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TECHNIQUE IN FIVE VERSE NARRATIVES OF THE AUCHINLECK MS.

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ABSTRACT

TECHNIQUE IN FIVE VERSE NARRATIVES OF
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This study investigates the use of formula in five Middle English verse narratives of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Sir Degare, Lai le Freine, Sir Tristrem, Sir Orfeo and Amis and Amiloun. The formulas explored are those identified by John G. Cawelti in his studies of formula in contemporary literature--Adventure, Romance, Mystery, and Alien Being formulas. Because the narratives in Middle English were written as the conscious products of authors trying to satisfy the interests of an audience acknowledged for its awareness of and familiarity with the basic story line, we are able to study them as the embodiment of cultural images and symbols.

Each narrative is studied individually in order to establish the basic story patterns and identify similarities and differences. This method points to stereotypic vitalization which is accompanied by invention within those formulas. The five narratives of the study reflect their author's attempts to manipulate the four formulas. Sir Orfeo provides a model for understanding these formulas because it exemplifies the conventional pattern of social and spiritual disruption, regeneration, and reintegration. The

formulaic pattern in the Middle English Orfeo is similar to that in Sir Degare and le Freine. Only Sir Tristrem remains outside the formulaic patterns established, and this is attributable to the tragic nature of the inherited story pattern. Amis and Amiloun develops a new pattern of the conventional formulas. Its formulas are used to establish multiple personal and societal loyalities and obligations in order to create a society in which allegiances are mutual, not exclusive or hierarchial. The society being validated is one which stresses optimism, loyalty, excitement and entertainment.

Four of the five narratives are dominated by an ethos of the individual whose search for personal identity validates the continuity and stability of society. The quest for individual identity on the part of the adventurers results from an exposed weakness in the prevailing social order. As each of the adventurers seeks to discover that identity, he overcomes obstacles and challenges which help to establish self-worth and, at the same time, provides for the strengthening of the society from which he had been estranged. The adventurers' reintegration is made possible by a journey through an accepting world which provides the challenges and the support necessary for reintegration to the first world. The adventurer is successful in the journey because of the support of others who accept him without demanding the social conformity of that first world. These two worlds are synthesized and accommodated through the interwoven challenges of the Adventure formula and the promises of the Romance formula.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this study is the narrative structure of five Middle English metrical narratives preserved in the Auchinleck Manuscript: Sir Degare, Lai Le Freine, Sir Tristrem, Amis and Amiloun, and Sir Orfeo. As verse narratives their only similarity, at first glance, is that they are found in the Auchinleck MS, (1320-1349 A.D.), which is housed in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh as Adv. MS. 19.1.1 n.55; besides these the manuscript contains forty four complete and incomplete works which represent various literary genres (see Appendix I).

Literary criticism about Middle English verse narrative concerns itself chiefly with six areas: the setting or subject matter; the theme (moral or ethical); the source(s); the motifs; with an emphasis on folklore (type or incident or particular situation); the classification or number of lines, and finally, the comparison of different versions of the same narrative. For the most part these are not mutually exclusive, and individual studies often incorporate several areas while concentrating on one in particular.

The first scholars of medieval literature sought to establish the subject matter of the narratives[1] and, because the English poems were approached by way of the French, frequently considered them derivatives and usually inferior ones. Since these poems, unlike the French poems, do not occur in cycles, they were assessed as to their content and classified: Matter of Britian, Matter More or Less of Eastern Interest, Matter of France and Matter of English Heroes. This approach is orderly but not particularly useful when applied to Middle English verse narratives because it overlooks their adaptation of content to widely differing audience tastes.

The evaluation of Middle English verse narratives according to thematic considerations is best presented in Laura Hibbard Loomis' Medieval Romance in England, in which she divides the genre into Romances of Love and Adventure, Romances of Legendary English Heroes, and Romances of Trial and Faith.[2] Scholars following this line of inquiry have turned their attention to clarifying moral and ethical questions as presented in the narratives. This type of study usually relies on the identification and evaluation of sources in order to develop a thematic analysis with a historical emphasis.

The study of literary sources of the English verse narratives[3] combines the identification and evaluation of ancestral cultural myths with the continental literary sources and models whether found or posited 'lost.' Generally these studies are parts of larger ones but sometimes they deal with one narrative exclusively. They seek to establish larger story patterns based on archetypes which, of course, transcend mere source study, and thus become the

study of myth and motif. When this methodology of source identification is applied to the study of Middle English verse narrative, the Middle English poem is measured against its source or pattern, and deviations from the source are usually regarded as authorial oversights or errors with no consideration of the significance of these deviations to the Middle English author or his public.

The study of motif in Middle English verse narratives[4] also relies heavily on the identification of sources and, more specifically, on the use of folklore, myth and ritual. Folklore motif studies identify and evaluate the literary use of surviving customs, beliefs, superstitions and traditions. The use of symbols and specific character types is examined for psychological meanings. Often the critical focus is on one element or part (the churl/dwarf figure for example) but there is also focus on the narrative as a whole.

Studies based on the type of narrative or on the total length or on metric analysis[5] provide a way of distinguishing small groups of narratives with hitherto unrecognized distinctive features. Dieter Mehl's work is particularly instructive since he seeks to identify those characteristics which might be termed "Middle English." This investigation includes grouping of the poems according to metrical form and/or genre. In this manner, a group of narratives may be studied which are in the alliterative tradition (Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight) or in the tail-rhyme tradition (Havelock or Floris and Blauncheflur) or in the tradition of the Breton lais of Marie de France (Sir Orfeo and Launfal).

The sixth approach is the study of the various transformations that have occurred in the extant texts by placing them in chronological order and selecting the best for literary style.[6] This approach generally assumes the earliest text to be the best because it is "uncorrupted." It has produced good studies in the case of both Orfeo and Degare.

There exists one other scholarly approach which attempts to establish a new and different perspective on Middle English verse narratives, and that is developed in Velma Bourgeois Richmond's The Popularity of Middle English Romance.[7] Ms. Richmond does an admirable job of discussing the scholar's dilemma: the openly avowed advocacy of the so-called literary gems of the period (SGGK, Troilus and Cressida, Sir Orfeo, and the alliterative Morte Arthur, et al.) on the one hand, and the openly held contempt for other narratives which are thought to be tedious and uninspired, or to lack literary finesse and distinction of ideas, on the other.[8] Richmond unabashedly acknowledges her need to examine the popularity, in their own time, of narratives which present day scholars have considered inferior. Most significantly, she perceives that we must study the individual narratives themselves and not merely search for the many bases for the appeal of romance in general. Her application of this, unfortunately, is restricted too much in scope by a perception of what characterizes the narratives studied; she sets out to find a "popular aesthetic," and finds one: a view of human nature that is defined by Christian belief. Because she wants to discover in these works (a good selection from Auchinleck and other manuscripts of

verse and prose from a wider chronological period than the present study) examples of a high moral purpose, she finds those examples of that high moral purpose. That discovery is productive because, first of all, it forces our attention upon this literature which needs to be salvaged from its dark recess in the body of Middle English literature, and secondly, because it forces us to see it as literature which someone wrote and others read and enjoyed; this approach is even more productive because it encourages us to evaluate our own detachment from the literature we study.

Much scholarship concludes that Middle English verse narratives were written by poets less skilled than their French counterparts; this distinction is usually used to show how much more faithful the French authors were to their French and Norman models. Frequently these early Middle English poems are cited for lack of great merit or refinement. Much has also been made of the 'lewed men' addressed several times in the Vernon manuscript--as if, because the author addresses them with that pejorative term, his readers were, indeed, 'lewed.' The English verse narratives of the Auchinleck are further denigrated by references to them as "minor" or "kitchen" narratives, hence inferior, commonplace and unworthy of serious study.

Rarely have these verse narratives been studied objectively as representative literature of the early fourteenth century. Furthermore, the use of the term "romance" results in confusion when applied equally to the late twelfth and thirteenth century

narratives of France and to the Middle English narratives of the fourteenth century onward.[9] Very simply, these are two distinctly different types of narratives and the same term should not be used to refer to both. The associations we make with the term when applied to the narratives of the former period are inappropriate and inapplicable when used in reference to the literature of the later period. In this study, I shall refer to the selected Middle English works as verse narratives--stories composed of metrical lines--in the hope that the term will be accepted for no more and no less than what it means.

My analysis makes use of two distinct methodologies--formulaic and archetypal--and integrates them in order to suggest new ways of enjoying this Middle English oeuvre. Traditionally these two approaches have been applied exclusive of each other: formulaic literature is said to be the conscious product of an author trying to satisfy the desires and fulfill the dreams of a specific audience, while archetypal literature conforms to the elemental and basic audience satisfactions of all times. Both approaches are valid and informative for, very simply, they answer different questions.

The formulaic nature of this literature has long been acknowledged to have its mythical aspects, and yet all too often the approach being used has been of more concern than the actual literature itself. This literature is both formulaic and archetypal, for archetypes are the result of, or cause of, successful and popular

formulas. By using the eclectic approach I hope to suggest the pleasures which these narratives contain.

My purpose is to explore and to attempt to illuminate five Middle English verse narratives by using a methodology which follows that suggested by John Cawelti and incorporating the concept of the "otherworld journey" which is one of the essential aspects of the archetypal approach. As there is no agreement of opinion about the meaning and importance of the origin of any of these narratives, I shall accept them for what they are in the manuscript--fourteenth century popular literature, in the limited sense in which that term can be applied to anything written in the fourteenth century. Scholars are generally aware that there was a large reading population among the nobility both high and low. This means that there was an obvious market for books among those classes. And because of the rise of the merchant class which obviously knew how to read and write, a sensitivity to that commercial class expanded the definition of the literate public beyond that of the nobility.[10] I wish to study these narratives as wholes, rather than as parts of a larger literary work.

The Popular Literature Approach

The first step in this study is to explore our contemporary understanding of popular literature as opposed to more traditional literature. One essential aspect of popular, formulaic literature is that it is the product of a conscious and collective effort of many for the majority. Each successive author accepts and embraces

the efforts of his predecessor(s) and, in an individual effort, knowingly retains and builds upon what has already been accepted by the intended audience. Any changes or additions must be minor and subtle, in order to enrich the narrative texture without disturbing the basic story line; this is collective and conscious. The opposite of popular literature is elitist literature, the unique, exclusive and particular achievement of one individual artist for a relatively small, intellectual minority.[11] The aim of elite art is the discovery of new ways of recording and interpreting individual experience, whereas popular, formulaic art consciously affirms and validates the experience and dreams of its targeted audience.

Because popular art confirms the experience of the majority, it corroborates and reinforces the values and attitudes already familiar to the audience. Rarely does the popular artist provide a new experience or a new attitude in place of an already accepted one. Conventional and predictable plots reflect, in their formalized and abstract way, some of the real problems of their societies. For this reason, popular art has been judged to be an unusually sensitive and accurate reflector of the attitudes and concerns of the society for which it is produced.[12] The success of the popular artist is judged on the basis of the size and response of the audience. The popular artist is one who seeks the largest common denominator, or "what the public wants." The mass audience does exist, and artists have always responded appropriately to it. It is a mistake to assume that it requires less talent or expertise to satisfy the mass audience than to please a small, intellectually

elite one. In fact, pleasing a large audience is just as arduous and demanding, although it involves a different level of artistic and social consciousness which appeals to an audience whose concerns differ from an elite one.

Two methods of investigating popular literature seem particularly informative and productive for the analyses of the medieval verse narratives of the Auchinleck Manuscript: the formula approach of John G. Cawelti and the functional approach of Russell B. Nye.

Formula Literature Theory

In his recent comments on formula art, John G. Cawelti defines the concept of formula as "a means of generalizing the characteristics of large groups of individual works from certain combinations of cultural materials and archetypal story patterns."[13] Within this definition Cawelti distinguishes two particularly pertinent principles important to our use of the term formula: (1) a formula as a conventional way of treating some specific thing or person, any form of cultural stereotype commonly found in literature and usually quite specific to a particular culture and period; and (2) formula as it refers to larger plot types, not necessarily limited to a specific culture or period (in other words, archetypes). Any popular story type--the western, the spy adventure, the medieval romance--combines these two, because "these popular story patterns are embodiments of archetypal story forms in terms of specific cultural materials."[14] Therefore, creating medieval verse narratives involves not only some understanding of how to construct a good

adventure story, but also how to use, selectively, certain thirteenth and fourteenth century images and symbols as well as appropriate cultural themes and myths--the role of the individual in a changing society, the code of chivalry, or feudal obligations vs. personal imperative--to support and give significance to the action. Cawelti concludes that "formulas are ways in which specific cultural themes and stereotypes become embodied in more universal story archetypes."[15]

If these story patterns are to succeed, they must be embodied in figures, settings, and situations that have appropriate meaning for the culture which produces them. The artistry involved in formulaic literature is the writer's ability to plunge us into a believable kind of excitement while, at the same time, confirming our confidence that in this formulaic world things always work out the way we wish them to. Three literary devices often cited as evidence of artistic sophistication in works by formula writers include: suspense, identification, and the creation of a slightly removed, imaginary world.[16] Suspense is essentially the writer's ability to evoke a temporary sense of fear and uncertainty about the fate of a character we care about. Formulaic literature intensifies the powerful feeling of suspense because it encourages us to interpret the story in terms of a well known formula in which we know it must all work out but only after a most sustained tension.

We recognize with the protagonists of formulaic literature because they are typically better or more fortunate in some ways that we. "They are heroes who have the strength and courage to overcome dangers, lovers who find perfectly suited partners,

inquirers of exceptional brilliance who discover hidden truths, or good, sympathetic people whose difficulties are resolved by some superior figure."[17] The art of formulaic character creation requires the establishment of some direct bond between us and a superior figure and the suppression of all other aspects of the story which threaten our enjoyment of the protagonist's triumphs. Two means dominate: avoiding the necessity of exploring the complexity of character by emphasizing a constant flow of action, and using stereotyped characters that reflect the audience's conventional views of life and society.

Finally, because of their close connection to a particular culture and time period, formulas tend to have a limited repertory of plot, characters, and settings. Since artistic formulas constitute entertainment with rules known to everyone, they provide models for the construction of other artistic works which synthesize important cultural functions. For instance, a very wide audience can follow a western adventure, appreciate its fine points, and participate vicariously in its pattern of suspense and resolution.[18]

Two central aspects of formulaic structure which are often cited with intent to condemn are its standardization and its primary desire to satisfy our needs for escape and relaxation. There are special aesthethic imperatives associated with formula literature, and, after all, all literature is conventional to some degree because it establishes a common ground between writers and audiences. Because of a knowledge of conventions and an acceptance of standardization, a reader has very definite expectations when reading any

individual work, and "originality is to be welcomed only in the degree that it intensifies the expected experience of the type itself; it creates its own field of reference."[19] Because the effectiveness of an individual formulaic work depends on its intensification of a familiar experience, the formula creates an imaginary world with which we become familiar by repetition, and obviates continual comparison of that imaginary world with our own experience. For this reason, the medieval audience is able to respond favorably to an imaginary world full of the ambiance of court and forest as well as of knights, ladies and fairy figures.

Two special artistic skills required of all formulaic artists are the ability to give new vitality to stereotypes and the capacity to invent new touches of plot or setting that are still within formulaic limits. Two particularly effective modes of "stereotypic vitalization" are the use of stereotypical characters who also embody qualities that seem contrary to the stereotypical traits (Sherlock Holmes, the stereotypic man of rational, scientific abilities is also a dreamer, an opium smoker!), and the addition of significant touches of human complexity or frailty to a stereotypical figure (William Conrad's Cannon, Private Investigator, is obese and the frequent brunt of jokes regarding his size, yet he is a gourmet cook who enjoys eating the feasts he prepares).

Finally, formulaic literature is dominated by the goals of escape and entertainment, although the value of these goals has been frequently demeaned. In order for us to temporarily forget our own world and enter into the imaginary one, we require the strongest

kinds of stimuli; these are provided by action and plot, which are essential to formulaic literature. According to Cawelti, this art of literary escapism satisfies two rather different psychological needs, both of which operate to shape the kind of imaginative experiences we pursue for relaxation and regeneration: (1) we seek moments of intense excitement and interest to get away from the boredom of our lives, and (2) at the same time, we seek escape from the ultimate insecurities and ambiguities that afflict even the most secure life: death, the failure of love, our inability to accomplish the individual tasks we had hoped to.[20] This dual aspect of formulaic literature allows us to confront the ultimate excitements of love and death and danger and uncertainty but in such a way that our basic sense of security and order is intensified rather than disrupted--because we know this is an imaginary experience and because the excitement and uncertainty are ultimately controlled and limited by the familiar world of the formulaic structure.

Cawelti's four major formulas.--For the purpose of this study, four of Cawelti's story patterns are of particular interest. These patterns, it should be stressed, are rarely mutually exclusive:[21]

1. Adventure
2. Romance
3. Mystery (Truth)
4. Alien Beings and States

In an Adventure, the hero--group or individual--overcome obstacles and dangers to accomplish some important moral mission,

and the focus of interest is the character of the hero and the nature of the obstacles he has to overcome. While the method of characterizing the hero depends on cultural motifs and themes embodied in the particular Adventure formula, in general two primary characterizations are utilized: the superhero of exceptional strength and ability, or the protagonist who is "one of us," marked at the beginning by flawed abilities and attitudes presumably shared by the audience.[22] The medieval battle with a dragon and the quest for the Holy Grail have been replaced by more recent cultural symbols such as crime and the law, war, the Old West, and international espionage as well as science fiction. Perhaps the simplest and most straightforward, the Adventure story, appears at all levels of culture, in one form or another, and seems to appeal to all classes and types.

Cawelti considers the Romance the feminine equivalent of the Adventure story, although "there is probably no exclusive sexual property in these formulaic types."[23] The structuring action in the Romance is the development of a love relationship, usually between a man and woman; and while most Romance narratives have a female central character, this is not the crucial characterization. The moral fantasy of the Romance formula is that of love triumphant and permanent, overcoming all obstacles and differences.[24] Extensive use of elements of both Adventure and Mystery formulas in present-day popular literature is frequent, as seen in one of the popular contemporary formulas, the Gothic Romance. Although the usual outcome is a permanent end in death for one or both of the lovers, it

always occurs, Cawelti assures us, in such a way as to suggest that the lovers' passion is directly related to the extent to which their love is doomed--Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, or, asserts Cawelti, Last Tango in Paris. The passion itself brings the tragic destruction in a confrontation of the basic irreconcilability of love with other responsibilities and needs.

The Mystery formula involves the investigation and discovery of secrets, the discovery of which usually leads to some benefit for the character(s) with whom the reader identifies.[25] In the Mystery formula, the problem has a desirable and rational solution, for this is the underlying moral fantasy being expressed. Cawelti distinguishes the discovery of secrets with bad consequences for the protagonist (Oedipus, for example) from more common seekers (Degare et al.) as the use of this Mystery structure outside the realm of moral fantasy. For the most part, Mystery, unlike Adventure and Romance, has been far more important when used in a subsidiary way to the other formulas than as a dominant formulaic principle in its own right (except for its use in one of the greatest and most fruitful of all formulas--the classic detective story). In other words, most other formulas involving a good deal of Mystery tend to blend or be absorbed into an Adventure or Romance although the Mystery remains a basic interest or important secondary principle.

The Alien Being and State formula shows the incomprehensibility of all unknowns, and identifies the limits of the knowable as the reader completely forgets himself through the intense and momentary involvement in an external fantasy. Cawelti identifies

the key characteristic of this formula as follows: "The representation of some alien being or state and the underlying moral fantasy is our dream that the unknowable can be known and related to in some meaningful fashion."[26] In medieval verse narrative this formula is used with great frequency and effect. It allows the author to present a bothersome or troublesome issue as the result of the intervention of a fairy figure and not as the result of human behavior directly. The Fantasy Being is usually a fairy figure who disrupts or interrupts social tranquility with some anti-social behavior which, in turn, initiates a series of actions and reactions. The Fantasy Figure manifests an imperfection which already exists in the human culture but is frequently unarticulated or unapparent. In this way the author is able to attribute cause without worrying about "how can it be so?" and proceed to the effect of the Alien figure on the human figures. Eventually, of course, an accommodation must be made between the two worlds of Alien figure and human society.

Implicit in this study is an awareness that while we are discussing Cawelti's formulaic structures we are also acknowledging that other conception of formula where formula refers to larger plot types beyond any reference limited to a specific culture or period. At this point we have arrived at archetypal considerations in which other formulaic qualities dominate. To use these mythic terms, the Middle English verse narratives are characterized by a narrative movement which begins in a world of disruption, moves through challenges to a world of discovery and acceptance, and moves back to a

world of synthesis and accommodation. The story formulas identified by Cawelti distinguish what the patterns do, and the movement from one world to another shows another way of conceptualizing. The formulaic movement from challenge to resolution begins in a world of contradictions. It is a world of disruption and it is masking anti-social behavior but the setting is characterized by an atmosphere of social celebration, festival and togetherness. It is significant that the stories begin in a world of measured stability which is depicted generally so as to be nearly universally identifiable (Once upon a time, not so long ago...). The ease with which the disruption occurs implies essential weaknesses in this world of apparent stability. When the disruption comes, the narrative moves to a world which might, on another occasion, be considered threatening while it is, at the same time, recognized as a part of the natural environment (In a forest full of wild animals and weird happenings, not too far from town...). Ironically, the threatened or violated individuals are able to find safety and security at last in this land of the unknown, a place which is described as different from and separated from the more sophisticated disruptive world. The world of discovery and acceptance is defined by the individual challenges and achievements and the searchers are able to forge lives and identities, seemingly oblivious to the demands of the disruptive world. Finally, these individuals must move out of the forest and return at length to what, realistically, is the disruptive world but transformed so that it functions to accommodate and synthesize. The

formulaic structure synthesizes these two worlds, the challenges of the disruptive world and the promises of the accepting world; these two worlds are also identified by their conformity to the Adventure and Romance formulas, respectively. And if the narrative suggests a great number of interests and no particular ideology or mythology, the reader will be entertained by the paradoxical alignment of corrupted/uncorrupted, and contrived/natural. Because the movement from one location to another is clearly marked in the Auchinleck narratives, the stories cheerfully guide us, temporarily dispelling our disbelief, permitting us to embrace the excitement of escape and to have our society transformed.

In his theory of literary formulas and conventional story patterns, Cawelti points out two major advantages to his approach: first, the concept of formula forces us to consider the whole of the story rather than any particular elements which can be arbitrarily selected; and second, the relation between formulas and other aspects of literature can be explored more directly and empirically by investigating why certain groups of people enjoy particular stories.[27] The underlying assumption, is that people choose certain stories because they enjoy them. Cawelti's theory of conventional story patterns assumes that these narratives are enjoyed because they combine the greatest variety of existing cultural and artistic interests and concerns. Successful story patterns persist not because they embody some particular ideology, mythical pattern or psychological force, but because they cater to a great number of interests. Thus,

when we assess cultural relevance in such patterns we should not expect single key interpretations; instead we must show how a number of interests and ideas are effectively ordered and unified ("the dialectic of cultural and artistic interest").[28]

Certain story patterns are essential to an effective story and, by looking at a number of different stories, we may begin to determine the nature of these patterns. These story patterns are contained in specific images, themes, and symbols which are current in particular cultures and periods. Literary formulas are thus the way in which particular cultural imagery and symbolisms are fitted into conventional story patterns. A partial interpretation of the cultural significance of these formulas may result from an explanation of the way in which cultural imagery and archetypal story patterns are joined. This interpretative process reveals certain basic concerns dominant in a particular culture as well as something about the way in which the culture chooses to deal with or order these concerns. Furthermore, significant differences in attitudes and values are probably indicated by significant changes in the elements of the formula.

Nye's functions of formula.--Popular artistic formulas act as a model for the construction of artistic works which function to synthesize cultural differences. In his analysis of the cultural functions of formula, Russell B. Nye identifies two main concepts: the individual and society (or in a social setting) and the individual alone.[29] Accordingly, the interaction between the individual

and society incorporates two functions--an instrumental educative or "regulative" function, and a socializing or commonality function. The use of formula for instrumental or educative purposes is based on the formation of patterns which operate in order to teach people about their own culture and instruct them as individuals how to govern themselves in society. The formulas or patterns provide customs, control mechanisms, 'templates,' which inform and guide the transactions in a social network or simply, govern social behavior. The need for such control mechanisms is identified with our difference from the lower animal forms of life who have inherited behavior patterns. Humans, on the other hand, are not born knowing what they need to know and so, cultural patterns fill this need of humanity. From this, Nye asserts that individual choices are culturally inspired by the use of formulas which play a part in this learning process. Popular culture is not just as entertainment, but as a part of the whole culture in which an attempt is made to bring order out of chaos by instructing individuals how to govern themselves within a society. In this way, the soap opera, the cinema, and the detective story all operate in a way similar to the church, school or home in controlling society, or in making order. An important distinction is that popular culture functions in an acceptable, not forced manner, so that one can simple "take it or leave it" as opposed to rejecting or endorsing. The insturmental function of formula is a broadly dispersed message which addresses the cultural problem of learning how to live.

The socializing function of formula finds commonality among people and brings them together despite other differences. In an attempt to effect a sense of belonging, or cohesion, the formula embodies common experience which provides a basis for interaction either with each other or with larger groups. As an antedote to the differences in society, popular culture emphasizes the shared and sharing of experience. Certainly the frequently told and redacted medieval romances involving Arthurian heroes functioned this way, for no matter how one feels concerning say, Lancelot's adulterous relationship with the Queen, when Lancelot is threatened, all audiences would side with the knight in his fight against a churl or dragon. Just so, as a prime example of this socializing, Nye points to the 1936 heavyweight fight between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling, where there was little dispute over the villainy of the fiendish Hun (a surrogate Hitler) being far more threatening than the dark skin of Louis. In this way, Americans could come together to cheer for Louis because he represented a commonality against the unknown. Even more important, those who actually saw the fight would also be united in a unique way despite their many other differences. Thus, cohesion can overcome geographical or generational boundaries.

The third function mentioned by Nye, the therapeutic, is more oriented to the individual than to the group as it serves to vicariously rid us of our fears and anxieties. Horror movies and exorcist stories scare but also relieve, ridding us of fears in a controlled and managed situation and involving a vicarious

satisfaction of our dreams and fantasies. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, true romance magazines, and Superman comic/movies are control mechanisms which allow us to live out our dreams or fantasies and release them. No doubt those medieval fairy knights from the "other-world" who ravish innocent princesses rid us of anxieties and dreams. Equally, fire breathing dragons express the darker side of the human imagination.

Finally, Nye identifies the aesthetic function of popular formula, in which its utilization satisfies some aesthetic need (not merely as a qualitative principle). When formulas are changed or adapted, this usually reflects social change and so the audience ought to respond to the creation as a personal expression. The recognition factor of formula is important in medieval narrative ("Look how cleverly the poet handles the potion scene in Tristan.") because the audience would be able to tell a good one from a not-so-good one and therefore, experience aesthetic pleasure from this recognition. This matter of appreciation by others may not be possible to express with regard to literature, especially with reference to medieval literature, because it rests on immediate response which is, of course, impossible to evaluate. As examples of this concept, Nye points to many contemporary rock musicians who, with great diversity of style and talent, can be easily separated one from the other by aficionados of the formula but more on auditory and visual considerations than on any literary principles.

The narratives which I have analyzed were drawn from those Auchinleck narratives available in modern editions and from those which illustrate most clearly the type of formulaic-archetypal construction which is the subject of this study. I have included examples which are both widely known and widely praised--Sir Degare, Sir Orfeo and Amis and Amiloun--as well as those little known and little praised--Sir Tristrem and Lai le Freine. The narratives will be discussed in an order based on the following plan: (1) to begin with those characterized by simplicity of plot and by straightforward narration; (2) to consider the fairy tale atmosphere and its tradition; (3) to investigate exceptions to these patterns, and (4) to investigate accommodations which suggest new models. With these narratives, I hope to expand our knowledge of the familiar Middle English poems and, at the same time, broaden our awareness of those less familiar. This study then will investigate the formulaic and archetypal aspects of the five verse narratives mentioned above: Sir Degare, Lai le Freine, Sir Orfeo, Sir Tristrem and Amis and Amiloun. I have chosen this order also because the first three are similar in formulaic and archetypal structure and of modest length, while the latter two express the formulaic and archetypal structure in ways that are different from those of the first group.

CHAPTER I FOOTNOTES

[1]e.g., A.B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance (1930; rpt. New York: Barnes & Nobels, 1969) is best known.

[2]e.g., Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), dominates.

[3]e.g., G.V. Smithers, "Story Patterns in Some Breton Lays," Medium AEvum, 22 (1953): 61-92.

[4]e.g., Clark Harris Slover, "Sir Degarre: A Study of a Medieval Hack Writer's Methods," Texas Studies in English, n. 11 (1931), 5-23; George Patterson Faust, Sir Degarre: A Study of Texts and Narrative Structure (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935) are primary examples.

[5]e.g., Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968).

[6]e.g., William C. Stokoe, Jr., "The Double Problem of Sir Degare," PMLA, 70 (1955): 518-522.

[7]Velma Bourgeois Richmond, The Popularity of Middle English Romance (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975).

[8]Richmond, p. 18.

[9]The free and open use of the term "romance" to refer to medieval verse narrative is a scholarly habit which lacks precisions in much the same way that referring to any group of American shopping center devotees as "middle class" or "bourgeois" does. No two people understand or use these terms in a way that lead to meaningful analysis.

[10]Margaret Schlauch, English Medieval Literature and Its Social Foundations (Warsaw, 1956), 204. Also, Gwyn A. Williams, Medieval London: Commune to Capital (London, 1963), 264-315, points out the dramatic changes in London's city politics during the first decade with rising middle class families "who had entered into their political inheritance under the royal wardens." Second in number and often superior in importance were new thrusting merchants as populations, commercial expansion and trade competition mounted. Establishment of a new city bureaucracy which became permanent also influenced social power.

[11]John G. Cawelti, "Notes Toward a Typology of Literary Formula," Indiana Social Studies Quarterly, 26 (Winter 1973-74): 22.

[12]John G. Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery and Romance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 6.

[13]Cawelti, Adventure, p. 7.

[14]Cawelti, Adventure, p. 6.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Cawelti, Adventure, p. 17.

[17]Cawelti, Adventure, p. 18.

[18]John G. Cawelti, Six Gun Mystique (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971), p. 29.

[19]Robert Warshaw, The Immediate Experience (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1968), p. 58.

[20]Cawelti, Adventure, p. 16.

[21]Cawelti, "Notes," p. 21.

[22]Cawelti, "Notes," p. 24.

[23]Cawelti, "Notes," p. 25.

[24]Cawelti, "Notes," p. 26.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Cawelti, "Notes," p. 33.

[27]John G. Cawelti, "Myth, Symbol, and Formula," Journal of Popular Culture, 8 (Summer 1974): 4.

[28]Ibid.

[29]The following discussion of the Functional Approach is derived from taped conversations with Russell B. Nye in East Lansing, Michigan, during February and March, 1975.

CHAPTER II

SIR DEGARE

Sir Degare is a Middle English Breton lai in octosyllabic couplets which survives in six manuscripts and three prints. The Auchinleck version is the earliest and has been generally regarded as a narrative that recasts French poetry into native English.[1] In spite of the obvious popularity of Degare in its own day, the scholarship of the last one hundred years has ranged from open adulation and affection to condemnation (see Appendix II).

Most early scholarship praises Degare for its brevity and directness, rejoices in its lack of prolixity,[2] and in the fact that it is "wrought into a coherent whole without digression or unnecessary explanations."[3] More recently, Mortimer Donovan stated that "the Auchinleck reading is not without power, which originates in the suspense of a search deftly handled."[4]

After these initial laudatory responses, Degare came to be considered quite differently, and, as with Orfeo, the diversity of opinion is related to the methodology employed by the scholar. There are four basic approaches, although no single critic employs one exclusively:

1. The assumption that Degare is an archetypal Breton lai and that the basic story pattern, with deviations from the pattern, shows signs of ineptness and inconsistency.

2. The search for Degare sources and an in-depth examination of narrative elements in Degare, comparing them with variants, analogues and the redaction of texts and then trying to trace the branches back to a primal source.

3. A study of the transformations that have occurred in the extant texts by placing them in chronological order and selecting the best text for literary study; generally the early version is considered superior.

4. A study which sees the work as a whole--characterization, plot, allegory, folktale elements, patterns--and gives a favorable approval by showing Degare's structural strengths.

To a great degree, Laura Hibbard Loomis sets the tone for the second wave of scholarship with her equivocal comments.[5] Although she first praises Degare for its combination of a large number of folklore and romance motifs within the relatively brief nine hundred and ninety-three lines, she later concurred with Clark Slover's use of "hack" to describe the Degare author. She states that "one may agree . . . that the author was less stupid than Slover made out, without in the least escaping from the fact that this English 'author' was after all just what Slover termed him."[6]

Three individual studies which combine the first and second approaches and which view Degare unfavorably are those of Clark Harris Slover, George Patterson Faust and G.V. Smithers. Slover identifies the Degare author's technique as "a medieval hack writer's methods."[7] He stresses the low literary quality of Degare and calls the narrative a curiously garbled story because the author has so ineptly put his material together that a number of direct clues to his sources and methods remain. He rests his argument on his own identification, in Degare, of various elements of the Sohrab and

Rustem story, the Perseus story, the legend of Saint Gregory, and he concludes that the threads are poorly integrated.

Faust closely follows Slover's lead but finds rather more to praise than blame in Degare.[8] "The composer was not a thoroughly competent workman"; nevertheless, "despite its imperfections the romance as a whole has considerable merit."[9] He commends the economical and swift method of narration, and claims these are "virtues all too rare among the writers of medieval romance."[10] He first identifies the three 'types' of stories (Oenomaus, Schrab and Rustem, and St. Gregory) and states "by reference to these three stories most of the situations, incidents and complications of the plot of Sir Degare can be explained."[11] He continues by showing how true, or untrue, to type the Auchinleck Degare is. Furthermore, in an attempt to broaden his basic argument to include a discussion of Breton Lai elements, he states that since[12]

> ...the composer of Sir Degare consciously modified his original by the introduction of a setting in Brittany and certain features indicative of magic and the supernatural, the romance can be called a breton lai only in a special sense, by virtue of the fact that it has been made to conform roughly in appearance to a certain type of literature. It is a breton lai in exactly the same sense that Chaucer's 'Franklin's Tale' is one. As an imitation, and as that alone, can it be placed in the same category with the poems of Marie de France.

He asserts that the author succeeded in "entangling himself" through an "unintelligent use of borrowed material."[13] In a review of Faust's book, Muriel Carr defends Degare's most controversial elements and believes that "Mr. Faust has largely undermined Mr. Slover's idea that the author of Sir Degare was a stupid hack, clumsily fitting

together borrowed plots, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, in an incoherent tale."[14]

About twenty years later, G.V. Smithers assaulted Degare anew as "an inept modification of a basic story pattern."[15] By reduction he theorizes a Breton lai model made up of certain types of story patterns with three basic formulas of meeting, separation and reunion of lovers, and finds Degare wanting. Each of these three types is based on a distinctive feature, and Degare is identified as "manifestly a blend of Type III with Type II."[16] Smithers' discussion is deficient because his identification of certain stories as consistent (or inconsistent as in the case of Degare) with certain types is made without a discussion of the methods by which he constructed those three story types. Smithers never makes clear why Degare is not one of the stories on which the type is constructed, rather than Degare being labeled "an inept modification" of a model.

Smithers' critical assumption that narrative elements not covered by the lai model are artificial additions and therefore inferior is best illustrated with examples. Because Smithers considers Degare's engagement of both his grandfather and father in combat to be a digression from the Schrab and Rustem theme, he concludes that the first combat is "unhappy in a story already providing for a combat with the father."[17] This comment ignores the author's conscious attempt to order or structure Degare's combats for thematic emphasis. In a second example, Smithers says that Degare's recognition token for his father is a "clumsy imitation of the same motif in the story of Tristan, and is therefore probably

an addition at a later stage."[18] This comment cannot be taken seriously, for the broken sword cannot be derived from the Tristan unless every broken sword in medieval literature is also seen to be from the Tristan legend, which is blatantly ridiculous.

In his search for Degare sources, Smithers compares Degare to the late thirteenth century Old French romance Richars li Biaus, which "embodies what is undoubtedly a cognate, perhaps derived from a common antecedent with Sir Degare."[19] Because Richars does not purport to be a Breton lai and the lovers are both mortals, it is clear that "there can be no question here of an oral (Celtic) Breton lay as the source of Sir Degare, and that the author was exploiting an established formula which he applied on his own initiative to a story of Type II."[20] Furthermore, Smithers identifies "some partial (i.e. blurred) correspondence between Sir Degare and Chrétien's Contes del Graal" as well as certain elements common to versions of Desire, Yvain and Gareth.[21] Smithers' identification of Perceval connections is valuable for a clearer understanding of Degare, but he errs by constantly regarding the story as a series of episodes. For instance, he concludes that the empty castle episode in Degare "represents a form of tradition in some sense intermediate between these two types," the types represented by versions in Desire, Yvain and Gareth and that in the legend of Perceval.[22]

The third critical approach, studying transformations that have occurred in extant texts by placing them in chronological order and comparing them, is particularly productive when applied to Degare. William C. Stokoe, Jr. corrects earlier scholars when he points out

that significant changes occur between the Auchinleck-Cambridge MSS. and the other seven texts.[23] In fact, the changes are so major that there are virtually "two different versions of the story."[24] Stokoe discusses three kinds of differences brought about by the redactor (therefore uncovering strengths of the A Degare): (1) Stylistic or Dictional, where the Z redactor attempts to modernize the language through changes in syntax, versification, phrasing, and, particularly, "the hack writer's handiest device, the rime tag;"[25] (2) Narrative, where the redactor missed or lost, among other structural strengths, "the climactic presentation of the three combats," especially the final one, as a means of characterization;[26] and (3) Generic, with Z's "complete removal of the supernatural background" in which the setting is England, the fairy knight is a mortal, the enchanted castle is rationalized, and much, much more.[27] Stokoe's article refutes much of the adverse Degare scholarship by showing how these major differences between the texts can lead toward a recognition that "the Auchinleck MS. version of Sir Degare is the excellent story of adventure in the lay style that Hales, Wells, and French and Hale took it to be."[28]

The fourth and last approach is one which views a work as a whole and gives a favorable appraisal to works which are strong structurally. Of particular interest are articles by Bruce Rosenberg, Arthur E. DuBois and Henry Kozicki. DuBois refuses to see Degare as a "conglomerate" of distinct themes and discusses the poem as a "study of a cured or averted sex-abnormality."[29] His analysis relies heavily on the psychoanalytical: reader identification with Degare

as a young man with bad heredity (suspicion of incest), bad fame (a bastard), and confused origins (common, noble or fairy). He notes also that Degare has an inferiority complex and a mother fixation, that he was trained as a clerk (hardly a heroic occupation!), his receiving two phallic symbols as recognition tokes, his meeting an impotent dwarf in the magic castle and falling asleep instead of attending the maidens and, of course, fighting his father. DuBois asserts that the Degare "themes may have been sexual impotence which originated in a sense of inferiority, which might easily have become something worse (incest), but which was averted as the reason for the inferiority was removed."[30] The climactic fight with his father is of the utmost importance, "recognizing his father, able to consummate his mother's marriage, wholesome in 'scutcheon and sword,' he returns, self-confident, to marry the lady of the 'castle as puceles'."[31]

Kozicki's article also seeks to develop structural aspects in the entire narrative, and finds that Degare's literary merits are "the complex representation of psychological growth by manifest incident, the occasional use of sex symbols, and the use of the vegetation-myth life-symbolism vestigial in the author's culture."[32] He shows how the Degare narrative comes together in seven stages with several sets of symbolism fused. Kozicki's most fruitful comments show Degare's concomitant psychological growth and development as a mythic fertility symbol. He sees this theme as beginning with the portrayal of Degare's grandfather "as a Grail-King figure upon whose continuing vigor the people and the land depend."[33] This

interpretation denies an incestuous relationship with the daughter and shows Degare in a role which stresses the youth's archetypal coming-of-age. We then see Degare pass from the celibate stage of innocence in the forest, through the search for identity as expressed in several ways, to "a climax to his quest for identity in his father's recognition."[34]

Bruce A. Rosenberg reduces the Degare narrative to workable units by employing the folk motifs of the Thompson indexes in order to facilitate comparison with analogous folktale motifs--Oedipus, The King Discovers His Unknown Son, and The Maiden Without Hands.[35] Rosenberg shows that the transformations which have occurred create a Degare that "has been much altered, euphemised, and sophisticated . . . [into] a courtly romance."[36] He attributes the Auchinleck Degare to one of "considerable talent" and suggests that the narrative's distinctive features may be the result of its being shaped by oral delivery.[37]

Formulas

The various scholarly views of Sir Degare provide commonplace explanations for the folklore motifs of the fantastic and supernatural. Too much has been made of the various folklore elements and of evaluating the author's prowess in creating a coherent narrative. The achievement of Degare, that is, its verification of the cycle of human nature, establishes it in the mainstream of Middle English verse narrative. Degare emphasizes the struggle of the individual, but not, as is so often pointed out, the struggle to

prove the supremacy of individuality. Degare, the knight errant, ensures social stability because he acts within conventional limitations and responds appropriately to the challenges of the disruptive world with the expected degree of violence and guile. The boundaries of the conventional formulas restrict the expression of individuality but allow for each character to respond individually within the formula. Just as Degare and the princess respond to the forces of disruption which threaten, so the Degare author conforms to the structure of the formulaic movement. The world view of Degare is one which envisions an individual's being nurtured and becoming skilled in personal defense in order to overcome the disruptive forces of chaos and ambiguity. And, just as in other Middle English narratives, the author synthesizes the world of disruption with a world of accommodation to envision a freer society.

Sir Degare is basically a moral fantasy in which a young man discovers himself through a series of adventures and finds who he is--both literally and figuratively. As an innocent fool (Perceval analogue), the naive Degare blunders, forgets important instructions, and is over-confident, but finally establishes his credibility within society. The story is so familiar that the modern reader may overlook Degare's charm. The use of formula exposes existing attitudes and interests by presenting the prevailing social world and juxtaposing it with an open and accepting world. Essentially Degare incorporates three formulas:

1. Adventure-Mystery Formulas: the individual knight must survive challenges in order to establish identity and overcome the unknown in order to ensure social stability and gain acceptance.

2. Alien Being Formula: a disruptive figure represents the unknown and alienating forces; he sets the limit of the hero's adventures and complements the Mystery formula.

3. Romance Formula: this subsidiary element rationalizes some of the mystery and adventure; it provides for acceptance in the forest world and makes way for the synthesis of the two worlds.

The interweaving of the literary formulas gives expression to the culture's consensus about the nature of reality and morality. These formulas function regulatively and therapeutically, instructing the reader in self discovery as well as in confronting and conquering unknown fears and anxieties.

In Sir Degare social order is dependent on the individual who validates himself and manifests a realignment of the status quo. The message of Sir Degare is that when the individual fulfills the promise of heritage in order to achieve social integration, stability is ensured for the individual and the society. Social order is dependent on the individual's meeting the challenges of life without any assurance of success, reward or fairness.

The world of Little Brittany is morally and spiritually in need of renewal. The characters are separated from each other by social and personal barriers. By using several conventions, the author establishes the disruption which characterizes Little Brittany. First the suitors for the hand of the princess are tested in a conventional way, and then, on a festive minding day, the princess

herself is proved vulnerable. Furthermore, the fantasy figure focuses attention on the individual's lack of personal authority, a major aspect of Degare's challenge.

Degare's quest is framed by events in the ambiguous world of Little Brittany. Narrative symmetry results from the human encounters with the fairy knight: first, the princess' sexual experience, and, years later, Degare's discovery of his father. The function of the fantasy figure is clear--he represents the shadowy world of the unknown and the unknowable which threatens the peace of Little Brittany and with which accommodation must be made. The fantasy figure depicts behavior outside permissible social boundaries--yet his motivations are decidedly human.

The formula of the fantasy being structures the princess' encounter with the scarlet-robed knight. Also, it is a conventional model for a mortal under the spell of one from the "otherworld." In accordance with formula, the princess on her way to celebrate her mother's minding day, becomes lost in the woods with her attendants, who fall asleep under a chestnut tree. Seemingly secure in the spirit of celebration, she gathers flowers in honor of the occasion, and the birds sing. As she becomes aware of the potential for chaos, she reacts in a manner which contrasts with her previous attitude as well as with the peace of the forest:

> "Allas!" hi seide, "Þat i was boren!
> Nou ich wot ich am forloren!
> Wilde bestes me wille3 togrinde
> Or ani man me sschulle finde!"
>
> ll. 83-86

Once the fearful attitude of the princess has been established, the focus shifts to a handsome stranger who seems to originate as much from her subconscious as from the forest. Again, the formula patterns the contrast between expectation and actuality: the Degare fairy knight is from the world of reality--"gentil, ong, and iolif" and wears a scarlet robe (l.89).

Furthermore, the formula dictates that the contrast between appearance and reality be shown in the person of the fairy knight. He appears to be a well bred gentleman who would be welcomed as a suitor by the king of Little Brittany:

> His visage was feir, his bodi ech weies;
> Of countenaunce riȝt curteis;
> Wel farende legges, fot, and honde:
> Þer nas non in al þe Kynges loude
> More apert man þan was he.
>
> ll.91-95

He is neither dreadful or outrageous; we know he is from the "otherworld" because of the convention, not because of his overt behavior or appearance.

Furthermore, the scarlet-robed knight is a model of courteous behavior, at least at first appearance:

> "Damaisele, welcome mot þou be;
> Be þou afered of none wihte:
> Iich am comen here a fairi knyȝte;
> Mi kyde is armes for to were,
> On horse to ride wiȝ scheld and spere;
> Forþi afered to þou nowt:
> I ne haue nowt but mi swerd ibrout.
> Iich haue ioued þe mani a ȝer,
> And now we beȝ vs selue her,
> Þou best mi lemman ar þou go,
> Weþer þe likeȝ wel or wo."
>
> ll.96-106

He confesses admiration for the princess yet his actions discredit his words. In the world in which the scarlet-robed knight dominates, the princess becomes a victim:

> Þo noþing ne coude do ȝhe
> But weþ and criede and wolde fle;
> And he anon gan hire atholde,
> And dide his wille, what he wolde,
> He binam hire here maidenhod,
> And seththen vp toforen hire stod.
> 11. 107-12

The fantasy formula facilitates the discovery of the anti-social aspects of life in Little Brittany by showing sexual relationships as possible only under combative circumstances. The encounter is an accomplishment for him and an endurance for her. Although lust and violence are implicit, neither is developed.

The primary aspect of the fantasy formula is the begetting of Degare. The princess is victim and, as such, cannot be spared; concomitantly, the possibility exists that she will triumph over this adversity. In fact, she is a redemptive figure potentially coequal with Degare, as is seen in the fairy knight's address which sets up the challenge of Degare:

> "Lemman," he seide, "gent and fre,
> Mid schilde i wot þat þou schalt be;
> Siker ich wot hit worht a knaue;
> For i mi swerd þou sschalt haue,
> And whenne þat he is of elde
> Þat he mai himself biwelde,
> Tak him þe swerd, and bidde him fonde
> To sechen his fader in eche londe.
> Þe swerd his god and auenaunt;
> Lo, as i faugt wiȝ a geant,
> I brak þe point in his hed;
> And siththen, when þat he was ded,
> I tok hit out and haue hit er,
> Redi in min aumener.

Zit parauenture time bi
Þat me sone mete me wiz:
Be mi swerd i mai him kenne.
Haue god dai: I mot gon henne."
ll. 113-130

Over nine hundred lines later, the episode of final recognition is economically presented. Degare is challenged by the richly attired knight in whose forest he is seeking adventure. The author stresses their blood relationship (unknown to them, of course) but makes no explicit mention of the father's fairy origin:

Lo, swich auentoure Þer gan bitide--
Þe sone azein Þe fader gan ride,
And noiÞer ne knew oÞer no wizt!
. . . . . .
Sire Degarre tok his cours Þare;
Azen his fader a sschaft he bare;
ll.1026-28, 1030-31

The actual recognition and reconciliation of father-son is presented without embellishment:

Þe fader amerueiled wes
Whi his swerd was pointles,
And seide to his sone apliȝt,
"Herkne to me a litel wiȝt:
Wher were Þou boren, in what lond?"
"In Litel Bretaigne, ich vnderstond:
Kingges doughter sone, witouten les,
Ac i not wo mi fader wes."
"What is Þi name?" Þan saide he.
"Certes, men clepeȝ me Degarré."
"O Degarré, sone mine!
Certes ich am fader Þine!
And bi Þi swerd i knowe hit here:
Þe point is in min aumenere."
He tok Þe point and set Þerto;
Degarré fel iswoue Þo,
And his fader, sikerli,
Also he gan swony;
And whan he of swoue arisen were,
Þe sone cride merci Þere
His own fader of his misdede,
And he him to his castel gan lede,
And bad him dwelle wiȝ him ai.
ll. 1046-1068

Because the narrative is primarily concerned with Degare's discovery of his heritage, the adventure is completed once he solves the mystery by finding his father. His father is discovered and the father found is completely human; all traces of fairy have been expunged. The parents are reunited as Degare is joined by the princess from the fairy castle.

The fairy knight is a catalyst to the main story line. He is a manifestation of the chaos of Little Brittany and, in the end, provides the answers for which the protagonist has been searching. The solution to the mystery of Degare's parentage is accomplished by the young knight himself, with a little help from his mother. When the fairy father is united with the princess, the narrative has come full circle and symmetry is achieved. Furthermore, the society of Little Brittany is revitalized because of the moral and spiritual rebirth made possible through the successes of Degare. The final resolution is the coming together of the Alien Being, Adventure and Romance formulas.

The Adventure Formula shifts the narrative emphasis from the ambiguous world of Little Brittany to the forest world. The transition is begun by detailing the princess' reaction to her compromising condition. Caught as she is in her father's court, the princess becomes a model of virginal heroism and is defined by her endurance and patience as she responds appropriately. As "here wombe greted more and more" (l.155), she is well advised by her sympathetic maid:

Lo, how ich am wiȝ quike schilde!
ȝif ani man hit vnderȝete,
Men wolde sai be sti and strete
Þat mi fader Þe king hit wan
(And i ne was neuere aqueint wiȝ man!);
And ȝif he hit himselve wite,
Swich sorewe schal to him smite
Þat neuer bliȝe schal he be,
For al his ioie is in me,"
And tolde here al togeder Þer
Hou hit was biȝete and wher.
"Madame," quad Þe maide, "ne care Þou nowt:
Stille awai hit sschal be browt.
No man schal wite in Godes riche
Whar hit becomeȝ, but Þou and iche."
ll. 164-78

The two women join forces to protect the princess from being discovered, to fulfill the fairy knight's directions and, given the circumstances, to provide adequately for a noble son's upbringing.

As a narrative device, the theme of unwanted pregnancy is one which, in the Adventure Formula, frequently provides the opportunity for movement from the disruptive world to the accepting world. This movement is not the result of sexual promiscuity or hidden incest; rather it results from the princess's acceptance of social reality. That reality implies that in a male-dominated society a man often assumes that he ought to get a virgin at marriage, otherwise he may feel that he has acquired a used possession. The princess' statement of these social facts shows her levelheaded acceptance of the extreme conditions under which she will have to operate; she is no shrinking violet who wilts when confronted with difficulty. The solution to her problem is rendered economically and provides for the introduction of the Adventure Formula.

Because we know that the princess' virtue is beyond question, we respond to her guile with admiration. In this world of reality, she provides for the child's maintenance by slipping coins of gold and silver under his feet; as a recognition token she provides a pair of gloves which fit only her, and finally, a letter of directions attached by silken thread. The princess is able to protect father, son, the kingdom of Little Brittany, and, of course, herself.

Furthermore, the princess of Little Brittany approaches redemptive status as a result of the guile with which she accommodates the two poles of her existence. She and her nurse exhibit courage and endurance in the manner with which they deal with the immediate as well as the eventual circumstances. As is common in medieval narrative, her act of self preservation is not subject to development; it just happens, as does Heurodis' ten year exile. The princess patiently awaits her son's search, and in that way fulfills her function as heroine. Her secret suffering makes possible the maintenance of social order in Little Brittany and her twenty year endurance is understood without detail.

The detail given to Degare's begetting, birth and early moments fulfills several narrative needs. It establishes the princess' inherent nobility and ability to act heroically; it also illustrates the disruptive quality of Little Brittany. The narrative suspense is heightened because accommodation must be made between the world of reality (Little Brittany) and the world of illusion (the fairy knight's realm). The princess realizes that discovery of her secret would cause personal as well as public tragedy, and

she also convinces us that the discovery is a real possibility. As readers, we are captivated by the secrecy and the possibility of discovery while, at the same time, we hope she will succeed, for, after all, she has been victimized. Added to the fear of discovery is a realization that salvation is possible if the princess' secret is discovered under appropriate circumstances--the winning of her by defeating the father in combat. Her guileful behavior may not be in accord with conditions in the real world, but her control instructs us on preserving social customs in the disruptive world. She triumphs over immediate adversity by seeking and following the counsel of her wise maiden.

The adventure of Degare takes place in the forest world and is structured in accord with the coming of age of the hero. Traditional scholarship recognizes Degare's search as first for his parents and second, for himself. The first search consists of three experiences which conclude with Degare's finding his mother (11.220-714); the second consists of two adventures, experiences which involve Degare's seeking and finding both his father and himself (11.715-1070). The core of his adventure is the discovery of his mother and of the truth of his heritage, and the hero's moral growth in the magical castle. Once having been proved worthy, Degare is prepared to meet his father. Essentially Degare's quest is an individual and not a social quest.

Although Degare is nurtured deep in the forest away from the disruptive world of Little Brittany, his upbringing accommodates the demands of that world. After discovering the babe, the hermit

"tok þe letter and radde wel sone/Þat tolde him þat he sholde done" (ll.243-44). Appropriately the child is christened with great honor:

> In þe name of þe Trinité,
> He hit nemnede Degarré.
>
> ll.251-52

Degare's early life validates a familiar, conventional pattern: his first ten years are spent with a rich merchant family in the city (the hermit's sister, no less), and then the hermit cared for him well, and "tauȝte him of clerkes lore/oþer ten wynter oþer more" (ll.285-86). Eventually, Degare is shown the gloves and reads the letter. His response to the knowledge of his curious heritage is courageous and courteous:

> He knelede adoun al so swiȝe,
> And þonked þe ermite of his liue,
> And swor he nold stinte no stounde
> Til he his kinrede hadde ifounde,
>
> ll.305-08

Instinctively Degare knows the proper responses; he will no longer be defined by impersonal relationships, and sets out to create as well as discover his identity.

In the accepting forest world, each episode of the Adventure formula is patterned incrementally with respect to setting and purpose; weapon/adversary/degree of difficulty; reward and meaning. Each of the four confrontations embodies integral unity.

The purpose and setting of each episode are closely related. The first is characterized by simplicity and familiarity: Degare intervenes to rescue an earl who does battle in the forest, the environment in which Degare has spent his last ten years. The earl is no more and no less than what he says he is--a man beseiged by a

dragon. The purpose of this combat is to test Degare's limited skills at combat. The next challenge, a more sophisticated one, is a response to a parliamentary decree in which the king made it known that:

> ȝif ani man were of armes so bold
> ȝat wiȝ ȝe King iusti wold,
> He sscholde haue in mariage
> His dowter and his heritage,
> ȝat is kingdom god and fair,
> For he had no oþer hair.
>
> ll.437-42

Ostensibly the combat is a response to a general challenge; the setting is the court of Little Brittany (the disruptive world), and therefore contrasts with the more rustic setting of the first episode. Also, the hero has advanced from "childe Degarre" in the first to "Sire Degarre" in the second. In this example, the stated purpose of the joust provides for the real one--finding his mother. In the third challenge a more knowledgeable Degare seeks his father in fairyland; on the way, he fights on behalf of the young princess but also on his own behalf. This first encounter in the fairy forest sets up the final confrontation in which Degare represents himself solely. In each of these, the purpose and the setting is removed one step from the familiar and ordinary toward the unknown and mysterious. In addition, each depends on the skills learned while performing the previous one. As Degare begins fighting in the nearby and familiar forest, so he ends in another more remote forest, the fairy forest in which his mother first met his father. Degare conquers his first opponent (the dragon) in the rather primitive forest--saving an earl of no great importance--then conquers his second foe

in a courtly setting in a combat set up by royal decree; he further vanquishes, in the enchanted forest, a long standing foe of a friend, and finally, is engaged in the magical forest against the one whom he sought in the first place. Each successive challenge expands upon the accomplishment of the preceding one.

Furthermore, each of the adversaries represents a different level of challenge for Degare, and this is reflected in the weapon and in the difficulty of the combat. In the first, the adversary is one of the lowliest in medieval literature, the dreaded dragon:

> Ful of filth and of venim,
> Wiz wide Þrote and teȝ grete,
> And wynges bitere wiþ to bete.
> As a lyoun he hadde fet,
> And his tail was long and [gret].
> Þe smok com of his nose awai
> Ase fer out of a chimenai.
>
> 11.346-52

Moreover, Degare goes forth with only "a god sapling of an ok" (1.325) and succeeds in this manner:

> He tok his bat, gret and long,
> And in Þe forehefd he him bateregȝ
> Þat al forehefd he tospatere .
>
> 11.372-74

The oak sapling, one of the simplest weapons, is referred to three times and is surely the appropriate weapon to use against a dragon; a simple weapon for a simple task. This first adventure is a mere 150 lines and the battle (11.366-82) is concluded quickly.

The second combat is more fully developed and more fully tests the new knight's skills. This combat functions on an entirely different level from the first and is of greater importance to the

whole narrative. Because the adversary is first a king, hence noble, and second, the grandfather of the combatant, the episode is richer (11.425-715, or approximately 300 lines). The king is carefully depicted as a man of courtesy, bravery and skill. Neither is aware of his relationship with the other and so the fighting is particularly fierce, although the manner of combat and the weapons are those of the nobility: on horseback with sword and spear (455 ff.). This is a legitimate fight in which Degare, for the first time, represents his own interests. On another level, he is fighting to preserve his father's claim to the princess while at the same time fighting to establish his claim to the kingdom which, of course, we know is his by birthright. By fighting against and overcoming his grandfather, Degare releases his mother from the fear of discovery. He solves the King's problem of a successor and, most importantly, discovers part of his heritage.

The third combat is more intricate because it involves Degare's entrance into fairyland; it is both a physical and a moral combat. The third trial inside the magic castle is more complicated than the physical contest between Degare and the bully (11.737-917). We recognize the formula as based loosely on the Perceval legend and it incorporates the deserted castle, the fairy procession of damsels carrying the feast, the dwarf, the "dammeisele of gret honour" (1.800), Degare's numb silence, the enchanted bedchamber and the accusations against the shameful silence. When Degare finally responds to all the mystery, she responds:

"Sire, wel fain ich telle ȝe wolde,
ȝif euer ȝe better be me sscholde."
11.868-69

She explains her dilemma and the resultant combat in the magical forest on her behalf (the episode is approximately 255 lines while the battle is contained in 11.923-63) is a fierce one between the mortal Degare and the suitor who has already depleted the land of its male population:

Mine squiers ȝat were so stoute,
Bi foure, bi fiue, ȝat riden oute,
On hors armed wel anow ȝ:
His houen bodi he hem slough.
Mine men of mester he slough all,
And oȝer pages of mine halle.
ȝerfore ich am sore agast
Lest he wynne me ate last.
11.894-901

This battle is unusually intense, progressing from horseback to hand-to-hand combat, at which Degare finally triumphs. The trial's importance rests in Sir Degare's achievement of self awareness and confidence as an individual. Although he bungles the first part of the test, he is able to champion the princess as no one else could: he has now prepared himself for the final confrontation. Having established himself in the previous combats, the last two of particular difficulty, the final confrontation is not very arduous; in fact, it appears to be fought almost entirely as a formality. When Degare admits to being in search of adventure, the scarlet knight responds:

ȝif ȝou comest to seke batail,
Here ȝou hast ȝi per ifounde:
Arme ȝe swiȝe in ȝis stounde!
11.1009-1011

At this point, Degare is an integrated whole and is willing and able to confront his father on an equal footing. Both are magnificently armed and the fighting is impressive, although admittedly brief (ll.1030-1040). Finally:

> Afote þai gonne fi3t ifere,
> And laiden on wi3 swerded cleres.
> Þe fader amerueiled wes
> Whi his swerd was pointles,
>
> ll.1044-47

Hence the recognition which sets up the final reconciliation. With regard to adversaries, weapons and degree of difficulty, the pattern is one in which two single-purpose combats frame and give perspective to the two interior ones. "Childe Degarre" with oak sapling against the dragon is a set piece much like the last episode, in which Sir Degare, wandering westward, finds his father in the fairy forest. The two interior combats, by far the more difficult literally and figuratively, set up the final one.

Finally, the rewards which Degare receives for his efforts also conform to this incremental pattern. Those bestowed by the earl are essential to Degare's progress: knighthood, suitable armor and weapons, sturdy horses and a squire; he declines the offer of the earl's daughter and half the kingdom. Of course the rewards received as a result of his victory over the King of Little Brittany are without compare--he discovers his true identity, finds his grandfather and his mother, and receives the recognition tokens necessary for finding his father. From the princess of the magic castle, he is offered her land and herself; he accepts armor of gold and silver, and a horse, promising to return in twelve months for the former.

He also gains the heightened awareness and humility necessary to succeed in fairyland. As a result of the final combat, he achieves complete discovery of his parentage, unites his parents at last, and is reunited with the princess. Thus the conflicts initiated with the story are all successfully resolved and assure the stability and continuity of society, which is expressed in the rewards Degare earns.

The interior challenges in Degare synthesize the social and moral templates of Middle English verse romance. As a social creature, Degare must establish his position in courtly society and, as a moral being, he must establish himself as enemy of the forces of evil. The combat in Little Brittany functions to develop the template of Degare's social relevance and the experience at the magic castle functions to develop Degare's mortal nature.

In Little Brittany, Degare's lack of social sophistication nearly causes disaster. The actual combat is ritualized and the participants make the appropriate gestures: they are richly and heavily armed, they attend Mass and put their trust in God, and they fight bravely and fairly. Because Degare's victory is accomplished with ease, he seems overconfident and acts indiscretely; his easy success on the battle field contrasts with his ineptitude in the hall for, after all, there is much more to achieving social acceptance than merely doing battle. Although his physical victory signals partial success, his concern for the princess focuses our attention on the more important considerations:

Þan was þe damaisele sori,
For hi wist wel forwhi:
Þat hi scholde ispoused ben
To a knizt þat sche neuer had sen,
And lede here lif wiz swich a man
Þat sche ne wot who him wan
No in what londe he was ibore;
Carful was þe leuedi þerfore.
11.583-90

In her mind she rightfully realizes that it is not enough for Degare to be successful in combat in order to be judged a gentleman worthy to marry a princess. And although the bethrothal and the festivities proceed accordingly, the suspense builds as the author describes their being joined "vnder Holi Sacrement" (1.610).

The author returns to this problem of Degare's social position and, at the same time, indirectly addresses the problem of the fairy knight's social role:

Lo, what chaunse and wonder strong
Bitidez mani a man wiz wrong,
Þat comez into an vncouþe þede
And spousez wif for ani mede
And knowes noþing of hire kin,
Ne sche of his, neiþer more ne min,
And bez iwedded togider to libbe
Þar auẽntoure, and bez neghz sibbe!
11.611-18

At this moment Degare seems closest to failing, and that failure would be irrevocable:

But God, þat alle þingge mai stere,
Wolde nowt þat þai sinned ifere:
11.625-626

To Degare falls the full responsibility for avoiding disaster because he is the only one who knows what is possible at this precise moment. We know that he has acted appropriately in the previous episode, so this lapse is a little disturbing, particularly so

because the author manages to prolong it as much as possible. Of course we know that Degare will remember (and we may know that Oedipus never had the opportunity) and we enjoy the author's management of the suspense. The author's reworking of this element is particularly pleasing, partially because it is unexpected in such a short narrative but, more importantly, because he has developed it in an interior monologue first, as a characterization device of the princess, and thirdly, because he seems to be exposing a folly in the convention of the unknown knight fighting for the hand of a mysterious lady. His sensitivity to this ludicrous convention is unexpected and discloses a humorous streak not usually recognized to exist before Chaucer. The author of Sir Degare emphasizes his perspective by developing the possible objections for a specific character and by authorial comment, and shows at least one possible calamitous consequence of such a social convention.

Only at the last moment does Degare remember the hermit's warning to take as a wife no woman who has failed to try the gloves. Degare remonstrates and tells his story. Again, there is an ironic note because the glove test is applied in order to find whether the one whom they fit might be his mother, not because, as might be expected, she is the only possible woman for him to marry. The test of the token is easily applied and both Degare and the princess come out of their isolation. With the confessions and embraces, the social integration of Degare is completed--at least as it relates to the princess of Little Brittany. By finding his mother and receiving her maternal acceptance, he gains heightened awareness of his

responsibility to discover his father. As he receives the broken sword so necessary for his further education, he vows to pursue his father ceaselessly:

> "Whoso hit auȝt, he was a man!
> Nou ich hause þat in kepe,
> Niȝt ne dai nel ich slepe
> Til þat i mi fader see,
> Ȝif god wile þat hit so be."
> 11.710-14

This is another ironic boast, since it is his sleeping which nearly leads to failure in his next test.

In the magical castle episode the author concentrates on developing the moral template of Degare, the adventurer. Once again it is important to remember that Degare's quest is primarily an individual one and is distinct from the primarily social one of Perceval, whose experience in the magic castle provides the structural pattern for this one. In a reverse of the pattern of the previous episode where the physical combat precedes the meaningful encounter, the magic castle episode develops the moral combat before the physical one. The success of this episode rests on the author's ability to sustain the suspense relative to Degare's ignorant and rude behavior. We may expect that Degare will act more prudently following his near failure in Little Brittany and our expectations are used to make the action meaningful.

Scholars have frequently pointed to realism as a characteristic of Middle English verse narrative, particularly when comparisons are being made to Celtic and Breton antecedents. The magical castle of Degare is just such a realistic rendition of a scene which,

in continental versions, is characterized by mystery. The Degare episode here may not be as overwhelming as its various Perceval antecedents, but the moral template developed is all the more striking because it functions without the manipulation of magic and mystery. The author uses the conventions of the formula, even to the point of ritualizing them, and he still enables us to see beyond them to the moral dilemma facing Degare.

The actual entrance into the "otherworld" is ritualized by a catalogue of familiar clues: "he passede into west" (l.725), "no quik best he fond of man, / Ac mani wilde bestes he segh ." (ll.730-31) and:

> Þenne he seȝ a water cler,
> And amidde a riuer,
> A fair castel of lim and ston:
> Oþer wonying was þer non.
> . . . . . .
> Þe bregge was adoune þo,
> And þe gate open also,
> . . . . . .
> He passed vp into þe halle,
> Biheld aboute, and gan to calle:
> Ac neiþer on lond ne on he
> No quik man he ne seȝ.
> Amidde þe halle flore
> A fir was bet, stark an store,
>
> ll.737-40, 747-8, 755-60

We are pleased by our recognition of these clues and this, in turn, contrasts with Degare's ignorance of their meaning. Because we recognize the presence of the unknown we look to Degare to also be aware of the danger but, of course, he must learn, just as we have.

The pattern of familiar clues is continued by the three processional groups, each of which enters the hall in order to serve the guest, Degare:

Four dammaiseles, gent and fre;
Ech was nakked to ȝe kne.
Þe two bowen an arewen here,
Þe oþer two icharged were
Wiȝ venesoun, riche and god.
. . . . . .
A dammeisele of gret honour;
In þe lond non fairer nas;
In a diapre cloþed ȝhe was.
Wiȝ hire come maidenes tene,
Some in scarlet, some in grene
Gent of bodi, of semblaunt swete.
11.769-73, 800-805

Their "otherworldly" character receives no emphasis and, no doubt, this is part of the reason Degare responds as he does--he is unaware of the danger inherent in this situation. The author's description of these characters does not develop their "otherworldly" aspects and the dwarf's description is rationalized to the extent that he becomes human. Although the formula leads us to expect him to be grotesque or frightening, this dwarf is well-formed, and dressed as a knight:

Þer come a dwerw into þe halle,
Four fet of lengthe was in him;
His visage was stout and grim;
Boþe his berd and his fax
Was crisp an ȝhalew as wax;
Grete sscholdres and quarre;
Riȝt stoutliche loked he;
Mochele were hise fet and honde
Ase þe meste man of þe londe;
He was iclothed wel ariȝt,
His sschon icoped as a kniȝt;
He hadde on a sorcot ouert,
Iforred wiȝ blaundeuer apert.
11.780-92

A churl-like figure would be more conventional but the author stresses that the dwarf is "as a kniȝt." The forest world may be mysterious but not evil.

Because Degare has been unable to receive a verbal greeting from any of the three groups, he vows to remain silent until one of them speaks to him first:

> "Ich haue hem gret, and hi nowt me;
> But þai be domb, bi and bi
> Þai schul speke first ar i."
> 11.810-13

The meal which has been set before him is rich and he eats with pleasure:

> But biheld þe leuedi fre,
> And seȝ ase feir a wimman
> Als he heuere loked an,
> Þat al his herte and his þout
> Hite to loue was ibrowt.
> 11.824-28

In spite of his response to her beauty and in spite of the hospitality being shown him, he continues his silence even into the bedchamber to which the lady takes him. He listens as the harp play, and spices and wines are brought; he succumbs to the ambiance of the bedroom by falling asleep. Clearly his silence in the bedroom is both discourteous and untimely, and is reminiscent of his near disaster in the earlier bedchamber. From the incidents in the magical castle we learn that Degare is still capable of growth and that the forest world continues to provide the nurturing circumstances.

Upon awakening the next morning Degare is soundly and correctly rebuked by the princess:

> "Þou art worþ to suffri schame,
> Þat al niȝt as a best sleptest,
> And non of mine maidenes ne keptest."
> 11.851-53.

His discourteous behavior endangered the princess and her castle, and she pleads with him to depart at once. Almost too late he begs her forgiveness, asserting he was charmed by the harp. Finally he asks the questions which, of course, she should have asked before. In Degare it is possible for the adventurer to correct his error immediately for, having once (and finally!) shown his concern for the welfare of someone other than himself, he proceeds to do combat against the devastating force. Degare fights the evil manifest in the knight and overcomes it.

This episode is important because Degare learns that there is more to being a knight than merely pursuing one's own ends. At first he had too easily chosen to ignore the suffering while accepting the hospitality so freely given. His egoistical vow of silence almost causes the final devastation of the noble princess and her land as well as causes his own failure. Through the understanding forgiveness of the princess, he is able to learn that he has a moral responsibility to others. His skill and bravery must be used for purposes other than merely pursuing his own needs, and particularly in the service of others who so unquestioningly support him. The generosity and need of the princess are an example to Degare.

This rendering of the wasteland motif is interesting because of the adaptations made by the author. Because the castle and its inhabitants are life-like and because their dilemma is one which can be successfully confronted by the right-acting individual, the contrast between successful and unsuccessful is intensified. The narrative's directness emphasizes the offensiveness of his egoism.

Also, Degare's silence intensifies the suspense of whether Degare will act. When he does commit himself to fight, he succeeds and is rewarded appropriately by the princess as well as by gaining an understanding of what it means to be a moral individual in a complicated society. Now that he has learned of the moral imperative of knighthood, he is prepared to move toward accommodation with the disruptive world. For having proved himself worthy through a series of tests, Degare becomes capable of and responsible for revitalizing Little Brittany.

Essentially the formulas function regulatively and therapeutically in Sir Degare to affirm the ideology of the individual as well as the importance of community. As the life struggle of the young Degare unfolds, our emotions are engaged and intensified while our imagination interprets this well known story of the questing knight. Sir Degare affirms the view that true identity depends on individual action rather than the mere luck-of-the-draw of birth. The emphasis on the individual's response to antagonistic forces is expressed in the inability of the grandfather, the two princesses, the earl and even the fairy father to ensure the eradication of instability and evil and the continuation of social order. Degare must first establish himself, validate his own existence, as a prerequisite to establishing meaning for himself in a fuller context. With the possible exception of the grandfather, all the figures are seeking individual verification and are dependent one on the other; each is caught in 'nothingness', awaiting the opportunity to act appropriately. In Sir Degare, the formulas show that true identity

depends on individual action rather than any socially conferred or unearned status or rank.

Of particular interest in Sir Degare's formulaic structure is the role of the individual in the resolution of the tensions and ambiguities resulting from the antagonistic and disruptive forces within the culture. The narrative moves from expressing these tensions to harmonizing and accommodating these conflicts. Degare uses legitimate violence and force to effect that harmony. At the same time this ideology of the individual resolves the tensions between the anarchy of individualistic impulses and the communal ideas of law and order by making his individual violent action an ultimate defense of the community against the threat of anarchy. The validity of Degare's individual use of force is underscored by the authorial structuring of the use of violence against the dragon, in an authorized combat, against a bully and against an "otherworld" figure. The inherent destructiveness of each of these adversaries makes Degare's use of violence a social necessity as a force for stability. In this way we learn that the use of violence should be evaluated according to the situation and, in fact, its use is sometimes imperative in resolving conflicts which threaten social stability. The formulaic structure validates the indivudal's use of violence as a part of the cycle of human nature.

Another example of the affirmation of the individual is the princess' use of legitimate guile and deception to preserve her reputation and to protect the future of her child as well as herself. She uses guile and deception in order to resolve the ambiguities

between the anarchy of the fairy knight's individualistic impulses and the social ideals of courtship. Her individual deception is an ultimate defense of the communal standards against the threat of such anarchy. Her use of guile is a valid, formulaic response to the fairy knight's violence and deception. It ensures stability and endurance. Again, the formula of the individual's response is employed to resolve the tensions which result from the conflicting interests of different groups within the society. The action of the formula moves from the expression of the tension and disruption between conflicting interests, as seen in the respective deceptions, to a harmonizing of these conflicts. The author posits the acceptable use of deception in the service of protecting and promoting a stable community.

Sir Degare, an English Breton lai, is important among the Auchinleck verse narratives for a number of reasons, especially because it develops the ideal of the individual's struggle to achieve identity and contribute to social stability. The Degare author is a more than adequate poet whose composition is distinguished by its prosody and narrative technique. Also, the narrative incorporates a variety of inherited source material and a plot of limited characters and continuing action. The sustained popularity of Sir Degare comes not only from interest in the claims of heredity on individuals but also from concern for the role of the individual in feudal society. The challenges of the Adventure formula and the promises of the Romance formula are interwoven to validate the identity of a young knight who struggles to discover his heritage and his role in

feudal society. His personal achievement also includes restoring a wasteland community, uniting his parents, and accommodating the conflicting forces which threaten existence in the feudal world. The Adventure, Romance, and Alien Being formulas function therapeutically and regulatively in an accomplished Middle English verse narrative which utilizes many of the details and archetypes popular with its audience. Although limited in scope and purpose, Sir Degare is a narrative of considerable achievement.

CHAPTER II FOOTNOTES

[1]Sir Degare, ed. Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale in Middle English Metrical Romances, Vol. I (New York: Russell and Russell, 1930), 287-320. All references are from this edition.

[2]Introduction to Bishop Percy's Folio MS., ed. J.W. Hale and F.J. Furnival (London, 1868), p. 19.

[3]John Edwin Wells, A Manual of the Writing in Middle English 1050-1400 (New Haven, 1916), p. 135.

[4]Mortimer Donovan, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, 1967), p. 142.

[5]Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England (New York, 1924), p. 301-302.

[6]Laura Hibbard Loomis, "The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330-1340," PMLA, 57 (1942), p. 608, n. 53.

[7]Clark Harris Slover, "Sir Degarre: A Study of a Medieval Hack Writer's Methods," Texas Studies in English, n. 11 (1931): 5-23.

[8]George Patterson Faust, Sir Degarre: A Study of Texts and Narrative Structure (Princeton, 1935).

[9]Ibid., p. 45.

[10]Ibid., p. 87.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 86.

[13]Ibid., p. 82.

[14]Muriel Carr, LMN, 53 (1938): 154.

[15]G.V. Smithers, "Story Patterns in Some Breton Lays," Medium AEvum, 22 (1953): 79.

[16]Ibid., p. 79. Smithers identifies the distinctive feature of Type II as a mortal and fairy having a child, who is necessarily a son, and when the supernatural being is the father, he gives the mother prophetic instructions, informing her that she will have a son, and bidding her give the child a name (p. 66); and Type III with lovers who are mortals, having a child, who is necessarily a son, and who brings his parents together after an armed combat with his father (in which each is unknown to the other); in fact, a Sohrab-Rustem story (p. 75).

[17]Ibid., p. 80.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 81.

[21]Ibid., p. 83.

[22]Ibid., p. 85.

[23]William C. Stokoe, Jr., "The Double Problem of Sir Degare," PMLA, 70 (1955): 518-522.

[24]Ibid., p. 522. The Z group includes the Rawlinson MS., de Worde's quarto, Copland's quarto, King's quarto, the Douce MS., and the Percy MS.

[25]Ibid., p. 523.

[26]Ibid., p. 525.

[27]Ibid., p. 526.

[28]Ibid., p. 534.

[29]Arthur E. DuBois, "Not Sans Peur," SR, 41 (1937): 116.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., p. 118.

[32]Henry Kozicki, "Critical Methods in the Literary Evaluation of Sir Degare," MLQ, 29 (1968): 11.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., p. 14.

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

[36]Ibid., p. 49.

[37]Ibid., p. 51.

CHAPTER III

LAI LE FREINE

Lai le Freine is a Middle English Breton lai of 340 verses in short couplets.[1] Lai le Freine is the adventure tale of a heroine. The poem itself has never attracted much scholarly interest although its relationship to the Auchinleck Sir Orfeo has frequently been a source of interest (see Appendix III).

Existing scholarship falls generally into three categories: general, source and analogue, and authorship and prologue studies. Mortimer Donovan's comments seem to best represent a general scholarly disinterest.[2] He sees it "not a close rendering of one of the lays of Marie de France," in that it departs from its source by adding, omitting and changing detail. He further notes that the setting is shifted from Brittany to the "west cuntre" (l. 29) of England, that many passages in the source have been abbreviated and others expanded, and that "changes from indirect to direct discourse provide a dramatic effect." He concludes that the English le Freine as "a story ranks high and has been judged with Sir Orfeo as the most attractive of the English Breton lays."

Other general criticism includes that of George Kane, Margaret Gist, and Laura Hibbard Loomis.[3] Kane states that le Freine

"corresponds to the essential formula of escape fiction by its insistence on the fundamental 'good nature', of life and attracts by reflecting the author's conception of this."[4] Gist interprets the story as a moral one in which it is "important that not only the lineage of the lady be established but the relationship be sanctioned by the Church in order that heirs be legitimate."[5] Loomis regards the poem as "a moderately free translation of Marie de France's lay of that name," and omits any particularizing discussion of it while, at the same time, commenting in detail about the other Auchinleck Breton lays, Sir Degare and Sir Orfeo.

Margaret Wattie discusses the sources and analogues of Breton lais in general and le Freine in particular in her edition of the Auchinleck poem. She cites Marie de France's Le Fraisne as containing the seminal analogues for several Middle English verse narratives: the theme of the twin birth, the tale of the child separated from its parents and finally reunited with them, and the tale of the husband with two wives. In discussing the last motif, she points out that, although there are numerous stories which use this theme and are tales of the hero, le Freine is one of only three which are tales of a heroine (included are Griselda, and Fair Annie).

Early studies of the Auchinleck poem's Prologue point out that le Freine's differs only slightly from the prologue of two of the three extant copies of the Middle English Breton Lay, Sir Orfeo.[6] And because the first leaf of the Auchinleck Orfeo (and the last leaf of Sir Tristrem) are missing, various scholars have posited either a common or different author of the Auchinleck poems.[7] In

general, it is agreed that the le Freine Prologue should remain where it is because there is no evidence that the author of Orfeo knew Marie and the author of the Prologue certainly did, and because the two other Orfeo versions are much inferior to le Freine. A common authorship for le Freine and Sir Orfeo has also had advocates.[8] This theory has been based on verbal and dialect similarities (Guillaume) and narrative technique, especially suspense (Bliss). And in a recent study, John B. Beston argues persuasively against early common authorship theories.[9] He shows that the le Freine poet "has a moralistic sort of mind that differentiates it from Marie de France as well as from the Sir Orfeo poet; he is religiously and even clerically directed where they were not."[10] He perceives the author of le Freine as having a more logical, orderly kind of mind and, because of the limitations of such a mind, he tells a story in more logical sequence and, as a result, often misses dramatic effects gained by departing from the logical order. Furthermore, Beston cites the le Freine poet for the lack of range and spontaneity of emotions we find in both Marie and Sir Orfeo: "emotion in le Freine is controlled and rational." He also catalogues significant differences between le Freine and Orfeo in grammatical practices--especially their use of prefixes and of inversion--marked differences in style and narrative technique and differences in prosody.

The Prologue

Before turning to the analysis of le Freine itself, a brief discussion of the Prologue is in order so that the issue of a lai

pattern can be better understood. As in Wattie's edition, it reads:

> We redeþ oft & findeþ [ywri]te,
> & þis clerkes wele it wite,
> layes þat ben in harping
> ben yfounde of ferli þing.
> Sum beþe of wer & sum of wo,
> & sum of ioie & mirþe also,
> & sum of trecherie & of gile,
> of old auentours þat fel while;
> & sum of bourdes & ribaudy,
> & mani þer beþ of fairy.
> Of al þinges þat men se ,
> mest of loue for soþe þai beþ.
> In Breteyne bi hold time
> þis layes were wrouȝt, so seiþ þis rime.
> When kinges miȝt our yhere
> of ani meruailes þat þer were,
> þai token an harp in gle & game,
> & maked a lay & ȝaf it name.
> Now of þis auentours þat weren yfalle
> y can tel sum ac nouȝt alle.
> Ac herkneþ lordinges, soþe to sain,
> ichil ȝou telle Lay le Frayn.
> Bifel a cas in Breteyne
> whereof was made Lay le Frain.
>
> ll. 1-24

Loomis opined that this Prologue "accounts for every one of [Chaucer's] ideas about the lays" and Bliss states that it "is much the longest and fullest account of the Breton lais in Middle English."[11]

From the Prologue itself we can assume that the Auchinleck poet thought that lays were (1) written of times gone by (l.7); (2) of diverse subjects--treachery, jests, fairy land, love, guile (ll. 5-12); (3) set in Brittany, to be enjoyed by people of discriminating taste (l. 13 and l. 15); and (4) accompanied by music (l. 17). Surely there is more here than meets the eye. What is particularly striking about this passage is that it describes the subject matter

of Breton tales in general rather than Breton lais in particular. Even more important, the poet never once mentions or refers to Marie de France or her lais, either generally or specifically. Had he known of either Marie or her poem on the same subject, convention dictates that he mention that fact (even the poorly thought of author of the Auchinleck Sir Tristrem knew he should mention the name of his source--and often at that).

The le Freine Prologue is conventional in the sense that it represents most of what an educated layman could be expected to know about the form in which he is writing and yet, because of this same principle, it could also have been written from a very limited knowledge of the French lais supplemented by guesswork. Beston suggests that the le Freine Prologue may have been the poet's attempt to capture the attention of his audience by mentioning Breton tales, knowing that there was a strong audience interest in them.[12] This makes particularly good sense when combined with the obvious omission of any reference to Marie or to her poem, Lai le Fraisne.

Formulas

The Middle English Lai le Freine is an example of the Adventure and Romance formulas in which the main character is the heroine. In the conventional Middle English verse narrative, women are frequently adventurers, for example Heurodis in Sir Orfeo, yet their role is usually subsidiary and their struggle is a relative complement or contrast to that of the hero-adventurer. In most narratives, the male adventurer's endeavor is complicated, enhanced or

focused by female characters. Generally the female adventurer is defined by her patience and endurance, and frequently for her passive strength. She comes out of harm's way when and because the male hero is successful. Not so in the Auchinleck Lai le Freine. Essentially the poem incorporates two formulas:

1. Adventure: the individual adventurer must endure the challenges in order to discover and establish her identity, and to ensure social stability as well as the legitimacy of heirs.

2. Romance: complementary to the Adventure formula; provides the opportunity and acceptance necessary to bring about a synthesis with the world of conflict/disruption.

The combination of the Adventure and Romance formulas results in the rhythmic movement from a world in which twin births are suspect, to a world in which that reality is rendered irrelevant in order to suggest other possibilities or "truths," and then back to that first world in which accommodation and integration is now possible for the heroine. The action begins in a world represented as disruptive, moves to an accepting world where the causes of disruption are absent, and returns to that other world in order that a social synthesis take place. The Auchinleck author adapted the French source and made at least one set of alterations without really changing the basic tale. The interweaving of the formulas exposes the prevailing attitudes about twin births and suggests an accepting world in which those attitudes are no longer applicable or necessary.

Any conclusions regarding the total effect of the Auchinleck modifications are impossible because the text is incomplete. The

narrative breaks off at the marriage ceremony between Coudre and Guron, and the concluding sixty-seven lines are missing. In any event, the pattern is such that anything other than an upbeat ending would be almost impossible.

Le Freine is framed by episodes which establish the significance of Freine's struggle by showing the importance of legitimacy. The economic presentation of her mother's dilemma indicates that the author's intention is to concentrate more on consequences than causes. Besides, le Freine is the legitimate daughter of two mortals. The courtly world of her mother is disruptive because the predominant attitude is one of social conformity. It is also an attitude for which she is directly responsible.

As a citizen of that disruptive world, the lady is a flat character and her vituperous tongue stereotypes her. For the most part she is presented as someone who does not fully understand what she is doing because she is a slave to a predictable and self-imposed pattern of behavior. The author is not necessarily condemning her actions as much as ridiculing her lack of self-awareness. A concern for social conciliation through self knowledge forms the basis for the final synthesis, a scene which does not deal with the eradication of any explicit evil but rather makes possible the integration of the values of the world of acceptance and discovery.

In the first world, the mother is ruled by a kind of mental bondage which is expressed by her hypocrisy and her vicious tongue:

a proude dame & an envieous,
hokerfulliche missegging,
squeymous & eke scorning.
To ich woman sche hadde envie;
11.60-63

Furthermore, the judgment which she makes about her neighbor's wife's delivery of twins is so suspect by others that she is soundly cursed:

Þat ȝif hy euer ani child schuld abide
a wers auentour hir schuld bitide.
11.81-8

And "when God wild" (l.85), she becomes pregnant and is delivered of two female children. More than mere coincidence, the lady indicates an understanding of the implied relationship between her behavior toward the neighbor's wife and her own giving birth to twins:

or ich mot sigge in al mi liif
Þat y bileiȝe mi neȝbours wiif;
11.99-100

The birth of her own daughters is an act of retribution for her hypocrisy and telling falsehoods. Also, her twins contrast with her neighbor's who are the result of something which, although unaccounted for in the narrative, is implied to be natural (this seems reasonable enough, although twins were, in fact are still, frequently considered the issue of different fathers).

Aware of the nature of this disruptive world, the lady trusts more to God for forgiveness than to her fellow beings, and she prepares to act quickly to protect herself from ostracism. She perceives three alternatives--admit to having a lover, admit that she lied about her neighbor's wife, or slay her own child and pray to

God for forgiveness--and, because her concern for social conformity is so intense, she vows to slay her child:

> "ȝif ich say ich hadde a bileman,
> þan ich leiȝe meselue opon;
> & eke þai wil þat me se
> held me we þan comoun be.
> & ȝif ich knaweleche to ich man
> þat ich leiȝe þe leuedi opon,
> þan ich worþ of old & ȝong
> behold leiȝster & fals of tong.
> ȝete me is best take mi chaunce,
> & sle mi childe, & do penaunce."
>
> ll.105-114

And like Degare's mother before her, she summons her maid to help her accomplish the deed. By this time, the lady has been irrevocably influenced by the nature of the disruptive world and contributed to it. Further, she is incapable of openly admitting her falseness because she lacks the awareness necessary to achieve self knowledge. The interaction between the lady and her maid is similar to that between Degare's mother and her maid, and it functions in much the same say. The maid suggests a fourth option and immediately solves the dilemma:

> "But this o child wol I of-bare
> And in a covent leue it yare.
>
> ll.129-30

Without delay the lady consents, wraps the infant in rich cloth and attaches a gold ring so that anyone finding her will know that she comes from nobility.

Like the princess and her maid in Sir Degare, this lady and her maid assess alternatives in order to ensure some stability in the face of anarchy. In this case the two women act to preserve the fantasy of the single birth. The lady's one-dimensional response is

demonstrated by her concern only for her own survival, for she evinces no interest in the well-being of others. The ease with which she is willing to sacrifice her child contrasts with that of the maid. There is no indication that the lady, nor the neighbor's wife for that matter, has been promiscuous; rather the power of superstition and the effect of gossip are what threaten stability in the disruptive world. Further, in this world, telling the truth also appears to be a disruptive force. In le Freine there are forces which threaten social stability and structure the Adventure formula; the lady is both victim and victimizer. The challenge is the discovery of the truth and for circumstances which make it possible for that truth to be made public.

The resourcefulness of the maid functions to protect the lady's secret, to save the child from certain death, and to provide for the babe's well being. We admire the competency and guile which the maiden exhibits while, in contrast, we condemn the lady's behavior. The maid's courage to act demonstrates her ability to deal with the immediate circumstances as well as the eventual ones. She acts to protect the unprotected as she triumphs over the adversity which is, in part, represented by the lady. The maid's role is enlarged because she initiates the Adventure of Freine.

The maid is not characterized in detail but, in this brief and rather sparse narrative, her role is multi-dimensional. The description of her all-night journey is a powerful evocation of a passage into the "otherworld." It lacks the usual clues which signify traveling to fairy land but the catalogue of animals, sounds

and sights clarifies the author's intention to delight and suggest. Her spiritual experience on the long winter night is similar to Orfeo's long trek in the forest among the animals. Although isolated, she is guided by the moon and greeted by cocks crowing and dogs barking. The reverence with which she treats her solemn task furthers the contrast with the lady's behavior. We know the babe's safety and well-being are assured, because as the dawn breaks, the farmers and birds have begun their day--just as the babe enters her new life in the world of discovery:

Þe maide toke þe child hir mide
& stale oway in an euentide,
& passed ouer a wild heþ.
Þurch feld & þurch wode hye geþ
al þe winterlong niȝt,--
Þe weder was clere, þe mone was liȝt,--
so þat hye com bi a forest side;
sche wax al weri & gan abide.
Sone after sche gan herk
cokkes crowe & houndes berk.
Sche aros & þider wold.
Ner & nere sche gan bihold.
Walles & hous fele hy seiȝe,
a chirche wiþ stepel fair & heiȝe.
Þan nas þer noiþer strete no toun,
bot an hous of religioun,
an order of nonnes wele ydiȝt
to seruy God boþe day & niȝt.
Þe maiden abod no lengore,
bot ȝede hir to þe chirche dore,
& on knes sche sat adoun,
. . . . . .
Hye loked up & bi hir seiȝe
an asche bi hir fair & heiȝe,
wele ybowed, of michel priis;
þe bodi was holow as mani on is.
Þerin sche leyd þe child for cold
in þe pel as it was bifold,
& blisced it wiþ al hir miȝt.
Wiþ þat it gan to dawe liȝt.
Þe foules vp & song on bouȝ,

& acremen ȝede to þe plouȝ.
Þe maiden turned ogain anon,
& tok þe waye he hadde er gon.

11.145-65; 173-84

In comparison, Eugene Mason's translation of Marie de France's poem shows just how the Auchinleck poet embellished:[13]

> The damsel took the child, and went out from the chamber. When night was come, and all was still, she left town, and sought the high road leading through the forest. She held on her way, clasping the baby to her breast, till from afar, to her right hand, she heard the howling of dogs and the crowing of cocks. She deemed that she was near a town, and went the lighter for hope, directing her steps, there, whence the noises came. Presently the damsel entered a fair city, where was an Abbey, both great and rich. This Abbey was worshipfully ordered, with many nuns in their office and degree, and an Abbess in charge of all. The maiden gazed upon the mighty house, and considered its towers and walls, and the church with its belfry. She went swiftly to the door, and setting the child upon the ground, kneeled humbly to make her prayer. . . . the maiden looked around her, and saw an ash tree, planted to give shadow in a sunny place. It was a fair tree, thick and leafy, and was divided into four strong branches. The maiden took the child again in her arms, and running to the ash, set her within the tree. There she left her, commending her to the care of God.

The Auchinleck passage contrasts with that of Marie mainly in that it details the passage into the world of discovery with the sights and sounds of the forest while hers shows the details of nuns worshipping in an impressive setting.

The maiden's actions facilitate the main story line by initiating the Adventure formula. Her behavior instructs that moral behavior is both an individual and a social responsibility. She fulfills her feudal obligation to serve her mistress when she

advises her; she also makes possible the immediate safety of the babe and provides for the ultimate salvation of her lady. The interaction of these two female characters functions regulatively and therapeutically: (1) feudal obligations are of great importance and are to be kept by those who are dependent, even under the most demanding of circumstances; (2) one's reputation must be protected at all costs, even if one's actions invalidate that noble stature; and (3) the stability of established society must be preserved, even if sacrifices are necessary.

The adventure of Freine is an inversion of the standards established in her mother's conflict. The Adventure formula operates in a world which replaces the disruptive world and exists apart and separate from it. In the world of acceptance, the "realities" of that other, first world are unimportant because, very simply, they do not exist here. In this second world the reasons for expulsion are irrelevant because they are also distinctly the products of that other society.

Freine's adventure in the abbey begins when she is left in the trunk of the ash tree by the maid. As an embodiment of the Adventure formula, le Freine includes: (1) abandonment in the forest; (2) discovery, recovery, and nurturing by a religious or hermitic figure; (3) education befitting a noble person; (4) an unarticulated struggle for identity; (5) the adventurer as model of trust, strength and endurance in the face of challenge; (6) marriage as dictated by social and feudal obligations; (7) timely discovery of the truth and a confession of past wrongs; and (8) restoration to and continuation

of society. These elements are basically the same ones which order the adventures of Orfeo and Degare, to a lesser or greater degree. The unarticulated nature of Freine's struggle is similar to Orfeo's and yet Freine never really participates actively in forging an identity. On the other hand, Orfeo appears to scheme in order to overcome the spell of the fairy king, or at least to rescue Heurudis, his queen, and Degare undertakes a series of physical challenges in order to discover himself. Freine is distinguished by being acted upon by others instead of acting herself in a meaningful way. She suggests a primal innocence not ever encountered in Degare's struggle.

The adventure of Freine can be easily traced because it lacks embellishment or detail. This is not necessarily a deficiency, merely a characteristic, and may force us to see Freine's metamorphoric experiences as an abstraction which functions to instruct. In le Freine social order is dependent on the individual who validates herself and her society by freeing that society from the bonds imposed by individuals who lack self knowledge. The Adventure formula of le Freine embodies the challenge which most verse narrative heroines must overcome--an ambiguous identity and heritage.

Freine's adventure is structured in accordance with the coming of age of the heroine and with her struggle toward social integration. Her narrative life falls roughly into infancy (ll.185-250), seduction, sexual initiation and separation (ll.251-310), the subordination of individual desire to feudal obligation (ll.311-69), and the discovery and resolution (ll.370-408).

The atmosphere of acceptance is introduced when the maid enters the forest and continues when the Abbey's porter finds the babe hidden in the trunk of the tree. The discovery of the babe is closely observed, with details of the porter's morning ritual:

> Þe porter of þe abbay aros,
> & dede his ofice in þe clos,
> rong þe belles & taperes liȝt,
> leyd forþ bokes & al redi diȝt.
> Þe chirche dore he vndede,
> & seiȝe anon in þe stede
> Þe pel liggen in þe tre,
> & þouȝt wele þat it miȝt be
> þat þeues hadde yrobbed sumwhare,
> & gon þer forþ & lete it þare.
> Þerto he ȝede & it vnwond,
> & þe maiden child þerin he fond.
> 11.185-96

The immediate needs of the babe are attended to and then the abbess assumes control:

> "It is welcom to God & to me.
> Ichil it help as y can,
> & sigge it is mi kinswoman."
> 11.222-224

Further, the babe is welcomed in to the fellowship of God and the overall experience contrasts directly with that of the disruptive world from which she has been expelled:

> Þe Freyne of þe asche is a freyn
> after þe language of Bretyne;
> forþe Le Frein men clepeþ þis lay
> more þan asche in ich country.
> 11.231-34

The abbess oversees Freine's education and, by her twelfth year, Freine is considered one of the fairest maidens. Further, when Freine inquires about her parentage, the abbess tells her she was found, giving her the ring and cloth as recognition tokesn. The

atmosphere of the accepting forest world is one of honesty and unconditional acceptance, where an unknown heritage is met with generosity of spirit and deed.

The challenge of the Romance formula is prepared, and it commences with Guroun's entrance. Guroun is an ambiguous figure who, although not evil, seems to be ruled by his passions. As an embodiment of the anarchic forces within society (as is the lady, to some extent), he is both victim and victimizer. He is an archetypal young nobleman seeking adventure and excitement. Because he has heard the praises of Freine, he contrives to gain entry into the abbey. And as fate would have it, he "comced to love hir anon riȝt," (l.270) and began to consider how to make her his mistress. He seems to understand that his hedonistic behavior is outside the abbess's code of acceptable behavior, but he is not to be denied:

> He þouȝt, "ȝif ich com hir to
> more þan ichaue ydo,
> þe abbesse wil souchy gile
> & voide hir in a litel while."
> He compast anoþer enchesoun,
> to be broþer of þat religioun.
> 11.273-78

The Auchinleck employs dialogue to express Guroun's strategy--Marie says that "if he repaired often to the convent, the Abbess would consider of the cause of his comings, and he would never again see the maiden with his eyes."--and this is an amusing manipulation of the convention of love as a religion. It is not, of course, unique to le Freine; nonetheless, the Auchinleck author preserves and individualizes the Romance challenge of the lovers. That Guroun so easily succeeds in his conquest of Freine can be partially understood

by the ease with which he fools the abbess, the supposed guardian of morality:

> "Madame," he seyd to þe abbesse,
> "y loui wele in al godenisse,
> ichil ȝiue on & oþer
> londes & rentes to bicom ȝour broþer,
> þat ȝe schul euer fare þe bet
> when y com to haue recet."
>
> 11.279-84

Guroun exhibits behavior which is smooth and sophisticated, and the ease with which he manipulates those in the abbey suggests that his deception results not from evil but from selfish desires. In the world of discovery, Guroun's pursuit of Freine is the romantic ideal wherein no obstacle is too great, too outrageous--even living and loving in a convent! Their love is easily consummated because Freine succumbs to his charms without protest--"hye graunted him to don his wille/ when he wil, loude & stille." (11.291-92)--and he is successful in persuading her to leave the protection of her only known home to join him in his castle:

> "Leman," he seyd, "þou most lat be
> þe abbesse þi nece & go wiþ me.
> For icham riche, of swiche pouwere
> þe finde bet þan þou hast here."
> þe maiden grant, & to him trist,
> & stale oway þat no man wist.
> Wiþ hir tok hye no þing
> bot hir pel & hir ring.
>
> 11.293-300

In le Freine, Guroun becomes the center of focus, and the fate of the young Freine is reported without comment. Their relationship is established without authorial reflection; we are to understand that surmounting the challenges of the Romance formula signifies the increase of a bliss which multiplies.

What are to we make of this embodiment of the Romance formula? First of all, it is similar to the experience enjoyed by Tristrem and Ysonde in that it is socially unacceptable; the causation is, of course, quite different. Surely we recognize that the love between Freine and Guroun flourishes within the protective walls of the accepting world, within the abbey and away from the more disruptive forces of that first world. The implication is that their love is right and good, and could only flourish away from the disruptive world's moral imperative regarding legitimacy. The love of the Romance formula is nurtured by the values of the accepting world. In this world there is no concern about the unknown heritage of Freine, for she herself embodies all that is inherently valuable. The author has no need to detail their relationship because it is easily understood by the knowledgeable reader of medieval verse romance--the same person who is appealed to in the Prologue to le Freine. The reader expects a love without boundaries opposed by an intolerant world, a love which is expressed and fulfilled without qualification or concern for social demands. This love is founded on Guroun's need and Freine's desire to please someone more than the self.

Because their love validates the world of discovery and acceptance, it also contradicts the values expressed by the disruptive world. This second world seems amoral, and the social values of the first, dirsuptive world--fear of illegitimacy--clearly are impediments to the love of Freine and Guroun. The accepting world is a sensuous one in which acting naturally prevails in accord with

the fantasy of the Romance formula--love triumphant and permanent, overcoming all obstacles and differences. A major example of the author's belief in the natural quality of this second world is Freine's very name, which means ash, after the tree in which she is found. By association, the accepting world and the natural world establish another realm different from the disruptive realm; this accepting world is a place away from that first world of corruption and its threats to the fulfillment of human desires.

The values of the disruptive world threaten the lovers' seemingly idyllic relationship when Guroun's knights command him to wed one of their noble daughters. In spite of the love which his countrymen express for Freine, it is Guroun's feudal obligation to the welfare of his state which dominates--he is required to produce legitimate heirs. In particular, the daughter of a neighboring knight is promoted as acceptable because of her superior heritage and consequent suitability as wife and mother of his future children and heirs. And, just as Freine acts to accommodate, so Guroun accepts the arguments of his advisers and betrothes himself to the twin sister of Freine, Coudre. This betrothal, by frustrating the bliss of the lovers, builds narrative suspense as to the resolution and accommodation (much as the narrative suspense is created in Orfeo when the returning Orfeo disguises himself in order to test the Steward). Further, the impending marriage also represents forces of the disruptive world which upset the natural harmony achieved in the accepting world. These forces result not from any conscious motivation to destroy love but rather from a desire to

ensure feudal stability. After all, the accepting world is an idyllic world in which reality has been suspended and eventually must be accommodated with this other world which Freine and Guroun come to inhabit as a result of the interweaving of the Adventure and Romance formulas.

The marriage of Guroun and Coudre meets several narrative needs, but primarily it continues to build suspense by delaying the final accommodation. The intensity of the suspense within the formulas encourages us to respond emotionally because it functions therapeutically and regulatively: we can escape through the possibility that the lady might once again act badly by ignoring or renouncing Freine as her daughter, and we are reassured or comforted by the probability that she will at last respond to recognize her offspring and her maternal duty to both children. Therefore, we vicariously confront personal anxieties through the control mechanism of the formula (Therapeutic) while, at the same time, we are instructed in social behavior to respect and uphold familial ties (Regulative). The suspense is heightened by Freine's behavior as well: we can escape through the possibility that Freine will continue to act with noble dignity and self-sacrifice in an effort to please Guroun while making herself miserable, and we are assured by the probability that Freine and Guroun will at last find accommodation of their dilemma in the world of social synthesis. In this way, we vicariously confront and overcome our desire to act selfishly to further our own cause without regard to the well being of others

(Therapeutic) and at the same time, we learn that by acting unselfishly we may effect the desired consequences after all (Regulative). And finally, Guroun also instructs us on acting in accord with social obligations--even though immense personal sacrifice is necessary--for at any moment he might have chosen the path back to the romantic harmony of the accepting world instead of marrying to ensure social stability. Through Guroun's unarticulated struggle we confront and conquer our fears of forever forfeiting the fulfillment of a great love for a higher good (Therapeutic) while, at the same time, we are instructed in behavior that ensures social continuity through meeting feudal obligations (Regulative).

The challenge of the Adventure and the promise of the Romance formulas are completed when the lady embraces Freine as her rightful daughter. In the accommodating world, the innocence and passion which were expressed in the second world must be rendered acceptable to those who made the moral judgment that twin births are violations of social order and stability. The narrative moves away from the tension created by the assumption that twin births are unnatural and from the alienating behavior produced by the anxiety of that moral judgment. The challenge for the adventurer (as well as for the author) is to discover a world in which the mysteries of nature are without blame. Freine's world contrasts directly with the disruptive world, which is distinctive for its potential to cause humans to act in evil ways. The second world is the world of Romance formula, and in it the worldly obstacles to the love of Freine and Guroun are absent. This world is the only one known to Freine and here she is

the peer of all others. The love created is given without demands and both Guroun and Freine seem unaware of the potential for disaster which awaits them when they leave that security.

Both Freine and Guroun seek accommodation in the knight's domain--he by agreeing to uphold his feudal obligations and she by welcoming her new mistress. In this way, they contribute to the spirit of the accommodating world. In fact, Freine exhibits such generosity in preparing the marriage bed of Guroun and Coudre that the bride appears to change her attitude.

The accommodation is established when the lady accepts Freine as her other daughter, the equal of Coudre, and no longer persists in living the lie which results from her disruptive behavior. Without hesitating, the lady embraces Freine as her daughter and openly confesses to her husband:

> And sche told him al her wo,
> Hou of her neighbour sche had missayn,
> For sche was delyvered of childre twain;
> And hou to children herself sche bore;--
> 11.390-93

His generosity is equal to Freine's as he forgives his wife, accepts Freine, and he makes it possible for Freine to marry Guroun. In the accommodating world, the behavior which characterized the disruptive world is no longer valid or necessary. The lady is not threatened, nor does she threaten others. Because of her we come to believe that the errors of the past can be corrected, even forgiven, in a world of social synthesis. In Marie's version there is no explanation given for the lady's willingness to expose her previous wrongdoing and, of course, we have no way of knowing how the Auchinleck

author handled this detail, if he ever indeed finished his version. What appears as an inconsistency to a twentieth century mind may not have seemed so to a fourteenth century one. After all, Degare's fairy father reappears seemingly mortal and is integrated into the accommodating world without explanation.

Lai le Freine is significant among the verse narratives of Auchinleck for a number of reasons, not the least of which is its availability in a good modern edition. The poet shows a certain awareness of his role in the Prologue which, although it does not expand our ideas about the Breton lai form, does catalogue conventional aspects used in England for the English fourteenth century audience. Furthermore, because it occurs with other Breton lais (Sir Degare and Sir Orfeo) in English in the same manuscript, it provides additional information about the audience taste of the time. The le Freine author is a competent if not inspired poet for he utilizes numerous conventional poetic and narrative devices, and provides a good primer for learning Middle English verse narrative composition: the use of inherited source material; the use of formulaic language such as repetition, rime, dialogue and clichés; a plot with limited characters but enough action, and with an appropriate amount of didacticism. With regard to this study, le Freine is structured by the Adventure and Romance formulas which are interwoven to tell the tale of a young woman who discovers her heritage, finds security in her beloved's land, and makes possible social stability for a community previously threatened by a fear of no

legitimate heirs and by the threat of heirs with unverifiable legitimacy. The formulas function therapeutically and regulatively to tell a typical or conventional Middle English tale with a moral message and an optimistic ending.

CHAPTER III FOOTNOTES

[1]Lai le Freine, ed. Margaret Wattie, Smith College Studies in Modern Language, 10 (1929): 1-27. All quotations will be from this edition.

[2]Mortimer Donovan, A Manual of Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, 1967), 134-135.

[3]George Kane, Middle English Literature (London, 1951); Margaret Gist, Love and War in Middle English Romances (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1947); Laura Hibbard Loomis, "Chaucer and the Breton Lays of the Auchinleck MS," SP, 38 (1941): 14-33.

[4]Kane, p. 47.

[5]Gist, p. 6.

[6]Auchinleck Sir Orfeo is without a prologue it seems since the last leaf of Sir Tristrem and first of Orfeo are missing. Orfeo contains a Prologue in Harleian MS. 3810, early fifteenth century, and in Ashmorlcan MS. 61, later fifteenth century.

[7]Lucien Foulet, MLN, 21, 47. Foulet goes so far as to suggest that le Freine's prologue belongs to Orfeo and was borrowed; he provides no substantial evidence to support this point.

[8]Gabrielle Guillaume, "The Prologue of the Lai le Freine and Sir Orfeo," MLN, 36 (1921): 458-64; Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England (New York, 1924), pp. 294-5; Sir Orfeo, ed. A.J. Bliss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954): xliv-xlvii.

[9]John B. Beston, "Authorship of Lay le Freine and Sir Orfeo," Medium AEvum, 45 (1976): 153-63.

[10]Beston, p. 154.

[11]Laura Hibbard Loomis, "Chaucer and the Breton Lays of the Auchinleck MS.," SP, 38 (1941): 22; and Bliss, Orfeo.

[12]Beston, p. 162-63.

[13]The Lays of Marie de France and Others, tr. Eugene Mason (1911; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1966), p. 94.

CHAPTER IV

SIR ORFEO

Sir Orfeo is recognized as one of the finest non-cyclic Middle English verse narratives.[1] Until recently, the majority of critical opinion has dealt with the various classical, Celtic and Breton sources. For the most part, scholarship has evaluated the various changes wrought by the different authors writing in different centuries and responding to changing tastes. Above all, the Auchinleck Sir Orfeo incorporates details from numerous sources in order to transform the traditional Orpheus into a new portrait of a hero (see Appendix IV).

Commonly Acknowledged Classical, Celtic and Breton Sources and Influences

This section will discuss the classical story, then discuss the changes produced by Celtic influence and finally, show how the French lais of Marie de France had the most profound effect on the Middle English Sir Orfeo.

The classical story line tells of Eurydice, wife of Orpheus, who is bitten by a poisonous snake, dies and goes to the Underworld. Orpheus is inconsolable with grief at his loss and, in search of her, visits that world which is described as a place of the dead; he

capitates all those below by his playing of the harp, requests that she be returned to him and wins her back through his music. A condition of the winning her back is that he not look back when exiting from the Underworld or he will lose what he has won; of course, he looks back, loses Eurydice for all time.

So transformed is the Auchinleck Sir Orfeo in its medieval accommodation that it is strikingly dissimilar from its classical antecedents. First, Heurodis is spirited away or abducted by the fairy king and not poisoned to death by the bite of a snake like the Euridice of classical legend; Orfeo's inconsolable grief is changed into a willful self-exile from human society rather than as an active pursuit limited to the recovery of his beloved wife. Further, Orfeo's visit to the "otherworld" is not induced by a grief-stricken search for Heurodis--he accidentally sees her in a group of ladies whom he follows through the rocks into the fairy castle. There is no mention of the numerous inhabitants of Hades whom he charms in the classical versions. In fact, there is no Hades. His harp playing (minstrelsy) captivates all in the fairy king's palace. Whereas Orpheus declares frankly who he is and what he wants, and elicits, through his music, the regal promise that he may have whatever he desires, Orfeo fails to disclose his identity (a conventional medieval verse narrative motif), but accomplishes the same feat of gaining the promise of reward for a song. When the fairy king attempts to renege because of Orfeo's choice of Heurodis, Orfeo wins her by an appeal to the king's sense of honor. (This episode is impressively similar to that of the Auchinleck Sir Tristrem when Mark contracts to trade

Ysolde for a song and also tries to renege.) Unquestionably the most significant, perhaps surprising, difference is the substitution of a happy ending for the classical one, for in Sir Orfeo there is no condition placed on the lovers' return to the real world. Furthermore, Orfeo's awarding the stewardship of the kingdom to his vassal and the concluding episode in which Orfeo recovers his kingdom are not found in any classical source.

The major Celtic influence is the world of the fairies and is neither the afterworld nor the underworld: the substitution of Heurodis' abduction for death, the preliminary visit of the fairy king in the dream, the setting of a date for the abduction, the stationing of armed men to protect Heurodis, the mysterious spiriting away, and the royal status of Orfeo and Heurodis.[2] Other Celtic influences include the belief in the marvelous power of minstrelsy, the honor accorded harpers, the presentation of a harper as king, the winning of a woman through minstrelsy, the tradition of a wild man of the woods, the fairy army of knights, the fairy hunt, the fairy dance, sleeping under a tree as placing oneself in danger of a fairy spell, passage into a rock or hill as entrance to the fairy world, and the peculiar Celtic quality of fairy land, its king and the jeweled castle.

The all-important final episode is the only plot element not accounted for by the classicial versions or the Celtic influences. The happy ending clearly changes the tragic nature of the classical story. Severs concluded that "the pervading artistry of the poem is his [the poet's], for that artistry depends upon a simultaneous

awareness of all parts of the story, all details of description, all traits of character, and how they all fit together economically and effectively to create the unity of the poem."[3]

Until recently, there was a general agreement that the clearest proof of the existence of a Breton lai of Orpheus in the twelfth century was to be found in the De Nugis Curialium of Walter Map.[4] The elements attributed to Map (whom Bliss contends was working from a tale already contaminated with the classicial legend of Orpheus, set in Brittany and with numerous resemblances to Sir Orfeo) are the valley in the wilderness, the great company of women, the dance, and the mention of the fairies. Of course, it is impossible to tell precisely at what stage in its grafting on to the Celtic that the Orpheus story became so "unclassicial," i.e. influenced by the "otherworld" and optimistic at the conclusion, but the recent discovery of fragments of the Scottish King Orphius must alter the Map theory because these fragments include the testing of the regent (in this case, the nephew of Orphius), a final celebration with a double restoration and perhaps a double loss.[5] Marion Stewart suggests that both Sir Orfeo and King Orphius might be translations of the same French source, the lost French Lai d'Orphey. Since the Scottish fragments show that these additional motifs in Sir Orfeo are also present there, Map's De Nugis cannot be a primary ancestor since it omits these secondary elements entirely.

The Breton lais, none of which survive but which are known to us through references in the literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were primarily songs, so that the music was

as important as the words. The words were sung and accompanied by harp, and were lyrical rather than narrative, expressing the emotions of the hero or heroine on a specific occasion.[6] The Breton lais enjoyed particular popularity in England, a popularity lasting at least two centuries, and were of particular interest for the use Chaucer made of them in "The Franklin's Tale." Dieter Mehl asserts that there are at least four poems which can be called Breton lays in the spirit of Marie de France, three of which are in Auchinleck--Sir Orfeo, Lai le Freine, Sir Degare--and elsewhere, Sir Landevale.[7] Mehl considers the union between a human and an "otherworld" fairy to be the marked difference between the English lays and the other short narratives. In Orfeo the disparity between the two worlds is one of the main themes.

Additional and Recent Studies

Most recent scholarship is of four major types: structural analysis, analysis of mythic and folklore motifs, the analysis of classical and Christian elements, and the comparison of specific common elements in the extant Middle English versions. These categories are, as always, not mutually exclusive.

Studies of Sir Orfeo's structure cover a wide range of topics.[8] D.M. Hill discusses parallelism in the Auchinleck Orfeo as an example of conventional symmetry. He distinguishes two traditional aspects of love which are explored: the testing of Orfeo and Heurodis as an example of heterosexual or "romance" love, and the testing of the steward as an example of male or "epic" love. He

points to five medieval conventional means employed in Orfeo to achieve an atmosphere of inevitability and an affirmation of the will to live. David Lyle discuss the role of the principal symbolic objects of the poem and suggests how they are synthesized by the poet. Felecity Riddy's fine article concentrates, but not exclusively, on showing that, contrary to previous scholarship, there are numerous similarities in the poet's attitude toward fairy court and the court of Orfeo, and that the double restoration at the poem's end is both a climax and resolution (Mortimer Donovan's summary in A Manual provides the initial comments which she seeks to challenge).

Scholarship on the mythic and folklore aspects of Sir Orfeo is plentiful.[9] Edward E. Foster discusses the two worlds in Sir Orfeo as representatives of alternative human perspectives and finds that the blending of actuality and fairy constitutes a major structural pattern. Examples cited show how the fairy world passes imperceptibly from illusion to reality, and that this fairy land is neither Hades nor Hell but a world in which people are extracted from actuality to live in a timeless suspension--as is illustrated by the contrast between Orfeo's wretched physical appearance and Heurodis' beauty which is preserved as when "taken." Alice E. Lasater studies other lays and tales in which Celtic "otherworld" figures appear in connection with a tree in order to suggest the possible implications of Heurodis' falling asleep under the "ympretre." She discovers the branches of three: the Celtic Elysium, the

silver apple tree of Irish legend and the golden bough of Virgil--all of which connote "a universal token for admission to (and often for return from) the otherworld." Edward D. Kennedy, while acknowledging the Celtic and classical sources of Sir Orfeo, suggest as an additional influence the common medieval narrative motif of the "shadow king"--"a king who because of personal weakness or failure is unable to accept his responsibilities as ruler."[10] Kennedy finds that to a medieval audience, Orfeo's conduct as king would probably seem "neither extremely good nor extremely bad," hence a rex inutilis or "shadow king." He sees Orfeo as a king unable to carry out his responsibilities as ruler, like the Biblical David, because of a woman; that is, Orfeo neglects his royal duties for personal reasons. Kennedy points to similar figures in medieval literature: Merlin of Vita Merlini, Amfortas of Parzival, Torrent in Torrent of Portyngale, to name but a few. Kennedy believes that the Auchinleck Orfeo is presented favorably as both a private individual (love theme) and as a king loved by his people (political theme) because the fourteenth century audience had experienced three political crises between 1294 and 1327. He draws a number of contemporary analogies to the concept of the "useless ruler."[11]

The classical and Christian elements in Sir Orfeo have also received recent attention.[12] Michael D. Bristol finds Orfeo as harper and successful rescuer to be a parabolic Christ and the poetic structure to reveal a significant analogy to the larger scheme of Christian myth. For each Orfeo episode he cites a Scriptural "correspondent" for the pattern of separation,

imprisonment in the world, and the final liberation. He points out further that "liberation and reconciliation occur only when there is sound [music]"--harping enables Orfeo to endure in the forest, to tame the wild beasts, to liberate Heurodis, and to reclaim his kingdom. John B. Friedman also considers Orfeo's musical abilities as an obvious reference to the Biblical David. Constance Davies acknowledges the similarities of Sir Orfeo with the classical but sees the classical influence to be "pervasive rather than particular. . . . Superimposed on the classical and Celtic tales is the medieval social setting." Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis considers Orfeo's ten years in the wilderness as "a kind of penance," "substitute for death" during which, like Lear, he learns "what values man should cherish." Because of his great humility and willingness to sacrifice--to show worthiness as a Christian man--Orfeo is able to rescue Heurodis and regain his kingdom.

Thomas B. Hanson compares the Auchinleck and Harley versions of the legend and concludes that Sir Orfeo is "a carefully structured, skillfully wrought and unified assertion of harmony in the Christian universe."[13] He concentrates on the lines 355-376 in order to show that description of the fairy land is in the language of Gothic cathedral architecture: "butras," "y-arched," "vousour" (vaulting), "vt-mast wal" and "clere & schine as cristal." He considers the description of the "taken" to be a catalogue of human statues lining the interior, in various postures, so as to heighten "the fantastic and continue the suggestion of a cathedral filled with sculptured saints and martyrs and representations in glass."

Hanson sees the Orfeo fairy land as closer to the apocalyptic New Jerusalem than to any mythic conception of Hell and perceives Orfeo's role as one which harmonizes the worlds of nature, Paradise, and man in the Christian city of Winchester in order to turn the classical story into "a Christian exemplum of fortitude and reward."

Formulas

It is my view that Sir Orfeo, as a structured whole, functions in a modern way because of its synthesis of classical and contemporary elements. Of particular interest in Sir Orfeo is the harmonized presentation of two qualities of love: the heterosexual or 'romance' love--a strong component of the Orpheus myth--and the feudal or 'epic' love--the medieval addition of feudal loyalty. Recognition of this synthesis is a major step toward viewing Sir Orfeo as a coherent whole, the sum of the numerous traditional, inherited elements--as opposed the viewing of the narrative as part classical, part Celtic, part lai and part Middle English verse narrative. This perspective shows the story as a medieval English tale and will enable us to consider Orfeo as a treatise on human social and sexual relationships and obligations. Essentially, Sir Orfeo combines three popular literature formulas:

1. Adventure and Romance Formulas: these cannot be easily separated in this narrative; they express the challenges of all our lives without really specifying them, and expose the difficulty of establishing individual identity through testing; furthermore, the formulas incorporate aspects of both sexual and feudal love.

2. Alien State/Being Formula: through a highly stylized and conventional presentation of fairyland, Orfeo and the audience confront and conquer the unknown.

My intention is to discuss these formulas in Sir Orfeo and their functions: regulative and therapeutic. It is of utmost importance to recognizing that it is nearly impossible to separate the narrative into each of these ingredients while, at the same time, discussing it as an integrated whole. Keeping that in mind, I shall discuss these aspects simultaneously and recognize that such distinctions are arbitrary.

Sir Orfeo is primarily a moral fantasy of Romance in which married love, on the one hand, and fraternal love, on the other, are proved triumphant and permanent, overcoming all obstacles and differences. The Romance formula is combined with the formulas of Adventure and Alien Being. The narrative is one in which the individual, through love, transcends self-interest and is reborn in the spirit of self-sacrifice and humility. The love in Orfeo is not an all-consuming passion but charity, the going-out-of-self to find one's self. This love asserts the strength of an individual through humility and dignity.

In Orfeo there is a unity which structures and characterizes the narrative: social order depends upon the fulfillment of vows and pledges made by an individual without regard for the difficulties which their fulfillment might entail. Such fulfillment requires the most arduous of tests and the complete abnegation of self-interest in order for the individual to achieve meaning and relevance within

his society. The vision of Orfeo is that when the vows are kept, society will prosper, and that the individual and that society will "com . . . out of his care" (l. 603) if they are willing to sacrifice for shared values: loyalty to those served and loved, humility and patience in adversity and gratefulness not exultation, in the moment of triumph. The values affirmed here are those of an ideal society which seeks to be the kingdom of heaven here on earth.

One aspect of this unity is the structural development of the minor and major adventures of the characters--the two aspects of love as represented by the steward and by Orfeo and Heurodis, respectively. The poet has gone to great lengths to ensure that both sets of challenges have the same language and the same climax; in fact, so consummate an artist is he that his concern for symmetry is carried to perfection by his use of the word "asay" which occurs only twice and each time at the climax of the testing: in the case of the steward's success, "for-to asay þi gode wille" (l. 568) and in Orfeo's testing in the fairy castle, "now speke, & two mi3t asay" (l. 452). Further rhetorical evidence of this unity is developed by the parallel between Orfeo's distress at losing Heurodis and the steward's at the loss of his lord, for each ends with the same kind of phrase: "Þer was non amendement" (l.200) and "It nis not bot mannes deþ." (l.552)

As an ingredient of the Romance formula, the steward's assay is one-dimensional and complements that of the other two characters. The steward represents 'epic' love, that is, the fulfillment of feudal

bonds between men--Roland and Charlemagne, the knights of the Round Table and King Arthur (although I can think of no reason why 'epic' love could not also incorporate a sharing of commitments and vows between females in the feudal context). The steward's individual test is to fulfill these feudal obligations to his lord by arranging for the well-being of the kingdom during Orfeo's absence and, in the event of Orfeo's death, by arranging for a successful transition of power to a newly elected leader. Although the audience's knowledge of these obligations might be taken for granted, the Orfeo poet emphasizes, perhaps reinforces, by having Orfeo explicitly direct the steward and his lords:

> "Lordinges," he said, "Bifor ȝou here
> Ich ordainy min heiȝe steward
> To wite mi kingdom afterward;
> In mi stede ben he schal
> To kepe mi londes ouer al,
> . . . . . .
> & when ȝe vnder-stond þat y be spent,
> Make ȝou þan a parlement,
> & chese ȝou a newe king
> --Now doþ ȝour best wiþ al mi þinge."
> 11.204-08, 215-218

The steward's assay contrasts with that of the others because his responsibilities are defined in terms of his feudal obligations and explicitly stated by the author. Because the failure of the steward is possible but not probable, the author creates a mood of suspense and temporarily evokes a sense of fear and uncertainty about the steward's fulfilling of his vows. Furthermore, the fulfillment of his responsibilities is an integral though minor part of Orfeo's ultimate achievement, for, if the steward does not act accordingly,

that would reflect badly on Orfeo for having aligned himself with someone who would not act appropriately. The steward's success is heightened as a result of the test to which Orfeo puts him in the final recognition scene. In that suspenseful episode, in which a disguised Orfeo claims that the harp he plays belongs to one long dead, the steward's sorrow is recognized as sincere by Orfeo. This recognition sets up the final achievement and restoration of social order. As Cawelti has shown, the intensity of the suspense within the formula encourages us to respond emotionally because it functions in two ways: we can find release through the possibility that the steward might fail to fulfill his feudal bonds this one last time, and we are assured or comforted by the probability that he will act in accordance with those vows. And so, on the one hand, we vicariously confront and conquer our personal fears and anxieties through the control mechanisms of formula (Therapeutic function), while, on the other hand, we are educated or instructed in the necessity of upholding vows and pledges (Regulative function).

The addition of the steward and the enlargment of his assay is a mark of narrative sophistication because it lifts the classical Orpheus-Eurydice myth above the usually short story of limited scope and gives Orfeo a social relevance found in few other Middle English narratives. This addition is evidence of the author's capacity to invent new touches of plot which are within the formulaic limits. The steward's assay enriches the narrative symmetry and insists that both 'romance' love and 'epic' love are possible, even desirable, within the Christian ethos.

The major development of this unity is the 'romance' or sexual love of Heurodis and Orfeo, and this unity combines of the Romance, Adventure and Alien Being formulas. The assay of Heurodis and Orfeo is multidimensional, since the testing of each contrasts one with the other. Heurodis and Orfeo are united in their love for each other, and each is challenged by the unknown as manifested in the fairy experience. From the beginning, Heurodis, like the steward, is a positive "template" of the twin principles of trust and acceptance, whereas Orfeo is not. In fact, Orfeo acts in a manner which is opposite to theirs: he is proud and self-assertive. Studied separately, Heurodis is a one-dimensional example of the Adventure hero defined by Cawelti.

A major example of the narrative symmetry is the way in which the adventure of Heurodis frames Sir Orfeo. When she falls asleep under the ympre-tre, there is no social order until the chain of commitments which the sleeping causes is unworked and there is a restoration upon returning to court. As readers, we must not seek the cause of her abduction; rather we must accept it, as Heurodis does, as a definition of the human condition: This is the way things are. She accepts her trial and Orfeo has not; her acceptance, though unexplained, seems enlightened and obviously contrasts with the stubbornness of Orfeo. Her acceptance and trust function regulatively and therapeutically as she fulfills her implied personal and private obligations to Orfeo and to herself, and, in turn, her public obligations to society.

Heurodis stands as a positive embodiment of the Adventure and Romance heroine, and provides a contrast to Orfeo. The abduction challenges her acceptance and trust in the face of the unknown. Whatever suspense there is in connection with her assay is the result of the tension provided by the possibility of Orfeo's failure; we never doubt Heurodis' ability to act correctly. Her obligations both to herself and to Orfeo are clearly understood in the context of Christian marriage and her assay confirms what the audience would expect from such a marriage. Heurodis is challenged in the most severe way as she is "swept away" by forces beyond anyone's control. Through her we face our own fears of behavior which violate obligations. She is literally and figuratively "out of control" of the external situation, but her internal strength and control instruct us on the validity of keeping our private vows of love and fidelity. The double triumph distinguishes her from the steward and should bring her closer to the experience of the audience. We are aware of our own anxieties about our public and private obligations, and her successes instruct our moral behavior.

Heurodis' initial reaction to her dream is close to insanity as she physically abuses herself. She finally brings herself under control, tries to assure Orfeo and announces her imminent departure. In a touching and intimate scene, the love between Heurodis and Orfeo is portrayed as deep and fulfilling, and the despair as real. Gone is the madness which overtook her upon first awakening and, in its place, is a desire to console her beloved. Orfeo reacts by

cataloguing her physical disarray and expressing a sincere desire to intercede on her behalf:

> A! dame, ich biseche merci,
> Lete ben al þis reweful cri,
> & tel me what þe is, & hou,
> & what þing may þe help now.
> 11.113-16

While she declares her undying love for him on the one hand, she declares her acceptance of their fateful separation, on the other. Her response is direct, unambiguous and loving in tone:

> "Allas, mi lord Sir Orfeo!
> Seþþen we first to-gider were
> Ones wroþ neuer we nere,
> Bot euer ich haue y-loued þe
> As mi liif, & so þou me;
> Ac now we mot delen ato
> --Do þi best, for y mot go."
> 11.120-26

Her inner strength makes possible an acquiescence without hysteria or anxiety; a model heroine--passive and accepting.

From the point at which she joins the fairy king, Heurodis functions passively in the narrative. Her assay begins on that May morning under the ympre-tre and, to some extent, it is governed by the assay of Orfeo as she is caught and restrained in the "otherworld" until he is able to find her and arrange her release. Her role becomes one in which she follows the dictates of the one who possesses her, fairy or mortal. Only by fulfilling her obligation not to interfere in any way does she succeed. The rules as set out by the fairy abductor make it perfectly clear that she cannot escape from him or the abduction:

". . . ȝif þou makest ous y-let,
Whar þou be, þou worst y-fet,
& to-tore þine limes al,
þat noþing help þe no shcal;
& þei þou best so to-torn,
ȝete þou worst wiþ ou y-born."
11.169-174

She becomes, without struggle, a member of the fairy king's entourage. When in the forest, she passes by Orfeo-as-hermit, she recognizes but does not acknowledge him:

His owhen quen, Dam Heurodis.
ȝern he biheld hir, & sche him eke,
Ac noiþer to oþer a word no speke,
For messais þat sche on him seiȝe,
Þat had ben so riche & so heiȝé.
Þe teres fel out of her eiȝe:
Þe oþer leuedis þis y-seiȝe
& maked hir oway to ride
11.322-29

And inside the cave she is preserved just as when she was taken years before; Orfeo:

Þer he seiȝe his owhen wiif,
Dame Heurodis, his lef liif,
Slepe vnder an ympre-tre;
Bi her cloþes he knewe þat it was he.
11.405-408

Each has endured his relative position, and Orfeo has, in fact, grown during his forest experience. Heurodis' repose in the forest world is undeveloped, yet is in keeping with the abductor's promise. Like all others in fairy land, she remains a passive member of the entourage until, released from the spell, she goes just as easily with Orfeo-disguised-as-hermit. Her rehabilitation will be completed only after Orfeo and the steward also successfully conclude their respective assays.

Clearly the poet's primary interest is Orfeo's assay, but, Heurodis' assay is also exemplary, if in a subsidiary way. From the moment she falls asleep under the tree, we know she will be most severely challenged. The suspense and uncertainty over her recovery are sustained until the last because her failure is not only possible, it is probable. We can relate to her because the loyalty being tested is that which is essential to intimate relationships. Not only must she keep her marital vow of fidelity, she must also not violate her public obligations as queen. The Orfeo poet expects us to understand her ten year hiatus without his detailing it; she remains as she was when "taken." The two glimpses we have of her in fairyland show a passive, obedient and physically unaltered Heurodis. She no more actively responds to Orfeo's arrival in fairyland after the separation than she acted to prohibit the fairy king's abduction of her. Perhaps her behavior is to be understood as a result of being in fairyland. Yet, how does it instruct us?

Surely the adventure of Heurodis is one which validates obedience to incomprehensible demands and conditions as well as to silence when it seems public acknowledgement would be more appropriate. She meets the challenges of the Adventure formula by acting passively. Just as she must deal with the unexplained and unexplainable, so must we. And when faced with the challenges of the disruptive world, she acts in such a way as to comply with the threats of the Alien Being--just as Degare's mother acted to hide the results of her forest adventure. In her assay, she remains faithful to her vows and overcomes all fears by allowing others to

act for her. To the extent that Heurodis displays strength, her strength is her ability to act not as an individual, but rather to trust in others to bring her out of danger. The suspense associated with her assay is intensified each time she is confronted with an opportunity to act as an individual in order to change her situation. We respond emotionally, knowing that Heurodis might act at last to violate her obligations while, at the same time, we are confident she will act appropriately--passively--one more time. As with the assay of the steward, we vicariously confront and conquer our fear of failure and we are instructed in our need to uphold our public and private vows. In this way, the Adventure, Romance and Alien Being formulas function both therapeutically and regulatively.

In Sir Orfeo, Heurodis' role is essentially traditional; that is, she is a woman who is dominated by men. She never really acts to cause her abduction or her release; she must await abduction by the fairy king in the same way she awaits restoration through the heroic acts of Orfeo. Essentially Heurodis is a member of a society based on male supremacy. It is also a society which is exceptionally favorable to women, despite their subordination. She does not suffer any harm as a result of her inability to act on her own behalf but she is a pawn of the disruptive forces manifested in the fairy king and his ability to carry out his threats. If she is ever tempted to act for herself--and there is no indication that she is--she does not. Heurodis is the product of the male-oriented conventions (social as well as literary) which dictate that the heroine behave with due moderation. In this way Orfeo validates

the woman's experience as being passive and as dominated by men. This is the story of Orfeo's struggle and adventure, and Heurodis functions to assist in the realization of his success. Thus Heurodis' assay instructs women in levelheaded acceptance of male dominance in order to be protected from the unknown evils of the world. Heurodis' assay allows women to confront the fear and fantasy of abduction, and of being without the protection of the accepted male-dominated social structure; at the same time, her assay instructs women to remain passive until men arrange for their proper restoration within that social structure. Both the fairy king and Orfeo act on behalf of Heurodis, and each provides for her integration into his world. Equally important to the analysis of Heurodis' assay is the manner in which it instructs men to recognize that women will wait and do need to be rescued.

Orfeo's assay complements, controls and contrasts with those of Heurodis and the steward. The Adventure, Romance and Alien Being Formulas in Sir Orfeo are unique in this study because Orfeo's moral fantasy is one which is expressed not in active pursuit and combat against explicit evils, but through a solitary internalized search for renewal. He is an adventurer in the limited sense that the challenges and obstacles which he overcomes are within himself. His road to rehabilitation is through the discovery world of humility and penance. He removes himself from his feudal obligations in a conscious act of detachment, and frees himself from the mechanical behavior of one who acts without comprehending the meaning of his

actions. When his memory and sensibilities are restored, he moves back into the world of the previous disruption and toward a higher level of social and marital accommodation. His recovery signals his achievement of balanced sensibilities. As the Adventure-Romance hero, Orfeo is a "revitalized" stereotype; he wanders, not pursues. The Auchinleck Orfeo is characterized by his choice of self-exile:

> "Lordinges," he said, "Bifor ȝou here
> Ich ordainy min heiȝe steward
> To wite mi kingdom afterward;
> In me stede ben he schal
> To kepe mi londes ouer-al,
> For now ichaue mi quen y-lore,
> Þe fairest leuedi þat euer was bore,
> Neuer eft y nil no woman se.
> In-to wildernes ichil te,
> & liue þer eurrmore
> Wiþ wilde bestes in holtes hore;
> & when þe vnder-stond þat y be spent,
> Make ȝou þan a parlement,
> & chese ȝou a newe king
> --Now doþ ȝour best wiþ al mi þinge."
> 11.204-18

He responds to the challenges with thought and conscious plans.

The status of Orfeo as a disoriented individual is clearly established by his reaction to Heurodis' dilemma. His aggressive assertion that "this can not happen in my kingdom!" is founded on a perception that he is equal to or more powerful than the disruptive forces of the Alien Being/State formula. He vows, like the Biblical Ruth, "Whider þou gost ichil wiþ þe,/& whider y do þou schalt wiþ me." (11.129-30). His sincerity is beyond doubt, and he intends that they shall be together both physically and spiritually; that is, he means it literally. He does not understand his limited power and exhibits an exalted sense of self and a lack of humility.

Mistakenly Orfeo believes that he can actively prevent harm coming to Heurodis, and the poet emphasizes his image of the proud, self-confident and aggressive Orfeo who thinks the proper response to the forces of disruption is a physical one. His preoccupation with the physical is further developed when he calls out 1,000 troops in a futile attempt to prevent the abduction:

> & Orfeo hab his armes y-nome,
> & wele ten hundred knistes wib him,
> Ich y-armed, stout & grim;
>
> 11.182-184

The abduction by the fairy forces represents a disruption against which Orfeo is powerless. It is a limitless challenge to him as an individual as well as to the communal ideals of law and order. His massive military response is out of all proportion to the threat, and yet is inadequate to meet the threat. Orfeo has no personal sense of what it means to act appropriately in the face of such challenges. He cannot prevent Heurodis' abduction (a fact she recognizes) any more than Degare's mother or Freine's mother could prevent the fairy disruption of their lives. He can only accept and learn.

As the Adventure-Romance hero, the achievement of Orfeo comes in his ten year self-exile during which he must overcome numerous obstacles to his survival while, at the same time, he finds himself. Two major changes in the classical story have significance for this study: (1) Orfeo is a king instead of a simple shepherd, (2) he makes a conscious choice of self-exile, avoiding all human contact. Because Orfeo is at the top of the social scale, his choice

of the pilgrim's mantle and way of life emphasizes the contrast between exalted position and the "fall" into another level of being. Both Orfeo innovations come together in his abdication-exile speech and clarify the internalization of his struggle (11.204-18). He rejects the civilized society which he leads. By delegating his obligation for social stability, and not merely abandoning it, Orfeo is free to wander like a pilgrim and devote himself like a hermit, to meditation and introspection. Orfeo as adventurer combines two medieval ascetic modes.

While most medieval adventurers undertake moral missions which are fairly well defined, Orfeo's challenge is ambiguous and results from the general but inescapable fact of being an imperfect human being. One interesting aspect of the Orfeo Adventure formula is that it functions therapeutically as Orfeo faces obstacles of an unspecified nature. Orfeo is like Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade who, in The Maltese Falcon, must, in spite of his deep attachment, turn in Brigid O'Shaughnessey to the police, not for any articulated reason on his part (although he does catalogue seven tangential ones). Instead he is impelled from within by an innate sense which he cannot articulate, even if he knows what it is. Spade recognizes that his position is the universal human condition--this is the way it is because it has to be. This sense of personal decency in Spade, unspoken as it is, is no doubt the quality which has endeared him to modern audiences; it is this same implied sense of personal struggle for decency over unactualized foes which has attracted

readers to Orfeo through the centuries. The struggle of Spade and of Orfeo is our struggle against a disruptive world.

In order for Orfeo to act appropriately, his search must be solitary and thoroughly humbling--a complete and total rediscovery and redefinition of self. There are no explicit statements regarding what it is that Orfeo is confronting in himself--excessive appetites, self-centeredness to name but two possibilities--we only know that we must make this journey of discovery. Evidence of this is his oneness with the wild beasts, and with nature. In the accepting world when he charms the beasts with music, he is approaching peace with the bestial aspects of himself; the paradox is that his 'wild' exterior is opposed by the 'interior' peace he is achieving for the first time:

> He toke his harp to him wel riȝt
> & harped at his owhen wille,
> In-to alle þe wode þe soun gan schille,
> Þat alle þe wilde bestes þat þer be
> For ioie abouten him þai teþ,
> & alle þe foules þat þer were
> Come & sete on ich a brere,
> To here his harping a-fine
> --So miche melody was þer-in;
> & when he his harping lete wold,
> No best bi him abide nold.
>
> 11.270-80

Orfeo's musical ability leads to the recovery of his lost self, enables him to endure the tortures of the forest and allows him to achieve the awareness necessary to follow the fairy ladies without causing a disturbance. Through his music, Orfeo first achieves harmony with the wild animals, and then expresses an inner harmony after his conflict with the fairy king. Orfeo's use of music

enables him to approach self integration, to be worthy of restoration, and to once again rule his kingdom.

In the discovery world of the forest there is no expressed violence, and the emphasis is on music as the healing agent for the social harmony and personal misery. Orfeo's achievement of Orfeo contrasts with the more physical and incremental ones detailed in Sir Degare but has an implied counterpart in the leperous suffering and wandering of Amiloun. In the fairy court, Orfeo's harp playing challenges the fairy king's authority and helps Orfeo to establish his identity. This time when Orfeo confronts the fairy king, he uses a harp instead of armed soldiers and, of course, he succeeds. Although the fairy king asserts his supremacy, he is outwitted and easily overcome by an Orfeo who casts a musical spell. With his harp playing, Orfeo gains the promise of a reward, but it is his sense of ethical behavior which wins him Heurodis in the face of the fairy king's ignobility. This time Orfeo's response to the challenge of the disruptive king is verbal, not physical:

> "O, Sir!" he seyd, "Gentil King!
> Zete were it a wele fouler þing
> To here a lesing of þi moupe:
> So, Sir, as ze seyd noupe
> What ich wold aski haue y schold,
> & nedes þou most þi word hold."
> ll.463-68

Although Orfeo failed so abysmally when he tried physical force to overcome his adversary, his use of guile secures Heurodis' release. Like the maids in Degare and le Freine who use guile to protect their ladies to deal with the forces of disruption, Orfeo also

schemes his way to success. In the fairy king's domain Orfeo is able to manuever himself into the command position by using his music and his wit, not his muscle.

Orfeo's achievement of heightened self-awareness identifies many of the same qualities of other Adventure-Romance heroes who overcome personal, inner conflicts through the selective practice of humility, and his achievement contrasts with some of those who fail--to name but two, Tristan and Lancelot. In order to achieve this awareness, something or someone must be rejected or denied, and in Orfeo the individual struggles against and overcomes the disruptive forces which threaten his kingdom and himself. His challenge and his triumph are ambiguously related to any identifiable 'reality' and that seems to have been the charm of the Middle English version.

Sir Orfeo functions therapeutically through the Alien Being formula when, after all, much of Orfeo's experience is based on the incomprehensibility of the unknown and the limits of the knowable. If we see his assay as a metaphor for life and the Alien-fairy king as a representation of the known within us, Orfeo's triumph instructs on meeting the challenges of the disruptive world. The underlying mystery in Orfeo is, like our dreams, an experience in which the unknowable is confronted and, hopefully, conquered. Because Orfeo confronts and overcomes the unknown, the formula operates "in a complete forgetting of self in the intense and momentary involvement in an external fantasy."[14] The unknown is always incomprehensible

in some way, but in Orfeo it is manifest in the fairy king, his seizure of Heurodis and his world. As the Adventure and Romance hero, Orfeo's struggle leads to his meeting the challenges of the unknown and surviving in order to be accommodated into the world of former disruption.

The regulative function is the formulation of patterns which operate in order to teach people about their own culture and to instruct them as individuals on how to govern themselves in society. If the goal is to regulate individual behavior in a productive manner for the society as a whole, then Orfeo is a clear and precise achievement of that goal. The individual in the society of Orfeo is one who seeks fulfillment in both heterosexual 'romance' love as well as in 'epic' male love. Furthermore, this fulfillment is to be achieved through the exchange of promises and vows without regard to the ease of keeping them; this is surely a functional definition of all feudal relationships. For these three characters, it is absolutely essential that they remain loyal to the vows which commit them to each other and their society. Because Heurodis, the steward, and Orfeo are willing to abnegate self-interest in order to achieve relevance within society, it is possible to be "newe coround" (1.593). The formulas affirm the experience of the individuals who are challenged by the unknown and who face those challenges of self-discovery in order to be productive. The promise of the regulative function is that when the vows are kept, the society will prosper. The vision being validated is one of a non-militant, non-aggressive

society. Furthermore, the challenges to remaining loyal are structured so that they are interdependent and hierarchal. In order for the final synthesis to be accomplished, each adventurer must uphold fidelity to the vows taken and it is this achievement which renders the Middle English Orfeo so different from its predecessors. Because each succeeds, there can be a restoration and synthesis of the two worlds of disruption and discovery.

As Cawelti has suggested, popular story patterns persist not because they embody some particular ideology or mythology but because they contain a great number of interests. In Sir Orfeo the synthesis of cultural and artistic interests is shown in the final recognition scene. The force which the fairy king represents is unarticulated and Orfeo's self exile is personally rather than socially motivated. We can trace the narrative movement from the challenge of the disruptive world represented by the fairy king to Orfeo's long exile in the forest and back to the final accommodation. The triumph of the accommodation is that, even though Orfeo was unable to prevent Heurodis' abduction, he acts heroically and with authority to assert his command over his domain by outmanuevering the fairy king. Orfeo never beats or eradicates the disruptive forces, he frees himself, Heurodis, and his kingdom of the influence of the disruptive world. The forces of disruption continue to exist, but they will no longer threaten Orfeo because the final synthesis is ensured when he becomes king once again. This social synthesis is a characteristic of Middle English verse narrative and shows how the Auchinleck poet accommodates

the inherited material to incorporate an optimistic ending, more in agreement with other Middle English verse narratives, and hence more to the tastes of his contemporary audience. Sir Orfeo resembles Sir Degare, Lai le Freine and Amis and Amiloun in its use of the Adventure, Romance and Alien Being/State formulas and in the social values that it promotes in the achieved world of accommodation.

The Alien Being formula dominates the Orfeo myth but the Auchinleck version is a unique accomplishment in its resolution of the tragic ending. Although Orfeo's search is not detailed in the same way as those of other adventurers of this study, the interweaving of the Adventure and Romance formulas establishes the primacy of the loyalty to those with whom one exchanges vows. The steward's adventure is to uphold his public obligations to Orfeo whereas the challenge of Heurodis and Orfeo incorporates the concepts of public and private fidelity. The Romance formula ensures us that the love of the individuals for each other--'epic' or 'romance'--will sustain and enable them to overcome the forces of disruption. And, it is this dual concept of love which provides the basis for the social synthesis and ensures its success.

CHAPTER IV FOOTNOTES

[1]Sir Orfeo, ed. A.J. Bliss, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1966). All references are to this edition.

[2]J. Burke Severs, "The Antecedents of Sir Orfeo," Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Albert Croll Baugh (Philadelphia: University of Penn Press, 1961), pp. 195-196; Bliss, Orfeo, p. xxxiv, citing Filii Mortue and Wooing of Etain as influences.

[3]Severs, "The Antecedents," p. 197.

[4]Bliss, Orfeo, p. xxxii; Roger Sherman Loomis, "Sir Orfeo and Walter Map's De Nugis," MLN, 51 (1936): 28-30; Constances Davies, "Notes on the Sources of Sir Orfeo," MLR, 31 (1936): 354-357; Constances Davies, "Sir Orfeo and De Nugis," MLN, 51 (1936): 492; J. Burke Severs, "The Antecedents," p. 197; G.V. Smithers, "Story Patterns in Some Breton Lays," Medium AEvum, 22 (1953): 61-92.

[5]Marion Stewart, "King Orphius," Scottish Studies, 17 (1973): 1-16.

[6]Bliss, Orfeo, p. xxviii.

[7]Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth Fourteen Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 40.

[8]D.M. Hill, "The Structure of Sir Orfeo," Medieval Studies, 23 (1961): 136, 53; David Lyle Jeffrey, "The Exiled King: Sir Orfeo's Harp and the Second Death of Eurydice," MOSAIC, 9 (1975-76): 45-60; Felicity Riddy, "The Uses of the Past in Sir Orfeo," YES, 6 (1976): 5-15.

[9]Edward E. Foster, "Fantasy and Reality in Sir Orfeo," BSUF, 14 (1973): 22-29; Alice E. Lasater, "Under the Ympre-Tre or: Where the Action is in Sir Orfeo," Southern Quarterly, 12 (1973-74): 353-363; Edward D. Kennedy, "Sir Orfeo as Rex Inutilis," Annuale Mediaevale, 17 (1976): 88-110; J. Eadie, "A Suggestion as to the Origin of the Steward in the Middle English Sir Orfeo," Trivium, 7 (1972): 54-60; Howard Nimchinsky, "Orfeo, Guillaume, and Horne," RPh, 22 (1968): 3.

[10]Kennedy, "Rex." He builds his case on material suggested in Edward Peters, The Shadow King: 'Rex Inutilis' in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327 (New Haven, 1970).

[11]Kennedy, "Rex," pp. 106-109.

[12]Michael D. Bristol, "Structure of the Middle English Sir Orfeo," PLL, 6 (1970): 339-347; John B. Friedman, Orpheus in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass., 1970); Constance Davies, "Classical Threads in Orfeo," MLR, 56 (1961): 161-166; Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, "The Significance of Sir Orfeo's Self-Exile," RES, 18 (1967): 245-252; A.M. Kinghorn, "Human Interest in the Middle English Sir Orfeo," Neophil., 50 (1966): 364-368; Dorena Allen, "Orpheus and Orfeo: The Dead and the 'Taken'," Medium AEvum, 33 (1964): 102-111.

[13]Thomas B. Hanson, "Sir Orfeo: Romance as Exemplum," Annuale Mediaevale, 13 (1972): 135-154.

[14]Cawelti, "Notes Towards . . .," p. 33.

CHAPTER V

SIR TRISTREM

Sir Tristrem is the only Middle English version of the legend except for Malory.[1] The verse narrative consists of 3344 verses in eleven line stanzas and is incomplete because the last leaf has been removed. The poem faithfully follows the poem of Thomas, although only a skeleton of the story is presented.[2] Sir Tristrem has generally been judged to be "brief and undistinguished" and scholarly concerns fall into four categories: source and authorship; poetic form and style; oral-minstrel influence, and coherence and overall narrative pattern and technique.[3]

There are five allusions in the poem to "Tomas" as the narrator or source of the poem and these have prompted speculations about the authorship. It is generally agreed that Tristrem is closely related to the poem of Thomas or its source.[4] Newstead states that the identification of Thomas of Ercildoun or Thomas of Kendale as the source rests "on shaky evidence, and the references could just as reasonably be allusions to the French author."[5] The length of the Auchinleck poem is considerably less than other extant versions; Mehl estimates it to be half the length of the Norse saga, far less than what Thomas' French poem must have been.

Gottfried's poem, while full of digressions and rhetorical embellishments, is nearly six times longer. The English Tristan is a concise poem in comparison to its continental counterparts.

Perhaps the main reason Sir Tristrem has been so poorly received is that its poetic form and style are extremely complicated and filled with too many meaningless tags.[6] Mehl considers the meter comparatively sophisticated, and cites several other somewhat unusual formal devices used by the Auchinleck poet--a 'bob' which is one part of a tripartite structure, alliteration and verbal repetition. Newstead considers that the complicated and difficult stanza form so preoccupied the author that he "sacrificed the story to the demands of meter and rime."

Most scholars have agreed that Sir Tristrem shows the conventions of minstrel technique--an action which does not proceed by a logical sequence of events, the drastic condensation of the story and the elimination of the debates and soliloquies characteristic of other versions. Most of the poem's stylistic pecularities are characteristic of poems written for recitation: direct simplicity, a lack of metaphor and simile, a studied reiteration of stereotypic combinations of words and the use of meaningless expletives to answer the metrical needs of the verse.

The narrative technique of Tristrem is one of utmost brevity but, more importantly, the story is no longer one of love, but rather a "history of fatal error" which brings a promising knight to misery.[7] Mark is turned into a ludicrous figure partly because

neither adultery nor fatal love are ever mentioned. Mehl concludes that Tristrem is written with "unsubtle and heavy-handed narrative technique" and Newstead that it is "a much coarsened version of its subtle and moving original."

Formulas

Like the other Auchinleck authors, the Sir Tristrem poet does not attempt to imitate the courtly background of his continental models. Instead he is more concerned with an accurate reflection of his own society--a society profoundly changed from that of earlier Tristan stories by the passage of many years and the development of a different national character. At the same time and in a very real way, Sir Tristrem is a fairy tale, a story from a distant past--"of eldirs, þat before vs were" (Sir Ysumbras). Furthermore, the Auchinleck author appears to have been motivated by a desire, perhaps a need, to popularize; that is, to make contemporary and English the tragic love story of Tristrem and Ysonde. He added and expanded specific popularizing elements but was unable or unwilling to subjugate other traditional courtly parts of the legend; Sir Tristrem can hardly be described as a consistent, coherent narrative with a single purpose. By incorporating moral imperatives from the world around him, he has nearly brought about the collapse of the delicate fabric of the fatal, tragic love story. As he rendered up more and more in characterization and situations in order to increase the audience's ability to identify with his story, the Auchinleck poet was unable to reconcile the conflict between the nature and intent

of the traditional legend and his own efforts to accommodate it to contemporary English concerns.

On one level, Sir Tristrem is the story of two people who love one another uncontrollably, and who have obligations and loyalties which make open and public expression and acknowledgement of that love impossible, even a threat to life itself. On another level, the Tristan legend is a story of a fatal, all-encompassing passion which violates and transcends religious and social morality. This aspect of the story cannot be easily reduced or rendered in the popular mode. The Auchinleck author's dilemma is that popular literature seeks to validate the experience of the audience and, at the same time, explain the unexplainable. The potion as the cause and excuse for the immoral behavior is questionable to an audience more concerned with the articulation of the most desired popular experience--the possibilities of sexual relationships. In other words, the author might have been more successful had he been able to provide substantial and suitable motivation for the love of Tristrem and Ysonde without resorting to sole reliance upon the potion. Furthermore, because the popular mode implies an optimistic resolution of difficulties, the Tristrem author encounters unsurmountable barriers in the continental myth.

Sir Tristrem combines the Adventure, Romance and Alien Being/State formulas, and it is a story in which the tragic love theme is subordinated. The Auchinleck Tristrem is a noble youth of flawed abilities. Like most Romance figures, Tristrem creates an identity

within the Adventure formula and, in the process, fulfills his noble heritage while discovering his identity. He is confronted with a series of trials and adventures which reveal his character but these are, for the most part, in accord with the conventional story line inherited from the continental source. In brief, the three formulas conform to the popular theory:

1. Adventure Formula: develops and establishes Tristrem's superiority much in the superhero mode; overcomes challenges to identity in order to provide social stability through succession; popularizing elements introduced, especially minstrel aspects; public hero with private life.

2. Romance Formula: prototype of tragic love; an antisocial love; characterized by privacy, isolation, adultery; the exclusive aspect of love seems enhanced through a fear of discovery; conflicts with Adventure formula and makes synthesis impossible, at least in worldly terms.

3. Alien State/Being Formula: effect of potion is irreversible; in Tristrem, potion's effect seems rationalized, even trivialized; is supposed to explain the unexplainable but really not germane in this version.

The interweaving of the formulas is supposed to give expression to the culture's consensus about the nature of morality and reality. In Sir Tristrem the use of the Romance formula validates a self-destructive and somewhat nihilistic love relationship, and is counter to the template developed by the Adventure formula. The popularizing impulses which seek to make Tristrem an exemplary Adventure superhero are not compatible with the inherited tragic elements which dictate another type of figure. Because the destruction of Tristrem and Ysonde is called for by the legend, the synthesis which characterizes most popular formulaic literature is not possible.

The first third of Sir Tristrem conforms to the Adventure formula, in which the hero does not already embody achieved perfection but is, we suspect, capable of perfectability. In the active process of discovering himself and realizing his inherent potential, Tristrem overcomes obstacles and dangers in order to accomplish a moral mission, to become an idealized self, an enriched character. Although Sir Tristrem suggests an old "ideal," a new template begun in Gottfried's version is here further developed from the old material; this new template is one which de-emphasizes a lover consumed by passion--illicit more often than not--in favor of a template which incorporates the musically oriented Adventure knight.

In the tradition of the formula, Tristrem's heritage and childhood remind us of other Auchinleck heroes as he establishes himself by his experience. Like those of Degare and le Freine, Tristrem's begetting and birth are essential aspects of the Adventure formula, because he too is born under unusual circumstances. His parents meet at the court of King Mark where Roland wins the heart of the King's sister, Blaunchefleur; soon:

> A knaue child get ȝai tvo,
> So dere;
> And seȝȝen men cleped him so:--
> Tristrem ȝe trewe fere.
>
> 11.107-10

Blaunchefleur returns with Roland to his country where he goes to fight against his long time foe, Duke Morgan. Roland is fatally wounded in battle, and Blaunchefleur:

On child bed þer sche lay
Was born
Of hir tristrem þat day.
11.217-19

She soon dies, only after entrusting her son to the faithful steward, Rohant, to whom she gives the necessary recognition token:

"Mi broþer wele it knewe,
Mi fader ȝaf it me;
King markes may rewe,
Þe ring, þan he it se,
And moun."
11.225-29

And so, Tramtris, née Tristrem, is raised and nurtured by Rohant as the twin son of his own wife.

Continuing within the boundaries of the Adventure formula, the early training and education of Tristrem resembles that of other Adventure heroes:

Fiftene ȝere he gan his fede,
Sir rohant þe trewe;
He tauȝt him ich alede
Of ich manner of glewe
And eueriche playing þede,
Old lawes and newe;
On hunting oft he ȝede,
To swiche alawe he drewe
Al þus,
More he couþe of venerie
Þan couþe manerious.
11.287-97

On the whole, Tristrem's education is that of the conventional Middle English verse narrative. When the author turns to Tristrem's other areas of expertise, however, the result is quite different. The Auchinleck Adventure formula emphasizes Tristrem's physical prowess and masculinity. His ability at chess serves him well as he outwits the Norwegian merchants to win six hawks. Even more impressive and

instructive is Tristrem's demonstrable knowledge of venerie and the attention given it by the Auchinleck author. These masculine, knightly and noble pursuits show essential aspects of Tristrem's character instead of merely informing the audience or assuming that it already knows Tristrem. Although these aspects of Tristrem's early life are essentialy in accord with Gottfried's version, these comparatively lengthy passages are important in a tale which is so condensed and generally lacking in descriptive passages emphasizing the courtly, aristocratic elements. The important thing to note is that, although the facets of Tristrem's personality which are being emphasized are not unique and unusual within the Adventure formula itself (in fact, they are the Adventure formula), they are not essential or necessary to the Romance formula. These passages show authorial acceptance of the traditional legend to include other familiar aspects of the Adventure formula.

A major example of the Auchinleck poet's emphasis of certain aspects of the basic story is the dressing of the hart episode, for it shows the poet's own personal touch. Having already been informed of Tristrem's model education (ll.278-97), we learn of his skill at dressing the hart in a lecture and demonstration:

Tristrem schare þe brest,
Þe tong sat next þe pride;
Þe heminges swiþe on est
He schar and layd bi side;
Þe breche adoun he þrest,
He ritt and gan to riȝt;
Boldliche þer þest
Carf he of þat hide
Bidene;
. . . . . .

Þe spande was þe first brede,
Þe erber dizt he zare,
To þe stifle he zede
And euen ato hem schare;
He rizt al þe rede,
Þe wombe oway he bare,
Þe noubles he zaf to mede.

11.474-82, 485-91

The dressing of the hart is provocative because, although it fulfills the narrative function of introducing Tristrem into Mark's court and consequently discovering his heritage, it is expanded by careful details. The description is a "tell and show" or a "how to manual" as it instructs as well as entertains. This Auchinleck scene differs in kind and purpose from the embellishment for which Gottfried is praised. The poet is not trying to impress with poetic fancy so much as to be interesting to his contemporary audience. Drawing upon the basic story line for the facts of Tristrem's noble education, he develops a template from the Adventure formula's superhero.

The major objectives of the Adventure formula are fulfilled with the acceptance of Tristrem as Mark's heir and with his trial by combat against Moraunt. The latter incident establishes Tristrem for all to accept and honor as defender of Mark's kingdom and as future ruler. At this point Sir Tristrem parallels other narratives of adventure--the hero discovers his heritage by finding his blood relatives and proves his worth by overcoming a series of challenges. The formulaic development of Tristrem conforms to the popular literature theory of Cawelti because it validates positive social values.

The interweaving of the Adventure and Romance formulas is initiated in an episode which I consider pivotal. Tristrem's combat

against Moraunt fulfills the needs of both formulas: Tristrem is well qualified in this challenge to represent England, because of his blood tie to King Mark, and second, because of his superior prowess. On the remote island Tristrem defeats Moraunt by splitting his brain, thus embedding a small sword fragment as a future recognition token; at the same time, he is severely wounded himself by Moraunt's poison-tipped sword. This conventional combat scene (ll.1000-98) functions to further and to support the story line in at least seven ways: (1) it shows Tristrem to be a brave and superior warrior, the Adventure formula superstar; (2) it secures the feudal bond between Tristrem and King Mark; (3) it obligates Mark and his countrymen to recognize Tristrem as their champion and savior; (4) it necessitates Tristrem's search for a cure for the poisonous wound received in combat; (5) it provides the opportunity for Tristrem to meet Ysonde who then administers the necessary salve to nurse him back to health; (6) Ysonde and the disguised Tristrem become close friends as a result of their mutual and shared interests both in the arts and in each other; and (7) most importantly, it establishes the grounds for the animosity between the two family-nation groups. This incident establishes Tristrem as the champion of Mark's kingdom and provides the basis for the romantic entanglement, thereby interweaving the Adventure and Romance formulas. The Auchinleck poet preserves this combat scene without much noticeable expansion or embellishment; it is rendered in an economical manner and its importance is obvious for unifying the formulas.

Tristrem's single combat against Moraunt is the fulfillment of the Adventure formula as it functions to create Tristrem, adventure-hero. He proves his physical prowess while establishing a claim to Mark's kingdom; he also earns the admiration and acceptance of Mark's countrymen. And in spite of all the positive results of his victory, his accomplishment is also the very thing which makes impossible the natural fulfillment of the affection between Tristrem and Ysonde. Precisely because they are who they are--Moraunt's niece and Moraunt's slayer--they are unable to express love without violating the boundaries of the established society and that would be against their human nature. For the Auchinleck author the combat scene adjusts the story to his interests and suggests that the relationship between Tristrem and Ysonde will be fraught with ambiguity and adversity.

Because Sir Tristrem accords with the continental versions in its major conflicts, resolutions, episodes and characters, a detailed recapitulation of the story is not necessary. There is little narrative attempt to analyze the psychological state of being in love, and the author emphasizes the involvement of Tristrem and Ysonde, not Mark and his betrayal. The Tristan-Iseult legend exemplifies the principles of conventional medieval verse narrative: love derives from sudden illumination, love is essentially private, love is intensified by frustration and difficulty, and love lifts the lovers to a new level of being. The Auchinleck Tristrem fulfills these in varying degrees and conforms to Cawelti's Romance formula

by showing a love relationship which has lasting and permanent impact. The intensity of the lover's passion is directly related to the extent to which their love is doomed.

The Sir Tristrem Romance formula contains the essentials of the continental myth, but the overall effect differs. The Auchinleck poet adapts the love of Tristrem and Ysonde by developing their mutual interests and shared experiences. The Middle English adaptation follows Gottfried's by moving away from a love resulting from the irrational in favor of a love whose origins are within the lovers themselves; the relationship still is improper and for the same social reasons, and the end result is much the same, but the emotional intensity differs.

This difference in the emotional intensity derives from the author's use of the Romance formula. The subtle and finely tuned antagonisms which characterize the continental versions are, on the whole, subjugated in this version. The author's desire seems to be to express the pure, exalted nature of Tristrem's love, and to de-emphasize the evil jealousy and scheming on the part of the others. There is no evidence to show that he did not understand his sources and, as some scholars have suggested, their use of love as a "dark passion." His central ambition seems to have been to tell the tale as concisely and completely as possible. The Auchinleck poet seems to emphasize Tristrem's musical ability and its role in expressing the lovers' unity. Music is an important aspect of Tristrem's education, is a crucial factor in the development of the friendship and love between Tristrem and Ysonde, and provides a distinction

between Tristrem and King Mark. In this way, the author goes beyond merely manipulating the formula to individualizing it, particularly in a narrative as economically recorded as Tristrem. The emphasis given Tristrem's musical gifts transcends a desire to delight his audience and becomes a matter of style--a style which seems to have been influenced by the traditions of oral story telling. And just as the musical metaphor is essential to Orfeo's conquest over the forces of disruption, Tristrem's musical interest also reflect a personal harmony also apparent in other versions of the story. Further, the emphasis given his musical talents reflects the author's interest in the practical, almost simple, aspects of the Romance formula. He keeps trying to humanize and make believable the tragic love that Tristrem and Ysonde share.

An example of the Auchinleck author's adaptive technique is the harp and rote (or Gandin) episode of the basic story line. There is no substantive adaptation and yet, the scene is memorable in a narrative of such modest proportions (11.1808-1925). The episode warrants full discussion because, in it, the author establishes that musicians have social position and are worthy of proper, adequate monetary reward. Also, he enriches the contrast between the ignominy of Mark and the valor of Tristrem. Most importantly though, the episode develops the importance of the lovers to each other. A certain Irish harper attracts Mark's attention and becomes so entranced by Ysonde that he hides his harp and refuses to play except for gifts. King Mark seems to find this not discourteous, so he requests the harper to play, after which he will grant a gift.

Of course, the musician asks for the Queen, and, in an effort to solve his dilemma, Mark, in an Auchinleck addition, calls a council meeting for advice. The situation is clear: Mark must either forfeit his honor or forfeit the Queen. Thus, Mark pays the harper with Ysonde, and when Tristrem returns from hunting and learns what has happened, he severely berates Mark:

> "Zifstow glewemen, Þi quen?
> Hastow no noþer þing?"
>
> 11.1850-51

Ever the hero of the Adventure and Romance formulas, Tristrem seizes his lute and rushes to where the Queen has been taken.

Whereas Mark is impotent to respond to the situation he has created, Tristrem acts quickly to redress it. At shipside, Ysonde recognizes Tristrem's voice despite--or because of--his minstrel disguise, and when she hears him sing, she swoons, so that her captor becomes concerned. She tricks the earl into inviting the "minstrel" to join them. While ashore, the earl and his party are serenaded by this "minstrel" whom the earl generously rewards with money. As they prepare to return to the ship, Tristrem grabs Ysonde, jumps on a horse and they disappear into the forest; eventually they return to court.

What does this episode show? As an enclosed piece which is reminiscent of Orfeo's rescue of Heurodis, the emphasis on minstrels is out of proportion to that in the whole of the narrative, and Mark's shameful behavior is not a new aspect of his character. Mark's inability to act to either prevent Ysonde's being taken or to rescue her combines with his ability to think only of <u>his own</u>

desires and his own honor; he is shown to be unimaginative, ignoble and vain. The rebuke Tristrem levels at him is well deserved, and it is Tristrem's formulaic behavior which is worthy. The author's concern is the moral truth shown by Tristrem's behavior, rather than the relationship between the lovers. Even the scheming minstrel comes off morally superior to Mark, since his behavior is made possible by Mark's stupidity. As the Auchinleck author frequently elaborates with the mundane and everyday, this particular episode adds: (1) greater emphasis on Mark's ignobility; (2) the harper as a surrogate suitor for the earl who awaits in shipboard; (3) Ysonde's recognition of Tristrem's voice before she is able to see him, and (4) Ysonde as accomplice in executing her escape. These are relatively minor details added to an episode which is faithful to other versions of the poem, yet we sense the importance of the minstrels and their ability to act as individuals and we notice Ysonde's active participation in bringing about her rescue.

With respect to the more conventional aspects of the Romance formula, more than enough has been written concerning the metaphorical religion of love and love as a religious experience. Because of the demands of the story line, Sir Tristrem presents a love which makes an absolute claim as a way of life. However, the love of Tristrem and Ysonde is not a love from sudden illumination; it is a mysterious and imperfectly comprehended experience. In Auchinleck, a friendship between Tristrem (as Tremtris) and Ysonde is established when they share experiences and interests during his recovery from his poisonous wound:

His gles weren so sellike
Þat wonder þouȝt him Þare.
His harp, his croude was rike,
His tables, his cles he bare.
. . . . . .
In yrlond nas no kniȝt
Wiþ ysonde durst play,
Ysonde of heiȝe priis,
Þe maiden briȝt of hewe
Þat wered fow and griis
And scarlet Þat was newe.
In warld was non so wiis
Of craft Þat men knewe
Wiþ outen sir tramtris
Þat al games of grewe
On grounde.

ll.1224-27; 1264-74

In addition, Ysonde and Tremtris discover each other's charms:

Þe king had adouhter dere
Þat maiden ysonde hiȝt,
Þat gle was lef to here
And romaunce to rede a riȝt.
Sir tremtris hir gan lere
Þo wiþ al his miȝt
What alle pointes were,
To se Þe soþe in siȝt,
To say.
. . . . . .
Ysonde he dede vnder stand
What alle playes were
In lay.

ll.1255-63; 1283-85

In Auchinleck, the friendship between Tremtris and his Irish hosts grows strong and deep, so much so that he is greatly missed when he returns to Carlion. Tremtris is accepted in Ireland as a friend and as a noble adventurer.

The Adventure and Romance formulas are further elaborated by the Auchinleck poet in the episode in which Tristrem wins Ysonde for King Mark. In the same way that Degare wins the princess of the magic castle by defeating the quarrelsome churl, Tristrem slays

the dragon threatening Ireland. The Tristrem who wins Ysonde is disguised as a merchant and, of course, he wins her for another. The irony of the situation is that the formula assures this to be proper (even Ysonde responds knowledgeably, "Allas þat þou ner knizt" (l.1551), but Tristrem is a surrogate suitor for Mark, perhaps even his procurer. Traditionally Tristrem's very success is potentially disasterous on several accounts: he loses Ysonde as his own life's partner by winning her for another, he endangers his inheritance by enabling his uncle to marry, and, most importantly, he violates the implied personal relationship that winning Ysonde had made possible. After all, there is something anti-Romantic in Tristrem's considering his duty to Mark to be superior to his having won this maid whom he already cares for. And in another Auchinleck modification, Ysonde herself seems to recognize a contradiction, for she quickly modifies her opinion of this brave champion when she discovers that he is Tristrem, the one who killed her Uncle Moraunt. She admits she would have killed Tristrem (Tremtris) as he bathed if he had not convinced her that he had slain her noble relation in a fair fight; she is also persuaded toward kindness when he reminds her of the friendship which had grown between them when he was Tromtris:

> Þo y tramtris hizt,
> Y lerle þe play and song,
> And euer wiþ al mi mizt
> Of þe y spac among
> To marke, þe riche knizt,
> Þat after þe he gan long.
>
> ll.1607-12

This scene establishes the ambivalence and antagonism which exists between the lovers in spite of the effect which the potion uniting

them will have. Our author seems to sense the Romance formula and its complications, and tries to integrate his interest with those of the legend. With this episode he shows their natural affinity for each other while emphasizing their families' long and deep feud.

Ysonde accepts her fate to become the wife of Mark, and her attitude toward Tristrem changes only as a result of the potion's effect. In this the Auchinleck author conforms to the basic story line but does little beyond mere statement:

> Swete ysonde þe fre
> Asked bringwain adrink.
> Þe coupe was richeli wrouȝt,
> Of gold it was, þe pin;
> In al þe warld nas nouȝt
> Swiche drink as þer was in.
> Brengwain was brong bi þouȝt,
> To þat drink sche gan win
> And swete ysonde it bi tauȝt;
> Sche bad tristrem bigin,
> To say.
> Her loue miȝt no man tvin
> Til her endingday.
> An hounde þer was biside,
> Þat was y cleped hodain;
>
> 11.1660-74

The Auchinleck Sir Tristrem preserves the necessary story line regarding the taking of the potion, but it is all substance and no sens. The lovers are physically joined, but there is little sentimental or emotional force in the scene. The effect of the potion is such that Ysonde overcomes her hostility toward Tristrem, and the sexual aspect of the love begins to dominate. This domination is implied, never articulated, just as there is no mention or development of the fatal love or the adultery. We can only speculate as to why the Auchinleck author avoids an analysis of his material.

Surely he understood his source material and he probably was unsympathetic to it--or may be he was instructed by his patron to expunge the mythic qualities. He does de-emphasize the "dark passion" aspect of the love between Tristrem and Ysonde with the effect that the Romance formula becomes dominated by adventures created to keep that love secret. This may be an attempt to "popularize," to accommodate the basic story to a fourteenth century audience. As such, certain narrative Tristrem aspects do resemble certain aspects in other Auchinleck narratives in this study. As in these others, the Alien State/Being formula is still interwoven but its importance and impact are limited: upon accommodation, Degare's father has become mostly human and little fairy; Orfeo does rescue Heurodis and is restored despite the generalized sojourn in the fair forest, and in Tristrem the lovers' love with the aid of the potion, not merely because of it. In the other Auchinleck narratives of this study the Alien Being/State formula complements and supports the formulas of Adventure and Romance in a rationalized way, but in Tristrem the author was unable to accomplish such a rationalization of the potion and the love.

The Romance formula is elaborated by the frustration and difficulty which the lovers face as a result of the hatred and jealousy which Mark's countrymen have for Tristrem. After all, Tristrem is unacceptable to those in Cornwall before Ysonde is ever heard of. Probably because of the absence of any discussion of the adulterous aspects of the love between Tristrem and Ysonde, the Auchinleck Tristrem seems to offer King Mark and his knights as

incompetent and inconvenient complications which thwart the lovers' happiness. Like the drinking of the potion before it, the marriage ceremony of Mark and Ysonde is remarkable for its modesty:

> Ysonde briȝt of hewe
> Þer spoused mark Þe king.
> He spoused hi wiþ his ring,
> Of fest no speke y nouȝt.
>
> 11.1704-07

Mark is not actualized evil although he is often influenced by the force of evil as embodied in the jealous countrymen and the dwarf.

Two scenes develop the Romance formula's concept of the essentially private nature of love--the substitution of Brengwain in the marriage bed and the famous grotto scene. The first complies with the basic story line in substituting Brengwain and in Ysonde's only pretending to drink a second draft with Mark (11.1712-25). This conspiracy is dictated more by the necessity to keep Mark from learning that Ysonde has been with another than by any exalted notion of love's privacy. The private nature of the love between Ysonde and Tristrem should be glorified in the grotto scene, if anywhere, but the Auchinleck poet never really manages to create that special joy and pleasure. The grotto scene should be one in which the lovers are lifted to a new level of being; in Auchinleck they are essentially no different in the woods than they are at the court. They live the rustic life of simplicity in the accepting world of the forest:

> Þai hadden adern gat,
> Þat Þai no man told.
> No hadde Þai no wines wat,
> No ale Þat was old,
> No no gode mete Þai at:

Þai hadden al þat þai wold
Wiþ wille.
For loue ich oþer bi halt,
Her nom miȝt of oþer fille.
11.2489-2497

This conforms to the story line but is an astonishingly modest treatment. Once again the poet evinces no concern for the spiritual aspect of their adulterous love, and is able to leave unaltered those aspects of the Romance formula for which he had little interest.

The Auchinleck Sir Tristrem is in accord with the continental sources and conforms to the major elements of the Romance formula, and yet it fails to comply with the tradition of the other Tristan versions. His matter-of-fact grotto scene confirms our impression that the Auchinleck author intentionally subordinates the elitist elements of the legend; he expunges those elements which might be considered unintelligible to a popular audience and that accommodation might be a result of his preference for or training in the oral tradition. The poet adapts and expands the story to his own modest purposes, and he is able to respect those aspects of the story for which he has little concern. Instead of creating a love which results solely from sudden illumination, he creates a friendship between the two which is founded on the sharing of an interest in music and other more commonplace elements. He moves toward rationalizing their passion into a rather modest affair of the heart as he attempts to personalize the sources of their mutual affection.

The legend of Tristan and Iseult is a major example of Cawelti's literary formula of Romance, and because the development

of the love relationship is the organizing action, the poet's attempts to rationalize the growth of their love are important. Cawelti asserts that:

> . . .the intensity of the lovers' passion is directly related to the extent to which their love is doomed. It simply cannot continue to exist in the situation in which it arises either for social or psychological reasons and thus the passion itself brings about the death of one or both of the lovers. . . . Since romance is a fantasy of the all-sufficiency of love, most romantic formulas center on the overcoming of some combination of social or psychological barriers.

The legend of Tristan and Iseult conforms to this formulation primarily because the death of the lovers is supposed to unite them in a way impossible for them in life. Their adulterous love is held by the poet to be superior to the more socially acceptable love between Iseult and Mark and between Tristan and Iseult of the White Hands. There are no limits to the love which exists between these two except the boundaries of their earthly existence, and so the ultimate union takes place symbolically outside the actual narrative. Cawelti sees most modern Romance formulas as affirmations of the ideals of monogamous marriage and feminine domesticity, but for a multitude of reasons, the legend does not advance such limited ideals (it may also be true that the Romance formula in contemporary literature is radically changing in our own time as a result of new social tastes and demands). The Auchinleck author emphasizes the possibility that Tristrem and Ysonde are brought together by something other than the potion and, for this reason, their passion resembles that of Romeo and Juliet. The expunged aspects of the

legend are those usually associated with the moral fantasy of a tragic love. The Auchinleck author includes all the major narrative elements, even the aura of the "irrational" which is best preserved in the effect of the potion, and yet the overall result, if not spectacular, is not very successful. The death of the lovers is decidedly human, not undeniably a religious sacrifice and union.

The Function of Formula

The regulative function of the Adventure and Romance formulas is evident in the Tristan legend, because it incorporates a cultural message which seeks to instruct on how to live and love. A difficulty with the Auchinleck verse narrative is the poet's inability to accommodate effectively two contradictory cultural messages: the moral and optimistic which develops a love between two individuals, and the immoral and tragic which dictates that the expression of that love be satisfied outside of marriage, even beyond the confines of worldly existence. And whatever else it may do, the Tristan legend primarily teaches that the fulfillment of sexual fantasies may take place outside of marriage. Implicitly, the secrecy, the lying, the scheming, the adultery, all of which are reprehensible in the 'real' world, become justified, almost admired; for the lovers, no sacrifice is too great. The cultural and quasi-religious message is one which we find expressed in the rules of courtly love and in the code of chivalry--both of which are decidedly elitist.

Furthermore, the Tristan legend stresses the scheming necessary to maintain an adulterous relationship to such an extent that the story almost becomes a guide on how to fool a husband. Of course the important function of this scheming is to emphasize the cunning of the lovers; in Auchinleck the effect often suggests more the ridiculous than the sublime. Also contributing to the regulative function are the characters of Tristrem and Ysonde; they are courteous, talented, gracious, in fact, the very embodiment of the noble ideal. What we know them to be, noble beings, is offset by their treacherous and treasonable behavior. In Auchinleck, the hero's heritage and training are detailed in order to introduce a Tristrem who seem to be a relatively well developed character; also, his training and education are detailed because they are of interest to his audience, just as the lovers' behavior in the grotto is not. Another seemingly noble ideal is provided in King Mark, an ideal which is probably even less worthy. He is little more than a shell in Auchinleck, as he acts merely in accord with formulaic requirements. In the legend, Mark is usually another of the tragic figures who is caught by the effects of the love of Tristan and Iseult, and yet, in Auchinleck, as in Gottfried, he contributes rather more fully to his own demise. He allows himself to be forced to take a wife when he has already solved the problem of succession, to be forced to disinherit Tristrem, to be fooled first by Ysonde, then by Brengwain and finally by the conspirators, the dwarf and the harper, as well as by the lovers.

The emphasis on scheming in the cause of love is deepened by the duplicity of Ysonde of the White Hands. For some readers, her scheming is most likely wrong, even evil, and is to be contrasted to that of Tristrem and Ysonde which is justifiable because it is in the service of a superior emotion (love is more exalted than jealousy). Ysonde of the White Hands and King Mark function as foils to the lovers and, at the same time, as their mirror images. Deception in the service of true, mutual love is rewarded with eternal union, whereas scheming in the cause of frustrating that exalted love is ugly and corrupt, and is punishable by suffering. These subtle distinctions remain in Auchinleck but the counterpoint is not emphasized. For the Auchinleck poet the message is more straightforward and less dependent on these finely tuned antagonisms. As shown earlier, the poet is less interested in relying on the effects of the potion and more interested in showing how to defend and support the love relationship actively.

Because Sir Tristrem is the recapitulation of a famous story, the aesthetic function of the Adventure and Romance formulas is important. The recognition of the minstrel style of this Middle English verse narrative and its emphasis on music and musicians is important because it is part of what the author tried to include in order to entertain his reader. The adaptations in Tristrem, those aspects which are distinctive, reflect changes in taste, perception and ability. These changes could result from numerous factors, to name only a few: the commissioner or artistic director

of the manuscript directed changes in order to achieve a different literary result; as one of a number of narratives in the collection, certain accommodations were necessary to be more concise, such as fewer rhetorical embellishments and soliloquies; the subordination of the refined or elitist sentiments in an attempt to popularize by means of an oral tradition which is action oriented; or, a general aversion to a reliance on the magical potion and the tradition of love as a "dark passion." I suspect that as the author attempted to accommodate the legend to new, different concerns, the enjoyment of the myth became less rewarding except in extreme cases such as the clearly superior and unique Wagner version. First of all, the Tristan legend, regardless of the adaptor, never seems to have attained the popularity in Middle English that it achieved in other languages, and this fact must be appreicated when assessing Sir Tristrem. A love resulting from a potion does not seem to have been particularly convincing to a Middle English audience. The use of the Alien State/Being formula is acceptable and even preferable in other contexts but too much of the central tragedy of the Sir Tristrem narrative rests on this magical causation. The Auchinleck author may have been embarrassed by the tragic love in the poem as he accommodates so that their love results from other sources as well. It may also be that these accommodations existed in his source.

The Auchinleck author attempts to subordinate the tragic aspects of the legend by omitting all discussion of adultery and fatal love in an effort to incorporate the Adventure and Romance

formulas. At the same time, no amount of accommodation can effect an optimistic resolution. The poet was uncomfortable with the magical potion and the adultery perhaps because he realized they conflicted with the template developed by the Adventure formula. The Romance formula in Tristrem validates a selfish and self-destructive template of love which is generally unlike other Middle English templates. The individual Adventure hero developed in Auchinleck is one who serves the community and himself. That template is violated when, in the pursuit of adulterous love, Tristrem's behavior becomes antisocial, and not in keeping with the image developed in the other verse narratives of this study.

CHAPTER V FOOTNOTES

[1]Sir Tristrem, ed. George P. MacNeill (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1886).

[2]Helaine Newstead, "Arthurian Legend," A Manual of Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 77.

[3]Velma Bourgeois Richmond, The Popularity of Middle English Romance (Bowling Green: Bowling Green Iniversity Popular Press, 1975), p. 150.

[4]Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 176.

[5]Newstead, A Manual, p. 77.

[6]MacNeil, p. xi.

[7]Mehl, Romances, p. 176.

[8] John G. Cawelti, "Notes Toward A Typology of Literary Formula," Indiana Social Studies Quarterly, 26 (Winter 1973-74): 25-26.

CHAPTER VI

AMIS AND AMILOUN

The tale of the friendship of Amis and Amiloun was popular in medieval England, as the existence of three Anglo-Norman and four Middle English manuscripts evinces. The Auchinleck version is a refreshingly well-written narrative of twelve line, tail rhyme stanzas whose reputation among scholars has steadily improved after initial rebuffs[1] (see Appendix VI).

Scholarly opinion of Amis and Amiloun seems to follow the trends evident in the study of the other familiar Auchinleck narratives--early articles stress sources and analogues in an effort to establish folklore, romance and hagiographic elements; general studies which emphasize stylistic strengths which eventually lead to approaches emphasizing an essentially Christian message, and, most recently, attempts to introduce other 'aesthetic' aspects, such as the tradition of oral transmission.

1. Early scholarship stresses source and analogue study in an effort to establish its folklore, romance and hagiographic elements and generally finds more to blame than praise.

2. General studies which emphasize the author's skill and craftsmanship in telling his story; quite often these studies also evaluate its success in conveying an essentially Christian message.

3. Studies of other structure and 'aesthetic' aspects which influence medieval narratives, such as its oral transmission.

Early Amis and Amiloun scholars find little to praise, although not always for the same reasons. John Edwin Wells identifies it as a "Legendary Romance of Didactic Intent," written largely to instruct and dependent upon "supernatural intervention in behalf of a pious hero."[2] Laura Hibbard Loomis classifies the narrative among the "Romances of Trial and Faith," and, in general, praises its secular values. Of the four extant Middle English texts, Loomis judges the Auchinleck to be "the best and the earliest" and independently derived from the common source of the other three. A.B. Taylor considers Amis and Amiloun typical of the failure of medieval romance in particular, and medieval philosophy in general, to exalt one ideal after another, "each in turn as supreme and exaggerated beyond human possibility."[3] For him, Amis and Amiloun confounds as it exalts the virtue of friendship by debasing the virtue of feudal fidelity because the commission of deceit and sin are permitted in service friendship and violators are unpunished therefore debasing the ideal of justice.

In his 1937 edition of the poem, MacEdward Leach's introduction traces the occurrence of different and similar incidents in the several Amis and Amiloun analogues and sources in a comparative approach which emphasizes the semimythic and folkloristic. He sees the origin of the story in the fusion of two independent folk tales--the Two Brothers and The Faithful Servitor. Leach

concentrates on the sources and the Auchinleck poem becomes submerged by the attempt to show that the oldest form of the story is not hagiographic and Christian and "that the Anglo-Norman and English are likewise fundamentally non-Christian and non-hagiographic."[4] Margaret Gist concludes that Amis and Amiloun is "an example for special pleading for the responsibilities of sworn brotherhood," and judges it to be a narrative with a "curious distortion of values."[5] Furthermore, George Kane considers Amis and Amiloun to be inferior because of its "many absurdities of subject and faults of construction." He speculates that the faults "are perhaps to be explained by the fact that it was first designed with a didactic intention which was wanting in later versions but still continued to affect action and motivation at cardinal points."

With Dieter Mehl's investigation of the Middle English adaptations, the Auchinleck poem is seen as "a typical and particularly successful example of the English shorter romances and is quite different from the lays."[6] Mehl points out that the Auchinleck compilers "considered the poem not a romance but a didactic tale because they put it among the homilectic works, not next to the romances." Amis and Amiloun's success as an English narrative is seen because of the way the story is embellished and dramatized by the author: by composing vivid scenes which are often exactly localized and by "an astonishing mastery in handling dialogue." He also commends the Auchinleck adaptation for relating, he some way, the thematic (didactic) conflict between loyalty and selfishness to nearly every episode.

Two recent scholars who praise Amis and Amiloun for its Christian context are Ojars Kratins and Velma Bourgeois Richmond.[7] Kratins judges the poem to be a case of secular hagaiography in which "the English version is strongly influenced by the pattern of the saint's legend because it attempts to interpret the story within a framework of faith." As an interesting cast of a secular legend, the heroes are pious but are not saints because their virtue is a bond between men and not between man and God. He sees the thematic double standard of justice in Amis and Amiloun, where the "trewþe" between the friends takes precedence over the law and feudal duty as explained by the single theme of faith in the saint's legend where all demands are subordinated to the obedience to the highest good in the hierarchy of Christian values. Richmond praises Amis and Amiloun as a Middle English narrative in which essential Christian principles underlie the thematic material in such a way as to give real distinction to its thought and aesthetics. The strength of her argument is in seeing the poem as "much more than an 'exposition of the theme of friendship.'" According to Richmond, the author adds the themes of Christian charity and humility to the obvious one of friendship in order to show the choice of multiple and often fiercely contradictory nature of human relationships: "man with friend, husband with wife, parent with child, lord with servant, man with good and evil, and above all, man with God."

In assessing Amis and Amiloun's stylistic excellence while considering its use of Christianity, Dale Kramer studies the method of presentation, the recurrence of various action or events, and

the moral background. Partially in response to Kramer's assertion that there is "almost no explicit characterization at all," Kathyrn Hume investigates with less thematic emphasis in favor of a positive appraisal of Amis and Amiloun's stylistic excellence. Kramer emphasizes our critical need to be mindful of the poem's "system of values" (that is, the audience) and cites as particularly important the oral nature of Middle English metrical narratives. Kramer cautions that we too often judge these poems by narrow narrative standards and fail to appreciate Amis and Amiloun's "tightly-knit structure, its steady forward motion, and its satisfying sense of completeness."

The Use of Formulas

In studying the formulaic aspects of Amis and Amiloun, one becomes increasingly aware that the Romance and Adventure formulas are much more alike than most approaches, which stress their differences, would indicate. The tendency of most scholars seems to be to divide, separate and label. Too often the ability of an artist to assimilate and synthesize is overlooked or ignored in an effort to identify those aspects which we set out to find or investigate from our own particular frames of reference. In many studies of Amis and Amiloun the Romance and Adventure aspects are considered separately; however, as I hope to show, that approach is not productive or instructive. In the Auchinleck Amis and Amiloun, the Romance formula is adapted and expanded by substituting two male protagonists for the traditional male-female relationship, and,

because the major characters are of the same sex, the similarity of the two formulas becomes more apparent. As has been illustrated in the four previous chapters which discuss the typical uses of formula, in each the protagonist is supported and aided by various figures (family, servants, religious and fantasy figures, even royalty), and obstructed by others (Churls, wild animals, fantasy figures casting spells, jealous lovers/spouses, worthy knights, infidels, circumstances and even themselves). And usually the achievement and fulfillment of the Romance and Adventure fantasies include a reunion with those who supported the protagonists as they were overcoming the various obstacles. The achievement is represented by the attainment of a goal or set of goals--the discovery of individual identity (Degare), the joining of lovers (le Freine and Guron), the assuming of social responsibilities, or solving a mystery (Degare and Orfeo). In Amis and Amiloun, the similarity of the Romance and Adventure formulas is even more obvious because the narrative seems to contain nearly all the Middle English verse narrative conventions and cliches, which taken together make it a provoking and provocative object of study.

Amis and Amiloun expresses the moral fantasy of Romance formula which is interwoven with the Adventure and Alien State/Being formulas. It is a fantasy of the all-sufficiency of love, and of the overcoming of a combination of social and psychological barriers. Amis and Amiloun incorporates three popular formulas:

1. and 2. Romance-Adventure Formula: not really separable; four figures are inextricably bound to each other for all time, and must confront and overcome numerous obstacles both alone and together; these struggles severely challenge their loyalty to each other.

3. Alien Being/State Formula: through conventional techniques such as the prophesies of dreams and of angels, and afflictions followed by magical cures, the characters and audience confront the unknown and unknowable.

This interweaving of literary formulas is the technique utilized in order to convey the culture's consensus about the nature of morality. The formulas expose existing attitudes by presenting the prevailing social order and juxtaposing it with an open, accepting world in which there is value in being loyal to those with whom one exchanges vows.

The Auchinleck Amis and Amiloun is a highly unusual Middle English narrative which explores the deep and beinding relationships of four characters. More importantly, there is no hierarchy among the relationships as each individual strives to remain loyal to all those with whom vows have been exchanged; that is to say, no one alliance is more important than or exclusive of another. No individual is independent of or superior to the others nor is any relationship independent of or superior to the others. Each individual responds appropriately and individually to the forces of disruption, and those responses are within the limitations of the formula; in fact, they are the formula. In sum, each relationship is equal in importance in achieving the final accommodation.

In Amis and Amiloun, the major ingredients of the Alien Being/State formula include coincidence and dreams as well as angel voices prophesying disaster and prescribing means of renewal. The formula advances the action by telegraphing the events to come and alerting the audience to the imminent dangers in order to intensify the audience's emotional response. Generally, the Alien formula disrupts the tranquility of the individual protagonists, with the unbelievable, the unusual, the extraordinary. The special and unusual relationship between Amis and Amiloun exists from the beginning and sets the tone for the other seemingly unnatural and unbelievable events. The Alien Being/State formula is expressed in three primary ways: (1) the experience of a dream or dream-like incident which is shared; (2) a series of appearances or voices of an angel; and (3) the contraction and healing of leprosy.

The first manifestation of the Alien formula is fairly conventional: Amis falls asleep in the wild forest while on a journey to Amiloun for aid (11.985-1055). The necessary signs to alert us to entry into the "otherworld" are apparent, so that when Amis falls asleep under the tree, we are prepared for the dream. In this case, however, someone else has it--Amiloun. This transference to Amiloun draws upon and further emphasizes the special relationship between Amis and Amiloun for each must be rejoined with the other in order for the experience to be meaningful. Amiloun

> ...seþe sir Amis bi siȝt,
> His broþer, þat was trewest-pliȝt,
> Bilapped among his fon;
> Þurch a bere wilde & wode

& oþer bestes, þat bi him stode,
Bisett he was to slon;
& he alon among hem stode
As a man þat coupe no gode;
Wel wo was him bigon.

11.1012-1020

Amiloun quickly senses the harm facing Amis in much the same way he previously warned his friend about the danger inherent in the Evil Steward. He goes to find his friend, still asleep under that tree. This shared dream experience functions to advance the action, but, more importantly, it also evinces the sympathy which exists between these united souls. Their psychic connection is so strong that nothing can prevent Amis and Amiloun from coming together in time of need. This nicely contrived piece heightens the suspense arising from the challenge of the Evil Steward, and also develops that limited imaginary world with which the formula has been identified and which it has familiarized. Because we recognize the Alien State formula we are able to respond emotionally to the suspense while, at the same time, appreciating the finer points of its execution.

The Alien Being formula is more fully utilized in the various visitations by angels. The first occurs in a lengthy passage in which Amiloun is told of the consequences of his substituting himself for Amis:

Com a voice fram heuen adoun,
Þat noman herd bot he,
& sayd, "Þou knizt, sir Amiloun,
God, þat suffred passioun,
Sent þe bode bi me;
Zif þou þis bataile vnderfong,
Þou schalt haue an euentour strong

Wiþ-in þis ȝere þre;
& or þis þre ȝere ben al gon,
Fouler mesel nas neuer non
In þe world, þan þou schal be!
Ac for þou art so hende & fre,
Ihesu sent þe bode bi me,
To warm þe anon;
So foule a wreche þou schalt be,
Wiþ sorwe & care & pouerte
Nas neuer non wers bigon.
Ouer al þis world, fer & hende,
Þou þat be þine best frende
Schal be þi most fon,
& þi wiif & alle þi kinne
Schul fle þe stede þatow art inne,
& forsake þe ichon.

11.1250-72

The garrulous angel clearly outlines the consequences of Amiloun's complicity in trickery. The fulfillment of the prophecy is rendered more economically and dramatically, for just after hearing of Amis' good fortune to become duke following the old duke's death, we are told how poorly Amiloun fared as a result of his loyalty to Amis (the conventional reversal of fate motif):

...Sir Amiloun,
Wiþ sorwe & care was driuen adoun,
Þat ere was hende & fre;
All so þat angel hadde him told,
Fouler mesel þat nas non hold
In world þan was he.

11.1540-45

As foretold, Amiloun loses all his worldly prestige and possession and must begin a different life as a leprous pilgrim.

The second appearance by an angel includes aspects of each of the previous two incidents--an instructive voice to Amis and an informative dream for Amiloun. The individual experience of each is integrated with the other's, for, just as in that earlier forest dream, they must act together in order to succeed. To Amis:

An angel com fram heuen briȝt
& stode biforn his bed ful riȝt
& to him þus gan say:
ȝif he wald rise on Cristes morn,
Swiche time as Ihesu Crist was born,
& slen his children tvay,
& alien his [broþer] wiþ þe blode,
Þunch godes grace, þat is so gode,
His wo schuld wende oway.

11.2200-2208

For his part:

Sir Amiloun met þat niȝt also
Þat an angel warned him þo,
& seyd to him ful ȝare,
ȝif his broþer wald his children slo,
Þe hert blod if hem to
Miȝt bring him out of care.

11.2221-26

Next day Amis and Amiloun agree that:

"Broþer, ich abide her godes wille,
For y may do na mare."

11.2231-32

And of course, Amis does slaughter his children, catch their blood so that Amiloun can be washed back to health. Finally, the children are discovered miraculously alive and well in their castle bedroom. Surely the visitation of the disease as well as the miraculous cure are aspects of the Alien State formula.

In summary the Alien Being formula operates in ways familiar to the reader of medieval narrative. First, the formula creates, in an acceptable way, a world in which mysterious events can happen without irrevocable consequences. In this classification I include the relationship of Amis and Amiloun, which sets the tone of the unusual and coincidental, and prepares us for more coincidental and interlocking events. The formula both asks and answers the rhetorical

question, "and what happened next?" And regardless of how impossible what happens may seem, the reader knows that the formula is in control. Because of this formulaic control (or license), not only does the impossible become possible, but the horrendous and unthinkable also happen. This then is the pleasure: confronting and conquering our fear of the impossible and knowing there can be no deleterious consequences for Amis and Amiloun (and implicitly for us).

Furthermore, the Alien State formula functions in such a way that by prolonging the tension and suspense, it heightens our emotional response. This formula thrills and amuses while simultaneously drawing upon our awareness of how skillfully the author manipulated the formula in order to please. An important part of the pleasure is the recognition of those changes and manipulations which sustain our emtoional response. We are not really frightened or confused because the Auchinleck author ensures our enjoyment by using the easily identifiable or recognizable formula.

The major formulaic structuring in Amis and Amiloun is the combination of Romance and Adventure patterns. There is a natural and spiritual bond between Amis and Amiloun which transcends all worldly unions, and the obstacles which threaten them are impediments to the expression of their unique friendship. Furthermore, that friendship can only be preserved by great sacrifices by each on behalf of the other, and each must face challenges by jealous and evil persons (forces of disruption) who wish to impede or to nullify that special friendship. The forces of disruption are

tests and obstacles which are fundamental to the Romance-Adventure formula. Also, there are several auxiliary formulaic relationships which expand the concept of the Romance and Adventure formulas.

The Romance-Adventure formula expresses and defines the friendship between Amis and Amiloun. Establishing the meaning of this bond is a major authorial responsibility, and a catalogue of narrative statements clarifies that bond. At first, the spiritual and physical uniqueness of this friendship is emphasized by suggesting that the friends are like two bodies sharing the same spirit or soul:

> Þe children-is . . .
> Boþ þey were getyn in oo nyȝt
> And on oo day born a-plyȝt,
> . . . . . .
> In al þing þey were so lych
> Þer was neither pore ne ryche,
> Who so beheld hem both,
> Fader ne moder þat couþ say
> Ne knew þe hend children tway
> But by þe coloure of her cloþ.
>
> ll.37,40-41,91-95

Their physical similarity is only an outward manifestation of other shared qualities, and instead of jealousy growing between them (another conventional narrative device), a great love grows. The vows they exchange are the conventional ones of feudal friendship but, more importantly, suggest an exchange of marriage vows:

> On a day þe childer war & wiȝt
> Trewepes to-gider þai gun pliȝt,
> While þai miȝt liue & stond
> Þat boþe bi day & bi niȝt,
> In wele & wo, in wrong & riȝt,
> Þat þai schuld frely fond
> To hold to-gider at eueri nede,
> In word, in werk, in wille, in dede,

Where þat þai were in lond,
Fro þat day forward neuer mo
Failen oþer for wele no wo:
Þer-to þai held vp her hond.

ll.145-56

As symbol of their unity, Amiloun has two identical golden cups cast when they are forced to separate:

To a gold-smiþe he gan go
& lete make gold coupes to,
. . . . . .
Ful richeliche þai were wrouȝt,
& boþe þai weren as liche, ywis,
As was Sir Amiloun & sir Amis,
Þer no failed riȝt nouȝt.

ll.244-45, 249-52

At the moment of their separation, the last time they are together unencumbered by other concerns, they reaffirm as primary their vows to each other; Amiloun to Amis:

"Broþer, as we er trewþe-pliȝt
Boþe wiþ word & dede,
Fro þis day forward neuer mo
To faily oþer for wele no wo,
To help him at his nede,
Broþer, be now trewe to me,
& y schal ben as trewe to þe,
Also god me spede!"

ll.293-300

He finished with a warning against the treacherous Steward.

Through the conventions of the Romance formula, an overpowering love is established between Amis and Amiloun. The author utilizes the disruptive forces associated with the Adventure formula, although those challenges are also conventional Romance complications. The unity between Amis and Amiloun transcends the mundane friendships of worldly existence and it sustains the moral fantasy that this love is triumphant and permanent, even in death.

The Auchinleck poet develops a passion between the lovers which can be reconciled with their other responsibilities and relationships. The love being validated is between Amis and Amiloun, and the destruction which occurs to others is a result of their being obstacles to that love.

Having established the special relationship between Amis and Amiloun, the Auchinleck author continues to manipulate and expand the Romance-Adventure formula by introducing variations which complicate the concept of the pattern in medieval verse narrative. The incidents in the old duke's court are particularly rich and fulfill a conventional narrative obligation of uniting one of high birth (Belisaunt) with one of lower status (Amis). At the same time, the jealous, scheming Steward who tries to thwart the happiness of the others is outmaneuvered. As an embodiment of the Romance-Adventure formula, Amis and Amiloun goes beyond the mere conventional so that, by means of subtle variations, the commitment between Amis and Amiloun is deepened and their relationship expanded to include Belisaunt in a special, even unique way. Furthermore, Belisaunt and the Evil Steward simultaneously complement that first relationship and challenge its fulfillment.

Although separating out for special consideration those episodes involving the Evil Steward may appear inconcistent with the formulaic approach, it may be the only way to understand clearly the function of the Steward. As the most conventional of Romance-Adventure figures, the Auchinleck Steward is fully within the

boundaries of the formula as a villain whose jealousy impels him to seek revenge because his offer of friendship is rejected. We are prepared for the villainy of the Steward in part because Amiloun warns Amis even before leaving the old duke's court:

> Ac broþer, ich warn þe biforn,
> . . . . . .
> &, broþer, ȝete y þe forbede
> Þe fals steward felawerede,
> Certes, he wil þe schende!
>
> 11.301, 310-12

Amiloun's warning is important because it establishes that Amiloun himself may have just cause to battle the Evil Steward.

The Steward is an obstacle to the expression of the love between the two knights, and to that between Amis and the duke's daughter. The Steward is a figure of some ambiguity. He at first wishes to replace the departed Amiloun in Amis' affections; then he, just as easily, changes approach by seizing upon the friendship between the duke's daughter and Amis as a way to wreck Amis' life. He seems to be equally envious of Amis' relationship with Amiloun and of Belisaunt's with Amis. His villainy is nicely anticipated by Amiloun's warning (as well as by being a conventional aspect of verse narrative), and the trickery employed by him and against him is conventional. Further, the Steward's machinations result in the irrevocable interweaving of the fates of the three lovers--Amis, Belisaunt and Amiloun. In this way he is both obstacle to and facilitator of the happiness of Amis and Amiloun as well as that of Amis and Belisaunt.

But how are we to evaluate this use of the formulas? The Steward begins with an offer of friendship and ends by doing battle against the one he sought to befriend. After all, it appears that the Steward acted honorably and that his offer of friendship was made without malice:

> "Sir Amis," he seyd, "þe is ful wo
> For þat þi broþer is went þe fro,
> & certes, so is me.
> Ac of his wendeing haue þou no care,
> ȝif þou wilt leue opon mi lare,
> & lete þi morning be,
> & þou wil be to me kende,
> Y schal þe be a better frende
> Þan euer ȝete was be.
> "Sir Amis," he seyd, "do bi mi red,
> & swere ous boþe broþerhed
> & pliȝt we our trewþes to;
> Be trewe to me in word & dede,
> & ye schal, so god me spede,
> Be trewe to þe al so."
>
> 11.352-66

In contrast, Amis' fidelity to the individual with whom he exchanged vows requires that he courteously but firmly reject the offer. Amis' response confirms the intensity he feels regarding his loyalty to Amiloun and his fidelity to their vows. This interaction enlarges our understanding of the nature of that friendship, because Amis' reaction sounds like a response to an adulterous offer. In other words, Amis' rejection of the Steward's offer indicates that for him his relationship with Amiloun goes beyond comradeship:

> Y no schal neuer mi treuþe breke
> Noþer for wele no wo.
> . . . . . .
> Where so he in warld wende,
> Y schal be to him trewe;
> & if y were now forsworn

& breke mi treuþe, y were forlorn,
Wel sore it schuld me rewe.
Gete me frendes whare y may,
Y no schal neuer bi niȝt no day
Chaunge him for no newe.

11.371-72, 377-84

Clearly the Steward's proposal provides Amis the opportunity to reaffirm his loyalty to Amiloun and to lecture on the impropriety of any additional commitments such as that being suggested by the Steward. Like the proverbial lover scorned, the Steward reacts with intensity:

"Þou traitour, vnkinde blod,
Þou schalt abigge þis nay,
Y warn þe wele," he seyd þan,
"Þat y schal be þi strong foman
Euen after þis day!"

11.389-93

Of course the Steward's reaction is conventional as he plots to intervene between the lovers--the difference, in this case, is that his destructive impulses are directed toward separating another, different set of lovers:

Þe steward nold neuer blinne
To schende þat douhti kniȝt of kinne,
Euer he proued þo.
. . . . . .
Þe steward wiþ tresoun & gile
Wrouȝt him ful michel wo.

11.400-2, 407-9

The Auchinleck Steward embodies the concept of obstacle as defined in both Romance and Adventure formulas. His motivation is to get even with Amis, but his opportunity for revenge results from Belisaunt's passion. He seeks revenge and is not a preserver of "the good, the true, and the beautiful." That is, initially at least, the Steward is not motivated to protect the honor of

Belisaunt or that of his liege lord; he is motivated by hatred and a jealous desire for revenge. Ever the instigator and opportunist, the Steward seeks "...wiþ tresoun and wiþ gile" (l.707) to cause trouble. In scenes structured by formula, the Steward takes advantage of the old duke's going hunting, the sexual encounter of Amis and Belisaunt, and a hole in the wall, well placed for spying. And like dwarfs and churls in medieval narrative everywhere, he informs the old duke of the treasonous behavior in the court:

> "In þi court þou has a þef,
> . . . . . .
> For, certes, he is a traitour strong,
> When he wiþ tresoun & wiþ wrong
> Þi douhter haþ forlain!
> . . . . . .
> It is þi boteler, sir Amis,
> Euer he haþ ben traitour, ywis
> He haþ forlain þat may.
>
> 11.787, 790-92, 799-802

The Steward is highly suspect because, unlike other medieval tattlers who evince some regard for the morality of the situation, he informs merely to get even. The duke's reaction is conventional in every way, and further emphasizes the Steward's lack of moral motivation. In fact, the duke's behavior is vintage burlesque as he chases Amis around the castle with a heavy sword:

> Þan was þe douke egre of mode,
> He ran to halle, as he were wode,
> For no þing he nold abide.
> Wiþ a fauchoun scharp & gode
> He smot to sir Amis þer he stode,
> & failed of him biside.
> In-to a chaumber sir Amis ran þo
> & schet þe dore bi-tven hem to
> For drede his heued to hide.
> Þe douke strok after swiche a dent
> Þat þurch þe dore þat fauchon went,
> So egre he was þat tide.
>
> 11.805-16

Ever the master of the convention, the Auchinleck poet continues the formula as Amis insists on doing battle in order to prove his innocence of the accusations.

Within the formulaic boundaries, the Steward makes possible the trial by battle in order to establish the truth. When Amiloun (as Amis) comes to do battle against the Steward, the formula ensures that the brave friend will triumph over the evil and malicious opponent. The battle is intense and Amiloun acts with courtesy by not pressing his advantage after killing the Steward's horse. The author does not embellish with detail, yet the description of the last thrust is vivid: Amiloun:

> Wiþ a fauchoun scharp & gode
> . . . . . .
> In-to þe brest þe brond gan wade,
> Þurch-out his hert it ran.
> Þe steward fel adoun ded,
> Sir Amiloun strok of his hed,
> & god he þonked it þan.
> . . . . . .
> Þe heued opon a spere þai bare;
> To toun þai dist hem ful ȝare,
> For noþing þai nold abide;
>
> 11.1360, 1365-9, 1372-4

In conclusion, this Evil Steward is like other conventional meddlesome stewards (Meriadok in Sir Tristrem, for example) and yet he also is unlike them because he incorporates more narrative aspects than they. Essentially the Steward embodies aspects of both the Romance and Adventure formulas because of his intervention between the two different sets of lovers. He is both obstacle to fulfillment and facilitator of challenge, and his relationship to the other characters is complementary. The Steward is a foil to both Amis

and Belisaunt, and functions to emphasize the importance of taking vows and remaining loyal to those with whom one exchanges them. His death completes only part of his narrative function, for his demise initiates an entirely new series of obstacles to the fulfillment of the love between Amis and Amiloun, and Amis and Belisaunt. Furthermore, he is important for the contrast he offers to another subsidiary and formulaic character, Amoraunt.

After the Steward's death, the control of the formula becomes less obvious because it is no longer manifested in the machinations of a single character. In some ways, the challenges to be faced are more spiritual, less physical. This is necessary because different aspects of the loyalty of Amis and Amiloun are being explored. On the surface, the challenges which beset Amiloun are more intense than those endured by Amis and Belisaunt because they result in long suffering. In keeping with the conventional Romance and Adventure formulas, two primary factors obstruct Amiloun's reintegration into his kingdom after the combat against the Steward: his wife's inability to accept the substitution of Amis in the marriage bed, and the outcome of the fulfillment of the angel's prophecy. The leprosy, comprehensible in itself, represents something greater, and the obstacles facing the lovers test not only their devotion to each other but also test each to the depths of his being: one is condemned to suffer exile as a result of a hateful disease, the others must succumb to the sacrificial murder of their children. Furthermore, the formula utilizes the conventional

motif of the reversal or counterpoint of fates; for a number of years, Amis and Belisaunt enjoy a prosperous, happy life while Amiloun is condemned to exile as a leper. The suspense is intensified by Amis' vow or pledge of reciprocity (much like Orfeo's to Heurodis, "whither thou goest..."):

> "Broþer," he seyd, "ȝif it bitide so
> Þat þe bitide care oþer wo,
> & of min help hast nede,
> Sauelich com oþer sende þi sond,
> & y schal neuer lenger wiþstond,
> Al so god me spede;
> Be it in periil neuer so strong,
> Y schal þe help in riȝt & wrong,
> Mi liif to lese to mede."
>
> ll.1444-52

In Amis and Amiloun, the obstacles and challenges necessitated by the Romance and Adventure formulas are further defined by two other types of relationships: the antagonistic (Amiloun's wife) and the supportive (Belisaunt and Amoraunt).

Amiloun's wife is a conventional shrew, and yet she continually upbraids him for a deed, which, on the surface at least, is truly dishonorable. Of course her failure is that she is insensitive to and ignorant of the nature of Amis and Amiloun's love. Each of her actions further challenges that love and, specifically, increases the pain and degradation of Amiloun as he seeks to overcome challenges to his loyalty. The obstacles which challenge Amiloun are given perspective by his wife, who curses him for killing the Steward and echoes the warning of the angel:

> ". . . wiþ wrong & michel vnriȝt
> Þou slouȝ þer a gentil kniȝt;
> Ywis, it was iuel ydo!"
>
> ll.1492-94

She beings with lectures:

> So wicked & schrewed was his wiif,
> Sche brac her hert wiþ-outen kniif,
> Wiþ wordes harde & kene,
> & seyd to him, "Þou wreche chaitif,
> Wiþ wrong þe steward les his liif,
> & þat is on þe sene;
> Þer-fore, bi Seyn Denis of Fraunce,
> Þer is bitid þis hard chaunce,
> Dapet who þe bimene!"
>
> 11.1561-69

In a series intended to humiliate, she kicks him out of his bedchamber, then condemns him to eat at the foot of the banquet table in hopes that he will die of the disease which afflicts him. Soon she banishes him to a hut outside the city gate, allowing him to take only his golden cup (11.1575-1610). The degradation and suffering progresses as she cuts off his food (11.1665-68), necessitating public begging (11.1696-98), and four years later, banishes Amiloun and Amorant after granting their request for an ass (11.1777-78) which must later be sold (1.1805). Amoraunt thus has to carry Amiloun on his back all winter (1.1845) until, with their last pence, they buy a pushcart in which they arrive, by chance, at Amis' court. Clearly Amiloun's wife is a force of disruption, and she becomes an integral element in achieving the eventual synthesis. Finally, the formula incorporates the punishment of the wife by the restored Amiloun. With Amoraunt and Amis, Amiloun returns to his country, discovers his wife about to marry someone else, and engages in a decisive battle which validates his restored authority. In a fit of retributive action, Amiloun judges his wife ("for his lady sake" 1.2476) to spend her living days

imprisoned in a hut, and to be fed on bread and water. She suffers punishment for her failure to remain loyal to Amiloun regardless of the difficulty which that fidelity entails. Her antagonism is an essential element of the Romance and Adventure formulas and her punishment completes the accommodation of the disruptive forces necessitated by the formulas.

Contrasting with and accommodating the villainy of Amiloun's wife are two figures who enrich the Romance and Adventure formulas: Belisaunt and Amoraunt. As auxiliary figures who expand the concept of love, they resemble other Middle English figures who function in a somewhat similar way: in Auchinleck, Brengwain of Sir Tristrem, and the steward in Sir Orfeo, as well as a varied group of hermit, abbess and squire figures. The selfless sacrifices made by Belisaunt and Amoraunt cause each of them to suffer, but eventually facilitate the fulfillment of the love between Amis and Amiloun as well as their own relationships with them.

The Auchinleck poet's understanding of how to manipulate the Romance formula is best illustrated by his characterization of Belisaunt. She is an ambiguous figure who is amusingly formulaic at first, but who later transcends that role to function beyond the conventional boundaries of Romance heroine. As a conventional figure, Belisaunt is the daughter of the old duke into whose household the young Amis and Amiloun come for education; and of course she is the fairest flower in all the kingdom. In keeping with the convention, she judges Amis to be the finest combatant and suffers accordingly:

Wher þat sche seiȝe him ride or go,
Hir þouȝt hir hert brac atvo,
Þat hye no spac nouȝt wiþ þat bliþe;
For hye no miȝt niȝt no day
Speke wiþ him, þat fair may,
Sche wepe wel mani a siþe.
Þus þat miri ȝing
Lay in care & loue-morning
Boþe bi niȝt & day;
As y ȝou tel in mi talking,
For sorwe sche spac wiþ him no þing.
Sike in bed sche lay.

11.475-86

Continuing in what seems to be a model for the formula (and a perfect example of the device of Potiphar's wife), Belisaunt discovers Amis alone in the garden one day as the duke hunts elsewhere; she confesses her love, seeks his favorable response, is rebuffed and, in a gesture of high humor, throws herself at him (worth quoting in full):

. . . "Sir kniȝt, þou nast no croun;
For god þat bouȝt þe dere,
Wheþer artow prest oþer persoun,
Oþer þou art monk oþer canoun,
Þat prechest me þus here?
Þou no schust haue ben no kniȝt,
To gon among maidens briȝt,
Þou schust haue ben a frere!
He þat lerd þe þus to preche,
Þe deuel of helle ichim biteche,
Mi broþer þei he were!
"Ac," sche seyd, "bi him þat ous wrouȝt,
Al þi precheing helpeþ nouȝt,
No stond þou neuer so long.
Bot ȝif þou wilt graunt me mi þouȝt,
Mi loue schal be ful dere abouȝt
Wiþ pines hard & strong;
Mi kerchef & mi cloþes anon
Y schal torende doun ichon
& say wiþ michel wrong,
Wiþ strengþe þou hast me todrawe;
Ytake þou schalt be þurch londes lawe
& dempt heiȝe to hong!"

11.614-35

Naturally we recognize that there is nothing unique in her approach; in fact, it is model for the formula, particularly her unsubtle taunts regarding the impropriety of his seemingly monkish behavior. The cleverness of the situation is the creative way the poet adapts the formula of the lovesick maiden pursuing the reluctant knight and softens somewhat the Potiphar's wife-motif. Importantly, an exchange of vows between Belisaunt and Amis does not endanger his loyalty to Amiloun; instead he sees such a relationship as a possible violation of feudal social class divisions. In this way, a relationship between the duke's daughter and the knight contrasts with the one sought by the Steward--a fact which obviously escapes the spying Steward. And for all we know, Amis wishes to take up her offer because her persistence at wooing him does succeed after all (11.732-780). Again, in accord with a bower of bliss motif, the Steward watches as:

> Þat hende knizt biþouzt him þan
> & in his armes he her nam
> & kist þat miri may;
> & so þai plaid in word & dede
> Þat he wan hir maidenhede,
> Er þat she went oway.
>
> 11.763-68

Belisaunt thus overcomes Amis' objections and reticence when they consummate their pledges, and the love between them will always exist side by side that which Amis shares with Amiloun. Nonetheless, Amis' relationship with Belisaunt must still be challenged. The first challenge to their love is her offer of herself as surety for Amis when they are confronted by the accusations of the Steward. Furthermore, she is responsible for providing the armaments and

attire for Amiloun/Amis as he prepares for battle against the Steward. And like Amis and Amiloun, she benefits from their mutual deception of the Steward and the duke, so that she too surely will be punished.

In this way the Auchinleck author expands our sense of a love which accommodates. These three individuals are tied together not merely by their deception and its consequences, but are inextricably bound to each other by the loyalty they feel toward one another. Belisaunt is a manifestation of a traditional Romance heroine, yet her relationship with Amis is not exclusive nor is it subsidiary: it is equal to his with Amiloun. Conventional signs and cues would seem to indicate a suspenseful and tormented love between Amis and Belisaunt, but they are happily united for all eternity halfway through the narrative. Their relationship is clearly a complementary and accommodating one and permits the author to expand his understanding and use of the Romance and Adventure formulas.

The most severe test of Belisaunt's love (as well as of Amis') is in agreeing to sacrifice the children in order to restore the health of Amiloun. Again, the greatness of her generosity is best understood as a contrast to the selfish villainy of Amiloun's wife. Belisaunt's immediate reaction is revulsion when Amis brings the leper into the castle, but she changes radically when she learns that his leper is Amiloun:

> "Sir," sche seyd, "wat is þi þouȝt?
> Whi hastow him in-to halle ybrouȝt,
> For him þat þis world want?"
>
> 11.2158-60

Then, responding as her love of and loyalty to Amis and Amiloun compels her:

> As foule a lazer as he was,
> Þe leuedi kist him in þat plas,
> For noþing wold sche spare,
> & oft time sche seyd, "Allas!"
> Þat him was fallen so hard a cas,
> To liue in sorwe & care.
> Into hir chaumber she gan him lede
> & kest of al his pouer wede
> & baþed his bodi al bare,
>
> ll.2173-83

Furthermore, her acceptance of and response to Amis' killing the children is extraordinary:

> Sche comfort him ful ȝare,
> "O lef liif," sche seyd þo,
> "God may sende ous childer mo,
> Of hem haue þou no care.
> ȝif it ware at min hert rote,
> For to bring þi broþer bote,
> My lyf y wold not spare.
> Shal noman oure children see,
> To-morrow shal þey beryed bee
> As þey faire ded ware!"
>
> ll.2391-2400

Her willingness to comply in sacrificing her children and even herself further evinces the strength and importance of Belisaunt's loyalty to Amis, and, in a special way, implicitly to Amiloun. Also, she rejoices in finding not only Amiloun fully recovered but the children fully restored.

In the beginning, Belisaunt's narrative role is a common verse narrative one in which she is discouraged from wooing someone outside her social class. This principle is one used in other Auchinleck narratives: the wasteland castle princess must wait until Degare's noble heritage is established; Tristrem and Ysonde

are condemned, in part, because they violate a social taboo against loving below one's station, and le Freine's struggle is directly related to her classless state. Belisaunt, having once aligned herself with Amis, becomes more than a conventional Romance figure, for she is an instrumental and supportive character who functions to refine the author's ideas regarding loyalty to loved ones. Her loyalty makes possible the reunion of Amis and Amiloun, and it assures the accommodation of all of them into a world which permits their love to flourish. Her relationship with the other figures is nonexclusive, and it functions to enhance the nonhierarchical concept of loyalty to various individuals. And whereas Heurodis is a passive figure, Belisaunt is as much an Adventure hero as the others.

The narrative role of Amoraunt also complements the Romance and Adventure formulas, as he too sacrifices personal, individual pursuits in order to serve another. As he provides for the welfare of the leperous Amiloun, he must constantly adjust to the demands which conditions require. Often he may be tempted to seek an easier life by abandoning Amiloun, much as Amiloun's wife has, but he does not. The importance of his behavior is emphasized when, having actually arrived at Amis' court, he is propositioned and enticed to abandon Amiloun for more favorable conditions. He remains steadfast in his loyalty and refuses the offer. And so impressed by Amoraunt's loyalty is the spurned knight that he reports this experience and sets up the recognition scene. Clearly Amis and his court value such loyalty to and respect for vows taken, and they act to reward that behavior. Like the steward in Orfeo

and Brengwain in Sir Tristrem, Amoraunt fulfills his feudal obligations to his lord by serving without qualification and he also goes beyond these duties to expand the Amis and Amiloun concept of friendship and loyalty. Further, this concept of loyalty goes far beyond that developed in Orfeo and Tristrem because Amoraunt is the social equal of Amis and Belisaunt and not restricted by feudal concepts of servitude. The keeping of vows is beyond personal concerns or conflicts and beyond consideration of the suffering endured in the service of that fidelity.

When Amiloun returns to Lombardy to live out his life in the company of Amis and Belisaunt, narrative symmetry is achieved:

> Boþ on oo day were þey dede
> And in oo graue were þey leide
> Þe knyȝtes boþ twoo;
> And for her trewþ and her godhede
> Þe blisses of heuyn þey haue to mede,
> Þat lasteþ euer moo.
>
> 11.2503-08

In Amis and Amiloun the challenges of the Adventure formula and the promises of the Romance formula are interwoven in a moral fantasy which validates loyalty to the vows of friendship and love. By means of four worthy adventurers, the author shows how each human being must strive to free him or herself of egocentric concerns and honor the claims of close family ties and sworn loyalty oaths. Unlike the other verse narratives of this study which seem to advance two different types of love--romance/sexual or epic/homosexual--Amis and Amiloun treats them neither as exclusive nor hierarchial. Somewhat like the adventurers of Sir Orfeo, these four individuals

are sustained by their fidelity to both public and private vows in their battle against the forces of disruption. Their commitment to and loyalty for each other provides the basis for the social synthesis and ensures its permanence. The purity of conception and the skill of execution through the carefully interwoven conventions of the formulas makes Amis and Amiloun an admirable intellectual and aesthetic achievement. Amis and Amiloun illustrates distinctively the author's ability to incorporate and accommodate the elements of other popular Middle English verse narratives.

CHAPTER VI FOOTNOTES

[1]Amis and Amiloun, ed. MacEdward Leach, EETS, O.S. 203 (London, 1937). All quotations will be from this edition.

[2]John Edwin Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1400 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), p. 157; Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romance in England (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 68; A.B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance (1930; rpt. New York; Barnes & Noble, 1969), pp. 140-41. The four extant English manuscripts include Egerton 2862 (14th century), Douce 326 (15th century), and Harley 2386 (16th century).

[3]Taylor, pp. 140-41.

[4]Leach, p. xxvii, who classifies the motifs: Brotherhood (natural and sworn, or friendship), Belisaunt's love sickness, the judicial combat, the tricked ordeal, and Amoraunt's behavior.

[5]Margaret Gist, Love and War in Middle English Romances (University of Pennsylvania, 1947), pp. 37-38; George Kane, Middle English Literature (London, 1951), p. 30.

[6]Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 105-111.

[7]Ojars Kratins, "The Middle English Amis and Amiloun: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?" PMLA, 81 (1966): 347-54; Velma Bourgeois Richmond, The Popularity of Middle English Romance (Bowling Green University Press, 1975), pp. 92-105.

[8]Dale Kramer, "Structural Artistry in Amis and Amiloun," Annuale Mediaeval, 9 (1968): 103-22; Katherine Hume, "Amis and Amiloun and the Aesthetics of Middle English Romance," SP, 70 (1973): 19-41.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

We may conclude from the present study that Sir Orfeo provides a model for understanding the use of formula in the other four verse narratives examined. All five are formulaic, and each shows adaptations of the formulas to the needs of their culture for relevant myths of identity.

In the five Auchinleck narratives of this study, I have discovered some valuable clues about how medieval narratives reflect their authors' attempts to manipulate formulas in order to achieve popularity. Sir Degare, Lai le Freine, and Sir Orfeo are good illustrations of that accommodation. Amis and Amiloun develops a new pattern from the conventional formulas, and Sir Tristrem reveals the essential inability of at least one traditional myth to be accommodated.

I recognize that all these narratives derive from previous sources; what I have tried to discover is how they employ the inherited formulaic myths to reflect the tastes and values of a possible fourteenth century English reading audience. I also accept Richmond's assertion that the popularity of Middle English narratives is based on their positive, even inspirational quality: the

capacity of the human personality to strive, to cope with and endure the manifold stresses and challenges of experience is what most Middle English literature shares with contemporary literature:[1]

> Giants and dragons and paynims are the nominal opponents, but the knights of romance are really combating their own humanity--and thus providing the reader with an exposition of his own nature and some indications of how he too may survive.

That is exactly what a formula does, and the narratives studied here offer examples of confrontation and survival. The optimistic quality is one which distinguishes nearly all popular literature; with this sanguine attitude, Middle English verse narrative meets the challenges and changes taking place both in the religious and in the secular worlds of the fourteenth century. Four of the five narratives discussed display optimism and one does not. The differences and similarities are certainly instructive.

One of the objectives of popular literature methodology is to show how the audience tastes are reflected in its literature. With regard to the present study, it is impossible to confidently identify any specific influence of the audience on the Auchinleck narratives. I have been able to apply Cawelti's formula and to show significant authorial manipulation to achieve the optimistic, upbeat ending in at least one narrative. Whether or not we are ever able to go beyond rather limited conclusions is dependent upon our resourcefulness at discovering and comprehending cultural messages. Even so, the absence of the direct connection between audience and artifact may always interfere with our efforts to assess the cultural and narrative formulas of the fourteenth century. We may be

able to trace the movement of the narrative toward new uses of formula and to speculate as to the causes for those changes but much remains to be done.

I believe that this methodology may expand our understanding of the English literature of the early fourteenth century, a literature which evolved from an oral tradition and was read by an audience with a heritage firmly founded in the Christian tradition but increasingly mobile and wordly.

The Movement

The combination of the Adventure and Romance formulas in these Middle English works produces a recognizable pattern: a world of contemporary challenge gives way to an 'other' world wherein a solution to that challenge is formulated, and a final, new world blending the previous two and promising freedom for the adventurer is created. The narratives begin in an everyday world peopled by men and women of ambiguous individual or social identity. The individual adventurers (Degare, Freine, Orfeo, Tristrem, Amis, Amiloun and Belisaunt) are incapable of or prohibited from integration into this first world as it is, and are driven to seek accommodation in another, less restrictive and less disruptive world. In this first setting, the Adventure formula, with its moral imperative to achieve and overcome, is initiated. The adventurers' search for individual meaning is clearly drawn, and the challenge to achieve is fairly obvious. For adventurer and audience alike

that meaning is associated with a heightened awareness of the relation of man and nature.

In the second or discovery world, the adventurer, no longer confronted by a disruptive social order, achieves spiritual and temporal tranquility as expressed in the Romance formula. One part of the adventurers' achievement may be a successful heterosexual relationship which provides individual enrichment as well as the impetus for completing the series of encounters dictated by the Adventure formula. As a result of the interweaving of Romance and Adventure experiences in the second world, the adventurer is eventually rehabilitated to the world of the former disruption. In this new world of synthesis, the adventurer achieves rehabilitation both personally and socially in a manner which is appropriate to the first world's challenges and which is the fulfillment of the Adventure and Romance formulas.

Upon restoration to the disruptive world, the adventurer is welcomed as hero in a general atmosphere of reconciliation and accommodation. The occasion or reason for the original expulsion has been forgotten and all right-thinking people accept the adventurer and his/her accomplishments. Thus a new social unit is formed, and the moment in which this social entity crystallizes is the moment of synthesis. Most of the major and minor characters are brought together to witness and become part of the birth of a renewed sense of social integration. This new synthesis is both a moral norm and a pattern for a new society in which the forces of

disruption are no longer viable. The new social fabric results from the interweaving of the challenges of the Adventure formula and the promises of the Romance formula.

Those forces which impede the progress of the adventurer are generally people who are in some kind of mental bondage, who are driven helplessly by ruling passions, social rituals or blatant self-interest. Generally they do not manifest evil, but rather embody a lack of self-knowledge or awareness. For this reason, the final reconciliation of the adventurers' challenges is also the release of these minor figures. These persons (Degare's mother and father, Freine's mother, Amiloun's wife and, to some extent, King Mark) are responsible for the initial expulsions, which result from misunderstanding and from frailty. The exposure of that frailty suggests the folly of human society at its most basic level.

The narrative movement can be seen as an artistic pattern which weaves together the Adventure and Romance formulas by juxtaposing a disruptive world with a world of discovery in order to resolve the problems limiting freedom in that first world.

Each of the five narratives studied begins in a world of general social stability based on what appears to be rigid conformity. During a public celebration of some sort, that stability is disrupted and the disruption exposes the hypocrisy on which it seems to be founded. This first, disruptive world embodies an inversion of the natural and balanced; the adventurers' alienation discloses this imbalance. Furthermore, the unnatural or inverted

is exemplified by its inability to accommodate the truth and is manifested in generally wrongful behavior against the innocent adventurer:

> Sir Degare--in this world, knowledge of the truth would ruin; the kingdom and the ruling family are threatened by the birth of an illegitimate son; so fragile is the stability of this world that even knowledge of the child would cause individual suffering and social upheaval; disclosure of the truth would free the princess because of its basic "antisocial" nature.
>
> Lai le Freine--in this world knowledge of the truth would ruin; general knowledge of the twin births, of the unexplainable child would cause individual suffering and social upheaval; again, the truth is essentially "antisocial."
>
> Sir Orfeo--there is no articulated truth being hidden; instead the kingdom and the rulers are being torn apart by their inability to ward off the challenge of the fairy king and to prevent the abduction of Heurodis; there is no one-to-one correspondence suggested to explain the fairy king's actions; the formula dictates an endurance test the reason for which is not articulated.
>
> Sir Tristrem--in this world, knowledge of the truth would ruin; the kingdom is torn apart first by Morgan, then by the adulterous love which results from the magic potion; this adulterous relationship is a closed society which is incompatible with any other; individuals and society are threatened.
>
> Amis and Amiloun--in this world, knowledge of the truth would ruin; the stability of the kingdom is interrupted by the Evil Steward, then Amiloun's wife and finally, leprosy; the truth is "antisocial."

The movement from the first, disruptive world is quick and is signaled by the passage into another reality in which the hypocrisy and deception dissolve and the potentially disruptive situation is rendered insignificant. This idyllic and 'natural' world enables the threatened adventurers to grow, flourish and become whole without awareness of that disruptive world and its complications.

The previously destabilizing and nonconforming characters are shown to be uncorrupted by the pretensions of the first world with all its hypocritical intolerances:

> Sir Degare--Degare is successfully transported by the princess' maid into the protective care of the hermit by whom he is educated and prepared to discover himself through experiencing the world; he learns by trial and error without ever actually losing, although he has several narrow escapes; a pattern of tests is discernible and appropriate; he solves the riddle of his parentage and, at the same time, discovers romantic fulfillment with the princess he rescued earlier; he is successful without using deception or hypocrisy, thus discovering the truth as an agent of freedom.
>
> Lai le Freine--Freine is successfully delivered to the abbess and into the protective care of the inner world; love is discovered and allowed to flourish, a love in which the problem of the first world is without significance and beyond the reach of the interference of that first world; the lovers and those around them achieve a world in which the truth is unimportant.
>
> Sir Orfeo--with the aid of an enabling steward, Orfeo endures a ten year self-exile in a fairy forest, during which he discovers his inner self, loses pretensions of civilization and is able (becomes worthy as never before) to "rescue" and be reunited with Heurodis; his discovery of himself is not detailed or particularly rationalized, but the 'wildman' connotes 'natural man'; musical metaphor for harmony of soul emphasizes the spiritual aspects of the self exile; the achievement represents major manipulation of inherited story.
>
> Sir Tristrem--with the help of Brengwain, Tristrem and Ysonde satisfy their passion and strive to maintain the secrecy of their adulterous love; they remain both within and apart from the Cornwall society; deception and hyprocrisy are staples of the modus operandi; the dual nature of their challenge makes it a threat to themselves and to the stability of society; there is no secular society in which the truth is acceptable, this is only possible in the 'next' world.
>
> Amis and Amiloun--Amis and Belisaunt thrive as a result of Amiloun's victory over the Evil Steward by deception; meanwhile, Amiloun must endure the humiliations of leprosy and exile; Amiloun's journey is made easier by the faithful Amoraunt who seems to engineer the survival of both, the

> disclosure of truth and the eventual reunion; Amis and Belisaunt are tested by sacrificing the children in order to restore Amiloun; the truth is made acceptable without deception or jealousy.

The truth is made acceptable as a result of the innocence of the adventurers in the Romance world. This Romance world of continual discovery suggests the primeval, even mythological, time before and without guilt or doubt.

With the movement to the accommodating world, the truth is made acceptable as the individuals demonstrate self awareness and combat a general social malaise. The interweaving of the Adventure and Romance formulas promotes a freer society in which the problem solved is significant. There is a repudiation of the barriers constricting society in general as well as the individual.

> Sir Degare--discovery of the truth leads to individual freedom and social harmony; the adventurer unites his mother and father in the kingdom of the grandfather; Degare is also united with the besieged princess whom he earlier rescued and he is accepted as heir so that society can flourish; his individual accomplishments clarify the unnatural quality of the first world and validate the second world.
>
> Lai le Freine--discovery of truth leads to individual freedom and social harmony; with the aid of recognition tokens, Freine's mother makes possible the correction of past injustices and saves Freine from exile; both individual and social reconciliation as 'unnatural' behavior of the first world is repudiated by exposing its irrelevance and its destructive qualities.
>
> Sir Orfeo--Orfeo endures and achieves freedom and with Heurodis establishes social harmony; they are rehabilitated and return from exile to reclaim their kingdom; the steward has maintained order and joyfully receives them; restoration and renewal are achieved.

> Sir Tristrem--the truth is never discovered or made public; there is no movement toward accommodation because the truth cannot be synthesized; Tristrem and Ysonde cannot be rehabilitated or made acceptable because the love caused by the potion is a law unto itself; it invalidates all other individual and social priorities; the truth is too terrible for secular reality and can be accommodated only in death.
>
> Amis and Amiloun--discovery of the truth leads to individual freedom and social harmony; with the restoration of Amiloun's health through the sacrifice of the children, the punishment of the spiteful wife and the installation of Amoraunt in Amiloun's kingdom, individual and social harmony are achieved; a world in which petty jealousy and venality are repudiated.

Before proceeding, we must offer a few comments on the obvious nonconformity of Sir Tristrem to the patterns we have established. Poets have long been recognized, sometimes even appreciated, for their ability to tell new tales from old. An author's ability to synthesize various cultural demands with beloved myths may often be tested to the extreme. Two such examples in the present study are Sir Orfeo and Sir Tristrem. The crucial authorial tampering in Orfeo which brings about the happy ending which does not happen in Tristrem. The essential thrust of Tristrem could not be accommodated to the popular mode. The Orfeo poet could confidently manipulate his material, the Tristrem poet could not; consequently, the Tristrem narrative seems out of place (and probably is) and has certainly never received nearly the general acclaim accorded other Middle English verse narratives derived from continental sources. I think I know why he failed--adulterous love cannot be rendered acceptable or optimistic. In fact, it might have been easier for him to develop a new truth, one in which Tristrem by rights ought to have married Ysolde and Mark was not the

rightful husband. In the three other Auchinleck verse narratives studied here, the expression of sexual passion is an essential aspect of the disruption and of the accommodation, but nowhere is it as irreversibly sinful as in Sir Tristrem. The suspicion of antisocial sexual relationships is a major disruptive force in Sir Degare, Lai le Freine, and Amis and Amiloun. The denial or repudiation of any such antisocial relationship is the basis of the reconciliation and accommodation which leads to social harmony. Suspicion and titilation, yes; adultery, no! Even Amis and Amiloun contains an incident which seems to refer to adultery, but this time the separating sword motif is what it represents. Sir Orfeo succeeds because its author saves the wandering adventurer, Heurodis and their society at the last possible moment; no such salvation exists for Tristrem and Ysolde. Is Orfeo an example of elite art being popularized? Perhaps; to view it as such also makes it possible to characterize Tristrem as essentially and irretrievably within the elitist mode. When the Orfeo author rewrote the conclusion of his inherited material in order to achieve a positive, optimistic conclusion to the previous tale, he accommodated the tale to an emphasis on the capacity of the human personality to strive, to cope with and to endure the challenges of experience; no such accommodation happens to Tristrem. A number of factors would exclude Tristrem from the popular mode, but two of them seem to me especially important: (1) by definition, adultery is antisocial and not to be

emulated (at least not by the masses or in front of the servants); and (2) by definition, the tragic death of the adventurers is rarely if ever inspiring.

These five verse narratives, and many like them in Middle English from the fourteenth century, are short, compressed narratives whose impact is relatively intense (as compared to the more sprawling travelogues Guy of Warwick, Beves of Hamtoun, The High History of the Holy Grail or other continental contemporaries). At first glance, these verse narratives seem limited in scope; that is, their plot line is simple and involves few characters. But the study of their use of formula shows that by combining the highly familiar Adventure and Romance formulas, the plots usually achieve an illusion of a world beyond petty alienation. The poet is able to synthesize the world of social reality which is threatened by kidnapping, illegitimacy and secrecy with a world of dreams in which those threats are insignificant. This synthesis results from the accommodation of the Adventure and Romance formulas in both the disruptive first world and the second world of discovery so that social integration can result in spite of the previous individually induced chaos and anarchy. The resolution is a world where there is a heightened awareness, albeit temporary, of the nature of human society.

The disruptive world sets up or provides the challenges and obstacles which the adventurers seek to overcome. This world is fully the world of human actions and desires, and not that of

divine manipulation. It is peopled by those who might alter their behavior if they had more self knowledge. The anarchic behavior of Degare's parents, Freine's mother, the fairy king and the Evil Steward focuses our attention on the same negative impulses around us and within us. Their behavior--kidnapping, jealous scheming, adulterous love, illegitimate children--reflects social concerns which are always timely. What is important is how that behavior functions to expose the disruptive society--it compels these individuals to act in ways which are destructive to themselves, to others, and to their community in general.

When we see the effect of this disruptive society on its members, we may also begin to question our own relation to our communities. These characters are initially not in control of their own lives and are unable to respond when confronted by situations which threaten their world. They are alienated by that world's values because they are able to conform only by making extreme personal sacrifices. Beyond doubt this undermines the community and the social unity which is suggested in the opening celebrations of each narrative (the feast in Orfeo, the minding in Degare, the birth of the neighbor's children in le Freine). The opening of each exposes the unstable nature of each community, evinces a lack of harmony. Each world represents an inversion of the implied or expected sense of being part of a whole; therein lies the challenge presented in the Adventure formula.

The second world attempts to clarify a different type of community, a place without prejudice or deception, and characterized by acceptance and innocence. Given the imperative to overcome the obstacles presented in that first world, the adventurer retreats into a world where the Romance formula becomes a part of the fabric in order to create a solution. Ironically, these adventurers also lack knowledge, but knowledge of a different type--they seem literally not to know who they are, yet they are not inhibited from seeking answers. The spiritual harmony which each adventurer achieves is that which can come in the world of friendly beasts, protective hermits and embracing abbesses.

The idyllic world functions to develop individual identity by promoting the struggle against a restrictive world. The discovery world of Sir Orfeo, Amis and Amiloun, Sir Degare and le Freine establishes the importance of accepting and supporting individuals who may violate social norms as well as the importance of being able to seek support from others when we ourselves may be lost. Once this is established, the narrative moves back to that first world in order to affirm the significance of the adventurers' achievements and reconcile individual differences.

Having overcome the obstacles, solved the mysteries and discovered the loved ones, the adventurers are capable of being integrated into the previously disruptive world; equally, the disruptive world is capable of integrating them at last. The ease with which the barriers become insignificant and the unity created

by completing the Adventure and Romance formulas ensures a society which is no longer disruptive. The synthesis of the two worlds produces social harmony.

The present study shows the use of popular formulas in five Middle English verse narratives of the Auchinleck MS. The Adventure, Romance and Alien Being formulas structure a narrative movement from the archetypal worlds of dsiruption to worlds of discovery and return to a world which synthesizes the two. Even in the Middle English rendering of the tragic fable of Orpheus, the Auchinleck author achieves a quiet harmony out of the characters preseverance in adversity and tolerance of human failing and the unexpected and unusual. As the ethos of popular literature is decidely optimistic, it is not surprising that these narratives have remained in demand for centuries. They are characterized by high moral purpose, exciting adventures and comforting reassurances--all the elements of the popular modern thriller. Even a cursory glance at the quality of medieval life as reflected in its literature provides evidence of an awareness of misery. In the literature of the Middle English verse narrative, this awareness enables the authors to create an alternative social perspective from traditional materials. That alternative stresses optimism, loyalty, excitement and entertainment.

CHAPTER VII FOOTNOTE

[1]Velma Bourgeois Richmond, The Popularity of Middle English Romance (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1975), 18.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I

An identification of the contents of the whole Auchinleck Ms. would be helpful and orderly. There remain a total of forty-four items, although the original numbering shows that thirteen have been lost. The following is a table of contents in agreement with that of Laura Hibbard Loomis, "The Auchinleck Ms. and a London Bookshop," PMLA, 57 (1942): 604-605.

Romances:

Otuel; Roland and Vernagu; Degare, Orfeo; Lai le Freine; Sir Tristrem; Arthour and Merlin; Guy of Warwick; Reinbroun; Beves of Hamtoun; Horn Childe; Richard Coeur de Lion; Alisaunder; Seven Sages of Rome; Floris and Blauncheflur; King of Tars; Amis and Amiloun.

Chronicle and list of Norman Barons:

Short Metrical Chronical (Kolbing, No. 40, Liber Regum Angliac) A list of Norman Barons, not included in Wells.

Pious Tales of the Miracle Type:

1. Lady Was Made (Kolbing, No. 29, How Our Lauedi Saute Was Ferste Sounde).

2. Clerk Who Would See the Virgin (Kolbing, No. 9, Miracle of the Virgin).

Legends of Saints and Other Holy Legends:

1. Gregory; Margaret; Katherine; Mary Magdalene; Anna (saints)

2. Adam and Eve; Harrowing of Hell; Assumption of the Virgin (other Holy Legends)

Visit to the Otherworld:
Owayn Miles or The Purgatory of Saint Patrick

Humerous Tale:
Penniworp of Witte

Debate:
1. Debate Between the Body and Soul
2. The Thrush and the Nightengale

Homily:
Speculum Gy de Warewyke (Kolbing, No. 10, Epistola Alcuini)

Monitory Pieces:
1. Sayings of Saint Bernard (Kolbing, No. 35, Les Diz de Seint Bernard)
2. Enemies of Man (Kolbing, No. 39, A Moral Poem)

Works of Religious Instruction:
1. Seven Sins
2. Pater Noster
3. Psalm 50 (English Bible, 51; Kolbing, No. 36, David the King

Satire and Complaint:
1. Evil Times of Edward II
2. Praise of Women (classification as satire is doubtful)
3. On the King's Breaking of the Magna Carta (Kolbing, No. 20, A Satirical Poem).

Illegible Except for the Title:
Pe wenche þat loved a King (Kolbing, No. 27)

APPENDIX II

APPENDIX II

This plot summary of Sir Degare follows closely that in A Manual of the Writing in Middle English 1050-1500 (New Haven, 1967), pp. 140-41.

In Brittany a king unsurpassed at arms has offered his only daughter and heir to whatever suitor overcomes him in tournament; during the years no suitor succeeds. While on her way to the abbey where the deceased queen is buried, the princess becomes separated from the royal party and lost in a forest. There as her attendants rest under a chestnut tree in the heat of the morning, she moves off alone and is ravished by a knight from fairyland. On parting he leaves a pointless sword with her for the son she will bear; the point of the sword the knight himself keeps to identify his son later on. When the son is born, the mother, fearing for her reputation, secretly abandons him, but leaves in his cradle, gold, silver, and a pair of gloves together with a letter informing the finder that the infant is noble and should love only her whom the gloves fit. A hermit, who finds the infant and christens him Degare ("the one almost lost"), entrusts him to his sister until his tenth year and thereafter educates him himself.

Given the gold, silver, and gloves and informed of the letter Degare at twenty begins to search for his parents. With only a

sapling as weapon he saves an earl from a dragon's attack and is forthwith knighted. Since the gloves fit no one present, he continues his travels. Meeting a king offering his only daughter to any suitor who can overcome him, Degare unhorses him and so is married. Only later, when he gives her the gloves, does he discover that he has married his own mother, who at once confesses to her father her meeting with the knight from fairyland and Degare's secret birth. Armed now with the pointless sword, which his mother has kept for him, Degare sets out to find his father. He travels far in the forest where he was begotten, and reaches a castle, but then occupants appear, four huntresses, a dwarf and a beautiful lady with attendants. Degare conducts himself courteously, yet no one speaks to him. He is refreshed at a banquet and then reveals his love for the lady of the castle. Following her to her chamber, he lies down and is lulled to sleep by the music of a harp. Next day, after he learns that her father's death has left the castle undefended, he fights off a neighboring suitor and is promised the lady's love and hand in marriage. But this he puts off until he has found his own father.

His search leads him now to a forest, where he is challenged by a knight for poaching. Though Degare protests his innocence, he accepts a fight and readies his pointless sword. But sight of the pointless sword moves his challenger to break off fighting and, by means of the missing point, which he has with him, to identify

Degare as his own son. Joyfully the two then seek out Degare's mother. To the King's satisfaction, the knight from fairyland marries his daughter. Accompanied by his mother, father, and grandfather, Degare returns to the castle on the island and is joined to the lady to whom he earlier promised his love.

APPENDIX III

APPENDIX III

This plot summary of Lai le Freine follows that in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. by J. Burke Severs (New Haven, 1967), p. 134.

In the West Country two knights live as neighbors. When one becomes the father of twins, the wife of the other remarks enviously that any mother of twins has been unfaithful. Soon, however, she herself bears twin daughters. To save herself embarrassment, she plots with the midwife to do away with one of them. The one chosen is wrapped in a rich robe and identified as well-born by means of a ring. During the night a maiden carries her as far as a distant convent and abandons her in a hollow ash tree. When the porter finds the infant, he at once informs the abbess of his discovery. The infant is christened Freine, which in French means "ash."

As Freine matures, she is accepted as the abbess' niece and at twelve years is given the few facts of her past. By now there is no fairer, more gentle, more submissive maiden in England. A young knight, Sir Guroun, wins her love and takes her away as his mistress. Later, when persuaded to marry, he happens to choose Freine's twin. The ceremony is performed, and the bride is brought to Guroun's hall.

The fragment ends here, but the story may be completed from the source.

Freine is present at the hall. Thinking the bridal bed too plainly covered, she generously places over it her own precious robe. When her mother sees the robe and learns of the ring, she confesses her guilt and identifies Freine as her own daughter. Freine's noble birth is now established. As soon as Guroun's marriage is dissolved, Freine and Guroun are happily married.

APPENDIX IV

APPENDIX IV

This plot summary of Sir Orfeo follows that in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, 1967), pp. 135-36.

Orfeo, great harper and king of Traciens, is married to Heurodis, whose beauty is unsurpassed. One May morning, as Heurodis relaxes in her garden, she falls asleep under a grafted tree. On awakening she is distressed. She explains to Orfeo that their happy life together must end. During her sleep, she says, some knights appeared and asked her to speak with their king. Since she refused, the king himself carried her off to his kingdom; presently, he returned her to her garden and warned that she must be found under the same tree next day, her last with Orfeo. While lying under the same tree next day, she is spirited away despite her guard of a thousand knights.

Heartbroken, Orfeo appoints his steward regent and abandons himself to wandering in the forest. He lives meagerly for ten years and for solace plays his harp sweetly enough to tame the wild animals. He often sees the King of Fairies and his followers hunting; where they go when they disappear, Orfeo cannot tell. One day he sees among some ladies with falcons his own Heurodis, who recognizes her

lord, but does not speak. When she rides off with the others, Orfeo, with harp in hand, follows through a rocky opening until he enters a broad, sun-lit plain. Then he watches them enter a beautiful castle; posing as a minstrel, he too is admitted. Within, he finds these taken by the fairies, including Heurodis, who is sleeping under a tree. When Orfeo comes before the King and Queen of Fairies, he plays his harp so well that he is promised whatever reward he asks. He asks for Heurodis, and the King of Fairies is true to his promise. Taking Heurodis by the hand, he returns to his own kingdom.

Still unrecognized, he resolves to test his steward's good faith. Before his followers he plays his harp, which he claims belonged to a great harper long since killed in the wilderness by animals. The sorrow which the steward and others show is proof enough of their devotion to their king. Orfeo and his queen are crowned anew and live on happily.

From Master Walter Map's Book, De Nugis Curialium (Courtiers' Trifles), Englished by Frederick Tupper and Marbury Bladen Ogle, Macmillan: 1924, 97-98, 218.

Dist. ii, Cap. xiii (Of the same Apparitions):

> ...But what can we say of those ghostly appearances which abide and are perpetuated through worthy descendants like the instance of Alnodus (AElfnoth), or like that already cited example among the Britons, which is the theme of the following story: A certain knight buried his wife, who was dead beyond a doubt, and got her again by snatching her from a band of dancers; and he was afterward presented by her with children and grandchildren. Their posterity surviveth until this day, and those who thus derive their origin have become a vast number, all of whom are called 'sons of the dead woman.'

Dist. iv, Cap. viii (Also of the Appearance of Phantoms):

> Now that I am speaking of the deaths of those whose fate at Doomsday is doubtful, I must mention a knight of Little Britain, who found the wife whom he had lost and long mourned from the hour of her death in a great throng of women at night, in the depths of a most lonely valley. He was full of fear and wonder, and, seeing her alive whom he had buried, he did not believe his eyes, and was uncertain as to what

the fates had wrought. He preferred to snatch her with confidence whatever the outcome, whether destined to rejoice in this ravishment, if his sight were true, or to be defrauded by a phantom; so that he could not in any case be accused of cowardice in restraining his hand. He seized her, therefore, and for many years derived as notable delight from this union as in the years before (her death). From her he had children, whose offspring are numerous and bear the name of 'Sons of the dead.' Indeed, a prodigious wrong to nature, and quite incredible if sure proofs of its truth were not extant!

APPENDIX V

APPENDIX V

This plot summary of Sir Tristrem follows that in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, 1967), pp. 77-78.

Rouland Riis of Ermonie begets a child on Blaunchefloure, sister of King Mark of England. Duke Morgan treacherously slays Rouland and seizes his lands. Blaunchefloure bears a son, who is named Tristrem. After bequeathing him a ring received from Mark and entrusting him to the care of the faithful Rohand, the mother dies. Rohand rears the child as his own, educating him in music, sports, and hunting as well as in books. At fifteen, Tristrem wins a chess game against a sea captain from Norway. He is abducted by the seamen and deposited with his winnings on a strange shore, that turns out to be England. On the way to Mark's court he teaches hunters the proper way to brittle deer. At the court, where he is well received, he displays his skill in music. Meanwhile, Rohand, searching for Tristrem, arrives at Mark's court and reveals the youth's parentage and early history. Marks knights his nephew, who sets out to avenge his father's death. He slays Morgan, and gives Almain and Ermonie to Rohand and his sons to rule for him.

On his return to England, he finds everyone grief-stricken because the Irish king Moraunt has demanded his customary tribute of a hundred youths. In a battle with Moraunt on an island, Tristrem slays the foe, leaving a sword splinter in his skull. The wound which Moraunt had dealt Tristrem will not heal. After languishing thus for three years, he sets forth in a ship and lands in Ireland. As Tramtris, a minstrel, he plays the harp so charmingly that he attracts the attention of the Irish queen Ysonde, the sister of Moraunt. She heals his wound, and during his convalescence he teaches her fair daughter, also named Ysonde, to play the harp and to sing. After a year, he returns to his uncle and tells him of the princess Ysonde. Jealous barons, fearful that Tristrem seeks to prevent Mark's marriage in order to succeed him as king, demand that Tristrem risk danger of a visit to Ireland to obtain the princess as a bride for the king. In the guise of a merchant Tristrem wins her by delivering her from a dragon to which she was to be sacrificed. Ysonde recognizes Moraunt's slayer by his broken sword and the matching fragment retrieved from his victim. She and her mother plan to kill him, but he persuades them to spare his life.

By mistake, Tristrem and Ysonde drink a magic love potion prepared by her mother for Mark and his bride. Thereafter Tristrem and Ysonde are unable to resist its power. Mark weds the princess, but she substitutes her maid Brengwain for herself on the wedding night and later plans her murder to conceal the secret. Brengwain saves herself and returns to her repentant mistress. Tristrem next

rescues the queen from a minstrel who has won her from the king by a ruse. When Meriadok reports the love of Tristrem and Ysonde, the king seeks to determine the truth. Craftily he arranges to overhear the interview of the lovers, but they detect his presence and succeed in deceiving him. When they are at last discovered, Ysonde offers to undergo an ordeal by oath. Swearing an ambiguous oath that states the literal but incomplete truth, she evades punishment. Eventually, however, Mark banishes the lovers when he is finally convinced of their relationship. They live happily in the forest for about a year. One day, Mark comes upon them asleep with a naked sword between them. Persuaded now that he was mistaken, he summons them back to court. But soon again Tristrem is driven into exile, though Mark forgives the queen.

Tristrem weds Ysonde of the White Hand, daughter of the Duke of Brittany, because of her name, but sight of the queen's ring, given to him as a token, reminds him of her love and he refuses to consummate the marriage. He defeats a giant, with whose aid he constructs a hall adorned with images of the chief persons in Tristrem's story. Ganhardin, his brother-in-law, reproaches him for neglecting his wife. Sight of the images satisfies Ganhardin and causes him to fall in love with Brengwain. They set off for England to get Brengwain for Ganhardin. After further adventures and a brief meeting with Ysonde and her attendant, the knights flee. After Ganhardin returns to Brittany, Tristrem, fighting in behalf of a knight of his own name, is struck by an arrow in his old wound.

The text ends at this point and the conclusion was evidently lost when the following leaf was cut from the manuscript.

APPENDIX VI

APPENDIX VI

This plot summary of Amis and Amiloun follows that in A Manual of the Writing in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, 1967), p. 168.

Amis and Amiloun, born on the same day to neighboring barons, grow up looking so alike and so equally notable for beauty, courtesy, and strength that they are undistinguishable from one another. Adopted by a Duke, they pledge absolute faithfulness to each other for all time. The Duke knights them and gives them high office. After long service Amiloun must return home to manage his estate. Each friend renews his troth, and each retains one of two gold cups as a token. Amiloun marries. The Duke's daughter, threatening Amis, forces him to become her lover. A jealous steward reports them to the Duke. Amis denies his guilt, and a day is fixed for trial by combat. Since the truth of the charge makes it impossible for Amis to defend himself, he appeals to Amiloun, who impersonates Amis and kills the steward; but Amiloun is warned by a voice from Heaven that, for taking the place of Amis, he will be afflicted with leprosy and poverty. Meanwhile Amis takes his friend's place and sleeps with his friend's wife, a sword between them. The Duke's

daughter is then married to Amis and bears two children. When the Duke dies, Amis becomes the ruler.

Amiloun is stricken with leprosy, is cast out by his wife, and becomes a beggar. But he is cared for by a youth (Owaines or Amoraunt), who bears him in a cart to the gates of Amis. There Amis sends out wine in his token-cup. This wine Amiloun pours into his own token-cup. The similarity of cups is reported to Amis, who assumes that his friend has been slain by the leper and beats the sick man. Learning his error, Amis and his wife care for Amiloun. Both friends are warned from Heaven that if the blood of Amis's two children is used to bathe the leper, he will be healed. Agonized but faithful, Amis cuts his children's throats and restores Amiloun. Amis's wife is heartbroken, but approves. When they visit the nursery, they find the children alive and well. The friends go to the country of Amiloun, who gives his lands to Amoraunt.

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