centripetal" cultural force, and has never given adequate attention to the "centrifugal" forces shaping the literary history of Middle English romance. Bakhtin cogently points out:

...the great organic poetics of the past--those of Aristotle, Horace, Boileau--are permeated with a deep sense of the wholeness of literature and the harmonious interaction of all genres contained within this whole. The price it pays is an almost total deafness to disharmony. (*Problems* 270)

Thanks to the fact that Middle English writers and audiences did not have the benefit of Renaissance theories of literary criticism, they seemed to be flexible enough to appreciate all those genres deliberately concerned with upsetting order. In this sense, one can see why Middle

English romance, chronicle, saint's life, folk tale, and other forms share interchangeable generic elements. Perhaps these genres all belong to what Bakhtin calls the "dialogic line" in the development of western literature.

In conclusion, 1) the term "romance" is at best a convenient label to classify roughly the majority of Middle English narratives we conventionally name "Middle English romances"; 2) those texts share with other Middle English literature such as saints' lives, chronicles, and folk tales the nature of imaginative works: the poet and the reader are freely adopting and adapting those generic expectations raised by the texts, the moral values expressed in the stories, and the ways they open up new experiences and worlds, be they fictive or real; 3) that medieval English romancers did not have strict conceptions of fiction and truth--we find interchangeable elements among romance, chronicle, and saint's life--shows that their ideas of historicity were different from ours. In this sense, Jauss's hermeneutical concept of "alterity" and Bakhtin's dialogical concept of "intertextuality" are very helpful to our understanding and appreciation of these verse narratives written in Middle English 500 to 750 years ago.

NOTES

1. See Paul Strohm, *"Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives"* 348-59.

2. Folkloric motifs occur not only in romances but also in other "kinds" of Middle English narrative poetry. For example, the "adulterous love-seduction" motif occur in Marie de France's *Lanval*, which is a Breton lay, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, which is a "debate," *Dame Sirip*, which is a fabliau, "Maiden in the Moor Lay," "Jolly Jankyn," and "Jack, the Nimble Holy-Water Clerk," which are lyrics, "The Knight and Shepherd's Daughter," which is a ballad, and romances like *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale* (Garbàty "Appendix D" 971-74).

3. For example, John Finlayson rejects at least half of the English romances listed in Severs's *Manual of the Writings in Middle English* as "not romances in any meaningful sense, though this is not to deny that they

occasionally exhibit characteristics which are to be found in the *romance*" ("Definition" 178), and Joanne Rice argues that "romance" is "a most inaccurate term" for these narratives; it is "a genre which they did not belong" ("Middle English Verse Romances" 189).

4. See George Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances: Chiefly Written During the Early Part of the Fourteenth Century*, 3 vols.; and J. Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, 3 vols.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Sources and Texts

A. Anthologies of Middle English Romance Texts

Broughton, B. B., ed. and trans. *"Richard the Lion-Hearted" and Other Medieval English Romances*. New York: Mouton, 1966.

French, W. H. and C. B. Hale, eds. *Middle English Metrical Romances*. New York: Russell, 1964.

Gibbs, A. C., ed. *Middle English Romances*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1966.

Mills, Maldwyn, ed. *Six Middle English Romances*. London: Everyman, 1973.

Rumble, T. C., ed. *The Breton Lays in Middle English*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965.

Sands, D. B., ed. *Middle English Verse Romances*. New York: Holt, 1966.

Schmidt, A. V. C., and N. Jacobs, eds. *Medieval English Romances*. 2 vols. London: Holmes, 1980.

B. Individual Texts (Alphabetically arranged)

Alexander A. *The Gestes of the Worthie King and Emperor Alisaunnder of Macedonie*. Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS, ES 1. London, 1894.

Alexander B. *Alexander and Dindimus*. Ed. W. W. Skeat.

- EETS, ES 31. London, 1867.
- Alexander C. The Wars of Alexander.* Ed. W. W. Skeat.
EETS, ES 47. London, 1886.
- Amis and Amiloun.* Ed. MacEdward Leach. EETS 203.
London, 1937.
- An Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle.* Ed. Edward
Zettl. EETS 196. London, 1935.
- Arthour and Merlin.* Ed. O. D. Macrae-Gibson. EETS 268,
279. London, 1973, 1979.
- Arthur (from The Marquis of Bath's MS).* Ed. Frederick J.
Furnivall. EETS 2 London, 1864.
- Athelston.* Ed. A. McI. Trounce. EETS 224. London, 1957.
- The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne.* Ed. Ralph
Hanna III. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1974.
- Ballad of Hind Horn. The Traditional Tunes of the Child
Ballads.* Ed. B. H. Bronson. 3 vols. Princeton:
Princeton UP, 1959-66. Vol. 1. 254-64.
- Bevis of Hampton.* Ed. E. Kolbing. EETS, ES 46, 48, 65.
London, 1885-94; rpt. as 1 vol., 1973.
- The Brut, or The Chronicles of England.* Ed. Friedrich W.
D. Brie. EETS 131. London, 1906; rpt. Millwood:
Kraus, 1987. The Arthurian section. 59-91.
- Cambridge Alexander-Cassamus Fragment.* Ed. K. Roskopf.
Munich: Junge, 1911.
- Caxton, William. Caxton's Own Prose.* Ed. N. F. Blake.
London: Deutsch, 1973.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Riverside Chaucer.* Ed. Larry D.
Benson. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- The Chronicle of John Hardyng.* Charles L. Kingsford,
"Extracts from the First Version of Hardyng's

Chronicle. *English Historical Review* 27 (1912): 740-53.

The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft. Ed. Thomas Wright.
2 vols., Rolls Series. London, 1866-68.

Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain. Ed. S. J. Herrtage.
EETS, ES 35. London, 1880.

Earl of Toulous. Middle English Metrical Romances. Ed.
W. H. French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell, 1964.
383-419.

Eger and Grime. Middle English Metrical Romances. Ed.
W. H. French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell, 1964.
671-717.

Emare. Ed. E. Rickert. EETS, ES 99. London, 1908.

Firumbras (Ashmole). Ed. S. J. Herrtage. EETS, ES 34.
London, 1879; rpt. 1966.

Firumbras (Fillingham). Ed. M. I. O'Sullivan. EETS 198.
London, 1935; rpt. 1971.

Floris and Blancheflur. Ed. G. H. McKnight. EETS 14.
London, 1901.

Gamelyn. Middle English Metrical Romances. Ed. W. H.
French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell, 1964. 209-
35.

Geoffrey of Monmouth. The History of the Kings of Britain.
Trans. Lewis Thorpe. Baltimore: Penguin, 1966.

Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy. Ed. G. A.
Panton and D. Donaldson. EETS 39, 56. London, 1869,
1874; rpt. as 1 vol., 1968.

*Grene Knight. Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads
and Romances.* Ed. F. J. Furnivall and J. W. Hales. 4
vols. London, 1867-68; rpt. 1968. Vol. 2. 56-77.

Guy and Colbrond. Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript:

- Ballads and Romances.* Ed. F. J. Furnivall and J. W. Hales. 4 vols. London, 1867-68; rpt. 1968. Vol. 2.
- Guy of Warwick.* Ed. J. Zupitza. EETS, ES 25, 26, 42, 49, 59. London, 1875-1891; rpt. as 1 vol., 1966.
- Havelok the Dane.* Ed. W. W. Skeat, 2nd ed; rev. K. Sisam. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956.
- History of the Holy Grail.* Ed. F. J. Furnivall. EETS, ES 20, 24, 28, 30. London, 1874-1877.
- Horn Child. Horn Child and Maiden Rimnild.* Ed. J. Caro. *Englische Studien* 12 (1889): 351-66.
- Ipomadon* (couplet, stanzaic and prose versions). Ed. E. Kolbing. Breslau: William Koebner, 1889.
- John Barbour's Bruce.* Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS, ES 11, 21, 29, 55. London, 1870, 1874, 1877, 1889.
- John Capgrave's Abbreuiacion of Cronicles.* Ed. by Peter J. Lucas. EETS 285. London, 1983.
- Joseph of Arimathie.* Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS 44. London, 1871.
- King Horn.* Ed. G. H. McKnight. EETS 14. London, 1901.
- King of Tars.* Ed. F. Krause. *Englische Studien* 12 (1888): 1-63.
- Lai le Freine.* Ed. M. Wattie. *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages* 10.3 (1929): 1-27.
- Laud Troy Book.* Ed. J. E. Wulfin. EETS 121, 122. London, 1902, 1903; rpt. as 1 vol., 1973.
- Legend of King Arthur. Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances.* Ed. F. J. Furnivall and J. W. Hales. 4 vols. London, 1867-68; rpt. 1968. Vol. 1. 401-16.
- Libeaus Desconus.* Ed. M. Mills. EETS 261. London, 1969.

Lyfe of Alisaunder. Ed. G. V. Smithers. EETS 227, 237.
London, 1952, 1957; rpt. 1961, 1969.

Layamon's Brut. Ed. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie. EETS
250, 277. London, 1963, 1978.

Layamon's Brut: the Arthurian Section of Layamon's Brut
(lines 9229-14297). Ed. and trans. W. R. J. Barron and
S. C. Weinberg. Austin: U of Texas P, 1989.

Marriage of Sir Gawaine. Bishop Percy's Folio
Manuscript: Ballads and Romances. Ed. F. J.
Furnivall and J. W. Hales. 4 vols. London, 1867-68;
rpt. 1968. Vol. 1. 103-18.

Merlin. Ed. E. K. Kock. EETS, ES 93, 112. London: 1904,
1913. EETS 185. London, 1932.

The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester. Ed. W.
A. Wright. 2 vols., Rolls Series. London, 1887.

Morte Arthur (Stanzaic). Ed. J. D. Bruce. EETS, ES 88.
London, 1903.

Morte Arthure (Alliterative). Ed. E. Brock. EETS 8.
London, 1903.

Morte Darthur (Thomas Malory). Ed. E. Vinaver. 3 vols.
Oxford: Clarendon, 1947; rev. 1973.

Morte Darthur (Thomas Malory). Ed. James W. Spisak
(based on the Pierpont Morgan copy of William Caxton's
edition of 1485). Berkeley: U of California P, 1983.

Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis. Ed.
Churchill Babington and J. R. Lumby. 9 vols., Rolls
Series. London, 1865-86.

Octavian. Ed. F. McSparran. Middle English Texts 11.
Heidelberg: 1979.

Otuel a Knight. Ed. S. J. Herrtage. EETS, ES 39. London,
1882; rpt. 1969.

- Otuel and Roland.* Ed. M. I. O'Sullivan. EETS 198. London, 1935; rpt. 1971.
- Richard Coer de Lyon.* Ed. Karl Brunner. Leipzig: Wilhelm, 1913.
- Robert of Cisyle.* *Middle English Metrical Romances.* Ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell, 1964. 933-46.
- Romauns of Partenay.* Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS 22. London, 1899; rpt. 1973.
- Seege of Troye.* Ed. M. E. Barnicle. EETS 172. London, 1927; rpt. 1971.
- Sege of Melayne.* Ed. S. J. Herrtage. EETS, ES 35. London, 1880; rpt. 1971.
- Siege of Jerusalem.* Ed. E. Kolbing and M. Day. EETS 188. London, 1932; rpt. 1971.
- Siege of Thebes.* Ed. A. Erdmann and E. Ekway. EETS, ES 108, 125. London, 1911, 1930.
- Sir Amadace.* *Six Middle English Romances.* Ed. Maldwyn Mills. London: Everyman, 1973. 169-92.
- Sir Cleges.* *Middle English Metrical Romances.* Ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell, 1964. 877-95.
- Sir Degare.* *Middle English Metrical Romances.* Ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell, 1964. 287-320.
- Sir Degrevant.* Ed. L. F. Casson. EETS 221. London, 1949; rpt. 1970.
- Sir Eglamour of Artois.* Ed. F. E. Richardson. EETS 256. London, 1965.
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon. 2nd ed., rev. N. Davis. Oxford:

Clarendon, 1967.

Sir Gowther. The Breton Lays in Middle English. Ed. T. C. Rumble. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965. 178-205.

Sir Isumbras. Six Middle English Romances. Ed. Maldwyn Mills. London: Everyman, 1973. 125-47.

Sir Lambewell; Sir Lamwell. Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances. Ed. F. J. Furnivall and J. W. Hales. 4 vols. London, 1867-68; rpt. 1968. Vol. 1. 142-64.

Sir Lancelot du Lake. Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances. Ed. F. J. Furnivall and J. W. Hales. 4 vols. London, 1867-68; rpt. 1968. Vol. 1. 84-87.

Sir Launfal (Thomas Chestre). The Breton Lays in Middle English. Ed. Thomas C. Rumble. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965. 2-43.

Sir Orfeo. Ed. A. J. Bliss. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966.

Sir Perceval of Galles. Middle English Metrical Romances. Ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell, 1964. 531-603.

Sir Thopas. In The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. 212-16.

Sir Torrent of Portyngale. Ed. E. Adam. EETS, ES 51. London, 1887; rpt. 1973.

Sir Tryamowre. Ed. A. J. Erdman Schmidt. Utrecht: Drukk, 1937.

Sir Tristrem. Ed. G. P. McNeill. Scottish Text Society 8. Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1886.

Song of Roland. Ed. S. J. Herrtage. EETS, ES 35. London, 1880; rpt. 1973.

- Sowdon of Babylon.* Ed. E. Hausknecht. EETS, ES 38.
London, 1881; rpt. 1969.
- The Story of England of Robert Mannyng of Brunne.* Ed.
Frederick J. Furnivall. 2 vols., Rolls Series.
London, 1887.
- Squyr of Lowe Degre. Middle English Metrical Romances.*
Ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale. New York: Russell,
1964. 721-55.
- Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle.* Ed. R. W. Ackerman.
Anne Arbor, Mich.: U of Michigan P, 1947.
- Three Kings' Sons.* Ed. F. J. Furnivall. EETS, ES 67.
London, 1895; rpt. 1973.
- Turke and Gowin. Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript:
Ballads and Romances.* Ed. F. J. Furnivall and J. W.
Hales. 4 vols. London, 1867-68; rpt. 1968. Vol. 1.
88-102.
- Wars of Alexander.* Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS, ES 47. London,
1886; rpt. 1973.
- The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell.* Ed. L. Summer.
Smith College Studies in Modern Languages 5.4.
Northampton, Mass., 1924.
- William of Palerne.* Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS, ES 1. London,
1867.
- Ywain and Gawain.* Ed. A. B. Friedman and N. T. Harrington.
EETS 254. London, 1964; rpt. 1981.

II. Secondary Sources

- Ackerman, R. W. "The English Rimed and Prose Romances."
*Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A
Collaborative History.* Ed. R. W. Loomis. Oxford:
Clarendon, 1959. 480-519.

- Atwood, E. B. "The *Excidium Troie* and Medieval Troy Literature." *Modern Philology* 35 (1938): 115-38.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953.
- . *Literary Language & Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Bollingen, 1965.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. "The Elements of the Artistic Construction: The Problem of Genre." *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: a Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Trans. Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978. 129-41.
- . "Epic and Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986. 3-40.
- . "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse." *Dialogic Imagination*. 41-83.
- . "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel." *Dialogic Imagination*. 84-258.
- . "Discourse in the Novel." *Dialogic Imagination*. 259-434.
- . *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. & trans. Caryl Emerson. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984.
- . *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Vern McGee. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986.
- . "Characteristics of Genre and Plot Composition in Dostoevsky's Works." *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 101-80.
- Baldwin, Dean. "Amis and Amiloun: the Testing of Treupe." *Papers on Language and Literature* 16 (1980): 353-65.

- Barron, W. R. J. *English Medieval Romance*. New York: Longman, 1987.
- . "Arthurian Romance: Traces of an English Tradition." *English Studies* 61 (1980): 2-23.
- Barrow, Sarah H. *The Medieval Society Romances*. New York: Columbia UP, 1924.
- Baugh, Albert C. "Convention and Individuality in the Middle English Romance." *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley*. Ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1971. 123-46.
- . *The Middle English Period (1100-1500). A Literary History of England*. I. Part 2. 2nd ed. New York: Appleton, 1967.
- . "The Authorship of the Middle English Romances." *Annual Bulletin of the Modern Humanities Research Association* 22 (1950): 13-28.
- . "The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation." *Speculum* 42 (1967): 1-31.
- Beer, Gillian. *The Romance*. London: Methuen, 1970.
- Bennett, H. S. *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century*. The Oxford History of English Literature. II. Part 1. Oxford: Clarendon, 1947.
- Benson, Larry D. *Malory's Morte Darthur*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan. "Romance and Anti-Romance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Philological Quarterly* 44 (1965): 30-37.
- Bettridge, William, and Francis Lee Utley. "New Light in the Origin of The Griselda Story." *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 13 (1971): 153-208.

- Blake, N. F., ed. *Caxton's Own Prose*. London: Deutsch, 1973.
- Bliss, A. J. "Notes on the Auchinleck Manuscript." *Speculum* 26 (1951): 652-58.
- Bodel, Jean. *La Chanson des Saxons*. Ed. Francisque Michel. Paris: 1839; rpt. Geneva: Slatkin, 1969.
- Boitani, Piero. "The World of Romance." *English Medieval Narrative in the Thirteenth and Fourteen Centuries*. Trans. Joan Krakover Hall. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. 36-70.
- Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History: Studies in Modes of Perception*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1966.
- Braswell, Laurel. "Sir Isumbras and the Legend of Saint Eustace." *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965): 128-51.
- Brewer, Derek. *English Gothic Literature*. MacMillan History of Literature. New York: Schocken, 1983.
- . *Symbolic Stories*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980.
- . "The Nature of Romance." *Poetica* 9 (1978): 9-48.
- Broughton, B. B., ed. and trans. *'Richard the Lion-Hearted' and Other Medieval English Romances*. New York: Mouton, 1966.
- Brunner, Karl. "Hs. Brit. Mus. Additional 31042." *Archiv* 132 (1914): 316-27.
- . "Middle English Metrical Romances and Their Audience." *Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor Albert Croll Baugh*. Ed. MacEdward Leach. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1961. 219-27.
- Burrow, J. *Medieval Writers and their Work: Middle English Literature and Its Background, 1100-1500*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982.
- Childress, Diana T. "Between Romance and Legend: 'Secular

- Hagiography' in *Middle English Literature*." *Philological Quarterly* 57 (1978): 311-22.
- Coleman, Janet. *Medieval Readers and Writers 1350-1400*. New York: Columbia UP, 1981.
- Comfort, W. W., trans. *Chretien de Troyes, Arthurian Romances*. London: Everyman, 1914; rpt. 1975.
- Crane, Ronald S. *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance during the English Renaissance*. Menasha: Banta, 1919.
- Donovan, M. J. *The Breton Lay: A Guide to Varieties*. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1969.
- Eco, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- Ellis, George. *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances: Chiefly Written During the Early Part of the Fourteenth Century*. 3 vols. London, 1805.
- Everett, Dorothy. "The Alliterative Revival." *Essays on Middle English Literature*. Ed. Patricia Kean. Oxford: Clarendon, 1955. 46-96.
- . "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romances." *Essays on Middle English Literature*. Ed. Patricia Kean. Oxford: Clarendon, 1955. 1-22.
- Fedrick, Alan S., trans. *The Romance of Tristan by Beroul and the Tale of Tristan's Madness*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.
- Field, P. J. C. *Romance and Chronicle: A Study of Malory's Prose Style*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1971.
- Finlayson, John. *Morte Arthure*. London: Edward Arnold, 1967.
- . "The Expectations of Romance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Genre* 12 (1979): 1-24.
- . "Definitions of Middle English Romance." *Chaucer*

Review 15.1 & 2 (1980): 44-62, 168-81.

Fleischman, Suzanne. "On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages." *History and Theory* 22 (1983): 278-310.

Fletcher, Robert Huntington. *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, Especially Those of Great Britain and France*. 2nd ed. New York: Franklin, 1966.

French, W. H. and C. B. Hale, eds. *Middle English Metrical Romances*. New York: Russell, 1964.

Ganim, J. M. "History and Consciousness in Middle English Romances." *Literary Review* 23 (1980): 481-96.

Garbáty, Thomas J., ed. *Middle English Literature*. Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1984.

Gerould, G. H. *Saints' Legends*. Boston: Houghton, 1916.

Gibbs, A. C. *Middle English Romances*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1966.

Gradon, Pamela. *Form and Style in Early English Literature*. London: Methuen, 1971.

Griffin, N. E. "A Definition of Romance." *PMLA* 38 (1923): 50-70.

Haidu, Perter, ed. *Approaches to Medieval Romance*. *Yale French Studies* 51. New Haven: Yale French Studies, 1974.

Hanning, Robert and Joan Ferrante., trans. *The Lais of Marie de France*. Durham: Labyrinth, 1978.

Hanson, Thomas B. "Sir Orfeo: Romance as Exemplum." *Annuaire Mediaevale* 13 (1972): 135-54.

Hartung, Albert E., ed. *A Manual of Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1989. Vol. 8.

Heffernan, Thomas J. "An Analysis of the Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St. Eustace." *Medievalia et Humanistica* 6 (1975): 63-90.

---, ed. *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1985. 61-84.

Hibbard, J. *Medieval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-cyclic Metrical Romances*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1924; rpt. 1963.

Hirsch, Jr., E. D. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1967.

Hofstrand, G. *The Siege of Troye: A Study in the Intertextual Relations of the Middle English Romance*. London: Williams, 1932.

Hornstein, Lillian H. "Eustace-Constance-Florence-Griselda Legends." *A Manual of Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*. Ed. John Burke Severs. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967. Vol. 1. 120-32.

---. "Middle English Romances." *Recent Middle English Scholarship and Criticism: Survey and Desiderata*. Ed. by J. Burke Severs. Pittsburgh: Dusquesne UP, 1971. 55-95.

Horstmann, C. "Die Legenden des MS. Laud 108," *Archiv* 19 (1872): 395-414.

Hume, Katherine. "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance." *Philological Quarterly* 53 (1974): 158-80.

---. "Romance: A Perdurable Pattern." *College English* 36 (1974): 129-46.

---. "Structure and Perspective: Romance and Hagiographic Features in the Amicus and Amelius Story." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 89-107.

Jackson, W. T. H. "The Nature of Romance." *Approaches to Medieval Romance*. Ed. Peter Haidu. Yale French

- Studies* 51. New Haven: Yale French Studies, 1974. 12-25.
- Jameson, Fredric. "On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act." *The Political Unconscious*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981, 17-102.
- . "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism." *The Political Unconscious*. 103-150.
- Jauss, Hans-Robert. *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minn.: U of Minnesota P, 1982.
- . "The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature." *New Literary History* 10 (1979): 181-227.
- . *Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding*. Ed. and trans. Michael Hays. Minn.: U of Minnesota P, 1989.
- Jordan, Robert. "Chaucerian Romance?" *Approaches to Medieval Romance*. Ed. Peter Haidu. *Yale French Studies* 51. New Haven: Yale French Studies, 1974. 223-34.
- Jones, C. W. *Saints' Lives and Chronicles*. Ithaca: 1947.
- Kane, George. *Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romances, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman*. London: Methuen, 1951.
- Kennedy, Edward Donald. "Chronicles and Other Historical Writing." *A Manual of the Writings of Middle English 1050-1500*. Ed. Albert E. Hartung. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1989. Vol. 8. 2597-2647.
- Ker, W. P. *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature*. 1896; rpt. New York: Dover, 1975.
- . *Medieval English Literature*. 1912; rpt. London: Oxford UP, 1969.

Kiser, Lisa J. *Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983.

Kristeva, Julia. "Word, Dialogue, and Novel." *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. 34-61.

Kratins, Ojars. "The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?" *PMLA* 81 (1966): 347-54.

Lacy, Norris J., ed. *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*. New York: Garland, 1991.

---, and Geoffrey Ashe. *The Arthurian Handbook*. New York: Garland, 1988.

---, Douglas Kelly and Keith Busby, eds. *The Legacy of Chretien de Troyes*. 2 vols. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988.

Lagorio, Valerie M. "The Joseph of Arimathie: English Hagiography in Transition." *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 6 (1975): 91-101.

---. "The Evolving Legend of St. Joseph of Glastonbury." *Speculum* 46 (1971): 209-31.

Legge, M. D. *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1963.

Levine, Joseph M. "Caxton's Histories: Fact and Fiction at the Close of the Middle Ages." *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987. 19-53.

Lewis, C. S. "What Chaucer Really Did to *Il Filostrato*." *Essays and Studies* 17 (1932): 56-57.

---. *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. London: Oxford UP, 1938.

Loomis, Laura Hibbard. *Mediaeval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-cyclic Metrical Romances*. 2nd ed. New York: Burt Franklin,

1954.

- . "The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330-1340." *PMLA* 57 (1942): 595-627.

- Loomis, Roger Sherman, ed. *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1959.

- . *Arthurian Tradition and Chretien de Troyes*. New York: Columbia UP, 1949.

- . "Arthurian Tradition and Folklore." *Folklore* 69 (1958): 47-77.

- . *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*. New York: Columbia UP, 1927.

- . *The Development of Arthurian Romance*. New York: Hutchison, 1970.

- Lumiansky, R. M., ed. *Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of Le Morte Darthur*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1964.

- McKeehan, I. P. "Some Relationships between the Legends of British Saints and Medieval Romance." *University of Chicago Abstracts of Theses, Humanistic Series*, 2 (1923-4): 383-391.

- Mason, E., trans. *Arthurian Chronicles by Wace and Layamon*. London: Everyman, 1976.

- Matheson, Lister M. "King Arthur and the Medieval English Chronicles." *King Arthur Through the Ages*. Ed. Valerie M. Lagorio and Mildred Leake Day. New York: Garland, 1990. 1:248-74.

- . "Historical Prose." *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1984. 210-33.

- . "The Arthurian Stories of Lambeth Palace Library MS. 84." in *Arthurian Literature* 5(1985): 70-91.

- Mehl, Dieter. *The Middle English Romance of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967.
- . "A Note on Some Manuscripts of Romances." *The Middle English Romance of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. 257-58.
- Middle English Dictionary*. Ed. Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1952- .
- Mills, Maldwyn, ed. *Six Middle English Romances*. London: Everyman, 1973.
- Morse, Ruth. "'This Vague Relation:' Historical Fiction and Historical Veracity in the Later Middle Ages." *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 13(1982):85-103.
- Myers, A. R. *England in the Late Middle Ages, 1307-1536*. The Pelican History of England, 4. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1961.
- Newstead, Helaine. "Arthurian Legends." *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*. Ed. J. Burke Severs. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967. Vol. 1. 38-79.
- . "The Romances Listed According to Probable Chronology and Dialect of Original Composition." *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*. Vol. 1. 13-16.
- Oakden, J. P. *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English*. 2 vols. Manchester: U of Manchester P, 1930-35.
- Olsen, Alexandra Hennessey. "'De Historiis Sanctorum': A Generic Study of Hagiography." *Genre* 13 (Winter 1980): 407-30.
- Pearsall, Derek. "The Alliterative Revival: Origins and Social Backgrounds." *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background*. Ed. D. Lawton. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. 34-53; 132-36.

- . "The Development of Middle English Romance." *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965): 91-116.
 - . "The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century." *Essays and Studies* n.s. 29 (1976): 56-83.
 - . "John Capgrave's *Life of St. Katharine* and Popular Romance Style." *Medievalia Humanistica* 6 (1975): 121-38.
 - . "Understanding Middle English Romance." *Review* 2 (1980): 105.
- Ramsey, L. C. *Chivalric Romances: Popular Literature in Medieval England*. Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1983.
- Reiss, Edmund. "Romance." *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*. Ed. Thomas J. Heffernan. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1985. 108-30.
- Rice, Joanne. "Middle English Verse Romances: A Problematic Genre." Diss. Michigan State Univ. 1981.
- Richmond, V. B. *The Popularity of Middle English Romances*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1975.
- Ritson, J. *Ancient English Metrical Romances*. 3 vols. London: W. Bulmer, 1802.
- Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton, 1987.
- Roseberg, Bruce A. "The Morphology of the Middle English Metrical Romance." *Journal of Popular Culture* 1 (1967): 63-77.
- . "The Three Tales of *Sir Degare*." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 76 (1975): 39-51.
 - . "Medieval Popular Literature: Folkloric Sources." *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*. Ed. Thomas J. Heffernan. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1985. 61-84.

- Rumble, T. C., ed. *The Breton Lays in Middle English*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965.
- Salter, E. "The Alliterative Revival." *Modern Philology* 64 (1967): 146-50; 233-37.
- . "Alliterative Modes and Affiliations in the Fourteenth Century." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 79 (1978): 25-35.
- Sands, Donald B., ed. *Middle English Verse Romances*. New York: Holt, 1966.
- Schmidt, A. V. C., and N. Jacobs, eds. *Medieval English Romances*. 2 vols. London: Holmes, 1980.
- Severs, J. B., ed. *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967. Vol. 1.
- Smith, Nathaniel B., and Joseph T. Snow, eds. *The Expansion and Transformation of Courtly Literature*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1980.
- Spearing, A. C. *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1972.
- Speirs, J. *Medieval English Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition*. 2nd ed. London: Faber, 1962.
- Stevens, John. *Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches*. London: Hutchinson UP, 1973.
- Strohm, Paul. "Pssioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende: Some Generic Terms in Middle English Hagiographical Narrative." *Chaucer Review* 10 (1977): 62-75, 154-71.
- . "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English Romance." *Genre* 10:1 (1977): 1-28.
- . "Middle English Narrative Genres." *Genre* 13 (1980): 379-88.
- . "Some Generic Distinctions in the *Canterbury Tales*."

Modern Philology 68 (1971): 321-28.

---. "Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romanunce, Tragedie: Genric Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives." *Speculum* 46 (1971): 348-59.

Tatlock, J. S. P. *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's "Historia Regum Britanniae" and Its Early Vernacular Versions*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1950.

Taylor, A. B. *An Introduction to Medieval Romance*. 1930; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969.

Tamplin, Ronald. "The Saints in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Speculum* 44 (1969): 403-20.

Thompson, Stith. *The Folktale*. New York: Dryden Press, 1946.

---, and Antti Aarne. *The Types of the Folktale*. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1964.

---, ed. *The Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. 6 Vols. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1955-58.

Thorpe, L., trans. *The History of the Kings of Britain*. 4th ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.

Todorov, Tzvetan. "Intertextualité" in *Mikhail Bakhtine: le principe dialogique*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981. 95-115.

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

Utley, Francis Lee. "Arthurian Romance and International Folktale Method." *Romance Philology* 17 (1964): 596-607.

Vinaver, Eugene. *Form and Meaning in Medieval Romance*. The Presidential Address of the Modern Humanistic Research Association. New York: Modern Humanistic Research

Assn., 1966.

---. *The Rise of Romance*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971.

Wells, J. E., ed. *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500, and Supplements I-IX*. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1916-52.

Weston, Jessie L. *The Three Days' Tournament: A Study in Romance and Folk-Lore*. London: Nutt, 1902.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. London: Oxford UP, 1977.

Wilson, Anne. *Traditional Romance and Tale: How Stories Mean*. Ipswich: D. S. Brewer, 1976.

Wilson, Robert H. "Malory and Caxton." *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*. Ed. J. Burke Severs. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1972. Vol. 3. 757-71.

Wittig, Susan. *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romance*. Austin: Texas UP, 1978.

Wolpers, Theodor. *Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1964.

Wurster, J. "The Audience." *The Alliterative "Morte Arthure": A Reassessment of the Poem*. Ed. K. H. Koller. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981. 44-56.

Zumthor, Paul. *Toward a Medieval Poetics*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992.

---. *Speaking of the Middle Ages*. Trans. Sarah White. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986.

