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KISSAM, Margaret Denslow, 1943-
THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF MIDDLE ENGLISH
ROMANCES.

City University of New York, Ph.D., 1977
Literature, medieval

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THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES

by

MARGARET KISSAM

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in English in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1977

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES

by

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This study examines the structure of Middle English romances in order to determine, first, whether or not works often classified as romances share common structural characteristics, and, second, whether or not these structural characteristics alone can be used to distinguish romances from "borderline" romances and from other types of contemporary narrative.

Romance structure is episodic and scenic. Within the episodes (as defined in Chapter I), most scenes fall into three categories: 1) personal encounters (e.g. conversations, formal deliberations, love scenes; 2) battle scenes; 3) scenes of pure narrative (e.g. the working out of a plot). These scenic types differ from each other structurally. By far the largest group numerically consists of scenes of personal encounter, as a result of the personal nature of the motivation, action, and reaction at work in romance. The proportion of scenic to non-scenic material (including introductions, conclusions, and transitions) is relatively stable, regardless of the length of the romance. Except in special cases (enumerated in Chapter III), non-scenic

narrative in the Middle English romances does not exceed twenty-five percent of the total number of lines.

The narrative forms most closely related to romance are chronicle, heroic narrative, and the saint's legend. It is possible to distinguish romance from chronicle and heroic narrative by a comparison of their structural characteristics, for example, the relative importance of dramatization (scenes) and the organization of episodes into the narrative as a whole. The same structural isolation does not exist in the case of the saint's legend, for the legends are defined primarily by content and mode rather than by structure. Among the "borderline" romances, however, pious themes, especially the theme of patient suffering, effect structural deviations from the norms of romance, particularly in the use of non-scenic, summary narrative.

In conclusion, romance content (chivalry, and to a lesser extent, the supernatural) and romance mode (idealization) usually associate themselves with a certain type of structure, and deviations from that structure often go together with deviations from other romance elements.

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INTRODUCTION

From the Middle Ages to the present day, considerable confusion has surrounded the definition of romance. Originally, the term romaunce could refer to any narrative work translated from Latin into French, or from French into another vernacular.¹ Even in the twelfth century, however, there was a sense that some of these narratives stood apart in a class of their own, as Jean Bodel indicated with his division of the great narrative cycles into three matières.² Using these categories as a springboard, modern scholars have attempted to describe and isolate the literary conventions of romance in order either to establish or to negate the concept of romance as a genre.

Most definitions of romance focus on content, mode, or structure. Definitions by content emphasize the chivalric character of the dramatis personae. Such definitions usually confine themselves to medieval romances, which are described as stories of adventure, in verse or prose, in which the chief parts are played by knights, kings, and distressed ladies, usually motivated by love, faith, or the desire for adventure. The heroes and heroines conform to medieval ideals of chivalric conduct, though these ideals may differ from one period and from one country to another.³ A definition by content often includes the use of supernatural

properties which create an aura of wonder and mystery. This aura has led some scholars to define romance as a mode rather than a specific content. The romance mode may be found, in varying degrees and forms, throughout the history of literature. Romance is seen as a mythical way of writing, as a quality of imagination that "possesses the mystery and the spell of everything unattainable."⁴ The hero moves in a world in which "the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended."⁵ The idealization inherent in this interpenetration of the natural and the supernatural has a distancing effect, transferring the familiar into the unfamiliar and remote.⁶ The penchant for lavish descriptions of exotic splendor intensifies the idealization, even though that exotic splendor is normally depicted anachronistically in terms of familiar, contemporary customs.⁷ Since the modal definition of romance isolates a quality of narrative approach characterized by idealization and distancing of its subject, the nature of the definition is too generalized to permit any concept of romance as a genre. Now the question arises of whether or not there is such a thing as a romance genre. One scholar, pointing to the diversity of the so-called "romances" in the Canterbury Tales, has suggested that the generic label retains very little critical value, and therefore that the proper study is not genre but structure.⁸ Already certain critics have proposed definitions of romance that take structure into account along with content and mode.⁹ But the question of whether or not romances can be isolated structurally from other narrative forms remains unanswered.

If we abandon generic terms and look at medieval narrative as a whole, we are confronted with a body of literature which dates roughly from the sixth century to the fifteenth, and includes all those works formerly classified by content or intention, such as chronicles, heroic narratives, romances, allegories, saints' legends, fabliaux, exempla, animal fables, and other popular tales. This mass of literature must be broken down by some means to allow for any kind of discussion in depth. In order to establish classes or tendencies in structural forms, it is necessary to compare works with one another, and it is clearly impossible to take each medieval narrative and compare it with all the extant narratives composed in Europe over a period of nine hundred years. For this reason, I propose to begin by retaining the traditional generic labels while recognizing their inherent inconsistencies. Once having examined the structural features of the narratives falling under these labels, we can see whether the structures confirm or oppose the traditional groupings.

My purpose, therefore, is to describe the narrative structure of one genre, romance, without initially challenging the term or lingering over borderline cases. After studying the nature of episodes, scenes, and transitions in works widely accepted as romances, I shall compare these structures to those of "borderline" romances and those of other genres or narrative forms, to see which structures may be termed "romance" techniques.

The Middle English romances under discussion in Chapters

II - IV have been grouped according to verse form, for there are some similarities among the works of one verse form which are rarely to be found in narratives outside of that form. Since this is primarily a structural study, the romances within each chapter have been organized according to length. The arrangement by length facilitates a discussion of the various narrative techniques by showing them first in a simplified form. By means of this arrangement, I hope to show that there is not the great difference between the structure of shorter and longer romances that has commonly been assumed.

After some general comments in Chapter I on the nature of the narrative structure of Middle English romances, the first romances to be studied in depth, in Chapter II, are those written in couplets. This group contains a large number of "typical" romances: romances that create no generic difficulties. This chapter is organized strictly according to the length of the romances, beginning with the shortest and ending with the longest. Chapters III and IV emphasize deviations from the norms established in Chapter II. Often classified without qualification as romances, a number of stanzaic and alliterative romances show a marked deviation in structure, as well as content and mode, due to the presence of certain themes and literary influences. Therefore, these two chapters are divided into two parts. Because Chapter III deals with pious themes in tail-rime romances, the first half takes up secular romances, and the second,

pious romances. Within each of these two groups, the works are organized by length. Chapter IV deals with heroic themes in the alliterative narratives. The first part of this chapter deals with romances, and the second with heroic works which have sometimes been classified as romances. Again, within each of these groups the narratives are organized by length.

In choosing the narratives for these chapters, I have avoided short fragments, close translations of French works, and works containing more than one verse form, preferring whole or nearly whole works of English character with consistent prosody. The works selected illustrate a broad range of narrative techniques, including many of those that deviate from what I consider to be the structural norms of romance.

An examination of the Middle English romances will show that structure alone is enough to isolate them from almost all other contemporary narrative forms. The one exception is saints' legends, a form defined by means of content and mode rather than by structure. No one structural pattern can be associated with saints' legends as a whole. Many are in fact based on structures which are easy to distinguish from those typical of romances. But some have been influenced by romance structures, while others have influenced the structure of certain romances. Therefore, in order to isolate the Middle English romances successfully from other contemporary forms, we must refer to their content and mode as well as to their structure.

My thesis is that, in the Middle Ages, romance content (chivalry, and to a lesser extent, the supernatural) and romance mode (idealization) usually associate themselves with a certain type of structure, and that deviations from that structure often go together with deviations from other romance elements. Therefore, although the emphasis here will be on structure, structure will be considered throughout as an integral part of a multiple matrix, of which the other axes are content and mode.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

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³Dorothy Everett, "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romances," Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association 15 (1929), pp. 100-02.

⁴[William] P. Ker, Epic and Romance (New York, 1908, rpt. 1957), p. 321.

⁵Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (New York, 1969), p. 33.

⁶Pamela Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature (London, 1971), pp. 236-37.

⁷Helaine Newstead, "Romances," in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs, Fascicle I (New Haven, 1967), p. 11.

⁸Robert Jordan, "The Question of Genre: Five Chaucerian Romances," in Chaucer at Albany, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York, 1975), pp. 77-104.

⁹Newstead, pp. 11-12; George Kane, Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romance, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman (London, 1951), pp. 1-2; Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London, 1968), pp. 13-29.

CHAPTER I

The Narrative Structure of Romance:
Introductions, Scenes, and Episodes

Since the Middle English romances were usually intended for presentation to a listening audience, their form is governed by the patterns of oral poetry. It is now widely accepted that, although the romances which have come down to us are composed in a heavily formulaic, oral style, it is unlikely that they were actually improvised orally. Instead, they were probably often copied, translated, or adapted by different men from those who later recited them. Those who composed the romances made use of conventional oral formulas and motifs in order to guide the response of the listening audience.¹ However, other types of medieval narrative also employ oral conventions. Therefore, we must ask how we are to distinguish romance structure from the structure of those other types of narrative, and how we are to evaluate the works within each category.

In an essay on romance scholarship, Lillian Hornstein confronts the problem of isolating romance techniques:

Attempts to formulate a definition and isolate the genre "romance" by purely metrical, objective, non-denotational techniques have not succeeded. Having reached this stage, however,

we may begin to explore Benson's suggestion that it is not so much the author's debt to sources, traditions, and formulas, but his deliberate departure from them, the unexpected innovation, which reveals "a new aesthetic." Before the judgment can be rendered, romances should be examined for their idiosyncratic qualities--in what ways and at what points themes, characters, and episodes are introduced, how new scenes are manipulated, and how these function with relation to theme and plot, how dialogue moves the events, who speaks when, and how.²

Thus it appears that the narrative structure of the individual romances has not received sufficient attention in romance studies, especially regarding the distinction between the structural conventions inherent in the tradition and the use to which those conventions were put in specific works.

In order to discuss the similarities and differences in the episode and scene construction of the Middle English romances, this study will concentrate on romance conventions at the level of motifs and themes rather than individual formulas. For the purposes of this discussion, "motif" will refer to stock situations and in some cases stock characters, while "theme" will refer to larger, more abstract concepts which guide the course of the narrative as a whole. Before going on to the subject of episode and scene construction, however, it will be useful to look at the methods used by romancers to introduce their stories.

INTRODUCTIONS

It is common for romances to begin with some introductory comments designed to establish the relationship be-

tween narrator, audience, and tale. These remarks create expectations in the minds of the listeners by means of variations on a limited number of topoi. The most common topos is the exhortation, "Listen, and you shall hear," or "I will tell you of," "I will begin with." Very few romances ignore this topos altogether.³ A few romances, such as Arthour and Merlin and Partonope of Blois alter the topos so that it becomes a direct appeal to the reader. But a significant number of romances state outright that they are designed for oral delivery to a listening audience. When this is not actually the case, as in some erudite romances, the convention persists.

Introductions often begin with, or include, a brief prayer, even when the content of the romance has no religious bias. (For didactic romances, introductory prayers are obviously mandatory.) The introductory prayer can be for the listener, or it can be a more general prayer asking that we may all enjoy God's grace. Arthour and Merlin begins,

Ihesu Crist Heuen-king
 Al ous graunt gode ending
 And seynt Marie þat swete þing
 So be at our bigining
 And help ous at our nede,
 And leue ous wele to spede
 þat we habbeþ euer to don,
 And scheld ous fram our fon.⁴

This prayer is followed immediately by a sententia on the advantages of knowing how to read. The prayer, while it may

arise from sincere sentiment on the part of the composer or narrator, has no organic relation to the body of the narrative; it functions as a stock segment of the introductory matter in a verse romance. The stereotyped nature of this device is well illustrated in Havelok, where petitionary lines alternate with the secular:

þat ye mowen nou yhere,
 And þe tale ye mowen ylere,
 At þe biginning of vre tale,
 Fil me a cuppe of ful god ale;
 And wile y drinken, her y spelle,
 þat Crist vs shilde alle fro helle!
 Krist late vs heuere so for to do
 þat we moten comen him to;
 And witþat it mote ben so,
Benedicamus Domino!
 Here y schal biginnen a rym;
 Krist us yeue wel god fyn!
 The rym is maked of Havelok,
 A stalworþi man in a flok;
 He was þe wihtest man at nede
 þat may riden on ani stede.⁵

Here the prayer does as much to provide ready rime words as it does to set the tone of the work. Because there are several prayers at episode boundaries within Havelok, the prayers appear to influence the structure more than the content, for Havelok extols the virtues of a beloved, but not a saintly ruler. The romance concludes with a plea for pater-nosters:

For him þat haueth þe rym maked,
 And þerfore fele nihtes waked,
 þat Iesu Crist his soule bringe
 Biforn his fader at his endinge.
 (2998-3001)

It may be well to ask if this is in fact a plea for pater-

nosters alone, or in addition for a more immediate and material reward for the nocturnal labor of the poet's craft.

Other opening devices typical of more learned romances are the sententia, the topos of tranlatio studii, and the extended catalogue of heroes or romances. These devices often have a rather weak relationship with the matter of the tale; their function is limited to announcing the commencement of a narrative. But certain romances use the sententia more adroitly to manipulate the relationship between narrator, audience, and tale. For example, in the Lyf of Alisaunder, the narrator states that although unlearned and lettered men perceive the world differently, all desire to hear of remarkable events. For as Cato said, "Oþere mannes lijf is oure shewer."⁶ Some would rather hear ribaldry than a good tale; such people should be excluded from the audience. Thus the sententia leads the poet to request a serious and attentive audience, and to claim obliquely that his tale is concerned with remarkable events, and therefore merits their attention. Nevertheless, in secular romances, such attempts to point out the beneficial nature of the tale remain outside of the narrative itself.

Interspersed with this non-narrative introductory material, or following it, come remarks giving more specific background to the narrative itself. Most prominent are introductions to the hero, composed primarily of non-specific but positive adjectives announcing his good character, prowess, and other admirable qualities. Sometimes, as

in Perceval of Galles, the introduction will set forth the virtues of the father instead, indicating the source of courage in the son. Perceval's father was noble and won much respect at Arthur's court. Because he was such a doughty warrior, Arthur gave him his sister Acheflour to be his wife. This background foreshadows Perceval's accomplishments long before he himself shows any promise. Another variation on the delayed introduction of the hero occurs in Ywain and Gawain, as in its source, Chrétien's Yvain, where the narrator establishes an Arthurian setting by describing Arthur, rather than beginning with Ywain. More often, however, the hero himself is described early in the romance with such stock epithets as doughty, stalworþi, wyght, god, curteous, hend, hardy, gentyll, faire, bolde, comelych, der, free, fell, trewe. Of course these adjectives recur throughout the romance, but are often blocked together at the beginning to elicit the positive response and high expectations which the narrative will later gratify.

In addition to describing the hero, it is necessary to set the scene by describing either the time or the place in which the events of the narrative occurred. Descriptions can be as succinct as "It ffell sometimes in the land of Beame,"⁷ in Eger and Grime, or as complex as the twenty-nine lines describing the days when clerks were naming the planets and the months in the Lyf of Alisaunder.⁸ The hero often starts out at court, perhaps at the time of a feast. Then an event, such as the arrival of the Green Knight in

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, occurs to initiate the action. The romance called the Avowyngge of King Arthur, Sir Gawan, Sir Kaye and Sir Bawdewyn of Bretan sets the tale in what it claims to be an historical moment, gives the specific place where the events begin, and then moves directly into the narrative:

Þis is no fantum ne no fabulle:
 3e wote wele of þe Rowun Tabull,
 Of prest men and priueabulle,
 Was holdun in prise:
 Cheuetan of chiualry,
 Kyndenesse of curtesy,
 Hunting full warly,
 As wayt men and wise.
 To þe forest þay fare
 To hunte atte buk and atte bare,
 To þe herte and to þe hare,
 Þat bredus in þe rise.
 Þe King atte Carlele he lay;
 Þe hunter cummys on a day:
 Sayd, 'Sir, þer walkes in my way
 A well grim gryse.⁹

The first verse of the second stanza, "Þis is no fantum ne no fabulle," supports the claim made in stanza one that the story concerns the ancestors of the audience:

Giffe hom ioy þat wille here
 Of du₃ti men and of dere,
 Of haldurs þat before vs were,
 Þat lifd in this londe!
 (4-7)

This idea is in turn supported in the second stanza by reference to the audience's common knowledge of Arthur's court. The virtues of the fellowship of the Round Table are set forth, and followed by a more specific description

of one of their activities, hunting. Then the king is situated in Carlisle. By now, the time and location have been narrowed down to a point where a specific day can be introduced, followed by a minor character and some dialogue. Thus we have entered the first scene of the first episode.

Some romances open quickly into full scenes, while others delay, beginning instead with a telescoped account of the events leading up to the initial situation to be recounted in full. A few move directly from the introduction into the initial scene. For example, after a fifty-seven-line introduction of the dramatis personae, Generides shifts immediately to a certain spring day on which King Aufreyus goes hunting to lighten his spirit. King Horn follows the same pattern. In the Earl of Toulous, background narrative is mixed with the character introductions, so that we learn about the feud as we read a stanza about the Emperor Dyoclysyen, and another on the Earl of Toulous, Sir Barnard. The following stanza, the fourth of the romance, introduces the Empress, Dame Belybone, who breaks into speech at the end of the stanza (line 46), opening the first scene.¹⁰ Arthour and Merlin varies this pattern by introducing King Constance and his sons in a passage of summary narrative, giving a sixteen line scene at his deathbed, and returning to summary narrative in order to introduce the villain, Fortiger. This mixture of dramatis personae and background narrative also operates in Eger and Grime and Havelok. Libeaus Desconus gives us eighteen lines of preliminary

background, a description of how Sir Geyngeyn's mother kept him in the forest away from courtly life. The shift into the first scene is marked by the phrase "Tyll hit be-fell vppon a day."¹¹ Perceval of Galles, Bevis of Hampton, the Lyf of Alisaunder, and Richard Coer de Lyon all begin with a summary of the activities of the fathers of the heroes, proceeding to the heroes as children. Some romances, rather than giving recent background along with the character descriptions, trace the story back to distant origins and historic causes. A prominent example is Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. But in spite of these variations, the most widespread pattern is introduction, background summary narrative, scene.

The slowing down to scenic, as opposed to summary, narrative may be signaled at first by a reference to the time or location, or by an announcement of dialogue.¹² In other words, when the narrator begins to linger over the events of a specific time and place, the narrative line has expanded into the first scene of the first episode.

SCENES

Because of its relationship to the stage, a scene is easier to identify than an episode. Basically, a scene is a static picture set in motion by amplification. The narrator presents one or more characters who occupy a given slot of space and time, and describes the setting, their

actions and their discourse in some detail. The restrictions of space and time are somewhat more flexible in fiction than in drama; for instance, a scene may take place in a hall and adjacent garden. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the narrator stop merely naming events--"then they held council"--and take the time to describe such events in detail as to the setting, the characters, and what they did and said, in order for a narrative moment to be called a scene.

The amount of detail varies from scene to scene, depending on whether the scene is intended to represent a central or a subordinate moment in the episode. The amount and kind of detail can also vary according to the narrative style of the composer; alliterative long lines, for example, seem to encourage the use of considerably more scenic detail than the four stress lines of the romances in couplets and tail-rime stanzas. Even in highly specific scenes, however, English romances are usually characterized by swift narration, dialogue which adds to the narrative progression, and a minimum of description, aside from the initial portraits (effictio and notatio) of the principal characters. Although scenes range in length from a few lines to several hundred, length does not necessarily determine the degree or the kind of detail in use.

Scenes seem to fall into three major categories:

(1) personal encounters, such as conversations, formal deliberations, and love scenes; (2) battle scenes; (3) scenes

of pure narrative which do not fall under either category. In addition, there are a few monologues and visions which fit into none of the above categories. Not all scenes are amplified to the same degree. Occasionally, a romancer may wish to stop the action very briefly, in order to amplify a moment in the summary narrative, but he does not care to expand that moment to the point of including the setting, action, and dialogue typical of normal scenes. For example, he may delay the summary narrative long enough to give a brief, isolated dialogue of, say, six or eight lines, that is not sufficiently well developed to be a real scene, but contains too much detail to be identified simply as the naming of an event. This is a transitional scene. It must be admitted at the outset that this is a rather subjective label, as it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between a transitional scene and a real scene. However, it is essential to acknowledge that such a difference exists, for it would be an oversimplification to claim that romance narrative is made up entirely of developed scenes and summary transitions.

The shifts from one scene to another, or from summary narrative to a scene, are almost invariably designated by specific shift markers. The most obvious shift states directly the will of the narrator: "But lete we nowe . . . / And speke we of" Less abrupt shifts consist of single adverbial words or phrases: when, then, now, as, after, anon, soon, till; upon a day, in that time, on the

morn. A more elaborate adverbial beginning is the spring-time opening.

It should be emphasized, in the case of the individual words, such as when and then, that these words appear fairly often, and do not invariably signal a change of scene. For example, consider the following passage from Libeaus

Desconus:

þey ryde forþ all þre
Toward þe fayre cyte:
Kardeuyle for-soþ hyt hy3t.
þanne sawe þey yn a park
A castell stout and stark
þat ryally was a-dy3t.
Swych saw þey neuer non,
J-made of lyme and ston,
J-karneled all abowte.
'Oo!' seyde Lybeaus, 'Be Seynt Jon!
Her wer a wordly won
For man þat wer yn dowte.'
þo lo3 þat mayde bry3t
And seyde, . . .

(706-719, Cotton MS)

The first three lines exemplify a common transitional device, the journey. This link is a very short passage of summary narrative; the narrator designates the travelers as "all þre" (Libeaus Desconus, the maiden Elene, and a dwarf), and mentions that they rode toward a particular destination, "Kardeuyle." In the fourth line, the narrator announces a change of pace. The scene begins in a kind of vacuum, since the journey lacks any detail to place it in time. However, along with the words "saw þey in a park / A castell," the word "þanne" indicates that the narration has slowed down to depict the actions of a given moment in time. To confirm

this impression, the narrator describes the castle in some detail. After the description, a dialogue begins, in which Libeaus Desconus and Elene discuss the castle and its lord. Libeaus exclaims that the castle would be a worthy dwelling for anyone who was in fear. In order to indicate the maiden's reply, the narrator begins, "þo lo3 þat mayde bry3t / And seyde." Clearly, this is not the beginning of a new scene, but rather a continuation of the dialogue. Unlike the more obvious shift markers, such as upon a day, words like when and then only signal the beginning of a scene in conjunction with the following phrase, when that phrase expresses a shift from summary narrative to detailed description of a single event. It is rare for a scene to follow another with no transition at all; usually the narrator gives at least a line or two of summary to explain that the time or location has altered. The vagueness of many of these transitions is a clue to the importance of the shift markers, even the ones that may be used for other purposes as well. In an atmosphere of restricted vocabulary and highly conventional devices, their use as shift markers is consistent and vital both to the narrator and to the audience.

In addition, shifts are often indicated by stock motifs without a specific verbal formula. The following motifs are the most common:

STASIS

þe King atte Carlele he lay
(The Avowyng of King Arthur, 28)
þus als he in study sat
(Ywain and Gawain, 909)

A kny3t þer was in Lumbardye
 (Sir Launfal, 505)
 The king to souper is set,
 and serued in sale
 (Awntyrs off Arthur, 339)

TRAVEL

Riding in a forest
 aimlessly

Now rides Ywayn als 3e sal here,
 With hevy herte and dreri chere
 Thurgh a forest by a sty;
 And þare he herd a hydose cry
 (Ywain and Gawain, 1975-78)

hunting

He rode on huntyng on a day;
 A marchand mett he be þe way
 (Earl of Toulouse, 936-37)

Riding to a city

These knyghtys neuyr stynte nor blanne
 Tyll to the cyte that þey wan
 There the Emperes was ynne
 (Earl of Toulouse, 241-43)

ARRIVAL

He com to the gateward
 (King Horn, 1147)
 Into þe palays forþ he rod
 (Athelston, 358)

DEPARTURE

Leave taking

Furþ he went with al his mayn
 (Floris and Blancheflur, 383)
 When þat sir Amiloun was al 3are,
 He tok his leue for to fare
 (Amis and Amiloun, 253-54)

Setting out (often
 preceded by a Mass)

His stede he gan bistride,
 And forþ he gan ride.
 (King Horn, 801-02)
 Whenne þey ware dy3t al 3are
 Out off hauene ffor to ffare,
 Ihesu hem sente wynd ful good
 To bere hem ouer þe salte fflood
 (Richard Coer de Lyon, 1401-04)

Stocking fleet,
 boarding ship,
 setting sail

ENTRANCE INTO
CHAMBER

To the Erles chamber hee is gone
 (Eger and Grime, 1312)
 And whenne þat þey were þe chaumbyr
 withinne
 (Athelston, 130)

PASSAGE OF TIME/
HABITUAL ACTION

And whan the ten 3er was yspent
 (Sir Degare, 281)

Very little distinguishes the transitions between scenes
 within an episode from those between the last scene of one

episode and the first scene of another. In order to differentiate between episodes, one must examine the pattern of events made up by the scenes and transitions, that is, examine the rise and fall of the action itself.

EPISODES

The most striking feature of the narrative structure of romance is its episodic quality, accentuated by unusually abrupt links between episodes and between scenes within the episodes. In his book, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, Dieter Mehl characterizes the episodic nature of romances as follows:

Similar to the legends, where we often find static scenes, like devotional paintings, many romances consist of a series of short 'vignettes' which follow each other fairly abruptly. Between these 'vignettes,' the story is often summarized very sketchily. This does not necessarily mean that the scenes themselves are therefore worked out in great detail.¹³

Although to describe this episodic or vignette-like quality accurately requires a workable definition of an episode, medieval scholars have not yet produced a definition delineating episode boundaries and constituent parts in romance. Scholars too often assume that everyone agrees on a definition of episode so obvious that it need not be spelled out. For example, Morton Bloomfield, in his essay "Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance," defines an

episode as "any natural unit of action, any section into which a plot may be with reason divided," and as "the progressive and basic unit in sequence."¹⁴ However, Bloomfield's definition fails to provide specific suggestions as to what a "natural unit of action" might be.

At the beginning of the century, a scholar like Joseph Bedier was willing to consign text division to past authority. His rationale for dividing Thomas' Tristan into episodes is simply, "Nous adoptons la division en grands chapitres consacrée par les divers editeurs du poème de Godfried de Strasbourg."¹⁵ By 1918, however, Ferdinand Lot had developed the concept of interlacing to explain the structure of the Prose Lancelot. Referring to the complex and lengthy prose romances of the Vulgate Cycle, he offered a classification descending from cycle (the largest unit), to romance, to the tale of the individual hero (branche), which is interlaced into the romance as a whole.

According to Lot, the only divisions documented in the manuscripts themselves are "chapitres" of unequal length, announced by formulas such as "Mais ci endroit laisse li contes à parler de . . . et retourne à parler de . . . Or dist li contes que . . ." Ordinarily these divisions in the Prose Lancelot are distinguished by an ornamented letter. The function of such formulaic markers is to signal shifts from one character and his tale to another, for otherwise the multiple narrative lines of the interlaced tales of individual heroes would be impossible to follow.¹⁶ The

essential point here is that the narrative units concentrate on a central character or set of characters. But immediately Lot points to a difficulty present in his own explanation: "C'est qu'il est difficile et même impossible d'opérer de véritables subdivisions. Aucune aventure ne forme un tout se suffisant à lui-même. D'une part des épisodes antérieurs, laissés provisoirement de côté, y prolongent des ramifications, d'autre part des épisodes subséquents, proches ou lointains, y sont amorcés. C'est un enchevêtrement systématique."¹⁷ The question is what further narrative components exist which, added to the entrance and exit of the dramatis personae, will provide other bases for distinguishing episodes and scenes.

In outlining the continuations of Crétien's Perceval, William J. Roach identifies the larger "sections" with a central character or set of characters (sometimes related to a certain setting) in each conte: I. Guiromelant, II. Brun de Branlant, III. Carados, IV. Chastel Orgueilleus, V. Gauvain's Grail Visit, VI. Guerrehès. Terming the smaller units within these sections "episodes," he equates them with "incidents."¹⁸ Usually Roach determines the episode boundaries by means of a shift in space or time. But sometimes there will be a clear shift in space or time within an "episode," while at other times there will be a new episode marked by no spatial or temporal shift at all.¹⁹ Nevertheless, he adds the important spatio-temporal factor to the concept of episode construction.

Even without knowing exactly what an "incident" is, we sense that it is something with a beginning and an end. Within a given incident there can be more than one scene, each of which will be marked by a shift in space or time.²⁰ If space and time are to be used to distinguish one scene from another, they cannot also be the sole measure of episodic boundaries. A further determiner is necessary to describe narrative flow as a series of incidents, each of which may include several scenes between its opening and its conclusion.

If we combine the idea of incident with Lot's demonstration of how chapters concentrate on a certain hero, we find that an incident, however many scenes it possesses, is determined in part by the character or set of characters it emphasizes. To counter the argument that this could also be the definition of an entire romance, we must examine more carefully the pattern of cause and effect which determines how these incidents begin and end.

In his essay "Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance,"²¹ Morton Bloomfield contends that the episode construction of romances is characterized by a different causal pattern from other forms of medieval narrative. He explains how, contrary to epic, *chanson de geste*, and saga, romance shows a marked tendency towards unmotivated or weakly motivated episodes. Even when the motive is revealed at the end of an episode or tale, like Morgan le Fay's hostility to Guenevere in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,

the explanation does not fully account for the action or tone. According to Bloomfield, the two main sources of the romance in structural, motivational terms are the fairy tale and the saint's legend. Unfortunately, he does not analyze the relationship between romance and its two structural ancestors, or between romance and its ultimate sources. The accretive development of the romances, and the reluctance of storytellers to alter the details of the received matter, however ill those details might suit their own purpose, account for many inexplicable circumstances in the romances. Thus a grail large enough to hold a salmon or a lamprey contains a single communion wafer.

Moreover, in applying Bloomfield's theory to romances, it is important to distinguish between psychological and narrative motivation. Bloomfield gives the example of the hero meeting an unknown knight in the forest and immediately doing battle. In psychological and perhaps in novelistic terms, the cause of the battle would remain unexplained. But within the pattern of expectations established by the conte d'aventure, a challenge, particularly a hostile challenge, is ample motive for battle. Again, Bloomfield points out that there is no adequate explanation of why the power of three drops of blood should be sufficient to put Perceval in a trance. Although this may be true according to our own code of verisimilitude, like the challenge, the three drops of blood have an emblematic significance sufficient to cause the actions which follow, and to explain Gauvain's eventual

success in winning Perceval over through courtesy. In short, the episodes in romance should not be termed unmotivated or weakly motivated. They belong rather to a different, more emblematic, order of narrative motivation. This type of motivation reveals the function of the character in his relation to good or evil in the tale, rather than his personal psychology. It does not mean that the basic movement from cause to effect is obscured.

The pattern of cause and effect is central to the theory of narrative structure established by Valdimir Propp in his Morphology of the Folktale.²² He and his followers see the characters in Russian folktales as having narrative functions which fall into set patterns based on the results of certain binary choices. Claude Bremond explains that "Le conte russe serait organisé en fonction de ce qui en est--chronologiquement--le term: c'est pour introduire D qu'on pose C, et pour introduire C qu'on pose B. Comme l'explique Propp, 'il est toujours possible de se régler sur le principe qu'une fonction se définit par ses conséquences.'"²³ According to Bremond, the elementary sequences in the Russian folktale are typically articulated in three principal movements, each offering an alternative:

- une situation qui "ouvre" la possibilité d'un comportement ou d'un événement (sous réserve que cette virtualité s'actualise);
- Le passage à l'acte de cette virtualité (par exemple, le comportement qui répond à l'incitation contenue dans la situation "ouvrante");
- L'aboutissement de cette action, qui "clôt" le processus par un succès ou un échec.²⁴

Bremond adds that this process is not limited to unilateral narrative. "La difficulté [of the double morphological function] s'évanouit si l'on conçoit le récit, non comme un enchaînement unilinéaire, mais comme un entrelacement de séquences."²⁵ The movement from the possibility of an action or event, to materialization, and finally to the conclusion of it in success or failure suggests a cause and effect pattern of narrative useful for discovering the boundaries of narrative units.

Propp's concept of "moves" helps to mark out the limits of a narrative unit based on this principle.

A great many folktales end on the note of rescue from pursuit. The hero arrives home and subsequently marries (provided he has obtained a girl). Nevertheless this is not generally prevalent. A tale may often have another misfortune in store for the hero: a villain may appear once again, may steal whatever the hero has obtained, and may finally kill him. An initial villainy is, in a word, repeated either in the same form as in the beginning of a given tale, or, as sometimes happens, in another, new form, corresponding to the case in point. With this a new story commences.²⁶

In the Russian folktale, a given situation ends when the hero has definitely overcome or been overcome by the villainy which intruded on the initial situation. This resolution can in turn become the initial situation into which new villainy intrudes, setting off another series of events centered around the hero's struggle against the villain. In romances, where there are often more characters and a more

sophisticated plot than in the folktale, it is still possible to see something of this pattern.

Based on work done by the Russian Formalists on motif configurations in prose fiction, Lubomír Doležel recently proposed a concept of plot construction based on "dynamic motifs" rather than on the notion of action.²⁷ The motif formulas are "1. A performed an action affecting B; 2. A performed an action; 3. A was affected by an action; where A and B are characters (*dramatis personae*) or groups of characters in the story."²⁸ The basic terms of the formulas are agent, action, and patient, with agent or patient deletable. These motifs appear in configurations, sequences of two or more motifs displaying a certain order. Doležel gives the example of "The Three Little Pigs," in which the three motif variants on built a house of form a configuration of gradation. He concludes that "Plot construction is the superstructure of all sequential structures which can be described in the sequence of dynamic motifs of a particular narrative text. Thus it is a synthesizing concept, integrating motif configurations, scene composition, and other sequential structures of dynamic motifs. . . ."²⁹ Doležel discusses the arrangement and pattern of scenes, but does not group scenes into episodes. Instead, he speaks of motif repetitions based on equivalence, similarity, contrariety, etc. These patterns he compares to the configurations of sounds in poetry.

Segmentation of narrative into episodes, based on the

pattern of cause and effect, is the subject of The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic by Eugene Dorfman. His controversial theory rests on a separation of incidents into two classes:

central or core incidents, whose function is to serve as the central focus or core of a larger episode, and marginal incidents, which cluster around the core, supporting it and filling out the episode.³⁰

He calls these core incidents "narremes." The concept of the narreme depends on a tagmemic approach in which the narrative frame or core contains four slots: Quarrel (Family, Dynastic, Lovers', Lovers' Triangle), Motive (Insult, Killing, Inheritance, Marital Break), Act(s) (Treachery, Prowess), and Result (Punishment, Reward). This breakdown into simplified cause and effect leaves much of the structure of romance unexplained. Dorfman fails to take into account other types of predicated motives, such as a quest, a test of virtue, revenge, or territorial expansion. He also fails to consider segmentation in narratives with multiple causation and/or interlaced structure. Another reductive aspect of his definition of a "narreme" is the stipulation that "it be the organic consequence of the preceding narreme, and the effective cause of the following one."³¹ On the surface, this concept sounds logical, but it causes Dorfman to dismiss all other incidents as part of the "superstructure," and not "functionally necessary to the continuity of the story as written." According to this plan, the death of

Roland is such a marginal incident, because Ganelon's trial is the direct consequence of the act of treachery, rather than the result of Roland's death.

That Dorfman's system is reductive and misleading does not mean that the structure of cause and effect in narrative is unimportant. One can usefully identify the predicated motive or motives, and outline the episodes by ascertaining effective cause and organic consequence, that is, the relationship between one set of actions and another. This process does not necessitate a classification of the incidents as essential or inessential, for it is not the basic story line that determines the effect of the story on the audience. Rather, it is the cumulative effect of the succession of episodes, the balance between "central" and "marginal" incidents, which is essential to the narrative, in that it controls the audience's response to the plot.

A more successful definition of a minimal unit of narrative rhythm is offered by Harold Toliver in his book Animate Illusions: Explorations of Narrative Structure. Normally, a minimal unit will be an episode, although Toliver concedes that a smaller unit, such as a scene, an anecdote, or even a sentence may occasionally be a formal segment, a narrative block, if it is so memorable and complete as to stand out in the mind of the reader as a small work of art in itself, containing its own realized meaning. His definition is as follows:

A minimal unit of narrative rhythm is one that clarifies a portion of its own muddle and fulfills itself sufficiently to relax our vigilance momentarily and give pause to the forward urge of the work. It therefore makes necessary something of a new start, a new phase in the work's rhythm. It may either expand upon a former plot element or introduce new hindrances and disclosures.³²

This definition is reminiscent of Propp's theory of "moves," except that it can be applied to more complicated narrative structures than that of the folktale. In literary fiction, the self-fulfilling units must be "energized," according to Toliver. That is, they must possess a certain intensity, for less complete units cannot serve as structural blocks, or "memorable affective units," in the building of a narrative.

Out of all these scholarly observations on narrative structure, we can construct a preliminary definition of romance structure, which will be developed further in the following chapters. The narrative structure of romances can be described as a continuum, of which the largest possible unit is the cycle. Individual romances, whether parts of a cycle or independent, may consist of one or more tales (contes) involving a single hero. The introduction may include a considerable amount of condensed narrative not blocked into scenes. After the initial situation is established, the tales are subdivided into episodes, which are further subdivided into scenes and links. An episode is a unit of narrative which creates an unresolved situation,

stressing one particular set of characters, and creates within itself its own resolution. This resolution need not be the final one which completes an entire adventure, but it must conclude a certain set of actions by a given set of characters.

In the Earl of Toulous, for example, one episode begins as follows:

Let we now the Erle alloon,
And speke we of Dame Beulyboon,
How sche was caste in care.

The Emperoure louyd hys wyfe
Also so moche as hys own lyfe,
And more, yf he might;
He chose two knyghtys þat were hym dere,
Whedur that he were ferre or nere.
To kepe hur day and nyght.
(478-86)

Now these two knights are destined to plot against Dame Beulyboon so that she is falsely accused of adultery. Her being cast into prison is the result of their plot, concluding this section of the tale. Subsequently, the tale shifts to the emperor, who has his men search for a champion to rescue his wife from her accusers, and to the Earl of Toulous, who defeats the accusers, and is consequently reconciled with his enemy the emperor. Thus the conclusion of one episode, here the imprisonment of the empress, will often create a situation which needs further resolution, until the final episode completes the chain of events.

Towards the end of Amis and Amiloun, after Amis recognizes the leprous Amiloun and apologizes for his cruel

behavior, he takes him into his castle. This creates a stasis in which although Amis and his wife look after Amiloun for a year, he remains infirm.

& þus in gest as we say,
Tvelmoneþ in her chaumber he lay,
Ful trewe þai ware & kinde.
No wold þai nick him wiþ no nay,
Wha. so euer he asked niȝt or day,
It nas neuer bihinde;
Of euerich mete & eueri drink
þai had hem-selue, wiþ-uten lesing,
þai were hom boþe ful minde.
& biþan þe tvelmonþ was ago,
A ful fair grace fel hem þo,
In gest as we finde.³³

This sets the stage for a new series of events beginning in the next stanza. One night an angel appears to Amis, and informs him that he can save Amiloun with the blood of his own children. This new test of friendship is the subject of the following episode, which concludes with his successfully passing the test, and being rewarded both by the recovery of Amiloun and by the miraculous restoration of his children.

As an illustration of how the pattern of scenes and episodes develops in a romance, here is an outline of Sir Orfeo:

General introduction to the lay tradition
Introduction of the hero

Episode I: Abduction of Heurodis
Scene 1, by the Ympe tree: Heurodis dreams of the fairy king and wakes up in terror.
Link: She is carried to her chamber by her ladies in waiting.
Scene 2, in her chamber: in despair, Heurodis relates her dream to Orfeo. Orfeo asks for but fails to get advice.

Link: On the next day--

Transitional

Scene: by the Ympe tree: Orfeo is present with 1000 knights to protect Heurodis, in spite of which she disappears.

Link: Orfeo goes to his chamber

Scene 3, in his chamber: Orfeo decides to flee to the wilderness, with nothing but his harp. His people lament.

Transition to Episode II:

A rhetorical description of Orfeo's ten years in the wilderness, comparing his hardships there to his former comforts. He plays the harp. Sometimes he sees the fairy king with his host.

Episode II: Rescue of Heurodis

Scene 1, in the forest: Orfeo notices Heurodis among the fairy company. They recognize each other. He follows her to an entrance in the rocks.

Link: After three miles, Orfeo comes to a fair country and sees a wonderful castle. Description of castle.

Scene 2, at castle gate: Orfeo speaks with the porter. Once admitted, Orfeo notices certain humans taken by the fairies. They appear to be dead but are not. He sees Heurodis.

Link: Orfeo enters the hall of the king.

Scene 3, in the hall: He looks about, then kneels before the king and asks to play. The king, pleased by his harping, offers to give him anything he asks. Orfeo asks for Heurodis. Caught by his own rash promise, the king grants the request. Orfeo and Heurodis leave together.

Transition: Heurodis and Orfeo return to Winchester

Episode III: Return of Orfeo and Heurodis

Transitional

Scene: outskirts of town: Orfeo and Heurodis spend the night with a beggar. The narrator recounts, in a brief indirect discourse, how the beggar explains to them that the king and queen disappeared ten years before and that the steward has held the land since then.

Link: On the next day, Orfeo asks Heurodis to wait with the beggar. He borrows clothes from the beggar and goes to the castle.

Scene 1, at the castle: Orfeo asks the steward for help. The steward welcomes him. Orfeo tests the steward and finds him loyal. He reveals his identity. The queen is summoned and there is general celebration.

Conclusion: Orfeo and Heurodis are crowned anew; they live happily ever after. Orfeo is succeeded by the loyal steward. Harpers in Britain heard of this marvel, and made it into a lay, calling it by the name of the king.
"God graunte ous alle wele to fare! Amen."

Although this is a lay, and very short, it possesses the same type of episodic and scenic structure as the longer romances, except that there is only one adventure. However, even though the longer romances often have multiple adventures, in the Middle English romances, the plot structure is usually straightforward, because they are often tales of one or two heroes, in which the episodes correspond to complete adventures. A typical example of straightforward plotting is Libeaus Desconus. After knighting Libeaus Desconus, Arthur grants his request to be allowed to accompany the maiden Elene and her dwarf companion to deliver her imprisoned mistress the lady of Synadoune, from enchantment. On the way, Libeaus Desconus undergoes the following adventures:

- (1) He does battle with Sir William Delaraunche at the Chapel Auntours.
- (2) He does battle with Sir William's nephews, who wish to avenge their uncle.
- (3) He rescues a maiden from two giants.
- (4) He wins a gyrfalcon in a tournament, for

- successfully defending Elene's beauty against that of the lady of Jeffrond le Freudys.
- (5) He defeats Sir Otis de Lile and twelve companions.
 - (6) He slays a giant who besieges the fair lady of the Il de Ore (Ile Dolour), Dame Amoure. Through her magic arts, she detains him at her castle, until Elene reminds him of his neglected duties.
 - (7) Finally, he reaches Sinadoune. He overcomes the steward, Sir Labard, and the two magicians who hold the lady prisoner. The lady, transformed by the magicians into a dragon, is disenchanted when she kisses Libeaus Desconus. They are married.

Because the episodes here constitute separate adventures, the cause and effect pattern is clearly indicated by the hero's confronting and overcoming successive adversaries. Although Libeaus Desconus is an extreme example of unilateral plotting, it represents a strong tendency in English romances to stress concise narration over description and reflection, unlike their French analogues.

On the other hand, although French romances are often more complex than the English, this complexity is not always reflected in the plot structure. The relatively short romances of Chrétien de Troyes display only modest interlacing, since they center around just one or two heroes. Even though Yvain, for example, is practically twice as long as Ywain and Gawain (6806 lines: 4032 lines), it is not significantly more complex in plot structure. The complexity lies rather in its descriptions, dialogue and monologue, explanations of motive, and theoretical discussions of battle decorum, love, and the nature of women. The Continuations of Crétien's Perceval take up the

adventures of a given hero and finish with him before proceeding to another hero; there is even less interlacing than in Cretien himself. A large number of heroes does not induce heavy interlacing, as it does in the prose romance cycles.

In contrast to the romances in verse, the cyclic prose romances often depend heavily on interlacing to provide variety and sustain suspense. While in the verse romances an episode may contain an entire adventure, the lengthy prose romances not only amplify the adventures, but also subdivide them into the non-contiguous "chapters" mentioned by Lot. Although an episode is a unit of narrative which describes the successive actions of a given set of characters, beginning with the cause of those actions and ending with their immediate results, the interlaced chapters do not always portray the entire parabolic movement from cause to effect. Hence Jean Frappier suggests that the chapters are not the same as episodes (in other words, that an episode is not, as Bloomfield put it, "any section into which a narrative may be with reason divided"). Of the Lancelot Proper, Frappier writes:

At this point [after Lancelot has conquered and renamed La Doloreuse Garde] the author begins to use systematically the narrative technique to which Lot applied the term entrelacement (interlacing). Every episode is interrupted by another, which in turn is broken off in order to continue the earlier narrative. Thus the adventures are knit together, and are even fitted into a careful time scheme of days and hours.³⁴

In this way, the chapters create an incremental pattern which runs counter to the natural flow of narrative.

Many of the chapters contained within the boundaries of the formulaic "si taist or li conte à parler de . . . et retourne à parler de . . ." are little episodes in themselves, with one or more scenes and a decisive conclusion. However, episodes do not always coincide with each short chapter, for a chapter can end with a weeping maiden, who must wait several chapters for the resolution of her dilemma, or with a report of evil customs at a castle not to be visited until after another chapter about some other knight. Occasionally a chapter ends in the middle of a battle, in which case the new shift marker may be employed merely to introduce another knight, who happens by and changes the odds in favor of the initial hero. Even where the chapter does coincide with a complete episode, it often ends with the knight setting out again, logically a beginning. Obviously, total closure is avoided to insure the continuing involvement of the audience.

Just as chapters can contain less than a complete episode, they can also contain more. Even in the peripatetic sections, a chapter may contain numerous episodes, as in Gauvain's search for Lancelot, when the story concentrates on Gauvain almost exclusively for twenty-eight pages in Sommer's edition. Furthermore, the Lancelot Proper is composed in such a way that heavily interlaced quest sections are followed by lengthy and detailed episodes such as

the war against Galehaut, and the Charette section. These longer sections have considerably more narrative detail, description, and dialogue than the brief interlaced chapters. No shift markers occur for some fifty pages, as opposed to one to four pages in the usual quest chapters. That is, the story concentrates on one knight or group of knights exclusively, instead of moving back and forth from one tale to another. In short, the Lancelot Proper utilizes not only interlacing of chapters, but also alternation between the interlaced sections and straight narrative.

The complexity of plot organization characteristic of the prose romances is absent in the verse romances, because verse poses its own constraints and complexities demanding a simpler story line in compensation. While verse romances typically follow the "beads-on-a-chain" episodic pattern, prose romances include several chains at once, and skip from chain to chain subdividing the episodes as they go. If one extracts a single story line from the whole, the original "bead" pattern falls back into place. But since this simpler pattern has been tampered with, it must be conceded that whereas the structure of the episodes in the prose cycles may be similar, the organization of episodes to form the whole romance is not the same as that of the verse romances. Hence any definition of romance that begins with content description must eventually confront not only the obvious differences between prose and poetry, but also the effect that these have on narrative structure.

In order to isolate the narrative techniques characteristic of verse romance, I shall concentrate on those composed in Middle English. These verse romances have episodic patterns which usually fit without difficulty into the definitions of episode and scene proposed earlier. However, certain problems inherent in this method of segmentation arise even in the less complex romances. Non-narrative elements, especially didactic and descriptive material, can intrude on the narrative, altering its shape and effect. In the Lyf of Alisaunder, for example, description and mirabilia often take over the narrative altogether. Within a given narrative, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between links and scenes, where the links are sufficiently complex to be little scenes in their own right. However, in spite of these difficulties, the episode/scene pattern is an essential and clearly defined structural feature of the Middle English romances.

Emphasizing one set of characters, an episode follows their actions as they move from stasis to action and return to a resolved stasis. Episodes contain a variable number of scenes, set apart by formulaic shift markers indicating shifts of place and/or time. An urgent issue here is to determine the point of stasis which concludes an episode, for this resolution controls not only the ending of its own episode, but also the beginning of the next. In order to establish the controlling principles of episode construction, it will also be necessary to examine both sub-episodic

material--pure narrative, dialogue, description--and trans-episodic material--major themes--to determine the narrative techniques typical of those works normally classified as romances. This in turn will permit a discussion of the extent to which structure alone can be used as an indication of genre.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER I.

¹For a discussion of oral formulaic poetry, see Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (New York, 1971). Albert C. Baugh discusses the oral formulaic style in Middle English romance in his article "Improvisation in the Middle English Romance," PAPS 103, 3 (1959), p. 419; "The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Perservation," Speculum 42, 1 (1967), 1-31. See also Larry D. Benson, "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry," PMLA 81, 2 (1966), p. 340; and William E. Holland, "Formulaic Diction and the Descent of a Middle English Romance," Speculum 48, 1 (1973), p. 105.

²Lillian H. Hornstein, "Middle English Romances," in Recent Middle English Scholarship and Criticism: Survey and Desiderata, ed. J. Burke Severs (Pittsburgh, 1971), p. 69. The quotation from Larry D. Benson is taken from his book Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (New Brunswick, N. J., 1965), p. 119.

³Eger and Grime and the Squyr of Lowe Degre, two late works, are exceptions.

⁴Of Arthour and Merlin, ed. O. D. Macrae-Gibson, EETSos 268 (London, 1973), vol. 1, p. 3, lines 1-8. Subsequent references will be to this edition (Auchinleck MS).

⁵Havelok the Dane, in Middle English Metrical Romances, ed. Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale (New York, 1930, rpt. 1964), pp. 74-5, lines 11-26. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

⁶Kyng Alisaunder (also known as Lyf of Alisaunder), ed. G. V. Smithers, EETSos 227 (London, 1952), vol. 1, p. 3, line 18. Subsequent references will be to this edition (MS. Laud Misc. 662).

⁷Eger and Grime, in French and Hale (see note 5 above), p. 672, line 1. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

⁸Kyng Alisaunder, lines 41-70.

⁹The Avowing of Arthur, in French and Hale (see note 5 above), p. 608, lines 17-32. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹⁰The Earl of Toulouse, in French and Hale (see note 5 above), p. 385. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹¹Lybeaus Desconus, ed. M. Mills, EETSos 261 (London, 1969), p. 77, line 31. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹²Claes Schaar, Some Types of Narrative in Chaucer's Poetry (Lund, 1954). He distinguishes between close chronological narrative (a minute account of what happens in a short amount of time), and loose chronological narrative (a more loosely connected account, characterized by a greater frequency of digressions and more extensive descriptive elements). See also Paul Hernadi, Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Classification (Ithaca, N. Y., 1970), p. 181.

¹³Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London, 1968), p. 23.

¹⁴Morton Bloomfield, "Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance," in Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 99.

¹⁵Thomas, Tristan, ed. Joseph Bedier, SATF (Paris 1902, 1905), vol. I, p. viii.

¹⁶Ferdinand Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, Bibl. de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, fac. 226 (Paris, 1918), p. 16.

¹⁷Lot, p. 17.

¹⁸William J. Roach, The Continuations of the Old French Perceval by Crétien de Troyes (Philadelphia, 1949-55), vol. 1, p. xlvi. In Roach's edition, each of the episodes mentioned in the outline begins with a large capital. Roach states that these do not necessarily coincide with large capitals in the MSS; they have been inserted for clarity. I, p. xliii, note 2.

¹⁹Occasionally, there is no change in scene or character to justify a shift to a new scene. See I.4/5 and III. 10/11.

²⁰For example, consider Roach's description of I.6 of the First Continuation:

Gauvain rides away not caring where he goes. The next day he meets a maiden carrying an ivory horn. Upon learning that he has spent the night in the forest, she blows the horn, and servants appear who prepare dinner. Gauvain remains armed during the meal. A knight suddenly appears, takes the horn from the maiden, and goes away with it. Gauvain rides after him, kills him, and brings the horn back. The damsel tells him that he has

killed her enemy Macarot de Pantelion. In gratitude she gives him a ring which will aid him in combat, even against five knights; but he must return it to her when she asks for it. Gauvain next meets a dwarf who reminds him of his promise to rescue the damsel besieged at Montesclaïre and thus win the Espee as Estranges [E: Estroites] Renges (cf. Perceval 4718-20). Shortly afterward he sees a tent in which lies the body of Macarot, whose wounds begin to bleed when Gauvain enters. He leaves at once, but is pursued by four knights. He kills three of them, but spares the fourth. That evening he comes to a deserted castle, where he finds a table laid for dinner. As he is about to begin eating, an armed knight comes in and challenges him to combat. When Gauvain wins, a maiden enters who begs him to spare her lover. She has induced the knight to kill or capture anyone who enters the castle in the hope of wreaking vengeance on a certain Gregoreas who has wronged her several years before. Twenty maidens come in and beg Gauvain to release them from the imprisonment in which they have been kept after their lovers had been killed by the knight whom Gauvain had just conquered. He orders their release, and the next morning rides away with them.

I. pp. xlvii-viii.

Since this episode takes place in several different locations, Roach seems to depend on the twenty-four hour period it covers to be the unifying element. But within the episode there are smaller time segments corresponding to Gauvain's encounters with various characters. These encounters constitute scenes (in some cases, transitional scenes) in themselves.

²¹Morton Bloomfield, "Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance, in Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), pp. 97-128.

²²Vladimir Propp, The Morphology of the Folktale, ed. Svatava Pirkeva-Jakobsen, trans. Laurence Scott (Bloomington, 1958).

²³Claude Bremond, "Le message narratif," Communications 4 (1964), p. 11.

²⁴Bremond, p. 21.

²⁵Bremond, p. 26.

²⁶Propp, p. 52

²⁷Doležel quotes from B. Tomashevskij, Terorija Literaturny (Poetika) (Leningrad, 1925), p. 137: "Action (fabula) is the ensemble of mutually connected events which are conveyed in a literary work. Action can be described pragmatically, in the natural chronological and causal order, independent from their order and introduction in a literary work. The opposite of action is plot (sjužet): the same events, but in their distribution, in that order in which information about events is given in a literary work."

²⁸Lubomír Doležel, "Towards a Structural Theory of Content in Prose Fiction," in Literary Style: A Symposium, ed. Seymour Chatman (London, 1971), p. 98.

²⁹Doležel, p. 99.

³⁰Eugene Dorfman, The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic (Toronto, 1969), p. 5.

³¹Dorfman, pp. 6-7.

³²Harold Toliver, Animate Illusions; Explorations of Narrative Structure (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1974), pp. 254-55.

³³Amis and Amiloun, ed. MacEdward Leach, EETSos 207 (London, 1937), p. 88, lines 2185-96.

³⁴Jean Frappier, "The Vulgate Cycle," in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford, 1959), pp. 298-99.

CHAPTER II

Romances in Couplets:

The Episodic and Scenic Structure

The romances in couplets are a good introduction to romance structure, because most of them adhere to a markedly episodic pattern, as well as to the idealized mode and chivalric content commonly associated with medieval romance. In order to discern the particulars of this episodic structure, I should like to consider a group of romances in couplets varying in length from roughly one to ten thousand lines, all of which are structurally representative yet cover a broad range of narrative approaches. At the beginning of Chapters III and IV, I shall discuss romances in other verse forms which conform to these representative structural patterns, before going on to romances which deviate from them to form significant alternative patterns. The deviations, in turn, will help to define the nature of the romances in this chapter.

Some of the shortest romances in Middle English are referred to by their narrators as lays. Three of the ten Middle English poems so designated have a known source among the lays of Marie de France or similar works, others simply assert that they have such a source, or, as in the case of

Sir Degare, that they are set in Brittany. They lack the characteristic prologue and epilogue of the French lays, but more important, the internal structure often corresponds more nearly to that of romance than to the structure typical of the French lays, in that the narrative is more fully amplified dramatically. Therefore, I have included the Middle English lays with the other short romances.

Sir Degare, probably written in the Southwest Midlands in the early fourteenth century,¹ begins with a six-line introduction and a ten-line description of the King of Brittany. This king was so strong that he could not be unhorsed by anyone. After the description, the narrator begins by summarizing the background situation. The king loved his daughter so much that he determined to give her in marriage to that man alone who could bring him out of the saddle. At line 35, the information becomes more specific, when we learn that every year the king sets aside a day in memory of his wife, during which he gives to the poor, and brings an offering to the abbey where she is buried. "That ryche Kynge euery yere wolde / A solempne feste make and holde / On hys wyuys mynnyng-day."² The wolde (occurring twice in eight lines) indicates an habitual, not an individual, set of actions. But in line 45, the verbs suddenly change to the indicative, indicating that we are to picture a specific instance of the habitual action described above.

Toward þe abbai als he con ride,
And mani kny3tis bi his side,

His doughter also bi him rod.
 Amidde þe forest hii abod;
 (45-48)

This is the beginning of the first scene of Episode I.

The heart of the first scene is an encounter between the king's daughter and a fairy king. After she, her chamberlain, and two ladies-in-waiting dismount on their way through the forest, her three companions fall asleep under a chestnut tree. This, according to G. V. Smithers, is a blurring of the original Celtic pattern in which a mortal opens the way for contact with a fairy by sitting or sleeping under a tree, as in Sir Orfeo.³ The king's daughter wanders off by herself. Just when she realizes that she is lost and cries out in fear, the fairy king is introduced. He merits a seven-line description as a "gentil, 3ong, and iolif man," fair of body and face. Although the meeting might have been the occasion of the first dialogue in the tale, we hear only what the fairy king has to say, for the damsel herself is more interested in escape than in discourse. Once the knight has ravished her, he prophesies the birth of a son, for whom he leaves two recognition tokens, a sword and a pair of gloves. Fairies are not subject to the human moral framework, and there is no indication in the text that we are to think well or badly of the fairy king's actions. If the rape were eliminated from Sir Degare or even changed to a relationship of mutual love, much of the tale would have to be recast, for every subsequent episode

in the tale is predicated on this event.⁴ At the end of this scene, the fairy king departs, and the king's daughter finds her way back to her companions. Soon two of the king's squires find them and lead them to the abbey.

After the relatively complex first scene come two brief transitional passages. The first of these is as follows:

þai browt hire into þe riȝte wai
 And comen faire to þe abbay,
 And doȝ þe seruise in alle þingges,
 Mani masse and riche offringes;
 And whanne þe seruise was al idone,
 And ipassed ouer þe none,
 þe Kyng to his castel gan ride;
 His doughter rod bi his side.

(143-150)

This brief summarized passage rounds off the first episode. In romance narrative, episode construction is organized in such a way that each narrative unit (episode) provides its own predication and progress towards stasis. But each static point also contains the seeds of instability and further development, until the conclusion of the plot.⁵ In Sir Degare, the first episode concludes when the lady returns to the normal events of the day. These are not worth reviewing in much detail, since their only value is to round off the narrative movement of Episode I. The sense of closure created by this small passage is confirmed after a second transitional passage by the introduction of a new set of characters: the child himself, and the maiden who spirits him away.

The second transitional passage narrates a generalized,

non-scenic account of the king's daughter living in misery, trying to hide her pregnancy, while her father returns to his normal activities. This static situation is interrupted "On a dai" when one of her maidens notices that the lady is weeping, and asks her why. The dialogue amplifies the narrative by explaining the predicament of the lady, and her fear of discovery. The incident with the fairy king is alluded to but not retold. At the end of the scene the maiden promises to bear the child away in secret.

The second scene begins with the transitional "Her time come" (179), and proceeds to narrate the birth of Degare, and the preparations to remove him. The lady and the maiden of scene 1 wrap him in swaddling clothes and place him in a cradle with four pounds of gold, ten pounds of silver, the gloves, and a letter explaining his situation. The emphasis here is not on any personal encounter between the two women, but on their working out of a problem. Therefore, the scene is one of pure narrative. There is no discourse, either direct or indirect; however, the scene concludes with the letter of explanation, quoted in full. Afterwards, the narrative shifts abruptly to a transitional scene in which the maiden travels by moonlight to a hermitage and leaves the baby on a doorstep. The episode concludes with a summarized report that the maiden returns home, finds her lady in tears, and relates the journey.

Episode III introduces another new set of characters: the hermit, his servant, and his sister and brother-in-law.

The episode spans the twenty years during which Degare grows up. In the first scene, the hermit and his servant discover the cradle, and the hermit christens the child Degare. The scene concludes with an aside by the narrator, explaining the significance of the name:

Degarrē nowt elles ne is
 But þing þat not neuer whar hit is,
 Oþer þing þat is neg3 forlorn also;
 Forþi þe schild he nemnede þous þo.
 (253-56)

Like the scene of Degare's birth, this is a purely narrative scene, for it would be stretching a point to describe as a personal encounter a scene in which one of the two principals was barely conscious of there being any encounter.

This scene is separated from scene 2 by a passage of thirty-four lines, a lengthy transition in relation to the total length of the poem, in which Degare's uneventful youth is reviewed. He spends the first ten years with the hermit's sister and her husband, imagining them to be his parents. The second ten years he spends with the hermit, being tutored. Scene 2 begins when the hermit realizes that Degare has become a man. This leads to the moment (seventy-five lines after his initial arrival at the hermitage) when Degare receives the letter, the gloves, and the gold, the silver having been spent on his upbringing. Although this is a scene of personal encounter, there is very little direct discourse. Again, as in the scene between the lady and her maiden, the original incident of the fairy king is not

retold, but passed over with the remark that the hermit "told him al" (304). Rejecting the hermit's suggestion that he obtain a horse and armor, Degare leaves the hermitage with nothing but an oak staff, the gloves, and the gold. His departure from the hermit completes Episode III, creating the static situation of his travelling alone until he encounters another set of characters.

In Episode IV, Degare proves himself as a hero. A very common transitional device, the hero's wandering through the forest at random, introduces scene 1.

Child Degarré wente his wai
 Þourgh þe forest al þat dai.
 No man he ne herd, ne non he se3,
 Til hit was non ipassed he3;
 Þanne he herde a noise kete
 In o valai, an dintes grete.

(333-38)

With the "Til/Þanne" the narrative lights on a specific moment in which Degare comes across an earl doing battle with a dragon. The dragon is described in detail. Since Degare's first opponent is non-human, and Degare inexperienced, the narrator dispenses with many of the conventional battle themes, which usually apply to armed fighters with human limbs. The dragon's attack takes up three lines, and Degare's retaliation another three, in which Degare bashes in the dragon's forehead with his staff. The battle scene is organized by means of four motifs: the dragon leaves the earl and attacks Degare, Degare strikes the dragon, the dragon falls down, knocking Degare over with his tail, and Degare gets up and kills the dragon. The battle scene is

short, and does very little with the themes which commonly create suspense, the back and forth movement characteristic of a contest between two equal adversaries. But the dragon is in itself an interesting variation as an opponent, one which does not recur.

The transition to scene 2 consists of the earl's persuading Degare to return to his castle. There, in the scene that follows, the earl rewards Degare liberally for his aid. Although the scene is a personal encounter, the only direct discourse is a speech by Degare requesting to have all the women in the land try on the gloves he has brought with him. When he fails to find the right woman, he refuses the earl's offer of land, and proceeds on his way with the armor, horse, and attendant he has earned in battle. The transition to Episode V, scene 1 again employs the popular theme of the hero wandering at random, this time with his companion: "Mani a iornē þai ride and sette" (425).

Episode V, a relatively complex group of five scenes, concerns Degare's battle with his grandfather, and his marriage to and timely recognition of his mother. Both scenes 1 and 2 begin with the "on a dai" formula. In scene 1 Degare inquires of a servant why so many noblemen have gathered in the town he is passing through. The remainder of the scene is organized into two speeches. In the first, twenty-three lines long, the servant relates the king's intention to hold a tournament in order to joust with the suitors of his daughter. He goes into con-

siderable detail about the usual maiming of the king's opponents, and the king's own invulnerability. Immediately following this speech come nine lines of interior monologue ("Sire Degarre þous þenche gan" [455]), in which Degare determines to take on the battle to win renown, reasoning that if he is disgraced, he is still unknown. Scene 2 is also composed of two speeches, this time an exchange between Degare and the king. Degare, posing as the underling of a great lord, conveys the intention of the lord to take up the challenge, to which the king agrees.

The tournament is set for the next day. There is a transitional passage of ten lines explaining that since Degare knew no one, he put all his trust in God. When he goes to church and makes an offering to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a priest begins to pray for him. This passage reinforces our concept of Degare's good character, apprises us of his offering, and assures us that a priest is praying for him. All these details promise well for the battle scene to follow.

The battle scene is developed at some length, and includes a considerable amount of direct discourse. It is constructed with many conventional motifs, incorporating the variation that Degare, though very strong, does not know how to joust. The battle themes are listed below. Seventeen out of the twenty-nine themes are listed by Baugh. Those mentioned by Baugh as conventional are indicated by their number on his list of battle themes, in the article "Improvisation in Middle English Romances."⁶

The hero arms
 Not part of the battle scene itself,
 but a common introduction

- 3 He mounts
 Baugh: "He leaps into the saddle."

His squire bears his two lances
 In the field, he awaits the king

- 2 "The opponent approaches"

- 6 "He rides against the foe"

- 13 "He strikes the helmet"

- 17 "The spear breaks"

- (18) He fails to unhorse Degare
 Negative variant of "He unhorses his
 opponent"

At this point the king expresses his dismay at encountering
 an opponent who can withstand his blows.

- 37 "He is 'full woe,' 'in heart wroth,' etc."

The king takes a longer shaft

- 36 He swears to break Degare's back
 Baugh: "The knight is stung by injury or
 anger to retaliate"

- 6 "He [the king] rides against the foe"

- 16 He strikes him on the breast bone
 Baugh: "He strikes the neck, shoulder, side,
 etc."

Degare is stunned

- 36 "The knight [Degare] is stung by injury or
 anger [here both] to retaliate"
 A four line monologue to this effect

- 7 "The knights meet head on"

The shafts split right up to the handle

The nobles say that there was never another man who could hold out for so long against the king. Even for these minor figures the narrative breaks out into direct discourse.

- 43 "None could stand against him"
- 36 The king is again angered, and vows to
retaliate
- Degare takes another shaft
- 6 "He rides against the foe"
- 8 "They strike each other"
- The king's steed rears
- 18 "He [Degare] unhorses his opponent"
- There is hooting and shouting
- The king is ashamed
- The lords help the king to remount
- They all cry "Child Degarrē haþ wone þe pris"

Although the battle scene is highly conventional, it differs from many in that it has nothing to do with war. It also differs from other tournament scenes in that the two knights continue to fight with lances instead of changing over to broad swords. Instead, the battle is organized by a three-fold repetition of the same type of encounter with mounting intensity of anger and determination to overcome the opponent.

Following the actual battle, but apparently still at the site of the tournament, we hear the sorrowful reaction of the king's daughter, who realizes she is bound to marry

a stranger about whom she knows nothing. And immediately the king, in a thirteen-line speech, promises to fulfill the covenant, give Degare his daughter in marriage, and make him heir to the land. The irony that Degare is already the undisclosed heir to the land, an essential feature of the plot, is not commented on by the narrator. What does warrant an authorial comment, however, is the power of chance, which can bring two people together in marriage not knowing that they are closely related. This comment occurs in the middle of what would otherwise be a brief transitional passage in which the couple is brought to church and married. The narrator insists that despite this chance occurrence, God did not wish them to sin. Having reassured us on this point, the narrator repeats for emphasis that the couple were brought to church with the barons, and then to a wedding feast. The transition and commentary form a link between the battle scene and the next major point in the narrative, the first recognition scene.

When Degare and his wife are about to depart from the wedding feast, Degare remembers the hermit's admonition never to take a woman for fairness or riches unless she could wear the gloves found in his cradle. As the king asks him why he is distressed, Degare repeats the information about the gloves. His "jonge bride" overhears him and blushes violently, saying, "Schewe hem hider, leue sire" (662). She puts them on and collapses, crying that Degare is her son, and she his mother. It is typical of the

idealized romance mode that the lapse of twenty years should not be treated realistically. For her father's benefit, Degare's mother retells at length the story of Degare's conception and birth, unlike the previous two occasions when the narrator passed over the incident in two lines of indirect discourse. Then she gives Degare his father's sword, of which the father has retained the broken tip. Degare determines to seek him night and day. The scene concludes, "In þe cite he reste al niȝt" (715). This has been another dialogue scene, with over fifty percent of the verses (48 out of 86) devoted to direct discourse. Between the speeches, the narrative concentrates on the characters' reactions and responses to the revelation unfolding within the dialogue.

Since the revelation forms a natural conclusion to Episode V, the narrative shifts to a new situation and set of characters. In a transitional passage, Degare departs in search of his father. At first we learn that Degare and his squire rode "Mani a pas and mani iurnai" (724), then that "he passede into west / Þat he com into þeld fforest" (725-26). Here he wanders without knowing where he is, until he sees "amidde a riuer, / A fair castel of lim and ston" (738-39). The details here have no real geographical function, but give us a generalized picture of Degarre's search for the unknown. Despite the constant motion of the search, the transition creates a sense of stasis, for Degare's inconclusive wandering has no form,

no rise and fall, until it is interrupted by his discovery of the castle. Here, there is a transitional scene in which Degare announces to his "knaue" that he intends to stay at the castle, come what may.

Once inside the castle, Degare stables his horse and goes up into the hall. The following scene contains a considerable amount of description (effictio), and some monologue, but surprisingly for a lengthy scene of personal encounter, no dialogue. Neither the four damsels, nor the dwarf, nor the lady of the castle with her attendants addresses one word to Degare, and the silence remains completely unexplained in the narrative. Like the battle scene between Degare and his grandfather, this scene is organized by the repetition of a scene cluster. After Degare has settled down by the fire, four damsels arrive dressed in hunting garb, bearing bows, arrows, and venison.⁷ Ignoring Degare's greeting, they silently enter a chamber and lock the door. Next a dwarf enters, who is elaborately described in a twelve line effictio. Strangely, this lengthy description applies to a character who drops out of the narrative almost immediately. But he adds to the inexplicable, supernatural aura of the scene. The dwarf remains silent while he prepares the supper. Finally, the lady of the castle enters with ten attendants. They too are described, chiefly their clothes and generally lovely appearance. Without saying a word, they sit down to dine. On the basis of the total silence, mentioned after each description, Degare

decides in a brief monologue to remain silent himself until someone addresses him. The remainder of the scene, some fifteen lines, is unbroken narrative. Degare joins the ladies and politely helps himself to some meat. But he eats very little, for as he beholds the fair lady he falls deeply in love with her. This decisive moment concludes scene 2.

A four-line link closes the scene and transfers the ladies and Degare to a bed chamber. The following eleven-line scene, containing no description or dialogue, recounts how the lady and her maidens entertain Degare with harping and spiced wine, until he falls asleep. The next scene, some eighty lines long, takes place the following morning in the same chamber. It is composed almost entirely of dialogue, the first words spoken since Degare's arrival. Here the lady narrates the background of her conflict with a would-be suitor, in a thirty-line flashback of summary narrative. After Degare has promised to defend the lady, and she has offered him her land and her person as a reward, a maiden cries out that the enemy is approaching the castle. Looking out the window, Degare sees his opponent, who is described in superlative terms. In a two-line transition, Degare arms himself and sets out for the battle field.

In this third battle scene (the second with a human adversary), the opponents rush at each other with lances. Degare unhorses the other knight, so that they must fight on foot. The battle, though again highly conventional, varies the themes from the earlier battles. They are fight-

ing on foot, and they are fighting to the death. A typical feature of battle scenes, used also in the previous battle, is a narrative shift to the reactions of the spectator(s), especially when their fate depends on the outcome. This can occur within the scene, but it also makes a good transitional device to link the battle scene with the reward scene which often follows in such cases. Here of course the scene shifts to the lady in the battlement, who sees Degare kill her enemy, and gives thanks to God. When Degare enters the castle, she meets him and leads him to a chamber. Thus they are situated for the final scene of this episode. Degare accepts her offer of land and marriage, with the proviso that he be allowed a year in which to seek further adventures. The lady provides him with equipment and money, and he sets out in search of his father.

In the seventh and final episode, the narrator moves quickly to the crucial moment when Degare discovers his father. A three-line transition informs us that Degare rode through many divers countries, always westward (towards the lands frequented by fairies⁸). He already appears to be in the Other World, having crossed a river to visit the castle of strange, silent inhabitants. After the transition come the setting and a new character, who will turn out to be Degare's father. The knight he meets is described as well armed, possessing a shield of azure with three boars' heads painted on it. After the description, there is an exchange of dialogue in which the knight accuses Degare of

hunting deer in his forest. Degare replies that he is not seeking deer but adventure and battle, prompting the knight to challenge him to a fight. While Degare prepares himself, the narrator provides a twelve-line description of his armor. This is a stock element before battle scenes and sometimes before departures from castles, but it is rather lengthy here for a text of this size and narrative pace. However, even the description itself is cast in narrative form, with such verbal statements as "Armed him in riche atir, / Wi3 . . . ," "A sscheld he kest aboute his swere / þat . . . ," "A sschaft he tok þat . . . ," introducing the descriptive phrases. The narrative breaks off for another rare authorial comment, also about chance, like the one which precedes the wedding with his mother.

Lo, swich auentoure þer gan bitide--
 Þe sone a3ein þe fader gan ride,
 And noiþer ne knew oþer no wi3t!
 Nou biginne3 þe first fi3t.
 (1026-29)

The last verse intensifies the effect of the detailed description to set the battle apart in time from the exchange that precedes it, thus qualifying the battle as a separate scene. In contrast, no such separating formulas interrupt the narrative between the battle itself and the recognition, so these should be considered as a single scene.

The battle scene offers yet another arrangement of standard battle themes, thereby creating suspense in the midst of conventionality. Degare and his rather ride at each

other and shatter their lances, but cannot unhorse one another. As in the battle between Degare and his grandfather, the equality of their strength to resist being unhorsed hints at a relationship unknown to the characters themselves. Again the second time neither proves to be stronger than the other, but since their mighty collision breaks the backs of both their horses, they continue the battle on foot. As soon as they have drawn their swords, the knight recognizes the one with the missing point, and questions Degare about it. Degare explains that he was born in "Litel Bretaigne," and that although he is the son of a king's daughter, he does not know who his father is. The knight produces the missing piece of sword out of his wallet, and they both swoon. Although it may seem out of character for a fairy to swoon, the theme belongs to the recognition cluster, which requires it as an expression of intense emotion. Once they have recovered themselves, Degare requests that his father accompany him to visit his mother, to complete the reunion. At this point the text breaks off.

In sum, Sir Degare has seven episodes and seventeen full scenes, that is, seventeen narrative moments set in a specific place and time, exhibiting some expansion into detail. There are fourteen transitions using summary narrative in the form of departures and journeys, two transitional scenes, three adverbial transitions, and two transitions of authorial comment before the two recognition scenes. In spite of the variety of transitions, however, the scenes

themselves remain isolated from each other in a sort of narrative parataxis. There are four battle scenes of various types: dragon, tournament, combat between heroes in a war, and personal combat in a forest. The battle scenes employ the themes of jousting and sword play with a tendency to repeat rather than mix, giving each battle an individual stamp. Two scenes, Degare's birth and discovery by the hermit, are narrative scenes but not personal encounters. The eleven scenes of personal encounter may be divided into three where narrative predominates, and eight dialogue scenes. Even the dialogue furthers the action rather than delaying it, because the characters make the crucial discoveries in this dramatic form. Only the descriptions slow down the narrative, and they are limited to characters and scenery essential to the dramatic effect. The description of Degare's arming before the battle with his father is the only lengthy set piece, but even it is realized in narrative form, as we saw. It functions as a transition that prepares us for the significance of the scene ~~which~~ follows. Sir Degare is a well constructed romance, with scenes balanced in length and varied in content. The episodes cover the essential moments in the progress of a foundling as he searches for his parents. The dominant structural principle is dramatic narrative. Let us examine, in a more condensed manner, how this principle is used in some other romances in couplets.

Two love stories of approximately the same length as Sir Degare are The Squyr of Lowe Degre and Floris and

Blancheflur. No source is known for The Squyr, and it has been suggested that the text was simply an assemblage of well known motifs such as the love of people of unequal rank, the probation of seven years, the wicked steward, and the catalogues, as well as the lesser known motifs of substituting the steward's body for the lover's, and the lady's preserving the body for seven years. Linguistic evidence points to a fifteenth century date and an East Midland dialect.⁹ This tale of love between a princess and her social inferior draws attention to their relationship and dilemma by blocking the romance into lengthy dialogue scenes, and deemphasizing or eliminating action scenes.

Foregoing any comments by a supposed minstrel, the romance opens with a description of the squire and his love for the daughter of the King of Hungary. The absence of proper names creates an idealized, generalized tone. Following the description, there is a lengthy iterative scene telling of the squire's habitual activity, during a seven-year period, of sitting in the garden (here a ten-line catalogue of trees and a fifteen-line catalogue of birds) and lamenting his fate. An example of his lament, still iterative, is given as a twenty-line monologue. All this time the lady hears his complaints as she sits in her chamber. Suddenly, as in Sir Degare, the iterative scene becomes particular, here with the word "anone."

Anone that lady, fayre and fre,
 Undyd a pynne of yueré,
 And wyd the windowes she open set,¹⁰

In this first scene the princess accepts the squire's love in some 275 lines of almost uninterrupted dialogue. The longest speech (127 lines) is that in which the lady tells the squire what to do to win her love. After warning him about the evil steward, she enumerates in complete detail the courageous deeds she expects him to perform, and the armor he should wear. The twenty-six-line description of armor and heraldry stops the narrative altogether, like the numerous catalogues, because its function is decorative. She also tells him exactly what she will give him for his journey, and how and when he is to leave the court. She will wait for seven years.

Meanwhile, the steward mentioned by the lady is seen to be eavesdropping on their conversation. The scene then shifts to an iterative transition, in which the steward ponders "euery daye by and by" (294), how he may be avenged on the lady, whom he loves jealously. This is followed by the author's comment, "Alas! it tourned to wrother heyle / That euer he wyste of theyre counsayle" (299-300). Then, with the formulaic "But leue we of the stewarde here, / And speke we more of that squyer" (301-2), the narrator opens a short transition which shows the squire dressing to serve the king in the hall. Even though this transition serves no narrative purpose except to move the squire from the lady's chamber to the hall, it contains a five-line description of his clothing and equipment, detail which functions again on the ornamental level. In the following scene he

serves the king with dainty meats enumerated in an eight-line catalogue. Here the motif of inability to eat because of sudden emotion is applied to the king, who is struck by an inexplicable affection for the squire, no doubt in unconscious sympathy with his daughter.

Scene 4, an interview between the king and the steward, introduced only by the word "Anone," begins with indirect discourse, but quickly shifts to dialogue for the balance of the scene, 109 lines. In response to the steward's accusation, the king promises him thirty-three men to watch his daughter's chamber. This is followed by a shorter scene, about half dialogue, half narrative, in which the squire goes to the king to ask his permission to depart. In a subsequent transition, the squire and his page ride about a mile, stop at an inn and go to supper. There the squire remembers that he has forgotten to take leave of his lady. A two-line speech in this transition is not enough to make it a transitional scene.

In the following group of three scenes, we see how action becomes subordinated to reaction. The squire returns and enters the castle, his sword drawn. This, in many romances, would introduce a prolonged battle scene. Here however, the narrative shifts into the authorial voice. The narrator promises that we "shall here nowe of the stewarde" (510). He reminds us that the squire thought no one knew his secret, while in fact the steward knew it. The narrator repeats that the steward has betrayed the squire to the king. He continues,

And yet he laye her chambre by,
 Armed with a great company,
 And beset it on eche syde,
 For treason walketh wonder wyde.
 (517-20)

Even if beset here means assail here and not merely surround, the important action in the scene--combat--is reduced to one verse. For at this point the narrator slips into unreal conditions: if the squire had known of the betrayal, he would not have come there alone. Or if the lady had known of the squire's plan, she would have provided him with men and gold. But no one knew what had become of the squire.

Scene 6 begins "Whan that he came her chambre to, / Anone he sayde, 'Your dore vndo!'" (533-4). Repeated anaphorically, this request intensifies the picture of his being beset "with many a spy" (536), "with many a knyfe" (540), "with enemyes great" (544). In short, we see the action indirectly through his request for entrance. In a lengthy speech the lady refuses to open the door, until she discovers that it is the squire himself who asks. The only indication that he has been admitted to her chamber occurs in the dialogue, when the lady says, "Welcome." She tells him in a sixty-five-line speech that he is to win worship like Libeaus Desconus or Sir Guy, for their mutual benefit. Then the squire's enemies arrive, occasioning a twenty-one-line battle scene. There is no indication of change of place or time, except that since the lady is unaware of the outcome, the battle cannot have taken place in her chamber.

The battle between the squire and the steward takes up eight lines of the scene. As soon as the squire has killed the steward, those of the steward's men who are still alive seize the squire and remove his clothes. These they put on the dead steward. After mutilating his face beyond recognition, they leave his body at the lady's door. Finally, in a brief concluding scene, the squire is led to the king, who informs him that he will prevent the marriage for seven years. We now turn to Episode II, which deals with the seven-year separation.

Episode II is divided into two sections; one depicts the lady's experience at the beginning of their separation, and another the squire's departure, travels, and return, concluding in their reunion. The new situation, their separation, is defined by the absence of the squire. It incorporates one new character in the zero degree, if we may stretch the "new character or set of characters" proviso to include the grotesque, namely a false squire in the form of the steward's corpse. This the lady embalms and sets at the head of her bed. The first scene, largely narrative, becomes iterative, when we learn that "euery day" she prayed beside the body, kissed it, swooned, and on recovery, went to church and had five masses sung. Scene 2 returns from her habitual actions to a pratical instance when her father tries to cheer her up by listing all the activities she can participate in to overcome her sadness. There is no narrative at all, not even dramatic dialogue, for 146

out of the 151 lines in the scene. This richly detailed, lovely picture of courtly life, which includes among other items a catalogue of wines, must have influenced Kane's choice of the Squyr as one of the most successful romances. His choice was based on the "delicate and tender mood," and the "creation of poetic effects." He points out that the "most striking feature of this romance is the manner in which the emphasis is laid almost entirely upon the moods of the various situations and hardly at all upon the narrative."¹¹ But however much poetic elaboration there may be, this romance does not seem to have the stature or universality of the other "great" romances listed by Kane, such as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Perceval of Galles, Sir Orfeo, and Sir Degrevant. The poetic elaboration is more decorative than functional.

With the formula "But leue we of that lady here" (859), the scene shifts to the squire, whom the king releases from prison in a brief narrative passage. This is followed by twenty lines of summary narrative, passing quickly over the squire's seven years abroad. It need hardly be said that these twenty lines could be the subject of an entire romance, were the emphasis more on narrative effects and less on sentiment. In any case, the squire returns at the end of the transitional twenty lines, and there is a brief scene in which he tells of his exploits (not enumerated). The king welcomes him, asking him to remain in seclusion until he, the king, has spoken with his daughter. In a

transitional passage, the narrator places the king underneath his daughter's window, and comments that she would never have revealed as much of her "counsaille," had she known that her father was there. Now that seven years have passed, the lady is compelled to part with the decomposed body of her supposed lover. In an anaphoric passage of fourteen farewells, she removes herself from the material world, vowing to become an anchoress. After her monologue, her father reveals himself. He informs her of the real circumstances in a forty-three-line flashback. Before she swoons, the damsel thinks to ask why the king neglected to tell her this story before. The king, who can hardly respond that the plot of the story requires it as a test of her fidelity, changes the subject, turning to the squire's chivalric deeds. He promises that they will marry and that the squire will be heir to the throne. In the Squyr, the overall theme of love between people of unequal rank requires that the lovers be separated and tested. Success in the test in turn requires reunion under circumstances which allow the lovers to enjoy each other's love in peace and harmony. Thus we are led logically as well as temporally to an inevitable marriage. Any other developments would be likely to introduce the element of tragedy.

Once the reunion has taken place, the romance draws to a close. A transitional passage shows a messenger announcing the wedding, and the nobility responding to the invitation. This generalized activity is brought to a halt with

the adverbial "Tyll on a day." The wedding is narrated summarily, as is the subsequent ceremony in which the squire becomes king. Finally the narrator states that they lived their life in joy and bliss, and he concludes the romance with a prayer for their souls.

The Squyr of Lowe Degre differs from Sir Degare in having only two episodes and fifteen scenes. The scenes are developed at greater length, mainly through extended dialogue. Both the dialogue and the narration contain a considerable amount of description, which does not contribute to the action or sense of drama, as in Sir Degare, but slows down the narrative pace to make room for poetic amplification. Scenes of personal encounter dominate the romance, shorter narrative encounters alternating with lengthy dialogue scenes. The latter often contain single speeches of well over a hundred lines, including one 147-line flashback. There is one brief battle scene, and another in which the battle disappears behind authorial comment. There are eight narrative transitions, two describing habitual actions, five naming specific moments, and one encapsulating a seven year period. The narrator uses the formula "But leue we . . . / And speke we of . . ." three times. All other transitions between scenes rely on adverbs: anone, tho, whan, right as, than. Despite the assumption that the Squyr has no French source, it lacks the "typical" English tendency to subordinate ornamental elements to action.

Floris and Blancheflur, composed around 1250 in the

Southeast Midlands,¹² tends toward briefer scenes, less dialogue than in the Squyr, and more narrative. However, most of the crucial decisions which control the movement of the plot occur within the dialogue. Furthermore, despite the increased amount of narrative, Floris and Blancheflur is composed almost entirely of scenes of personal encounter and dialogue. There are fifteen dialogue scenes, three more scenes that are half narrative and half dialogue or monologue, and only two scenes of almost pure narrative. There are no battle scenes. While the narrator misses no chance to create pathos in the dialogue, he avoids sentimental comments or even single words in his own voice, emotionally colored adjectives and the like. Thus the audience can be moved by the drama of intense love without obvious manipulation by authorial commentary.

The most interesting problem in analyzing this romance is to isolate the episodes, for the sense of closure is more ambiguous here than in other romances. This may be due to the history of the tale, which has many Eastern themes and motifs, such as the merchant disguise, and the marvellous garden about the Tower of Maidens. These elements probably arrived in Europe through crusaders' and travellers' tales, and the Alexander romances.¹³ Unlike the episode boundaries, shifts between scenes are unambiguous, except in one case between scenes 2 and 3 of Episode I, where the only shift marker is "now." This indicates a future so immediate that what follows might be a continuation of the same scene.

We deduce however that scene 2, in which the king suggests that Blanche-flur be murdered to remove her from Floris, cannot have taken place in the presence of the children in "Now ben þese Children swyþ wo, / Now þey may nat goo infere."¹⁴ All but three of the remaining transitions are one to ten-line narrative shifts in space or time. The problem, then, is to trace the blocking of scenes into narrative units with their own internal organization from stasis to kinesis to closure.

Episode I concerns the efforts of Floris' parents, King and Queen of Almeria, to separate him from his beloved Blanche-flur. They are afraid that Floris will marry below his station, since Blanche-flur is an illegitimate child of the pagan king and a Christian woman whom he captured in a raid. In all four manuscripts of the English version, the introduction is lost. The first few extant scenes may be outlined as follows:

1. The king tells his seven year old son that he must begin his schooling. This Floris refuses to do unless accompanied by Blanche-flur.

Transition: They are set to learn. Their learning is impressive, but much more impressive is their love for each other.

2. When he realizes that Floris is maturing, the king decides to do away with Blanche-flur to prevent their marrying. The queen dissuades the king from this violent plan by proposing to send Floris away to his aunt.

Transition: "Now ben þese Children swyþ wo," etc.

3. The king falsely promises Floris that Blanche-flur will follow him in a fortnight.

Here a transitional passage of thirty-three lines depicts Floris' two-week stay with his aunt, emphasizing his disconsolate state. It is summary narrative, iterative rather than strictly chronological. This cannot be called the end of the episode, however, because this transition is not followed by a single new character or altered situation. Floris' refusal to accept his lot merely intensifies the situation at hand. In fact, the passage links two very similar scenes, differing from each other mainly in intensity. In this new scene (Episode I, scene 4), the king is enraged at his son's despondency, and vows to have Blanche-flur be-headed. Again the queen dissuades him, this time suggesting that he spare Blanche-flur's life and sell her to a Babylonian merchant.

The next section of narrative could easily be an episode in itself, except that it is not developed in sufficient detail to qualify as an independent unit of narrative. In forty-eight lines the narrator describes the sale of Blanche-flur to the merchant, their journey to Babylon, and the resale of Blanche-flur to the emir ("amyral"). Over a third of these verses are devoted to a description of the wonderful cup, engraved with scenes of Paris' abduction of Helen and their love, which the merchant exchanges for Blanche-flur. The abduction motif is pertinent, although in this case, the lover will be the ~~rescuer~~, not the abductor.

The story of Blanche-flur's disappearance is thus incorporated into Episode I. The narrator subordinates her story line to that of Floris, in order to return as soon as possible to a single strand of narrative. This passage, like the one portraying Floris with his aunt, is situated between two scenes about the plotting of the king and queen. But rather than linking them, it breaks the continuity of the narrative by moving ahead in both time and space, only to have to return to the king and queen in Spain. The use of summary narrative other than the transitional increases in the longer romances.

Scenes 5 to 10 are still part of Episode I. One could argue that Floris' return is a new situation at least, even if there are no new characters. But a closer look reveals that the narrative concerning the king's plan to separate Floris and Blanche-flur has never really been broken by any other cluster of scenes. When the king first wishes to have Blanche-flur killed, the queen recommends sending Floris away. A transitional passage of summary narrative describes Floris in his absence. Then the narrative returns to the king and queen. The queen's plan has failed, so she suggests another. The implementation of the second plan is described. Finally a third plan, its implementation and ultimate failure, are narrated in the next four scenes. First, in a brief scene of straight narrative, the king and queen have a gravestone placed in the church, hoping to convince Floris that Blanche-flur is dead. Scene 6 tells

very briefly of Floris' return and his asking for Blanche-flur. When he gets no answer from his parents, he goes directly to Blanche-flur's mother.

More fully developed in dialogue than scenes 5 and 6, scene 7 provides Floris with an answer to his persistent question:

"Tel me where my leman be."
 Al wepyng seide þenne shee,
 "Sir," shee seide, "deede." "deed!" seide he.
 "Sir," sche seide, "for sothe, 3ee."
 (237-40)

The tension of his having to ask repeatedly for Blanche-flur before getting a straight answer is intensified by the repetition of "deed," and the "for sothe, 3ee," which we know to be mistaken. Predictably, Floris swoons. The king and queen hear the mother crying out to Jesus and Mary, and run to the chamber. They are both upset to see their son in despair, but still they maintain the deception.

Scenes 8 to 10 are very closely related in time. Scene 8 is organized into two sections of straight narrative separated by a seventeen line monologue. In the first section, the queen accompanies Floris to the grave. The monologue is a moving lament in which Floris rails at Death for separating him treacherously from his beloved. He resolves to take the matter into his own hands and kill himself. In the last seven lines of the scene, Floris' mother rushes at him and seizes the "litel knyf" with which he is about to carry out his resolution. The change of

heart which this pathetic scene produces in the king and queen is worked out dramatically, with very little prompting from the poet, whether descriptive or narrative. Here is the scene in its entirety:

Forþ þe Queene ranne, al wepyng,
 Tyl she come to þe kyng.
 Þan seide þe good lady,
 "For goddes loue, sir, mercy!
 Of .xii. children haue we noone
 On lyue now but þis oone.
 And better it were she were his make,
 Þan he were deed for hur sake."
 "Dame, þou seist soþ," seide he;
 "Sen it may noone other be,
 Leuer me were she were his wyf,
 Þan y lost my sonnes lyf."
 Of þis word þe Quene was fayne,
 And to her soone she ran agayne.
 (297-310)

Lines 297-8 are transitional. The first verse after that narrates the queen's response to her child's sorrow, and the adjective "good" is a signal from the narrator directing our response to her. The only other narrative is confined to the single word "seyde." In this crucial scene, the king is converted to a humane attitude, changing the course of the narrative.

In the final couplet, a transition to scene 9, two more words, "fayn" and "ran" indicate the queen's relief. In scene 9 the queen reveals the deception to Floris, who vows to search night and day for Blancheflur, if it be to the end of the earth.

The final scene, introduced by the conventional theme of leave taking, is organized around a catalogue and de-

scription of the horses, goods and men Floris will take with him on the journey. Although greatly reduced from the French version of the tale,¹⁵ the description is unusually extensive for an English romance of this length. (The Squyr of Lowe Degre is the exception in this respect, not the rule.) It is divided into two parts: Floris' detailed request for what he needs, and a description of the horses and equipment which the king commands for the journey. He also gives Floris the cup he received in payment for Blanche-flur, and the queen gives him a magic ring which will protect him from death. The amount of description in this scene slows the narrative pace to near immobility, until the statement "He took his leue for to goo" (379). His leave-taking, and his parents' sorrow, terminate Episode I. No further action is possible or desirable in this context, and a new set of events must be predicated on the instability embedded in the terminal situation in order to continue.

Beginning "Furþ he went with al his mayn," (383), scene 1 of Episode II immediately disrupts the stasis of I.10. The contrast dramatizes the possibilities which have suddenly opened up as the hero becomes free to act. Episode II concerns the events which lead Floris to Blanche-flur. It is organized as a chain of encounters between Floris and a series of informants and advisers. Scene 1 takes place before Floris leaves Spain, at an inn by the harbor. There he learns that Blanche-flur was sold and sent to Babylon. After a transitional passage describing Floris'

journey and arrival in Babylon, an innkeeper informs him in scene 2 that Blanche-flur has been sold to the Emir of Babylon. The following morning (scene 3), the innkeeper directs Floris to a bridge keeper who can advise him further.

The encounter between Floris and Darys, the bridge keeper, the longest scene in the romance, takes up almost two hundred lines. Encouraged by Darys, Floris tells him the history of his loss (condensed into six lines of indirect discourse). Darys' response takes up 151 lines. He begins pessimistically, "'Now y woot how it gooth, / þou desirest þyn own death'" (547-8). Then, in the first of his two lengthy speeches, Darys describes in detail the Tower of Maidens and its fortifications. He continues with the magic garden which betrays ladies who have lost their virginity, and reports the Emir's intention to marry Blanche-flur. The function of this speech is to set before the audience the impossibility of the rescue. But Floris persists in pleading for Darys' advice. In his second speech, Darys proposes that Floris disguise himself as a freemason, and approach the Tower of Maidens. There, he should make friends with the porter by playing chess with him and allowing him to win. Eventually, the porter will do homage to Floris and become his man.

It is tempting to call scenes 5 and 6 a new episode. They concern a new set of characters--the porter of the Tower of Maidens, Clarys and Blanche-flur--and a new situation--when Floris gains entry into the emir's stronghold,

and is reunited with Blancheflur. However, these apparent conditions for segmentation are nullified by the lack of closure at the end of scene 4. The transition between scenes 4 and 5 is as follows:

As he [Darys] seide, he [Floris] dide ywys;
 And as he ordeynd, so it is:
 Þe Porter ys Florys man bycome,
 For his gold and his warysone.
 Florys seide, . . .

(705-09)

Far from indicating any closure, this transition binds scenes 4 and 5 (beginning, "Florys seide") closely together in a cause and effect relationship. It seems to me that the question of segmentation is not solved by looking for a "core incident," as Dorfman would have it, and calling everything around it "marginal." In this case, would the core incident be the search or the reunion? Even if it were both the search and its result, which scenes or elements could we label marginal? In one sense, almost everything in the episode is marginal, being an amplification of the core idea: Floris searches for Blancheflur; he finds her. In another sense almost nothing is marginal. For example, if three informants seem logically excessive, they still have the essential narrative function of building up suspense. A more reliable way to establish the shape of an episode is to look for signs of progression and closure in the wording of the text itself. The transition quoted above makes it clear that scene 5 between Floris and the porter is a con-

tinuation of the narrative line introduced in the dialogue of scene 4. In other words, scene 4 sets the stage for scene 5 and consequently 6, the reunion. There is no verbal or thematic sign of completion before scene 6.

Scene 5 is a dialogue between Floris and the porter. Having pledged his loyalty to Floris, he dolefully agrees to help him. The plan, reported in a ten-line transitional passage, is to have Floris hide in a huge basket of flowers, and have two maidens bear the basket to Blanche-flur's chamber. The suitability of this motif to the romance as a whole needs no comment. In the recognition scene, the heavy basket of flowers is transported by two complaining maidens to the wrong chamber. Luckily, the chamber belongs to Blanche-flur's friend Clarys, who guesses that the stranger must be Floris, and calls for Blanche-flur. After the reunion itself, during which the couple speak hardly a word, they are brought to a bed "of palle and of sylke wrougt," and served by Clarys. The narrator expresses the intensity of their joy with the customary indescribability topos. In a final speech, Floris says,

"lord þat madest man,
I it þonke goddes sone
þat al my care I haue ouercome;
Now my leue I haue y-founde,
Of al my care y am vnbounde."
(828-32)

This speech is the counterpart of his speech towards the end of Episode I, when he vows to search for Blanche-flur to

the end of the earth. It rounds off the narrative movement from departure to accomplishment.

The stasis established by the reunion lasts a very short time, since the couple still have to deal with the emir. Episode III is organized into two scenes, each prefaced by a transitional scene. The first of these is a brief transitional moment, in which Clarys awakens Blancheflur only to see her fall back to sleep. In the first developed scene, Clarys explains Blancheflur's absence to the emir by saying that she was awake all night praying for him. Another day, Blancheflur falls asleep again. This time, the emir resolves to know why she is absent. In the second scene the emir's chamberlain discovers the couple together in bed, and he sends for the emir. Floris, seeing the emir's drawn sword, makes the only statement in a scene of pure, rapid narrative, when he says "Of oure lyf is no socour" (911). But their extreme peril is contradicted in narrative terms when the emir restrains himself from killing them. The scene and episode conclude with the emir having Floris and Blancheflur bound and cast into prison. The finality of this gesture creates a narrative closure, and their being in prison (implied) creates a stasis to be interrupted by the next series of events.

The final episode consists of one major scene of 150 lines, almost exactly half narrative, half dialogue. It depicts the trial of Floris and Blancheflur, which takes place before the barons and kings of the land. The scene

is the culmination of the romance's major theme, the power of love to overcome all other considerations, even strict justice. Since he has paid a high price for the maiden and done her every honor, the emir feels he ought to be avenged for the betrayal. However, the jury refuses to pass sentence until they have heard from the defendants. Following the entrance of Floris and Blanche-flur are two well-handled blocks of dialogue, separated by thirty-two lines of pure narrative. The dialogue produces the final turning point in the narrative.

The two blocks of dialogue are built around the same theme: each lover wishes to sacrifice his or her life to save the other. In the first section, they argue about the magic ring. Floris wants to give it to Blanche-flur to save her life, but she refuses to save her life if it means losing Floris. In the process of handing it back and forth to each other, they let it drop, and one of the jurors finds it. However, in order to build up suspense, the narrator delays any signs of hope, as he reports, "þus þe Children wepyng com / To þe fire and hur doom" (980-1). In the remainder of the narrative section, we learn that the jurors are moved by the couple's plight, but dare not mention it. Finally, the one who found the ring recounts their argument to the emir, just after he has ordered them to be cast into the fire. Therefore, at the last minute the emir orders them to return. Hence the ring does not save Floris (and Blanche-flur) by virtue of its magic, but by its function as a token

of their mutual generosity, which has the power to divert others from hostility. In the second section of dialogue, Floris pleads with the emir to slay him and spare Blancheflur, while Blancheflur argues that she is at fault. The emir resolves the dilemma by deciding to kill them both. At that dispute breaks out anew, when it comes to who will die first, for when Blancheflur puts forth her neck, Floris says, "I am man; I shal byfore" (1018). But as soon as he readies himself, Blancheflur pulls him away.

At this point, the king who found the ring suggests that there would be more honor in discovering how the strategem was accomplished than in slaying two children. Floris agrees to explain, provided that the man who helped him receive pardon. The emir responds to the story of his loss and recovery of Blancheflur by knighting Floris on the spot, and presenting him with Blancheflur. This sudden change of heart does not come as a complete surprise, because there are indications in the previous episode that the emir, though quick to anger, is not an impetuous man. Again we see that hostility cannot persist in the face of love. The final twenty lines bring the story to a rapid conclusion. Floris and Blancheflur are married, and the emir weds Clarys. Shortly thereafter, Floris receives word that his father has died, so he returns to Spain with Blancheflur to become king of Almeria.

The narrative structure of the tale is generated by the conviction that ultimately, nothing can resist true love.

But the structuring of the episodes--separation of the couple, search and reunion, threat to the reunited couple, resolution--is not rigidly fixed by the theme. The structure is based on certain choices within the verbal realization of the narrative, which indicate where the narrative flows on and where it pauses. Different verbalization at possible points of closure could have produced episodes with another shape and emphasis, even if the same plot line were retained. Although the overall themes determine the direction of the plot, they do not have absolute control over its segmentation into episodes. This occurs at the level of the individual realization.

Although Eger and Grime, written in a northern dialect in the mid-fifteenth century,¹⁶ is also about love, generating two separate love stories, the emphasis varies somewhat from the Squyr and Floris. It stresses the adventures involved in winning the love of the lady, rather than stressing the affective level of the relationship. Even so, there are seventeen dialogue scenes and ten other personal encounters dominated by narrative. In addition, there are two major battle scenes, one journey scene, and one scene of miscellaneous narrative (lines 183-201¹⁷). In other words, even in a tale of adventure such as Eger and Grime, the scenes of personal encounter outweigh the action scenes almost seven to one. Over half the scenes are dialogue scenes. This suggests that romances can (and often do, as we shall see) make heavy use of the dramatic mode.

The transitions between scenes are almost all quite short; only nine out of thirty-four are over two lines, only three of these are over five lines. The longest transition is a springtime opening with a short catalogue of birds (lines 919-32). Aside from this passage, there are only two other extended descriptions: the heroine Loosepine (793-96), and the arming of the hero (953-76). What sets Eger and Grime apart from the romances discussed above is its use of summary narrative for flashbacks instead of transitions, the most extended use of this device we have encountered so far.

This romance is also the first so far to begin in medias res, which of course requires the increased use of flashbacks. When Sir Grime returns to the Land of Beame badly wounded, he joins his sworn brother Eger in their chamber. There he relates his adventures in a "fforbidden countrie," apparently in the Other World,¹⁸ his battle with Greysteele, and his brief sojourn with the Lady Loosepine, who heals his wounds. The introduction and conclusion of this 252 line flashback are composed in summary narrative. In addition, we find a lengthy battle scene, a scene of pure narrative (miscellaneous)--what Grime did after the battle--and three encounters with Loosepine and her damsels. With this group of scenes, and an introduction and a conclusion, the flashback is an episode in itself, inserted towards the beginning of the romance's opening scene.

When the time sequence has returned to Grime's conva-

lescings in the Land of Beame, his lord, the Earl Bragas, visits him, and inquires how he was wounded. This occasions a second flashback, a summary of the first, reduced to thirty-five lines of telescoped narrative. One other flashback is delivered by Palyas, Grime's brother, after Eger has left to fight Greysteele in his place. The Lady Winglayne is annoyed that her suitor Grime has suffered defeat. Palyas reminds her of the time Grime defeated a band of pagans almost single handed to rescue the King of Beame. This thirty-one-line tale is the shortest of the three flashbacks. Its function is to show Grime at a moment of triumph, since he spends the entire course of the romance, including part of the flashback, in bed. We shall not encounter the ordo artificialis again until Ywain and Gawain, which is well over twice as long as Eger and Grime.

King Horn, composed in a Southwestern or South Midland dialect around 1225,¹⁹ resembles the romances under discussion earlier in this chapter in that it is based primarily on dialogue scenes. The romance contains three battle scenes, two miscellaneous narrative scenes, four transitional scenes, and thirty which are dominated by discourse. However, of those thirty, only eighteen contain real dialogue. The remaining twelve scenes contain monologues. Occasionally, the character is alone, but more often, a dialogue is implied but never realized. One character makes a speech, usually quite a well developed speech, and that is the end of the scene. In narrative characterized by highly complex

scenes, such as that in the alliterative Morte Arthure, monologues of this kind do not constitute scenes, because they come right in the middle of summary narrative, and no scene is indicated. Here, in contrast, the practice is to introduce all scenes by the most minimal indications. The speeches often exist in a sort of vacuum, with no reference to setting. For example, towards the beginning of the tale, there are thirty lines of summary narrative which tell how the pagans conquer the kingdom of Horn's father Murry, killing Murry and driving his wife into hiding. The summary action concludes,

Payns him [Horn] wolde slen
 Of̃er al quic flen.
 3ef his fairnesse nere,
 Þe children alle aſlage were.²⁰

The second couplet is clearer in the Laud manuscript 108 than it is in the Cambridge manuscript:

3if hornes fayrede nere,
 Þe child yslawe ware.
 (93-4)

In any case, the pagans intend to do away with Horn, lest he later attempt to avenge his father. This situation develops into a scene between the "Admirad" and Horn in the following manner:

Þanne ſpak on Admirad,
 Of wordes he was bald,
 "Horn, þu art wel kene," etc.
 (95-7)

This is typical of a number of scenes in which the fact of a scene is set forth by announcing a speaker, sometimes separated from the previous narrative only by a temporal adverb.²¹ Where settings do exist, they tend to be cursory and formulaic: "Bi dales and bi dune" (167-8), "in halle" (237), "to halle" (502, 663, 963), "to bure" (301, 558), "on bedde" (315), "in ture" (1312), "þe day bȝan to springe, / Horn cam biuore þe kinge" (527-8). The lack of scenic description is one reason Laura Hibbard Loomis sees King Horn as "virile and primitive" in comparison to the earlier Anglo-French Horn. "The bareness of scene, the simplicity of motive, and lively vigor of action, give the English Horn a popular, ballad-like quality."²² Dieter Mehl points out that King Horn is reduced to about one quarter of the length of the Anglo-Norman version, and he adds,

This remarkable abridgement is not achieved by the omission of complete episodes or a drastic simplification of the plot, but by a striking swiftness of narration, a lack of lengthy description or reflection, and a very sketchy indication of localities.²³

What is surprising, however, is that the "vigor" and "swiftness" of the narrative is present in a work that is almost fifty percent direct discourse (731 out of a total of 1530 lines in the Cambridge manuscript).

The dialogue scenes vary greatly in length, and even very short transitional scenes often include dialogue. Here is an example of such a scene, toward the end of the romance:

þe quen ȝede to bure,
 And fond Aþulf in ture.
 "Aþulf," heo sede, "be bliþe,
 And to horn þu go wel swiþe.
 He is vnder wude boȝe,
 And wiþ him kniȝtes Inoȝe."
 Aþulf bigan to þpringe
 For þe tiþinge.

(1311-18)

The scene contains eight lines, of which four are dialogic. This transitional scene is an example of a widely used technique of alternating short and long scenes for narrative balance. Nevertheless, it is unusual for minor and transitional scenes to include as much dialogue as they do in King Horn.

One of the best examples of the relative complexity of the dialogue is the famous pair of scenes in which Rymenhild declares her love, first mistakenly to Athulf, and after a transitional passage, to Horn. The first of these scenes opens with a brief narrative section which tells of how Rymenhild, believing Athulf to be Horn, seats him on a bed and begins to embrace him. Immediately, she delivers her wooing speech, noted for its directness.

"Horn," quaþ heo, "wel longe
 Ihc habbe þe luued stronge.
 þu schalt þi trewþe plizte
 On myn hond her riȝte,
 Me to spuse holde,
 And ihc þe lord to wolde."

(319-24)

The absence of any qualifiers indicates a speaker who in the intensity of her love has not considered the possibility of

failure. Her peremptory approach heightens the effect of Athulf's response. With great courtesy, he tells her "on hire ire, / So still so hit were" (325-6), that Horn is not there, that Horn is much fairer than he, and that he, Athulf, does not wish to betray either Horn or the lady. Rymenhild's initial reaction to this, in keeping with the absolute tone of her declaration of love, is extreme anger. She reproaches Athulf and demands that he leave immediately. She turns his own words against him, concluding that "'Horn is fairer þane beo he, / Wiþ muchel schame mote þu deie'" (349-50). Athulf answers with the same courtesy as before that since it is his duty to look after Horn, he wishes to protect him, in this case from offending the king, Rymenhild's father. Here four lines of narrative describe Rymenhild's change of mood, after which she sends Athulf to fetch Horn, claiming that she does not care what people think of it.

A transitional scene connects the two major scenes. Even here, eight out of thirteen lines are devoted to dialogue, while Athulf tells Horn to visit Rymenhild. The visit itself opens with six lines of narrative, emphasizing Horn's kindness and natural courtesy. This trait is stressed again in the dialogue, in Horn's tautological statement:

'Wiþ þe speke ihc scholde;
Seie me what þu woldest.
Seie, and ich schal here,
What þi wille were.'

(415-18)

Before we hear Rymenhild's answer (which we already know), a narrative section of eight lines shows Rymenhild seating Horn, bringing him wine, and embracing him. Her speech is an approximate repetition of the earlier one:

'Horn,' heo sede, 'wiſute strif
 þu ſhalt haue me to þi wif.
 Horn, haue of me rewþe,
 And plist me þi trewþe.'

(437-40)

But the "haue of me rewþe" seems not to be a mere decorative variation, for it shifts the unqualified tone of the first version to one slightly more diffident. Nonetheless, Horn excuses himself on the grounds that he is a foundling and no suitable match for a princess. At this point she faints. Moved by her distress, Horn begins to change his mind. In his next speech, he promises to comply with her wishes if she helps him to be knighted. This revives her, and in her final speech of eighteen lines, she advises Horn how to go about winning her for his wife. This is a common theme at the end of love scenes involving a woman of higher station than the man. The scene concludes rapidly with Horn's departure.

The dialogue is made up almost entirely of conventional formulas, such as the ones in Rymenhild's wooing speeches. Therefore, the drama and coloring are not to be found in individual verses, but in the motif patterns by which these elements take on scenic form. This is particularly evident in the scene between Rymenhild and Athulf, which is laid

out so that Rymenhild experiences three extreme changes of mood in seventy-three lines. The majority of important moments in the romance are similarly handled through dialogue, a minimum of narration, and practically no description.

Another example of the cumulative effect of these conventional patterns is the climactic moment of the romance. It is composed of a series of closely connected scenes totaling 162 lines. This group of scenes begins with a narrative section in which Horn arrives at the castle after a seven year exile and forces his way past a hostile gate keeper. Disguised as a beggar, he makes his way into the hall and notices that Rymenhild is in despair and Athulf is missing. Then the narrative deviates from its usually straightforward blocking technique to shift momentarily to Athulf, who is standing in a tower looking out to sea for Horn. In a seven-line monologue, Athulf addresses himself to the absent Horn, beseeching him to come now or never, for he, Athulf, has protected Rymenhild as long as he can. Following this section, the narrative returns to the hall, where Rymenhild begins to serve wine and ale to the men. This section is dominated by a dialogue between Rymenhild and the disguised Horn. Their exchange is developed by means of two allusions, of which the meaning is understood by the audience but not by Rymenhild. Horn speaks of himself as a fisherman, referring to a prophetic dream that Rymenhild had just before Horn was forced into exile. Rymenhild begins to suspect something unusual when the "beggar" asks her to

drink out of the same vessel as he, but she fails to recognize in "Drink to horn of horne" (1227) the message that she is saved. After Horn places the ring she had given him into the horn of wine, he asks her to see what is in her drink. Here there is a change of scene, as Rymenhild retires to her chamber and discovers the ring. She sends a maiden to fetch Horn, and the scene continues in her chamber. At first Horn claims to be a messenger sent by Horn at the moment of his death to return the ring to Rymenhild. But as soon as Horn sees that Rymenhild is ready to kill herself for grief, he reveals his identity, and tells her how to escape so that he can confront the king and the wedding guests. The function of the narrative in these scenes is typical of the romance as a whole: it moves the characters together for conversation, and relates briefly (usually in one to four couplets) their actions and reactions within the scene. The crucial, dramatic effects emanate from the dialogue.

In addition to its auxiliary function, the pure narrative exists on its own, especially in the three battle scenes and in the summary transitional scenes and in the summary transitions, with the function of linking the major time periods amplified in detail. The battle scenes (31 ff., 633 ff., 905 ff.) are less distinguishable from other types of narrative scenes than they are in many other romances, because the actual battle is usually reduced to a few lines, sandwiched in between narrative material leading up to it

and afterwards describing the results. Aside from the use of narrative in battle scenes, transitional scenes, and summary transitions, there is a conventional summarized conclusion. It relates what became of the principal characters, now that there is nothing left to impede the narrative resolution. At the beginning of the romance, a passage of summary narrative informs us what havoc the pagan invaders wreaked on Suddene. The function of the summarization is to subordinate the information it contains to the first scene with Horn. The passage is parallel to one near the end in which we see Horn defeat the pagans on his return to Suddene. There are no specific battle scenes at this time, just general remarks such as "Hi slozen and fujten, / ðe niȝt and ðe vjten" (1473-74). The same generalized narrative is used to describe Rymenhild's love for Horn, and her fear of detection (despite her later statement to the contrary, line 384). It is characteristic of Horn and in general of Middle English romances that her love is depicted in narrative, and later in dialogic, rather than in descriptive or lyric terms.

Havelok, 3001 verses in length, was composed during the thirteenth century in a Lincolnshire or West Norfolk dialect.²⁴ Although Havelok is twice as long as King Horn, it has only seven episodes to Horn's five. The movement of the episodes is controlled by a double plot, whose two parts are dominated by the pattern of treason-exile-trial-return. The two plot lines are sufficiently varied to maintain

interest; for example, one of the evil regents, Godard, is clearly more evil and deserving of worse punishment than the other, Godrich. There are two parallel introductory episodes:

- I. Athelwold of England dies, leaving his kingdom and his daughter Goldeboru in the hands of Godrich of Cornwall. When Goldeboru matures, Godrich throws her in prison in order to retain his power over the kingdom.
- II. King Birkabeyn of Denmark dies, placing his kingdom and three children in the care of his friend Godard. Godard immediately imprisons Havelok and his two sisters, and when they beg him for mercy, he murders the two girls. Instead of killing Havelok, however, he hires a fisherman named Grim to do it. When Grim and his wife realize that Havelok is heir to the throne, they escape to England with him and their own children for his protection.

These episodes are followed by a middle section of three episodes in which Havelok's fate becomes intertwined with that of Goldeboru.

- III. Havelok leaves Grim and finds employment in Lincoln as a cook's knave.
- IV. After Havelok has won renown for his great strength, Godrich forces Goldeboru to marry him, so as to fulfill his oath to give her to "þe hexte man þat micthe liue, / þe beste, fayrest, the strangest ok."²⁵
- V. To avoid bringing disgrace on his new wife, Havelok flees with her to Grimsby.

Finally, there are two parallel concluding episodes, corresponding to the first two episodes:

VI. Havelok conquers Denmark, and punishes Godard

VII. He conquers England, and punishes Godrich.

Havelok's ultimate triumph over the two realms is a direct result of the evil machinations of the two villains.

The scenes in Havelok are about the same length as those in the romances we have studied so far. Scenes of personal encounter outweigh other types two to one, while scenes of direct discourse, due to the prominence of monologue scenes, outnumber the purely narrative scenes six to one. The increased length of the romance results from the extensive use of monologue, and from longer transitions between scenes (thirteen out of thirty-seven are over ten lines).

The longer transitions consist mainly of summary narrative, though there are two transitional scenes (857 ff., 2838 ff.), and an extended authorial comment on the wickedness of Godard (422 ff.). The sections of summary narrative run from eighteen to eighty-five lines, covering such subjects as Havelok's journey with Grim and his family from Denmark to England, the famine which forces Havelok to seek employment, the impression Havelok makes in Lincoln, his wedding and flight to Grimsby, and the festivities celebrating the recovery of the Danish and English thrones. As in many other romances, summary narrative usually serves to condense a certain chain of events into a small unit, in order to subordinate those events to the major scenes. However, in Havelok, this is not always the case. For example, after

Havelok and Goldeboru have been married (twelve lines of summary narrative), the transition continues as follows:

Hwan he weren togydere in Godes lawe
 þat þe folc ful wel it sawe,
 He ne wisten hwat he mouthen,
 Ne he ne wisten wat hem douthen,
 þer to dwellen, or þenne to gonge.
 þer ne wolden he dwellen longe,
 For he wisten and ful wel sawe
 þat Godrich hem hatede, þe deuel him hawe!
 And yf he dwelleden þer outh,
 þat fel Havelok ful wel on þouth
 Men sholde don his leman shame,
 Or elles bringen in wicke blame,
 þat were him leuere to ben ded.
 Forþi he token anoþer red:
 þat þei sholden þenne fle
 Til Grim, and til hise sones þre;
 þer wenden he alþerbest to spede,
 Hem fortu cloþe and forto fede.
 þe lond he token under fote--
 Ne wisten he non oþer bote--
 And helden ay the rithe sti
 Til he komen to Grimesby.

(1181-1202)

Here we have not only the couple's flight, but also a detailed rationale, reported to pass through the mind of Havelok. This is indicative of a tendency in the longer romances (irrespective of their position in the chronological continuum from 1250 to 1550) to report thought as well as action. This is not yet characterization in the modern sense, but it provides a kind of motivation through formal deliberation, found here chiefly in the monologue scenes.

Monologue is used in Havelok primarily to depict the planning of treachery. The first monologue occurs in Episode I, lines 286-327. It provides the rationale behind Godrich's betraying the trust of Athelwold. He asks himself the

rhetorical question, whether or not Goldeboru should be queen and lady over him, controlling the entire country including him and his heirs. Then he thinks up reasons to support his negative answer. Goldeboru has become proud and spoiled, he believes, due to his own generosity, but she will learn that hope plays tricks on the foolish. Why should his own fair son not be the heir instead? In the rest of the scene, Godrich carries out his plan to usurp the throne by sending for Goldeboru and casting her into prison. Similarly, in Episode II, lines 509-22, Godard considers the danger of leaving Havelok alive, and how best to be rid of him. This second monologue is not spoken, but thought. So too the monologue in Episode IV, lines 1073-88, in which Godrich is inspired to fulfill his oath by marrying Goldeboru to the mighty kitchen knave, bringing disgrace on her and power to himself. In these monologues we have not so much characterization as amplification on the theme of treachery; that is, the treacherous action is amplified by a presentation of the motives behind it.

Another lengthy monologue, lines 790-810, is a sort of mirror image of the treacherous type, for it depicts Havelok's generosity and courage. In it, Havelok plans how he can help Grim and his family by going out to work instead of depending on them for support.

He thouthte, "Ich am nou no grom;
 Ich am wel waxen, and wel may eten
 More þan euere Grim may geten.
 Ich ete more, bi God on liue,
 þan Grim an hise children fiue!

It ne may nouth ben þus longe:
 Goddot! y wile with hem gange,
 For to leren sum god to gete;
 Swinken ich wolde for mi mete.
 It is no shame forto swinken;
 Þat man may wel eten and drinken
 Þat nouth ne haue, but-on swink long;
 To liggan at hom it is ful strong.
 God yelde him, þer i ne may,
 Þat haueth me fed to þis day!
 Gladlike i wile þe paniers bere;
 Ich woth, ne shal it me nouth dere,
 Þey þer be inne a birþene gret
 Al so heui als a neth.
 Shal ich neuere lengere dwelle;
 To-morwen shal ich forth pelle.
 (790-810)

In addition to explaining how a king's son ends up as a kitchen knave, these reflections characterize Havelok as generous, industrious, and modest. As David Staines has said, Havelok, unlike its analogues in Anglo-Norman, is "a portrait of the ideal king delineated from the point of view of the lower classes."²⁶ Henceforth, it comes as no surprise that Havelok is at one with the people he is eventually to govern. Like Athelwold and Birkabeyn, he will be a king who rules by love instead of fear.²⁷ In Episode V, when Havelok decides to set sail for Denmark, there is a monologue scene in which he goes to church and prays. In the prayer (1358-84), he enumerates the evil deeds of Godard, and asks for God's help to come safely to Denmark and avenge himself on his foe. By being reminded of Godard's evil deeds, we anticipate Havelok's victory and the punishment of Godard which follow as a matter of course, though not without a suspenseful denouement, in Episode VI.²⁸ Hence the monologues serve the double purpose of explaining motives and rousing

expectations about the narrative development. The extensive portrayal of thought is the result of rather sophisticated amplification which supports the narrative structure of the tale by causing the action to be reflected in the minds of the characters. In the following two romances, an opposite effect occurs as a result of abbreviation.

The Sowdon of Babylon, composed in the East Midlands between 1400-1450,²⁹ is written in four-stress lines riming abab, rather than in couplets. But since the rime scheme is simple, and the lines are of a uniform length, the effect of the narrative is indistinguishable from that of the romances in couplets. Like Havelok, the Sowdon of Babylon has seven episodes, although they lack the balance and focus of the episodes in Havelok. This seems to be the result of a condensation of the sources, probably the Destruction de Rome for the first half, and a lost version of Fierabras for the second.³⁰ However, this condensation was not executed by the author of the Sowdon, as its editor Hausknecht assumed. H. M. Smyser has shown that the Sowdon must be a translation of an intermediate redaction.³¹ Therefore, the effect of the reduction should be discussed not in terms of an individual contribution by the author of the Sowdon, but as a result of several stages in the transmission of the tale.

Although the Sowdon is more concerned than the romances discussed above with large-scale warfare, scenes of personal encounter outnumber battle scenes more than four to one.

The number of scenes of personal encounter may be accounted for in part by the concentration on a few main characters, rather than on the large campaign, especially in the Fierabras section. However, while the large majority of other scenes are under fifty lines, eight of the twelve battle scenes are longer, including one major scene of 250 lines. The brevity of most of the scenes and transitions is a result of the rapid narration and scarcity of detail. Amplification is almost entirely a matter of dialogue rather than description. Even the actions themselves receive cursory attention.

To illustrate this point, let us compare two scenes, a battle scene typical of the majority of scenes in the romance, and the tour de force of 250 lines. Towards the end of the romance (2915 ff.)³² there is a battle between King Charles (Charlemagne), Richard of Normandy, and ten knights against a Saracen giant who is guarding the entrance to the city of Mountribe. After a preliminary exchange of hostile inquiry and challenge between the giant Alagolofur and the knights, disguised as merchants, the battle proper begins. Confining the actual battle to Charles, Richard, and the giant, the author describes the weapons used by the giant and by Richard. However, there is no amplification of the actual combat. Only one action during the combat is particularized: Richard takes a brass bar from the gate and uses it to break the giant's legs. This fells the giant, who is then cast into the river. The following comment, "Chese he, whither he wolde swymme or gong!" (2934) seems to be original

to the English author, since it appears neither in the extant Fierabras edited by Kroeber and Servois, nor in the Egerton manuscript 3028. The battle continues with reinforcements until the Saracen forces are defeated (102 lines in all); the degree of specificity remains the same.

In the extant Fierabras, the same material takes up almost twice as many verses. Rather than limiting the description of battle to three combatants, the narrator includes five, none of whom is Charles; he arrives after, rather than before, the giant has been killed, and helps to storm the city. The narrator also gives more dialogue and more descriptive details than there are in the English version, such details as:

Mais ne li ont la teste ne le cors entamé,
Que vestu ot la pel d'un dur serpent cresté.³³

No mention of clothing appears in the description of Alagolofur in the Sowdon. Whatever description there is tends to be rather general; the giant is "harde" and "stronge" (2918), "hevy" and "longe" (2933). The condensed versions of the Fierabras material leave out many descriptive details, and at least half the dialogue, compressing the actions so as to have fewer characters to deal with (even though in this case we know beforehand that the others are on hand). Certain other battle scenes in the Sowdon employ the same synecdochic technique, by which one or two specific actions represent the entire battle. Others may mention a fair number of specific actions, but not go into detail about any one

of them. In the Sowdon, the mere enumeration of actions in a restricted period of time often is the detail.

There is one major exception. More or less in the center of the romance there is a 250 line battle scene. Leading up to this scene, there are three episodes, as follows:

- I. When the sowdon hears that a dromond laden with riches has been intercepted and plundered on its way from Babylon to his capital in Agremore, Spain, he vows revenge. He sails towards Rome with his son and daughter and 100,000 men.
- II A. The Pope, hearing that the pagans are destroying the country, holds council. They decide not to send for Charles, since they have not yet tried to defend themselves. The Romans gain the first victory, and several thereafter. Finally, however, the pagans kill the Roman leader, Duke Savariz, and the Pope's council decides to send for Charles. The Pope, attempting a sally with 2,000 men, is discomfited by the Sowdon's son, Ferumbras.
- (III.) This is the romance's single instance of interlacing: Scene I of Episode III shows Charles receiving the request for aid, and dispatching his nephew Guy of Burgundy to comply.
- II B. In the concluding three scenes of Episode II, the Saracens succeed in capturing and occupying the city of Rome.
- III. Episode III continues when Sir Guy approaches Rome. Having arrived too late to save it from capture, he is obliged to wait for Charles, who soon arrives with his douzepeers and 300,000 men. Charles and the sowdon each vow to destroy the other. After a day of bitter combat, the French hold sway. This is the end of the first part of the Sowdon.

Beginning with the prayer to Mars, springtime opening, and description of Charles' army, all apparently contributed by the English author, the second part continues to describe the war, but moves quickly to a more individualized, personal level. In Episode IV Ferumbras enters Charles' camp with only ten of his men, and offers to do battle alone with six of the douzepeers. When Charles orders Roland to undertake the combat, he refuses. Oliver, hearing of Roland's refusal, insists on taking up the challenge, although he has been severely wounded. He rides forth into the forest in pursuit of Ferumbras. This is the transition to the major battle scene.

The first forty lines of the scene narrate Oliver's challenge and Ferumbras' response. This preliminary section alone is little short of the average length of an entire battle scene elsewhere in the poem. What causes the greater length at this point is the amplification of the challenge motif. In the first place, Ferumbras, who is resting on the ground, does not wish to take up the challenge right away. Remaining where he is, he asks Oliver his name. Secondly, Oliver, rather than giving his real name, tells Ferumbras that he is "A yonge knighte late dobbet newe" (1136), which gives rise to an insulting rejoinder from Ferumbras. But Oliver insists that Ferumbras make good his boast, and so, after Oliver helps Ferumbras to arm, the battle proper begins.

The rest of the scene exhibits similar uses of ampli-

fication, for the narrative provides both more actions and more details about each action than it does in any other scene in the romance. The actions are as follows:

They mount their steeds.

They rush together, breaking both their lances.

They draw their swords and fight on horseback.

Oliver cuts two bottles of balm off Ferumbras' saddle and throws them in the river. Ferumbras tells him they were invaluable to a wounded man, and Oliver shall atone for their loss with his life.

Ferumbras kills Oliver's horse from under him.

Oliver tries to kill Ferumbras' horse, but Ferumbras rides off, demanding that Oliver yield and accept "Mahoude," in which case he will give Oliver his sister in marriage.

Oliver refuses, and the fight renews.

They stop to rest. Oliver admits who he is, and Ferumbras is delighted, since he now has the opportunity to avenge his uncle, slain by Oliver.

The fight continues the whole day.

Eventually, Oliver breaks his sword. Ferumbras refuses to have mercy on him, and insists that he surrender. When Oliver runs to get a sword he has seen fastened to Ferumbras' horse, Ferumbras fells him with a mighty blow. Oliver vows revenge and returns the blow with the newly obtained sword.

Conventional shift to spectators: Charles prays that Oliver may be victorious. An angel announces to Charles that his prayer has been heard.

When they resume fighting, Ferumbras breaks his sword on Oliver's helmet. Having obtained another sword, Ferumbras offers to share his kingdom with Oliver if he will surrender, and give up Christianity. Oliver refuses.

He strikes Ferumbras, cutting through his side so that his bowels are exposed.

Ferumbras yields, asking to be baptised. He also asks to be taken to Oliver's tent, pointing out that 10,000 Saracens are waiting for him.

They ride off.

The scene is built up around the following narrative pairs between the initial attack and the surrender:

False identity of Oliver / Ferumbras disdainful

Ferumbras slays Oliver's horse
Oliver fails to slay Ferumbras' horse

True identity of Oliver / Ferumbras delighted

Broken sword (Oliver) / Recovery
Ferumbras fells Oliver
Demand of Ferumbras that Oliver yield / Refusal

Broken sword (Ferumbras) / Recovery
Demand of Ferumbras that Oliver yield / Refusal
Oliver fells Ferumbras

If we contrast this pattern with the one in the battle scene between Charles, Richard, and the giant, we draw the obvious conclusion that the narrative complexity increases with the number of different themes which precede and cause the ultimate outcome of the battle. This scene also differs from other battle scenes in the Sowdon in the amount of dialogue and the degree of narrative specificity, clearly illustrated by the section about the bottles of balm--the

action itself and Ferumbras' ten line comment on it--and the spectator section, with its twelve-line prayer and angelic response.

However, despite the comparative richness of detail of this section, the same section in Fierabras runs to almost 1200 lines; so, assuming that the redactor's source was similar in length, he reduced the original scene to less than a quarter of its original size. The reason for the greater length and detail of this scene lies rather in its narrative function within the story as a whole. In Fierabras it is the first major scene, and it sets off the subsequent actions, which revolve around the sowdon's attempts to rescue Ferumbras in exchange for sparing the lives of Oliver, Roland, and Guy. In the Sowdon, where the Fierabras section follows the Destruction de Rome material, this scene is the turning point, for after Ferumbras has been converted to Christianity, the sowdon's forces are weakened, and his nerve is shaken. Furthermore, since Ferumbras is in the hands of Charles, the sowdon's daughter Floripas convinces the sowdon to spare Oliver, Roland and Guy, whom he has imprisoned, in the hope of recovering Ferumbras. This enables the four of them to plot the overthrow of the sowdon. Thus Oliver's defeat of Ferumbras is the focal point of the narrative line, and as such merits special treatment.

Aside from this major scene, however, most of the scenes are short and lacking in detail. This makes for rapid narrative, but not for any vivid realization of the actors

or the setting. To replace detail, the narrative often uses repetition, as for instance in the recurring motif of the sowdon's abandoning his gods in fury whenever he suffers defeat. And yet the narrative is far from weak in specifics. The difference between the narrative here and in other romances is that it usually confines itself to one or two specific details in each short scene, rather than expanding certain scenes and subordinating others. For example, one day Floripas is walking in her garden, when she hears the imprisoned Roland and Oliver (Guy is captured later on) groaning for hunger. Wondering how she can help them, she asks her governess how they might feed the prisoners. The governess, shocked at her insubordination, reminds Floripas that her father has forbidden everyone to send them any meat or drink. So far, there is nothing distinctive about this little scene. It continues, however,

Floripe by-thought hir on a gyle
 And cleped Maragounde anoon right,
 To the wyndowe to come a while
 And se ther a wonder syght:
 "Loke oute" she saide "and see a ferr'
 The Porpais play as thay were wode."
 Maragounde lokede oute, Floripas come ner'
 And shofed hire oute in to the flode.
 "Go there" she saide "the devel the spede!
 My counsail shaltowe never biwry.
 Who so wole not helpe a man at nede,
 On evel deth mote he dye!"

(1571-82)

The one detail which sets this scene apart from others of a similar type is the ruse about the porpoises. It is enough to maintain audience participation by creating some variety

and suspense. But certainly close narrative and pictorial detail are deemphasized in favor of minimal scenic development of a strong plot line.

Like the Sowdon of Babylon, Ywain and Gawain is a redaction of the original, Crétien's Le chevalier au lion or Yvain, although apparently in this case the condensation was done by the English author himself. As we saw in Chapter I, much of the reduction is due to his condensing or eliminating descriptions, dialogue and monologue, explanations of motive, and theoretical discussions of battle decorum, love, and the nature of women. In short, the narrative pace is stepped up while the courtly intellectualism of Crétien is diminished. Therefore, in spite of the relatively detailed, complex scenes (again two-thirds personal encounter) and lengthy summary narrative, the skill of the English author moves in the direction of abbreviation rather than amplification. What results is an excellent example of English romance narrative, more vivid than the Sowdon, faster moving than Yvain.

The plot structure of Yvain is retained, making this the first English romance we have discussed so far which makes consistent use of interlacing. First, the tale begins in medias res, necessitating a flashback to the original episode in which Colgrevice fails in the adventure of the fountain. This entire episode is placed within a monologue. Later, two more complete episodes take place within other episodes. The first is Ywain's encounter with the giant

Harpyns of Mountayne between the time when he promises to defend Lunette, and the following day when he actually does battle with her accusers. The two episodes are connected by the element of time; suspense is built on the possibility that the fight with the giant may delay Ywain until it is too late to save Lunette. Similarly, Ywain pauses for an adventure at the Castle of Heavy Sorrows between the time he has agreed to defend a disinherited younger sister, and the time when he fights unknowingly against Gawain on her behalf. Aside from temporal interdependence, both of the contained episodes are completely independent of the containing episodes, in location and dramatis personae. The interlacing here is not so complex as to retrace itself in time, except in the initial flashback. The interrupting episodes delay the actions of Ywain regarding one situation and set of characters, by posing a second problem to be solved between his promise to take up the first challenge, and his execution of that promise. The possibility arises from the fact that in both cases there is a lapse of time between his promise and the appropriate time for fulfillment, creating a temporal if not a casual connection. Interlacing is uncommon among the English romances of whatever length, but it is also used much more modestly in the French verse romances than it is in the prose romances, which are not limited by constraints of verse form.

Although the English author has retained the plot structure of Crétien, he has changed the tenor of the narra-

tive by means of abbreviation. As an illustration of his technique, let us look at the beginning of Episode II, which concerns Ywain's first sojourn at the castle of Laudine. To give a specific idea of the condensation, here is the transition to Episode II in both texts:

S'il s'an foï, n'a mie tort,
 qu'il se santi navrez a mort'
 car riens ne li valut desfansse.
 Si tost s'an fuit, com il s'apansse,
 vers son chastel toz esleissiez,
 et li ponz li fu abeissiez
 et la porte ouverte a bandon;
 et mes sire Yvains de randon
 quan qu'il puet après esperone.
 Si con girfauz grue randone,
 qui de loing muet et tant l'aproche
 qu'il la cuide panre et n'i toche,
 ensi cil fuit, et cil le chace
 si pres qu'a po qu'il ne l'anbrace,
 et si ne le par puet ataindre,
 et s'est si pres que il l'ot plaindre
 de la destrece que il sant;
 mez toz jorz a foïr entant,
 et cil de chacier s'esvertue,
 qu'il crient sa poinne avoir perdue
 se mort ou viv ne le retient,
 que des ranpones li sovient
 que mes sire Kex li ot dites.
 N'est pas de la promesse quites
 que son cosin avoit promise,
 ne creüz n'iert an nule guise
 s'anseignes veraies n'an porte.
 A esperon jusqu'a la porte
 de son chastel l'en a mené;
 si sont anz enbedui antré;
 home ne fame n'i troverent
 es rues par ou il antrerent,
 si vindrent anbedui d'eslés
 par mi la porte del palés.³⁴

þe knyght wist he was nere ded;
 To fle þan was his best rede,
 And fast he fled with al hys mayne,
 And fast folowd Syr Wwayne.
 Bot he ne might him overtake,
 þarfore grete murning gan he make;

He folowed him ful stowtlyk
 And walð have tane him ded or quik;
 He folowd him to þe cete,
 Na man lyfand met he.
 When þai come to þe kastel-3ate,
 In he folowd fast þareate.³⁵

The first four lines in the Ywain and Gawain section correspond to 873-79 in Yvain. The English author eliminates any mention of the castle to which the knight is fleeing, assuming perhaps that his direction is obvious. Lines 664-65 of Ywain and Gawain correspond to 880-89 in Yvain. It is significant that the metaphor "Si con girfauz . . ." is gone, replaced by the simple statement "But he ne myghte him overtake" (665). In lines 666-68, the English author forgoes the explanation of Ywain's motive in wishing to accomplish his mission: to fulfill his promise to his cousin and defy Kay's (Kex') insult. He replaces these explanations with repetition: the four instances of "folowd" create verbal rather than nominal intensity. The abbreviated English version is almost pure narrative statement, without the mental setting provided by Cr t ien, hence more vigorous and less sophisticated.

At the palace gate, more description and ornament are removed, with much the same effect. From there the texts remain roughly parallel until the point where the search begins throughout the castle for the man who slew its lord. The English author reports the search but leaves out twenty-one lines of direct discourse in which the searchers ask, "Ce que puet estre?" (1111), and so on. Later, another

lengthy speech is omitted, in which the lady cries that the bleeding wounds of her late husband prove that the murderer is still about. She apostrophizes:

Ha! fantosme, coarde chose,
 por qu'ies vers moi acoardie,
 quant vers mon seignor fus hardie?
 Que ne t'ai ore an ma baillie?
 Ta puissance fust ja faillie!
 Por coi ne te puis or tenir?
 (1226-31)

After Ywain has seen the lady and fallen in love with her, the English author eliminates Crétien's discourse on the arbitrary nature of love, and on the appropriateness of this particular match. He reduces a long monologue of the hero on the subject of his love to ten lines. In general, the narrator does away with those devices that point more clearly to a highly self-conscious manipulation of the narrator's own role, as manifested in the use of rhetorical figures and techniques of debate. Although in fact Crétien uses these devices to draw attention to the course of the narrative,³⁶ the English author prefers a more popular variety of narration in which the story takes precedence over the author's "baring of the device."

Richard Coer de Lyon is a combination of historical and romance materials. The earlier manuscripts are more sober, with minute details of equipment, siege operations, and geography, while in the extended version written in the Southeast Midlands less than two hundred years after Richard's death, King Richard has become a fictionalized romance hero.³⁷

However, it is not a deliberate fictionalization in the modern sense. The story is taken from the chronicle tradition,³⁸ where Richard is just one character among many, and put into a romance where he is the central figure. The plot is structured around his exploits, particularly his contribution to the Third Crusade. The importance of his role in the Crusade shapes the narrative. The order of events has been altered to make his role central to the romance. For example, his imprisonment in Austria ("Almayne") is placed before, rather than after, his campaign in the Holy Land, in order to avoid the anti-climax of a hero disgraced after his victory in the Third Crusade. Missing from the romance are the death of Archbishop Baldwin before Akkon, the murder of Conrad of Montferrat, and the election of Henry of Champagne as King of Jerusalem, for the narrative focuses on Richard's exploits, while other events are either subordinated or eliminated altogether.

The amplification of the material concerning Richard into dramatic scenes with direct discourse does not deviate as a technique from medieval historicity, since historians were supposed to interpret their material. But as Bradford Broughton points out in his book The Legends of King Richard I, Coeur de Lion, legendary elements found their way into the traditional material as a means of illustrating Richard's demonic, super-human character. Later chronicles discredit many episodes by recognizing them as stock romance devices.³⁹ Some of these stock romance elements are Richard's demon

mother, the tournament at Salisbury in which Richard fights successively in black, red, and white armor, the love story, pluck-buffet, and onomastic fight with the lion, Richard's possession of Excalibur, his cannibalism, the magic horse, and the angelic messengers. Despite the angels, Richard's role as champion of the Faith is underplayed; he is portrayed rather as the son of a demon, and referred to on eight separate occasions as "a deuyl." Furthermore, he himself acts conscious to support this notion, for example when he enters the port of Acre with his ship aflame in Greek fire, or when he has the heads of Saracen princes served up at a banquet for messengers from the Saladin. Thus it seems that the legendary elements gradually attached themselves to the story of Richard to glorify an immensely popular English military hero of almost superhuman bodily, if not moral, strength.

The first three episodes of the romance relate:

- I. Richard's supernatural origins
- II. the tournament at Salisbury
- III. Richard's imprisonment in "Almayne"
on his return from a reconnaissance
mission in the Holy Land.

Episode III offers a love story, and examples of Richard's phenomenal strength, courage, and craftiness. The balance of the romance⁴⁰ concerns the Third Crusade. It falls into two major sections, the events of Richard's journey to the Holy Land, and his campaign against the Saladin. The journey includes four episodes:

- IV. Richard's revenge on Modard in Almayne
- V. his battle against Tancer of Sicily and Philip of France, in Sicily
- VI. his struggle against Isaak of Cypress
- VII. his battle with an enemy dromond at sea.

The final section about the engagements in the Holy Land is organized on the whole into episodes about the beseiged cities, although Episodes XV and XVI are exceptions:

- VIII. Acre
- IX. Taburette
- X. Sudan Terry
- XI. The Castle Orglyoue
- XII. Ebedy
- XIII. Cayphas (Haifa)
- XIV. Nynyue (Nineveh)
- XV. the magic horse
- XVI. the march towards Jerusalem
- XVII. Jaffa

Again in this romance, scenes of personal encounter outnumber other types of scenes more than two to one. In this and other romances dealing with large scale warfare, the percentage of battle scenes is greater than in those romances about the adventures of an errant knight, and the like. In Richard the battle scenes are varied by shifting from personal combat to major sieges and battlefield encounters, and by describing the use of various ruses and mechanical devices to

destroy the enemy. Seven of the twenty-six battle scenes are over 100 lines long, combining individual combat and larger confrontations in a reasonably complex pattern. The other battle scenes average slightly longer than the scenes of personal encounter, but not a great deal longer, as is the case in Arthour and Merlin. Despite the length of this romance, however, the scenes are not significantly longer than those typical of the shorter romances in couplets. They range from ten to two hundred lines, with the typical scene thirty-five lines or less. Nor is there a more complex aggregation of scenes within each episode, the average number being only six to an episode. There are simply more episodes than there are in the romances we have encountered so far. This piling up of small scenes and episodes may be contrasted with the alliterative romances, where greater overall length tends to produce greater complexity of detail within each scene. Here the individual scene is apt to contain a single action, such as Richard's defeat of the lion, his destruction of the chain across the harbor at Acre, his receiving warning from an angel, etc., with just enough detail to place the action in a setting and adorn it with a small amount of dialogue. Similarly, the transitions are only slightly more extensive than those in shorter romances. They range from one to 105 lines, most between five and thirty lines. These transitions are usually composed of summary narrative, although there is a modest use of headpieces and authorial comment as well. In conclusion, the greater length of this

romance may be accounted for primarily by the fact that the story covers more narrative ground than is the case in the shorter romances, rather than covering a similar amount with greater complexity.

An exception to this tendency to pile up brief scenes in brief episodes is Arthour and Merlin. This work, written in the dialect of Kent during the second half of the thirteenth century,⁴¹ is a fragment of the received material concerning Merlin and the early career of Arthur. It ends after the betrothal of Arthur and Guenevere, the defeat of Rion, and the triumphant entry of Arthur into the city of Carohaise. According to Kölbing, the romance up to the coronation is taken from a pre-Robertian expansion of the chronicles, while the remainder is taken from the Vulgate sequel.⁴² This genesis influences the structure of the romance.

Before the Suite section, the summary narrative takes up almost forty percent of the total number of lines, and most of the scenes are very short. Although the average length of the scenes is thirty lines, a third of them are under twenty lines in length. The unusual preponderance of summary narrative follows the tendency of the chronicles and early expansions to concentrate on the larger story line, and to subordinate amplification, restricting it to the occasional interpretive scene. The minimal amplification of the first 3600 lines contrasts sharply with the development of certain scenes in the Suite section of the romance.

The author of Arthour and Merlin has simplified the Vulgate material by undoing the interlacing and eliminating material that does not pertain directly to the main story line. He has organized the second part of the romance by centering each new episode around a certain hero who plays a major role in the narrative at that time--Arthur, Galathin, Cradelman, Saigremor, Duke Estas, Ywain, Gawain--whereas the narrative concerning these characters is interlaced in the French. This second part is very different from the first. The scenes of personal encounter are more fully developed than they are in the first section, and they are more numerous than the battle scenes (twenty-five scenes of personal encounter to fifteen battle scenes). But the fifteen battle scenes are much longer than the scenes of personal encounter. While the latter range from thirteen to 186 lines, the battle scenes range from thirty-two to nine hundred lines. Actually, the final battle, of nine hundred lines, is two battles connected by a brief council meeting. However, after the conclusion of the meeting, the same forces resume battle on the same day and on the same battle field, so that the total effect adds up to nine hundred lines. The thirty-five line council meeting acts as a temporary shift in narrative pace for the sake of variety, before the battle continues. The second part of the battle features encounters between the two major figures, Arthur and Rion, until at last Rion is defeated and he flees. The emphasis on battle scenes--not in number but in length--is typical of works which concentrate on large scale wars.

Arthour and Merlin belongs to this category because of its concern with the wars of Leodegan and Arthur against Rion and the Saracens. However, the practice of including very lengthy battle scenes is more pronounced in Arthour and Merlin than it is in the Sowdon or Richard. Such scenes take longer to narrate because they cover the events of a substantial period of time--half a day or a day--and they cover a large area of ground, with no specific shifts in space or time other than the shift from one knight to another on the same battlefield. The author of Arthour and Merlin occasionally amplifies the narrative of a battle scene with background information about a certain knight, as in lines 8883-8926, where we learn of Nacien, his relationship with Perceval and Pelles, who his parents and cousins are, and what he will do during the quest. Battle scenes are also extended by means of rhetorical flourishes, especially head-pieces and similes. For example:

Also þicke þe aruwe schoten
 In sonnebem so doþ þe moten
 Guelokes also þicke flowe
 So gnattes ichil avowe
 Þer was so michil dust riseing
 Þat sen þer nas sonne schineing.⁴³

Except for the rhetorical ornaments and background information, however, the battle scenes are almost pure narrative, interspersed with a small amount of dialogue. The length of the narrative increases with the number of knights whose individual deeds the author follows, and the degree of detail he goes into about each one. Naturally the "details" are variations

on standard patterns for describing the slaughter of an enemy. Finally, in scenes describing battles between large forces, the narrative is a mixture of "close-ups" of encounters between individual knights, and more generalized (summarized) accounts of the actions of the soldiers. The inclusion of summary narrative within a scene is confined almost exclusively to this type of panoramic battle scene. It helps to account for the greater length of these scenes, even though it is in itself an abbreviating technique. Arthour and Merlin is unusual among the romances in couplets because of the number and length of these scenes, and the relative paucity of the scenes of personal encounter. However, the overall impression is just as episodic as that of romances dealing with the adventures of individual knights. Each campaign is presented as an end in itself rather than as part of a master plan, as in the case of the alliterative Morte Arthure.

Unlike Arthour and Merlin, Generides, written in the Midlands in the late fourteenth century,⁴⁴ amplifies the scenes of personal encounter consistently, as well as amplifying the battle scenes and transitions. This is partly due to the subject matter, for the story focuses on the fortunes of three pairs of lovers rather than on mass warfare. It seems to be the rule in romances which concern the lives of individual knights that the scenes of personal encounter and direct discourse should greatly outnumber all other types of scenes. This is certainly true in Generides.

In the center of the romance, Generides and his father Aufreyus are engaged in a war which takes up one episode of about 2800 lines (3351-6148), consisting primarily of battle scenes. These battle scenes closely resemble the lengthy scenes in the Sowdon, Richard, and Arthour and Merlin which depict warfare on a large scale. The episode begins with a long catalogue of the kings and their various troops, then continues with a series of ten battle scenes and eleven shorter scenes of personal encounter. The rest of the romance, roughly 7300 lines, consists almost purely of scenes of personal encounter, typically fifty to sixty lines long. The length results from an increased amount of dialogue and description in comparison to the Sowdon, Richard, and Arthour and Merlin. Structurally, the dialogue scenes are at one with those in other verse romances that stress the personal lives and fates of a small number of characters. These romances tend uniformly toward longer scenes of personal encounter, and more of them; that is, discourse is essential as a means of moving the plot forward. Scenes of personal encounter equaling those in Generides both in length and specificity are also to be found in the shortest romances we have discussed so far, although these are usually confined to crucial moments, and are supported by numerous other, briefer dialogue scenes. Proportionately, the relationship between personal encounter, battle, and summarized transitions remains stable in these romances.

The structural distinction between romances such as

Generides and Sir Degare, which stress the adventures of individual knights, on the one hand, and romances such as Richard and Arthour and Merlin, which stress warfare, on the other, corresponds nicely to Kathryn Hume's distinction between what she calls Type A and Type B romances. Hume defines Type A as those romances that are based on folktales. These works are so completely caught up with the hero and his concerns, that the setting and affiliations of the hero are arbitrary and could be shifted without significantly affecting the story.⁴⁵ "Type B romances," Hume continues, "display their heroes against a significant background, usually a specific swatch of history or pseudo-history. In most instances, these romances could not be transposed to other countries, centuries, or cultures without causing the hero to cease being himself."⁴⁶ Type B romances emphasize military campaigning, and depict the opposing sides in a slightly more complex or realistic manner than the clear-cut dichotomy of good and evil characteristic of Type A romances. However, although this is an important distinction, it is also important to bear in mind that these two types of romance share certain significant structural properties that place them together as distinct members of a single class.

The most characteristic blocks of narrative in both types of romance are the scenes. In the English romances in couplets, the scenes are constructed almost entirely with two components, dialogue and pure narration, since description, rhetorical ornamentation, and authorial comment

are generally at a minimum. We have seen that dialogue scenes outnumber purely narrative scenes by a substantial percentage, as much as seven to one in romances about a single pair of lovers, while even the romances about mass warfare contain two scenes of personal encounter (the great majority of which are dominated by dialogue) for every one of battle or other narrative. Dialogue scenes may include a fair amount of narrative, which often describes the characters' reactions to what is being said, or they may be pure blocks of dialogue with no more narration than "he said" and "she replied." The importance of dialogue is related to the oral presentation of the romances, making romance to a certain extent a dramatic mode, despite the much discussed emphasis on narrative. It is for this reason that a major portion of crucial discoveries in the romances occur within the dialogue rather than in the narrative itself.

Over half the scenes in which narrative predominates are battle scenes. These are usually highly conventional, and utilize a limited number of motifs. Although in some romances the battle scenes are considerably longer than the scenes of personal encounter, if fewer in number, they are more limited in the variety of motifs that they use. Battle scenes portray only one possible situation: enemies do battle, and they wound and kill, or else they are wounded or killed. The combatants may be dragons or giants, squires or emperors, and they may use a variety of weapons which penetrate or sever various limbs, but they are all engaged

in the same activity, one that is more confined in its ramifications and variations, though not in its dramatic effect, than discourse. Other narrative scenes describe activities not dealt with in scenes of personal encounter or battle, for instance the working out of plots against individuals. But these are in the minority, for if discourse is the most common activity in the romances, battle is often the most praiseworthy, and it receives in consequence a central focus by its very absence from all but climactic moments.

The shape of the episodes composed of these scenes is determined by a pattern of stasis-kinesis-closure. The closure is the resolution of the series of actions set forth at the beginning of a narrative situation. It is not necessarily a final resolution of the situation, but the episode cannot close until the series of actions projected at the beginning of the episode develops some kind of result. For example, if one character is plotting against another, the episode is incomplete until the plot produces a recognizable effect, even if this effect--say, imprisonment--is only temporary. Indeed, such a resolution often produces a new set of actions and thus a new episode. But although there must be a recognizable movement from cause to effect within each episode, the episodes are not always linked to each other by strong causal necessity. This lack of organic, structural exigency produces the self contained episodes, and the episodic quality characteristic of romance.

The romance as a whole is built on the same principle as the episode. The scenes are individual moments which are blocked together to form a unit of narrative. These units in turn are blocked to create the narrative pattern predicated by the major theme(s) in the romance. Some major themes of the romances in this chapter are the search for unknown parents, betrayal-exile-return, hostile challenge-territorial conquest. Even in the romances exhibiting the most obvious beads-on-a-chain structure, the overall themes almost inevitably contain certain signals which indicate the approach of the climax and final resolution of the narrative. The structure of the episodes does not change, except perhaps in the concluding episode. Final episodes often lack the element of suspense, and are consequently foreshortened, if not reduced to summary narrative. But when the searcher comes in contact with his parent, when the exile returns, when the hostile challenger suffers defeat, it is clear to the audience, without the slightest change in the causal pattern of the episode, that the disharmony posed by the narrative situation is about to resolve into harmony.

Sophistication in the realization of these basic story patterns is rarely a question of challenging the pattern itself. Rather, it involves manipulation of the story line by blocking episodes so that the various narrative threads associated with the several characters in the story receive balanced attention. This skill does not require consciousness of personal authorship, but it does require a sense

that narrative is an art, and that the role of the writer is not just to transmit the received material, but also to shape it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER II

¹Mortimer, J. Donovan, "Sir Degare," in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs, Fascicule I, (New Haven, Conn., 1967), p. 140.

²Sir Degare, in Middle English Metrical Romances, ed. Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale (New York, 1930, rpt. 1964), p. 289, lines 35-37. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

³G. V. Smithers, "Story Patterns in Some Breton Lays," MAe 22, 1 (1963), p. 79.

⁴I disagree with Kathryn Hume's statement in "Amis and Amiloun and the Aesthetics of the Middle English Romance," SP 70, 1 (1973), that Sir Degare is badly constructed because "a rapist escapes scott-free" (p. 27). She herself points out in her article, "Why Chaucer Calls the Franklin's Tale a Breton Lai," PQ 51, 2 (1972), that the Breton lays are typically a-Christian (p. 366).

⁵See Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago, 1968). She defines closure as "a modification of structure that makes stasis, or the absence of further continuation, the most probably succeeding event." On the other hand, she says of temporally organized works of art, "The writer wishes to maintain our interest in his play, novel, or poem continuously throughout the duration of its performance, and he does this by sustaining our continuous expectation of further development: that is, by providing constant sources of instability" (pp. 34-35).

⁶Albert C. Baugh, "Improvisation in the Middle English Romance," PAPS 103, 3 (1959), pp. 426-7.

⁷See Smithers, pp. 81-82.

⁸Howard R. Patch, The Other World, According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 27. Patch refers to E. Hull on this subject, Folklore 18 (1907), p. 158.

⁹Laura Hibbard Loomis, Mediaeval Romances in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances (New York, 1924), pp. 263-64.

¹⁰The Squire of Lowe Degree, in French and Hale (see note 2 above), p. 724, lines 99-101. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹¹George Kane, Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romance, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman (London, 1951), pp. 94-95.

¹²Donovan, "Floris and Blauncheflur," p. 145.

¹³L. H. Loomis, p. 190. Referring to a study by J. Reinhold, Loomis remarks that the theory that the tale itself is Arabic appears to be invalid, since no Arabic tale is of the same structural type. (See J. Reinhold, Floire et Blancheflor, Etude de Littérature Comparee, Diss., Paris, 1906).

¹⁴Flori3 and Blauncheflur, in King Horn, Flori3 and Blauncheflur, The Assumption of Our Lady, ed. J. Rawson Lumby (London, 1866), reedited by George H. McKnight, EETSos 14 (London, 1901), p. 72, lines 80-81. Subsequent references will be to the Trentham MS in this edition, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁵See George H. McKnight, ed., King Horn, etc. p. xxxix.

¹⁶Lillian H. Hornstein, "Eger and Grime," in Severs (see note 1 above), p. 151.

¹⁷Eger and Grime, in French and Hale (see note 2 above), p. 678. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹⁸The forbidden country lies across a river, while the lovely lady inherits the tradition of Morgan la Fee in her beauty and healing powers. For further discussion, see Mabel Van Duzee, A Medieval Romance of Friendship: Eger and Grime (New York, 1963), p. 53; L. H. Loomis, p. 314.

¹⁹Charles W. Dunn, "King Horn," in Severs (see note 1 above), p. 18.

²⁰King Horn, in King Horn, Flori3 and Blauncheflur, The Assumption of Our Lady, ed. J. Rawson Lumby (London, 1866), reedited by George H. McKnight, EETSos 14 (London, 1901), p. 5, lines 91-94. Subsequent references will be to the Cambr. Univ. MS Gg 4.27.2, unless otherwise noted.

²¹See lines 299 ff., 731, 771-72, 1057, 1449, 1561.

²²L. H. Loomis, p. 86.

²³Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London, 1968), p. 49.

²⁴Angus McIntosh, "The Language of the Extant Versions of Havelok the Dane," MAe 45, 1-2 (1976), p. 36. On the date, see George B. Jack, "The Date of Havelok," Anglia 95, 1/2 (1977), 20-33.

²⁵Havelok the Dane, in French and Hale (see note 2 above), pp. 118-119, lines 199-200, 1080-81. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

²⁶David Staines, "Havelok the Dane: A Thirteenth Century Handbook for Princes," Speculum 51, 4 (1976), p. 602.

²⁷Judith Weiss, "Structure and Characterization in Havelok the Dane," Speculum 44, 2 (1969), p. 249.

²⁸For a detailed analysis of this episode and its relation to the Anglo-Norman analogues, see Maldwyn Mills, "Havelok's Return," MAe 45, 1-2 (1976), 20-35.

²⁹H. M. Smyser, "The Sowdon of Babylon" in Severs (see note 1 above), p. 82.

³⁰Apparently not the extant Fierabras edited by Kroeber and Servois. See Emil Hausknecht, ed., The Romance of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras His Son Who Conquered Rome, EETSes 38 (London, 1881, reprinted 1969), p. xxxiii.

³¹H. M. Smyser, "A New Manuscript of the Destruction de Rome and Fierabras," Harvard Studies and Notes on Philology and Literature 14 (1932), 339-49. Smyser explains that the Sowdon and the Egerton MS 3028 combine the stories of the Destruction and Fierabras as they are combined nowhere else, and share a large number of parallel lines and structural confusions. But the Sowdon is not a translation of the Egerton MS. for it agrees with the Hanover Destruction and Fierabras in a number of particulars in which the Egerton MS differs. Thus the close parallelism between the Egerton MS and the Sowdon can be explained only by a common original.

³²Emil Hausknecht, ed., The Romance of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras His Son Who Conquered Rome, EETSes 38 (London, 1881, reprinted 1969), pp. 83-86, lines 2915 ff. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

³³Fierabras: chanson de geste, ed. by A. Kroeber and G. Servois (Paris, 1860), lines 4831-32.

³⁴Crétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain), ed. by Mario Roques (Paris, 1960), lines 873-906.

³⁵Ywain and Gawain, ed. Albert B. Friedman and Norman T. Harrington, EETSos 254 (London, 1963), pp. 18-19, lines 661-72. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

³⁶Helaine Newstead, "Narrative Techniques in Crétien's Yvain," RPh 30, 3 (1977), p. 435.

³⁷Lillian H. Hornstein, "Richard Coer de Lyon" in Severs (see note 1 above) pp. 158-60.

³⁸See Karl Brunner, ed., Der mittelenglische Versroman über Richard Lowenherz, Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie 42 (Vienna-Leipzig, 1913), introduction, pp. 49-50.

³⁹Bradford Broughton, The Legends of King Richard I, Coeur de Lion: A Study of Sources and Variations to the Year 1600 (The Hague, 1966), p. 45.

⁴⁰Brunner uses the MS Caius Cambridge 175, and gives variants from all MSS and from the edition of W. de Worde.

⁴¹Helaine Newstead, "Arthour and Merlin," in Severs (see note 1 above), p. 47.

⁴²Eugen Kölbing, ed., Arthour and Merlin, Altenglische Bibliothek, Bd. 4 (Leipzig, 1890), pp. ~~xxii~~-iii, c 1.

⁴³Of Arthour and Merlin, ed. O. D. Macrae-Gibson, EETSos 268 (London, 1973), vol. 1, p. 351, lines 9159-65.

⁴⁴Lillian H. Hornstein, "Generides," in Severs (see note 1 above), p. 148.

⁴⁵Kathryn Hume, "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance," PQ 53, 2 (1974), pp. 161-62.

⁴⁶Hume, p. 163.

CHAPTER III

Romances in Tail-Rime Stanzas

The Influence of Pious Themes

The romances in couplets and in tail-rime stanzas resemble each other in verse form more than either resembles the alliterative romances. The couplet and stanza forms share a comparable length of line and tendency toward syllabic regularity. Also the riming constraints are similar, even though the rime scheme itself differs, causing a similar type of formula to prevail. However, since the stanza form compels the narrator to deliver information in quite regular increments, the narrative takes on a staccato quality affecting the flow of pictures as they appear in the imagination of the listener. This staccato effect is intensified by the use of tail-lines. The narrative moments are carefully measured out, in the mediocre as well as the brilliant tail-rime romances, so that the narrative looks in on itself, rather than only progressing forward, as is usually the case in romances in couplets. One might compare the effect to that of a series of slides as opposed to that of film. However, it is the syntax of the narration, rather than the organization of the scenes and episodes, which differs from the narrative structure of the romances in couplets.

In many cases the tail-line is the only point of divergence from the couplet form, for without it, the tail-rime stanzas riming aabccbddbeeb would be pure couplets, and as such would not require six to sixteen line units to set off the recurring monorime. But the tail line has a marked effect on the prosodic and narrative flow. It moves away from the prosaic tendency of the verse in couplets by placing greater emphasis on the rime scheme and meter. In addition, the couplet (triplet) and tail-line generally constitute a syntactic unit, while the syntax of the romances in couplets is not restricted or controlled by the rime scheme. It is the restriction on syntax and the tail-line's missing foot more than special subject matter or poetic use of the tail-line, as Derek Pearsall suggests, that create the sense of alternating movement and rest in each stanza. Tail-lines carry narrative and dialogic material as often as they do a "descriptive arabesque, emotive comment, exclamation or conventional formula"¹ while fulfilling their musical function. It is the decisive pause after each of these units of meaning, signaled by the three stress line, that causes the sense of rest or completion mentioned by Pearsall. Such regularity, along with an unimaginative use of romance properties, can create the kind of doggerel which Chaucer parodies in Sir Thopas, when that regularity overwhelms the poet's expressive powers. As a vehicle for narrative, the tail-rime stanza has elicited such diverse critical evaluations as Kane's "a measure uniquely unsuited for narrative use;

its unrobust and mincing pace constantly breaks the flow of the narrative,"² and Trounce's "just right for presenting a series of well-moulded narrative units."³ The relative complexity of the rime scheme and the regularity of syntactical units seem to make the tail-rime romances more easily prey to meaningless rime tags, while the three stress tail-line can draw the entire rhythmic pattern into an oppressive sing-song. But in the hands of a skilled narrator the potential for jerkiness becomes well-balanced and controlled narrative progression.

In 1932-3 Trounce argued that the English tail-rime romances constituted a distinct literary group or school, characterized by popular and religious subject matter and outlook, and a lively tone.⁴ However, the extant tail-rime romances are not as uniform as this theory suggests. Although the subject matter and outlook do seem largely popular, these romances are by no means generally religious. What is interesting about the tail-rime romances in this respect is that the pious themes contained in some of them alter the narrative to an extent that they differ from the majority of secular romances not only in content, but also in form. First, we should look at some secular romances in stanzas, for the sake of comparison.

As the first example of a romance in tail-rime stanzas, let us consider the brief Syr Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle. Composed in north England around 1400, it is preserved in a unique manuscript, MS Porkington 10.⁵

Another version, in couplets, appearing in the seventeenth century Percy Folio Manuscript (B. M. Addit. MS. 27 879), contains the beheading scene absent in the stanzaic Carle. Both versions seem to be derivatives of a lost tail-rime poem.⁶ Although the stanzaic Carle consists chiefly of twelve line stanzas riming aabccbddbeeb, there are stanzas of six, nine, fifteen, and eighteen lines. Often these stanzas diverge from the usual pattern in order to be a self-contained narrative unit, where twelve lines would have been too much or too little, for the stanzas are almost all independent narrative blocks.

The first stanza introduces Gawain without naming him.

Lystonnyth, lordyngus, a lyttyll stonde
Of on þat was sekor and sounde
And dou3gty in his dede.⁷

The adjectival phrases describing his prowess, courage, and courtesy are similar to those used under the same circumstances in the romances in couplets. The narrator places Gawain's name in the initial line of stanza 2, giving it the prominence it requires after the interest built up in stanza one. The rest of the stanza moves gradually from description towards narrative. We learn that Gawain won much honor in Britain, occasioning a three-line explanation of where Britain is. Finally the narrator narrows the description down to "Cardyfe," where the king is sojourning with "many a gentyll kny3te" (21). These knights wish to go hunting, as great lords are used to do. In this way the stage is set for the scene which opens in stanza 3.

In the third stanza King Arthur calls for Bishop Baldwin to say Mass, so that they may all set out to hunt deer. In order to explain which knights are involved, the narrator now brings the narrative to an abrupt halt, after less than one stanza, while he catalogues and in some cases briefly describes twenty of Arthur's knights. One of these knights, Sir Ironside, has a thirty-six-line description--parentage, battle opponents (both human and otherwise), mount, armor, courage and resolution--even though he does not reappear in the poem. This curious digression, present in both the stanza and couplet versions, is evidence that the two texts were derived from the same original.⁸ Finally in stanza 11, line 103, the narrative resumes.

The hunt is not an episode in itself, but a means of introducing Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin into the castle of the carl. It is recounted in three stanzas (twenty-four lines) of summary narrative, expanding again into scenic narrative at the end of the day, when a thick mist descends on the forest and the hunt cannot go on. This automatically leads to the question of lodging for the night. Separated from their companions, Gawain, Kay, and Bishop Baldwin discuss the issue in a five-stanza scene of almost pure dialogue. The dialogue is sufficiently well developed so that there is some dispute (one stanza) before Bishop Baldwin hits on the idea of lodging with the carl. He mentions the possibility of hostile reception and danger, but recommends it nonetheless, apparently preferring danger to discomfort.

While Kay and Gawain both agree to the plan, the difference in their response foreshadows the situation at the castle itself. Kay claims testily that he defies the carl to give them a bad reception. If he should, Kay suggests that they simply beat him into submission, however bold he may be. Gawain counters this by saying that Kay ought to stop boasting and stirring up trouble, for they would be better off to see

3efe anny fayr wordus may vs gayn
 To make þe larde of vs full fayn
 In his oun castell.

(166-68)

This courtesy is the subject of the rest of the romance. The narrative is divided into two episodes, each depicting a series of tests initiated by the carl, which show off Gawain's courtesy and obedience to his host.

A transition of three lines transfers the three companions from the forest to the castle gate. Therefore, the third scene of Episode I is a conversation between them and the carl's porter. With great courtesy, Gawain asks for shelter, but the porter does all he can to dissuade them because of the villainy of the carl. Kay responds to this by threatening the porter, who replies with a threat of his own. The three narrative components of this exchange--1) arrival at the castle, appearance of the porter, Gawain's request; 2) the porter's response; 3) the dispute between the porter and Kay--are isolated into a single stanza with its own particular narrative focus.

Scene 4 takes place in the hall of the castle. The gigantic carl grants their request for lodging, and they are allowed to enter. As they enter the hall four whelps approach them as if to kill them, until the carl commands them to lie down again, and they obey. It has been suggested that this confrontation might somehow be the first test. But since there is no verbal suggestion of a test, no mention of how the knights stood their ground or refrained from drawing their swords, there is no proof, as Auvo Kurvinen points out, that the poet thought of the incident as a test.⁹ Instead, like the porter's plea not to enter, the whelps seem to be a device to suggest the terrifying danger the knights face in lodging with the carl. The imposing impression made by the whelps increases with the following two-stanza description of the carl. Despite the brevity of the romance, the narrator pauses for descriptions of this type where they will create dramatic impact (and in one instance, the description of Sir Ironside, where it will not).

When the narrator continues, Gawain, unlike his companions, kneels to the carl, because although the carl is a commoner, he is lord of the castle and their host. The carl protests that Gawain should refrain from kneeling, since the only courtesy he will receive in return is carl's courtesy. As if to demonstrate his carl's courtesy, he orders wine to be brought in a cup of gold. The rough edges of this courtesy emerge when the wine arrives in a four gallon cup. The carl, scandalized at the diminutive

size of the cup, sends the butler back for one more than twice the size. This grotesque moment is the only time that the narrator makes humorous use of the carl's immense size.

Because it is transitional, stanza 28 is one of the few that does not have a consistent narrative focus. The first three lines reiterate the import of the previous stanza:

IX gallons he hyld and mare,
He was not weke þat hit bare
In his won honde.

(295-97)

The second tail-rime group is a transition to scene 5, in which the knights drink their fill before Kay and Baldwin arise and leave the hall to look after their horses. This is the beginning of the first test. The bishop discovers that their horses have plenty of corn and hay, which they are sharing with a little foal of the carl. The bishop removes the foal, saying, "'Thow schalt not be fello wytt my palfray'" (305). In the following stanza, the carl catches the bishop in this act of discourtesy, and swears to repay him with a buffet. When the bishop protests that he is "a clarke of ordors hyȝe" (313), the carl justifiably retorts, "3et cannyst þou noȝt of corttessyȝe" (314), a point which the narrator underlines with the rime pair hyȝe / corttessyȝe. And so the bishop gets his buffet and falls to the ground in a swoon. Subsequently Kay performs the same act of discourtesy, going so far as to drive the foal out of the

stable, and receives in return the same treatment as Bishop Baldwin.

The next two scenes coincide with the next two stanzas. The bishop and Kay return to the hall and tell Gawain that they have been to see their horses and regret it. They do not explain why, leaving the test intact for Gawain. At the end of this stanza, the narrator comments suddenly that a wild storm is raging, so that anyone who has found shelter is well off indeed. Somewhat ineptly, this information is meant to intensify the atmosphere surrounding the test. In scene 7, Gawain finds the foal standing outside the stable in the rain, and leads him back in again. Furthermore, he covers the foal with his own green mantle, commenting,

'Stond vpe, fooll, and eete thy mette,
We spend her þat thy master dothe gette,
Whyll þat we her byne.'

(349-51)

For this generous attitude the carl thanks Gawain "full curtteslye" (353). Gawain's having passed the test of courtesy is the conclusion of Episode I. With Kay and the bishop disqualified, the carl continues in Episode II to test Gawain further.

Episode II contains several tests of Gawain's absolute obedience, and introduces two new characters for the purpose, the carl's wife and daughter. Scene 1 begins when supper is ready and the company goes to dine. The carl's wife, seated opposite Kay, is described at some length, and said

to be of perfect courtesy. Kay, who pities her for being married to the carl, receives a sharp reproach from him for these discourteous thoughts. In the meantime, since no one has asked Gawain to be seated, he remains standing. The carl demands that Gawain take a spear and hit him in the face with it. When Gawain strikes at him, the carl lowers his head so that the spear hits the wall instead. Although in obeying the carl's strange command, Gawain has passed the first test of obedience, this is not the end of the episode or even of the scene, for the narrative reverts to the carl's wife, to whom Gawain finds himself strongly attracted. The carl reproaches him as he had Kay, but in contrast to Kay, Gawain is ashamed of his thoughts. With that the carl's daughter is introduced and described in detail. She plays the harp, singing of love and of Arthur's knights, concluding scene 1.

In a six-line transitional stanza the bishop and Kay are led to their chambers, while Gawain is led to the carl's. There the next test of obedience takes place. Gawain is disarmed and placed in bed with the lovely wife of the carl. When the carl commands him to embrace his wife, Gawain obeys; when he tells him to stop, he stops. The narrator enhances Gawain's success in this test by making it plain how much more difficult it is for Gawain to stop than it is for him to begin. In scene 3, the carl rewards Gawain by giving him his fair daughter to make love to. Critics contrast these scenes with the temptation scenes in Sir Gawain and the Green

Knight, showing how crude they are in comparison to those of the Gawain poet. Although this is undeniable, the narrative of the Carle has certain virtues of its own which are absent from some other romances of comparable length, such as Emare. Except for the Ironside digression, the narrator shows a sense of balance in using the stanzas to narrate various central moments, causing those narrative moments to be in proportion to one another. The dialogue and description are neither too sparse nor too extended, given the total length of the romance. Its brevity, however, precludes use of the kind of detail which gives narrative individuality and depth.

After a transitional passage describing the events of the following morning, Gawain goes to the carl to take his leave. This is the place where the beheading scene, present in the couplet version, is missing from the stanzaic. Whether this happened by accident or design, it eliminates the theme of enchantment/disenchantment which would otherwise motivate the tests and the carl's ultimate renunciation of testing after Gawain's success. Instead, the carl explains that he had made a vow twenty years before that no man who lodged with him would escape death unless he did exactly as he was told. But since he has found a man who lived up to his expectations, he proposes henceforth to desist from slaying his guests, and welcome all who pass by. The vow, though perhaps more realistic, is in narrative terms a much weaker motive for the events of the tale, resulting in a sense of anti-climax.

The remaining scenes in the romance incorporate various concluding themes. Before the three companions leave the carl, they attend a dinner at which the carl gives them costly gifts, and bestows his daughter on Gawain. He tells Gawain to invite Arthur to visit him. Gawain performs this errand in a fifteen-line stanza, after which the scene returns to the castle of the carl. Here the carl entertains Arthur at a sumptuous feast. Having reached a point of stasis, this scene is composed primarily of description and enumeration of items served at the banquet. Finally the narrative is compressed into summary, where we learn that Arthur dubs the carl and makes him a knight of the Round Table, Gawain weds the carl's daughter amid elaborate festivities, and the carl founds an abbey in honor of the Virgin. The conclusion, then, like the introduction, provides a fairly involved series of events (relative to the length of the romance) to enclose the two principal episodes.

Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle does not deviate from the practice of the romances in couplets of stressing scenes of personal encounter (here twelve out of fourteen), and it follows the tendency of the shorter romances to have abbreviated transitions between scenes. The arrangement of episodes and scenes is also very similar. It differs in presenting the narrative moments in regulated blocks, and in this respect the narrative of the Carle maintains a considerable amount of control. The story is narrated vigorously, and succeeds on a simple level in its aim to

entertain by portraying the courtesy of a beloved English hero. It is hampered by the absence of the beheading scene, by its overall brevity, and by the limited aesthetic skill of the composer. Tail-rime stanzas are capable of a great deal more sophistication.

One of the most successful of the secular tail-rime romances is the late fourteenth century Sir Launfal by Thomas Chestre, written in the southeastern dialect. Chestre adapted the story from the romance of Sir Landevale, which in turn was an adaptation of the Breton lay Lanval by Marie de France. In some passages Chestre also seems to have followed the anonymous Breton lay Graelent.¹⁰ Sir Launfal is a typical example of the short English romance. The supernatural elements have been either eliminated or rationalized, probably for the benefit of a more bourgeois audience. It shows structural features more closely allied to other southern tail-rime romances than to the lays of Marie or to Graelent: amplification by means of description, expansion of summary narrative into scenes, an increased use of direct rather than indirect discourse, and regularization of the tenses.¹¹ According to Dorothy Everett, these common features are not enough to prove a common authorship with Libeaus Desconus and Octavian, as Mills supposed, or a common date, as Trounce suggested, but they do place Sir Launfal firmly in the tradition of the shorter English romances.¹² Despite its theme of largesse, however, this work is not moralized--except in terms of poetic justice--

unlike two stanzaic narratives with similar themes, Sir Amadace and Sir Cleges.

Composed in six line stanzas, Sir Launfal begins with an introduction which lists the knights surrounding Arthur during his stay at Carleon-on-Usk, and claims that the most generous of these was Sir Launfal. As the introduction gradually shifts from description to narrative, we are told that in appreciation of Launfal's generosity, Arthur made him steward, and that he held this post for ten years. At the end of this time Merlin advised Arthur to marry Gwennere, the daughter of Rion of Ireland. Neither Sir Launfal nor the other serious knights liked her, however, for it was said that she had many lovers. Nevertheless, Arthur marries her, and the first scene opens on the wedding.

The first scene of four stanzas remains fairly static while the wedding feast is described in general terms bordering on summary. Even the fourth stanza, which conveys the important information that the queen gave gifts to all the knights except Launfal, reviews the incident in a general way without expanding into any extensive detail. In contrast to its analogue Graelent, it establishes a reason for Launfal's leaving court but saves the queen's protestation of love until after Launfal's return. However, the narrator fails to explain why she discriminates against him. The introduction and first scene link the themes of generosity and selfishness which are paramount in the rest of the tale. When Launfal expresses his desire to leave court, Arthur

gives him money for expenses and two of his nephews for companions, delaying the poverty motif until the next episode. So Launfal takes his leave, concluding Episode I.

Episode II continues to explore the theme of generosity. The episode opens with a relatively extensive dialogue scene of thirty-five lines between Launfal and the Mayor of Carleon. Each stanza is devoted to the remarks of one or the other, but never both. Launfal asks the mayor, whom he has known for some time, for lodging. Again, as in the case of Gwennere, generosity is wanting, for the mayor at first makes excuses, and then in dilatory fashion offers Launfal a back room. Nevertheless Launfal accepts. A one-stanza (six-line) transition shows Launfal living there with his two companions for a year, as his money dwindles. Finally the companions are driven by their poverty to return to Arthur's court. In a scene of five stanzas, they report that Launfal is doing well, and they explain away their torn, threadbare garments by saying that they left immediately after going hunting in the rain in their old clothes. Arthur is delighted to hear a good report of Launfal, but the queen is disappointed and resentful. The weak point of this scene is that her resentment has no real grounds, such as those in the Graelent sequence, since Launfal has demonstrated no overt dislike of her. At any rate, her negative attitude creates a foil for Launfal's generosity, and gives further significance to what follows.

In the first scene of Episode III, during the absence

of the mayor, his daughter asks Launfal to dine with her. When he declines, explaining at some length how his poverty has depressed him, she kindly lends him a saddle and bridle so that he can take comfort from a ride in the country. His explanation that he has not eaten in three days, and that he cannot even go to church for lack of clean clothing, is an example of the process of rationalization by which the mystery, the Other World atmosphere, is tied down to the world familiar to the audience. The analysis of his state of poverty is more complex than the same situation would be in a folktale, where, as Elizabeth Williams puts it, "to fall into destitution is only a necessary preliminary to acquiring a fortune."¹³ It creates a sense of reality that carries over into the following scene, in which Launfal first encounters the fairy maidens.

The first sign of a shift towards the Other World occurs when, in a nine-line transition, Launfal takes a westerly direction in his ride, the direction of Faerie.¹⁴ As is often the case, the fairies are introduced at a point when the hero (or heroine) sits under a tree at noon to rest. The scene is largely taken up with a description of the two fairy maidens who emerge from the woods and approach Launfal. The details of the description indicate that Launfal is in the presence of extraordinary, probably supernatural, beings. In the final stanza of the scene they greet each other, and the maidens inform Launfal that their lady, Dame Tryamour, wishes to speak with him.

In order to convince us further of the otherworldly atmosphere, the next scene contains a two-stanza description of Tryamour's pavilion "All of werk of Sarsynys,"¹⁵ after which the narrator informs us that Tryamour's father was "kyng of fayrye / Of Occident fare and ny3e" (280-81). Tryamour herself is then described, sitting in bed scantily clad, with white skin, a red complexion, and golden hair. Unlike scene 2, however, this scene has, after the descriptive passage, a considerable amount of dialogue. Here Tryamour enumerates the rewards she will give Launfal if he becomes her lover: a purse that is never empty, her own steed and manservant, a banner with her arms on it, and invulnerability in battle. When Launfal gladly accepts, she washes her hands in the basin brought by her maid, and they dine. After spending the night together, they have a final exchange, in which the lady promises to visit Launfal secretly. But she imposes a taboo, in accordance with the Breton lay story pattern,¹⁶ that if he ever boasts of her, he will lose all her love.

Episodes IV and V show Launfal liberally repaying his debts, recovering his reputation in battle, and receiving clandestine visits from Tryamour. Episode IV recounts a tournament at Carleon in which Launfal wins the prize, while in Episode V he meets the individual challenge of the fifteen foot tall Sir Valentyne of Lombardy. The battle scenes are not drawn out at great length (any more than most of the other scenes). In the longer battle scenes,

those depicting the combat between Launfal and Valyntyne, the themes are similar to the corresponding themes in the romances in couplets, except that the formulas are often more alliterative than they are in the romances in couplets. This is true even in the southern tail-rime romances, where alliteration is a less consistent feature than it is in the North. The purpose of Episodes IV and V, amplifications apparently added by Chestre himself, is to rebuild Launfal's role as hero, after he can afford to act as a knight again in deed as well as in attitude. These episodes add two separate adventures, creating a more episodic pattern than that common to the French lays. They also delay the moment when Launfal breaks the interdict of his lady, and they create suspense by means of amplification.

It is on account of Launfal's knightly deeds that Arthur hears of him at the beginning of Episode VI and invites him to return to court as steward. In this way the interpolated material proves to have a narrative function outside of its own boundaries. Accordingly, in the four stanza introduction to Episode VI, Launfal takes his leave of Tryamour, arriving at court in time to celebrate the feast of Saint John. This four stanza transitional passage, the longest in the romance, serves to build up suspense for the climactic scene 1, in which the queen approaches Launfal with the idea that they should become lovers. Since Launfal has become rich again and beloved by all for his generosity, Gwennere drops the unexplained resentment of

Episode II, and fancies herself in love with him. She delivers a monologue to this effect at the beginning of scene 1, musing that Launfal, the fairest knight at the dance concluding the feast of Saint John, has never been married. After a brief description of the dancers and musicians, the queen accosts Launfal in the romance's climactic interview. The exchange lacks subtlety but not dramatic power, inasmuch as Gwennere seems to accuse Launfal of being a homosexual. In the face of this extreme provocation, Launfal breaks the taboo and boasts of his mistress's beauty.

The two scenes following the dance depict Gwennere's fury, which she conveys to Arthur in the form of slander, and then Launfal's despair at losing his mistress. The two scenes are only five stanzas each, but both convey a distinct if limited picture of the reactions of the two characters. The effect of their limited length, however, is to subordinate these scenes to the final trial scenes, both of which include more characters and a more complex narrative situation than the previous two scenes.

The first of these scenes, nine stanzas in length, concerns Launfal's trial before Arthur and the court. Launfal defends himself against Arthur's heated accusations by maintaining that he had not approached the queen but she him, and that on being refused, she had accused him of not being a man. Launfal goes on to repeat the answer he gave, insisting on the truth of his boast. This recapitulation is consonant with the practice in many romances of reviewing

critical moments in retrospect to get added service out of their dramatic effect. At this time twelve knights are chosen to consult the law. These acquit Launfal on the first charge, attempted adultery, on account of Gwennere's reputation for promiscuity. In this way the Queen's infidelity, selfishness, and bad temper, set out in the first two episodes, are put to important narrative use, although they are not previously presented with controlled consistency of character and motive. As for the second charge, Launfal is told to produce the mistress as proof of his boast, or else be hanged. The scene ends with Gwennere rashly stating, "3yf he bryngeþ a fayrere þynge, / Put out my eyen gray!" (809-10).

Between this scene and the next there is a transitional passage of three stanzas, which has no specific time frame, but covers the period of twelve months and a fortnight granted to Launfal. In the first stanza Launfal finds two knights, Sir Perceval and Sir Gawain, to act as sureties for him. The second and third stanzas describe Launfal's great sorrow, and the woe of all who knew of his plight. The uncertain temporal quality of this passage connects what has gone before with the final scene in such a way as to create dependence and preclude movement to an new episode.

The final scene is a tour de force of thirty two stanzas. Like most judgment scenes, it is based on the suspense of simultaneous hope and fear for the accused. The scene opens with Arthur's demand that Launfal produce his

mistress, and Launfal's admission that he cannot comply. At that, the king and his barons enter into debate as to whether he should be executed or exiled, the barons suggesting the more merciful course on the basis of Launfal's courtesy and generosity. This reminder of Launfal's noble qualities brings us face to face with the impossibility of Launfal's wrongly suffering punishment. This is the moment when the narrative requires the entrance of Launfal's savior. But in order to postpone the full gratification of the narrative requirement, none of the ten beautiful maidens introduced at this time is Tryamour, as Launfal explains to Gawain. When the maidens dismount and present themselves to Arthur in his hall, they bid him prepare a fair chamber for their lady, but will not disclose her identity. Arthur then tries to press the barons to decide on a verdict for Launfal, but they insist on waiting for the lady. Here a stanza is devoted to public opinion and the fierce debate between those who think Launfal is guilty, and those who think he is innocent. In order to delay Tryamour's arrival even further, ten more maidens arrive, still more beautiful than the last, who make the same request. Again Launfal admits that he recognizes none of these fair ladies. Here the queen, fearing that Launfal will be acquitted, prods Arthur to take revenge on Launfal. She accuses the barons of favoring Launfal and mocking Arthur. This dangerous moment is designed to necessitate the long-awaited arrival of Tryamour. Her arrival is prolonged and set apart from the others by a

thirty-nine-line description. This corresponds structurally to the first lengthy description at another climactic moment, Tryamour's first meeting with Launfal. When she removes her mantle so that she may be better observed, it is immediately clear how much more beautiful she is than the queen. In a speech of two stanzas, Tryamour reviews the events of the incident again. As soon as Arthur admits that Launfal's claim is true, Tryamour breathes on Gwennere's eyes and blinds her, in accordance with the queen's rash oath. With that Launfal, Tryamour, and their companions ride off to Faerie, never to be seen again.

Sir Launfal is composed primarily of scenes of personal encounter, most of which are dialogic. Although the actual number of lines of dialogue is low (only 240 lines out of 1044), the impression of conversation persists because of the extensive use of indirect discourse. There are just 202 lines of summary narrative, for the transitions are short. The longest is twenty-four lines, but most are twelve lines or less. In contrast, the scenes themselves are fairly long and detailed, with static description playing a central role at certain dramatic moments. The overall pattern of scenes and episodes remains the same as it is in other secular romances, with the same reluctance on the part of the narrator to impose authorial comment on the story, the same movement from cause to effect within the episodes, and the same rationalization of the marvelous.

We shall now see how some of these devices are used in

another secular romance with a rather different narrative pattern, the Avowyngge of King Arthur, Sir Gawan, Sir Kaye and Sir Bawdewyn of Bretan. the Avowyngge is a northern romance of the early fifteenth century,¹⁷ composed in sixteen line stanzas riming aaabcccbdddbeeeb. There is a fair amount of alliteration, although this is more a decorative than a structural feature. Some of the stanzas are linked by concatenation, but not as consistently as in Sir Perceval of Galles. The tale is built around vows made by Arthur, Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin, and the testing of those vows. The first half of the romance concerns the vows of Arthur, Gawain, and Kay, while the second concerns their testing Baldwin in his vows.

The first half of the romance falls into the following episodes:

- I. News reaches Arthur of a ferocious boar roaming about Inglewood forest. Arthur calls on Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin to accompany him to hunt the boar. When they return unsuccessful at the end of the day, Arthur vows to kill the boar alone on the morning; Gawain vows to watch all night at Tarn Wadling; and Kay vows to ride through the forest until day and slay anyone who offers to prevent him. Baldwin makes three vows: never to be jealous of his wife or any fair woman, never to refuse food to any man, and never to dread threat of death. They ride off severally to fulfill their vows.
- II. After a bitter struggle, Arthur slays the boar, cuts up the body, and gives thanks to the Virgin.
- III. Kay encounters one Sir Menealfe of the Mountain leading a maiden who is crying for help. Kay challenges the knight,

but is defeated in battle. He explains that Gawain, who is watching at Tarn Wadling, will pay his ransom. Kay is allowed to fetch Gawain, who releases both Kay and the maiden by overcoming Sir Menealfe in battle. Gawain and Kay accompany Sir Menealfe and the maiden to Carlisle, where Gawain turns him over to Arthur, and Arthur appoints him a knight of the Round Table.

Episode IV opens in stanza 37 with Kay's asking leave to put Baldwin to the test. The second half of the romance is constructed around the working out of Baldwin's three vows. Kay and five companions ride out to meet Baldwin, who is on his way to visit Arthur. When they find him, they demand that he either flee or fight all six of them. Despite the threatening odds, Baldwin refuses to leave his path. Once he has defeated Kay at battle, the knights are satisfied that he has fulfilled his oath never to dread the threat of death. At court, Baldwin does not mention the incident, which Arthur takes as another sign of his courage.

Like the first half of the romance, where one vow takes up one episode and the second two another, here Baldwin's remaining two vows are the subject of a single episode.

At the beginning of Episode V, Arthur sends a messenger to enter Baldwin's castle and observe the degree of his hospitality. Baldwin's liberality in this regard is described, the absence of a porter to hinder entrance, the abundance of food and wine, and the courtesy of the castle's inhabitants. After a week, the servant returns to report all this to Arthur, and bring Arthur and the queen back with

him to Baldwin.¹⁸ Immediately on their arrival they participate in a royal feast and Arthur comments that he has never seen such abundance in a single night. Baldwin modestly replies,

"Sir, God hase a gud pluze;
He may send vs all enughe:
Qwy schuld we spare?"¹⁹

With that, the narrative passes on to the third test.

Immediately following Baldwin's comment, Arthur changes the subject, commanding Baldwin to go on a twenty-four hour deer hunt in the morning, while he remains behind. This command initiates the third test, for in Baldwin's absence Arthur places one of his knights in bed with Baldwin's wife, and sits down himself in the same chamber to play chess while he acts as chaperone. When Baldwin returns, Arthur informs him that he has found his knight in bed with Baldwin's wife. But Baldwin, according to his oath, betrays no jealousy on hearing this news, reflecting that if such were the case, she did it willingly. In view of her long standing loyalty, Baldwin does not wish to be a stern judge of her misdeed. So Baldwin passes the test of his third vow, never to be jealous of his wife or any fair woman.

As they are conversing on this subject, Baldwin offers to explain why he has vowed not to be jealous. The remainder of the romance, a continuation of the present scene, consists of Baldwin's relating anecdotes to explain the motives behind his three vows. These anecdotes are remarkable for

two reasons. First, it is unusual for a character to deliver three separate flashbacks in a single scene, and second, the flashbacks themselves are more nearly in the fabliau than the romance mode. They are not developed scenically, although there is some dialogue, and the treatment, far from being idealized, shows what Baldwin learned from the cruelty, pettiness, and cowardice of others.

The narrative structure is characteristically high in scenes of personal encounter. In the case of battles four out of the six (including the two with the boar) receive only cursory treatment within a scene which is otherwise mainly conversation (see stanzas 21, 25, 27, 41). The romance is heavily dialogic. Even without Baldwin's anecdotes at the end, 425 lines contain dialogue; with the anecdotes the number is six hundred, over fifty percent of the 1148 lines of the romance. Also, the anecdotes themselves consist mainly of summary narrative, there are only 147 lines of summary in the rest of the romance. The transitions are very brief, usually just a line or two, but sometimes as much as a full stanza, and in one case, at the end of Episode III, two stanzas. This work deviates from the typical Middle English romance form in the fabliau-like tone of Baldwin's anecdotes, but the pattern of scenes and episodes in the romance which contains them follows the characteristic episode/scene pattern throughout.

Turning to the Earl of Toulous, we find a romance that adheres strictly to the romance pattern despite its pious

tone. It was composed in a Northeast Midland dialect around 1400,²⁰ and is organized into twelve-line stanzas. The Earl of Toulous is a fictionalized version of a story that was based on an historical incident. L. H. Loomis sums up Lüdke's findings on this subject, explaining that he identified the heroine with the Empress Judith, daughter of Wolf I, Count of Bavaria, and the second wife of Louis the Pious (778-840).

She was a brilliant, beautiful, and masterful woman, whose exertions to secure a kingdom for her son (Charles the Bald) led to strange chances and changes of fortune. Twice at least Judith was exiled from the imperial court, charged with illicit relations with Bernard, Count of Barcelona, son of that famous William of Toulous who is known in romance as William of Orange and in religious legends as St. Guillaume de Gellone. She maintained her innocence before an Assembly of the States at Aix in 831; and Bernard himself, though exonerated by her oath, later challenged anyone to maintain in battle the accusation against him. When no one accepted his offer, he withdrew to Barcelona. The identity of this Bernard with the Bernard, Count of Toulous, of the English poem and of its Old French prototype is not to be doubted.²¹

Although this background lends itself to the theme of the Innocent Persecuted Wife, the Middle English version focuses on the chaste love between the earl and the empress, and on the earl as her savior in the judicial combat that establishes her innocence.

The episodes are as follows:

- I. Sir Barnard, the Earl of Toulous, is at war with Dyoclysyen, Emperor of Almayne,

who has unjustly deprived him of some of his lands. The empress, Dame Beulyboon, attempts in vain to dissuade her husband from an unjust war. He does battle with the earl's forces and is defeated.

- II. The earl, who has heard of the empress's great beauty, gives one of his prisoners of war his freedom, in exchange for arranging for the earl to see the empress as she goes to chapel. This knight, Sir Trylabas, attempts to persuade Beulyboon to betray Sir Barnard, but she refuses on the grounds that Trylabas has promised to ensure his safety. Disguised as a beggar, the earl succeeds in seeing the empress, who gives him a ring. The earl sets out on a return trip to his country, rejoicing in this token of friendship. On his way, he is attacked by Sir Trylabas and two companions, but he is able to slay his attackers.
- III. Two knights, who have been chosen by the emperor to guard his wife in his absence, decide to seduce her. When she flatly refuses their offers, they betray her by making it seem as if she has committed adultery. She is thrown in prison.
- IV. The emperor dreams that his wife is in danger and returns to the castle. He is horrified by the accusation. A trial is held, of which the outcome is that, since she has been convicted on circumstantial evidence, she may stand trial by combat. The emperor sends messengers to find a champion, and the earl responds in disguise. Once he is satisfied of the empress's innocence, he does battle for her. As a result, the two guilty chamberlains are condemned to be burned at the stake. Sir Barnard is reconciled with the emperor, and after his death, Sir Barnard marries Dame Beulyboon and becomes emperor himself.

These four episodes are divided into well developed scenes, and linked by transitions of one to twenty-four lines. Out of a total of 1224 lines, 260 are devoted to introduction

and summary background, and 652 to dialogue. Most of the dramatic moments emanate from the plentiful dialogue, not only in the scenes, but also to some extent in the summary sections. As in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the themes of justice and loyalty²² are worked out dramatically, with no attempt on the part of the narrator to exhort the reader to imitate the behavior of the hero and heroine. The outlook of the romance as a whole is a moral one, and this sense of morality is clearly present both in the actions and the attitudes of the earl and Beulyboon. It is most obvious in her speeches rejecting treachery and adultery. But the structure of the romance is not altered in any way to create a homiletic atmosphere.

A similarly moral tone emerges in Sir Degrevant, apparently a late fourteenth century composite work without a direct source.²³ In this highly alliterated northern romance, we have a tale of love which is markedly English in flavor due on the one hand to the chaste behavior of the two main characters, and on the other to the aura of realism that pervades the work.

The plot of Sir Degrevant is as follows:

After a lengthy description of the hero's qualities, including his reluctance to involve himself with women, Sir Degrevant is divided into four episodes, as follows:

- I. While Sir Degrevant is away on a Crusade, a neighboring earl trespasses on his land and exhausts his hunting preserves. Although Sir Degrevant returns, the earl continues until Degrevant puts him to

flight. The earl resolves to desist from further provocation.

- II. Degrevant rides to the earl's castle to challenge him to combat. The earl refuses. Meanwhile, Degrevant catches sight of Melior, the earl's daughter, and falls in love with her. When he later surprises her in the garden, she rejects him. Her maid, whom Degrevant has promised to marry to his squire, fails to convince Melior to change her mind, since Degrevant is an enemy and lower in rank than her father.
- III. Melior's suitor, the Duke of Gerle, arrives to ask for her hand in marriage. Sir Degrevant challenges him, and overcomes him in a three day tournament. The duke departs.
- IV. Having been secretly admitted into the castle by Melior's maid, Degrevant meets Melior in her chamber and they confess their mutual love. Remaining chaste, they meet secretly for a year, until the earl's steward betrays them. The earl's men ambush Degrevant, but he slays them. At first the earl is enraged because Melior is in love with his enemy. But his wife sways him with the argument that Melior is their only child, and so he is persuaded to be reconciled to Sir Degrevant and permit the marriage.

The conclusion summarizes their wedding, the death of the earl and his wife, the couple's thirty years of marriage, Melior's death, and Sir Degrevant's journey to the Holy Land and death at Port Gaff (Jaffa) during a Crusade.

There are seventeen scenes of personal encounter, four battle scenes, and three scenes of miscellaneous narrative. Narrative transitions of one half stanza (eight lines) to five stanzas occur in nine instances other than the introduction and conclusion,²⁴ that is, in almost half the cases where a transition is needed. Descriptions, if limited in

number, are extended in length and ornate in wording. Sir Degrevant is described at length in stanzas 1-6, and again in the words of the earl in 66-67. Melior is described in two stanzas, 41-42, and more remarkably, her chamber in five stanzas, 91-95. Casson reminds us that whereas in French romances a poet will adorn the walls of a room with scenes of the Trojan wars, Alexander, David, or allegorical figures such as the Seven Liberal Arts, they avoid anything predominantly religious (as opposed to Biblical) like the statues and paintings in Melior's room.²⁵ This pious backdrop is specifically English. The pictures and statues of apostles, saints, and Church Fathers sets the scene for the chaste conduct of Melior and Degrevant in the year of clandestine meetings before their marriage.²⁶ Like the other descriptions, however, the picture of Melior's room is a set piece which is not integrated into the narrative but brings it to a halt, prolonging the climactic moment of the couple's declaration of love.

Aside from this five-stanza descriptive tour de force, and from the general aura of realism produced by the realistic details of the setting throughout the romance, the narrative pattern of the scenes is not out of the ordinary for an English romance. The poet, in manipulating the tail-rime stanzas to conform to these conventional patterns, also uses the prosodic and narrative patterns themselves to counteract the negative effects of the stanza form.

The prosody is marked by extensive alliteration, which

however, is decorative rather than structural. More than a third of Sir Degrevant is alliterated. The alliterated lines resemble the half lines of the unrimed alliterative long line, in that there are two principal accents and a varying number of unaccented syllables, most often falling into the pattern xx/xx/. The alliteration is used for emphasis, especially in descriptions of battles and tournaments, and in lyric passages. Furthermore, the author uses alliteration to facilitate the flow of narrative by linking two or more consecutive lines with the same alliterative sound. L. F. Casson shows that two-thirds of the lines connected by continuous alliteration consist of the last line of a triplet and the following tail-line, commonly alliterating aa/ax, approximating a complete unrimed alliterative long line.²⁷ While this creates a smoother flow from triplet to tail-line in the stanzas where it occurs, the linking of three quarters of the stanzas by monorime or the repetition of a word or phrase prevents the staccato effect of the stanzaic units from overwhelming the narrative.

Two narrative devices which create the same smooth effect are the poet's placement of dialogue and scene shifts. Unlike some of the tail-rime romances we have considered so far, Sir Degrevant makes consistent use of single stanzas for statements and responses, instead of relegating each speaker to a separate stanza.²⁸ Often one speech takes up a stanza and a half, with the response coming in the second half of the second stanza. Normally there are only two

speakers in such a case. If this technique is in part made possible by the sixteen-line stanza, the author is also fully capable of controlling the dialogue to produce perfect overlapping between speaker and stanza. But his technical skill leads him to vary the length and position of the speeches in order to support and enhance the narrative focus. Additionally, in eight cases he shifts from one stanza to another in mid-stanza,²⁹ a device which also appears in the Avowyngge. The author has developed a technique of narrative enjambement so as to utilize the stanza form to its fullest advantage while maintaining the flow of narrative unimpeded.

Another very skillful northern romance using some of the same prosodic and narrative devices is Sir Perceval of Galles. Sir Perceval makes use of the potential for swift action inherent in the tail-rime stanza. R. S. Loomis believes that in clarity of motivation and coherence of plot, the English poem is superior to other versions of the story which include the Grail sequence and the Gawain sub-plot.³⁰ The plot of the English Sir Perceval is blocked into three movements of roughly similar length:

- I. An introductory episode summarizing Perceval's father's rise to glory and ultimate defeat at the hands of the Red Knight, followed by three episodes concerning Perceval's youth, his encounter with the lady of the hall, and his introduction to court and defeat of the Red Knight.
- II. A lengthy episode, approximately as long as the first four episodes

together, in which Perceval proves himself worthy of knighthood by defending the Lady Lufamour single-handed from the aggressive suit of the Sultan Golrotherame. As a reward he marries the lady.

- III. One episode, somewhat shorter than the previous one, in which Perceval redresses the wrongs he committed out of impetuosity in his youth--the harm he did the Lady of the Hall, and the sorrow he gave his mother by abandoning her.

Each of these three movements is based on a stage in Perceval's development: his initial exposure to knighthood and avenging of his father's death, his learning to temper valor with chivalry, and his atonement for his early mistakes. However, although the plot is based on these developmental stages, the action itself and not the ethical tone is primary.

The first section opens with an unusual introductory episode, composed entirely of summary narrative. At the beginning of the romance, rather than merely providing background for the first episode, as most introductions do, the chain of events concerning Perceval's father must be considered an episode in itself, because it incorporates a completed movement from the beginning to the conclusion of a series of events, from his being knighted to his defeat at arms. Here the closure, Perceval's father's death, provides the predicated motivation for the rest of the first section, and to a lesser extent for the entire romance. It explains why Perceval grows up in the woods, why he feels compelled to leave his mother and follow the knights, why Arthur is drawn to Perceval despite his crude behavior, and

why the Red Knight should be his first opponent (though Perceval himself is ignorant of the significance). The summary narrative of this opening episode sets the tone for the rapid narrative pace of the subsequent episodes.

The following three brief episodes are composed on the whole of fairly short scenes. Episode II contains a scene of two stanzas depicting Acheflour's flight to the woods with her young son, a stanza and a half summarizing Perceval's childhood, and four more scenes of comparable length (one and a half to four stanzas) narrating Perceval's religious education, his encounter with Gawain, Kay and Ewayne fytz Asoure, his securing a mount, and his parting with his mother. Episode III consists entirely of one scene three stanzas long. The episode, Perceval's experience with the Lady of the Hall, is a perfect example of pure narrative reduced to the bare essentials. Stanza one recounts how Perceval found the hall, entered it, and discovered a set table, a bright fire, and a full manger. He recalls his mother's advice to be "of mesure."³¹ Therefore, in the second stanza he feeds his mare half the corn, and helps himself to half the food and drink he finds on the table. The narrator asks wryly, "How my3te he more of mesure be?" (462). In the third stanza Perceval finds the lady asleep in a chamber, exchanges rings with her, and departs from the castle. It is clear from this passage that the narrator shapes the narrative into blocks that correspond to the sixteen-line stanzas. Furthermore, there is almost no enjambement between the sub-

units of triplets with tail-lines. However, because of the stanza-linking and frequent use of the tail-line to impart narrative information as opposed to exclamatory tags, the narrative progression is not hampered by the regularity of the stanzaic divisions.

Episode IV contains five scenes of somewhat greater length and complexity than those contained in the previous episodes, including Perceval's first interview with Arthur and his unconventional battle with the Red Knight. At first the untutored Perceval goes right up to Arthur on horseback and threatens to kill him if Arthur fails to make him a knight immediately. But after Perceval has slain the Red Knight in the next scene, he concludes that he does not need Arthur to make him a knight, for, as he says, "I am als grete a lorde as he" (814). In the following episode he overcomes this immature view. Like other northern poems such as the Carle, the Avowyng, the Taill of Rauf Coilgear, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Sir Perceval questions the validity of the courtly code through the ignorance or skepticism of one of the characters, while at the same time using that code as a basis for action.

Episode V is more extensive than the previous four episodes, being blocked into twelve scenes which are longer on the average than the scenes of the episodes in the first section. One of these scenes is a single stanza in length, but the others are from two to eleven stanzas long, usually four or five stanzas. The episode begins with Perceval's

meeting a knight who, in gratitude for the slaying of his enemy, the Red Knight, invites Perceval to visit him. Perceval's sojourn in the castle (the point of stasis) provides the opportunity for him to respond to a plea for aid from a messenger of the Lady Lufamour of Maydenland (a region of the Other World), who is besieged by the Sultan Golero-therame. This episode enables Perceval to prove himself as a knight. Three out of the six battle scenes in the romance occur here. First Perceval cuts his way through eleven score of the sultan's men in order to reach the beautiful castle of the lady. In the second battle Perceval defeats yet more of the sultan's men, and immediately thereafter does battle with Gawain, who has just arrived with Arthur, Ewayne, and Kay. The battle terminates when Gawain informs Perceval who he is, but it shows Perceval to be a match for Sir Gawain, which (as in many other romans de pris) is a measure of the hero's own worth as a knight. Now Perceval is ready to be knighted. After Arthur performs this ceremony, Perceval engages in personal combat with the sultan. This battle again emphasizes Perceval's ignorance. As soon as he has struck the sultan down, he attempts to kill him, but does not know how to penetrate the armor. While he considers burning the sultan out of his armor, as he had tried to do with the Red Knight, Gawain proposes that he slay the sultan in a fair fight rather than destroy him as he lies helpless on the ground. While Perceval, who "ne wiste noþer of euylle ne gude" (1694), is preoccupied with this new idea,

the sultan stands up and attacks him violently, at which Perceval cries, "Now hase þou taughte me / How þat i sall wirke with the" (1717-18), and strikes off his head. Thus he learns both of courtesy and discourtesy in the same incident. The episode concludes with the marriage of Perceval and the Lady Lufamour.

Now that Perceval is a knight and a king, it remains only for him to redress the wrongs he committed out of ignorance in his youth. Episode VI, containing seven scenes, combines Perceval's search for his mother with his saving the lady, with whom he exchanged rings, from the wrath of her husband, the Black Knight. It connects these two incidents by the device of the ring Perceval's mother gave him when they parted. This is the ring that Perceval gave to the lady of the hall, which her husband, the Black Knight, then gave to the lord of the land, a giant and the brother of the sultan. The giant later offered it to Perceval's mother as a love token, and she, recognizing the ring, supposed Perceval to be dead. The shock caused her to go mad and roam wild in the woods. After being directed to the giant by the Black Knight, Perceval slays him and commences the search for his mother. He finds her in the forest, sitting by a well.³² He brings her back to the giant's castle to recuperate, and later they are reunited with Perceval's wife. The tale ends with a report of his future campaigns and death in the Holy Land.

Sir Perceval, composed between 1300 and 1340 in northern

dialect,³³ resembles the later Sir Degrevant in its sixteen-line stanza and its consistent use of stanza-linking. Margaret P. Medary shows that in 122 out of 144 stanzas, stanza-linking exists unmistakably in the form of repetition of a whole verse or several words, repetition of a single important word or use of a closely related word, or by repetition of sentences within the last three verses of one stanza and the first two of the next.³⁴ There are a greater number of whole verses or pairs of verses repeated than there are in Sir Degrevant, and the extended repetition tends to slow the pace of the narrative and draw attention to the stanza divisions, rather than smoothing the divisional effect. This is especially true in the case of indirect discourse repeated as direct discourse, and even more obvious in repeated dialogue, for example, when Gawain says to Perceval in Episode V,

"My name es Wawayne in kythe,
Whoso redys righte."

He says, "Who þat will rede the aryghte,
My name es Wawayne þe knyghte."
(1507-10)

By slowing down the narrative, double line repetitions become an emphatic device which can be used to stress certain moments in the narrative. As in Sir Degrevant, the poet uses the techniques of varying scene divisions, with sixteen scenes opening at the beginning of a stanza, and fourteen in mid-stanza. The narrator also joins speakers of dialogue in a

single stanza, but there is rather less dialogue and more indirect discourse than there is in Sir Degrevant, despite a comparable proportion of scenes of personal encounter. In Sir Perceval, however, the rapid progression of the narrative is as much a result of the brevity of the scenes and unrelenting thrust of the action, allied with the reduced amount of direct discourse, as it is a result of the poet's application of techniques found also in Sir Degrevant for maximizing the potential of the tail-rime stanza.

The stanzaic Morte Arthur, composed in the Northwest Midland region around 1400,³⁵ is unique among the other English romances in having a stanza form of eight lines with four stresses each, riming abababab. Although the absence of tail-lines has a profound effect on the movement of the verse, many of the characteristics of stanzaic narrative found in the tail-rime romances are also present here. On the other hand, since the verses all contain four accents, the syntactic movement is less jerky than it is in the tail-rime romances, and therefore it lacks some of the devices employed in the longer, more sophisticated tail-rime romances in order to combat the potential for sing-song rhythms that crush the narrative flow.

Despite the rigid rime scheme, the absence of metric alternation makes the stanzaic divisions much less obvious. Without these tail-rime groupings, the syntax of a given stanza tends to fall into one-verse clauses. Although the clauses do not overlap from one line to another, the verse

is by no means paratactic, since the sentences made up of these clauses are often as long as the stanza, or occasionally even longer. This means that there is a freer progression of information, for it is not confined to three or four line increments, but has the entire eight lines of a single stanza in which to develop. The greater freedom makes it possible for the narrator to ignore the device of starting scenes in mid-stanza. The vast majority of scenes and transitions coincide with the stanza divisions. Within each scene it is possible for sentences to run over from one stanza to another, causing a certain amount of stanzaic enjambement, which, however, does not usually cross scenic boundaries.

Transitions are often marked with the standard scenic shift markers, most commonly than (thoo), whan, and till on a tyme (day). Once in a while the narrator leaves out the shift marker, relying on the stanzaic division and the narrative statement to indicate a new time frame. At the same time, however, there are also a number of more extended transitions: fifty-six of one stanza or more. Uncharacteristically, the summary narrative takes up about a third of the total lines (1188/3969). The transitions of summary narrative grow longer in the second half of the romance, where they often take up six to ten stanzas, as opposed to the one or two typical of the first half. The second half of the tale, concerning the war between Launcelot, Arthur and Gawain, evolves into a kind of narrative approaching chronicle

in its political implications and the breadth of the issues involved: the crumbling of an entire reign and society of knights and the supplanting of order by disorder. The summary transitions convey information such as the gathering of forces and preparation for war, the delivery of messages, Lancelot's and Arthur's journey to the Continent and their return, Mordred's election as viceroy ("steward"), the news of his treason, and his excommunication. The Battle of Barendowne and Gawain's funeral are described in summary narrative, as are Lancelot's final search for the queen, and Lyonell's, Bors', and Ector's search for Lancelot. In short, there is a considerable amount of information which must be subordinated to the major scenes. The transitions are sufficiently complex to include dialogue, and they convey in chronicle style most of the necessary details about the military and political moves of the principal characters. This leaves the scenic narrative free for the crucial exchanges between Lancelot, Gwenivere, Gawain, and Arthur. Much of the going and coming is worked out in summary form in order to stress the personal encounters which dominate the work.³⁶

These encounters are noteworthy chiefly for their dialogue, which is developed at length and is, for all its conventionality, imbued with a deep sense of pain. The dialogue intensifies from the first laments of Arthur and Gwenivere when the adultery is revealed, to Lancelot's pleading with Gawain for reconciliation, and the final

parting of Lancelot and the queen. These conversations need no extended comment. They are present in the French Mort Artu, and have been quoted and commented on in numerous critical works. The stanzaic version is commendable for the restraint with which it represents the emotions produced by a war between close friends and the final parting of lovers, while at the same time losing no opportunity to move the audience. The effectiveness is buttressed by almost no description or authorial comment. In this treatment, the simple story and words of the dramatis personae are sufficient.

Structurally, the stanzaic Morte shares one important device with the pious romances: its use of summary narrative. However, the function of the summary in the work as a whole differs from its counterpart in the pious romances. In the Morte, the summary narrative deals with events of a broader scope than the personal exchanges, in the manner of a chronicle (of which more in Chapter IV). This enables the poet, as we have seen, to concentrate on certain dramatic moments in the lives of the protagonists. Their experiences lead to a catastrophe so terrible that several of the major characters dedicate themselves to a life of contrition as members of a religious order. Nevertheless, the major emphasis of the narrative material up to that point is not on the possibility of their conversion to the religious life; on the contrary, it emphasizes their role in the secular state, a role that is as much personal as political. The

themes of political and personal encounters and struggles are intermingled, with the major dramatic emphasis placed on personal relationships. Despite the increased use of summary narrative, the themes, and consequently the structures, of the Morte differ in several important respects from those of the pious romances.

Until now we have been dealing with narrative structure primarily in works which are easily identifiable as romances in content, mode, and structure. When we turn from secular romances to those which contain dominant moral or religious elements, we can distinguish certain themes that are rare in secular romances, especially patient suffering, and the direct intervention of God in order to punish and/or save the protagonist. But these themes are not merely incidental in such romances; they often control the shape of the narrative, as well as giving rise to edifying and instructive remarks from the narrator. In this respect, the pious romances seem to be influenced by the structures associated with saints' legends, just as the form of those legends was being influenced by contemporary romances.³⁷ Theodor Wolpers compares the structure of saints' legends to that of the secular romances in this way: "Die Ereignisse werden nicht, wie etwa in der profaner Erzählkonventionen der spät mittelalterlichen metrical romance, als Folge kleiner Zeitquantitäten verstanden, sondern als Manifestation göttlichen Wirkens."³⁸ In other words, the events in the saints' legends appear to emanate from or be caused by God, while

in the secular romances, events are usually synonymous with the blocks of time or the scenes and episodes that occur.

Certainly the purpose of the episodes in secular romances is to test the excellence of knightly heroes, but each test is an end in itself and a relatively independent unit. Considerable emphasis is placed on the individual episode and scene, and these narrative blocks exhibit what might be called amplification for its own sake. However, as soon as a religious or philosophical theme dominates a work, we find that amplification is often avoided except when it serves the purpose generated by that theme. Scenes become less important in their own right, and are subordinated to those parts of the narrative and ancillary matter which carry the thematic material forward to its predetermined end. When the narrative technique becomes one of subordination instead of coordination, it departs from an essential feature of romance structure.

In turning to a didactic romance, Sir Gowther, we find the religious theme of patient suffering well illustrated. Sir Gowther was written around 1400 in a Northeast Midland dialect.³⁹ Although there is no known source, it retells the widespread legend of Robert le diable. This work contains a number of romance properties, such as the knight who does battle anonymously on three different days in three different suits of armor, and the love between the hero and the daughter of an emperor. On the other hand, the narrative as a whole exhibits a marked deviation from romance structure. On the

broadest level, there is a two part structure that is atypical of romance. The difference does not depend on the number of episodes, for Sir Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle has only two, and yet, short as it is, it is a far more typical example of romance structure than Sir Gowther. Rather, the difference lies in the fact that the two part structure is based on a specifically Christian motif which might be described as the mirror image of medieval tragedy. In a tragedy of fortune, the hero is exalted in worldly terms only to be cast down. Here, as in other didactic romances following the same pattern--Roberd of Cisyle in couplets and Sir Isumbras in tail-rime stanzas, for example--the hero is utterly humiliated in order to achieve atonement with God and return to earthly joy. The concept and presentation of the hero is affected by this theme; the hero is "superior in degree," as Frye puts it,⁴⁰ only at the moment and to the extent that God chooses. One might say that God himself becomes one of the dramatis personae in such a narrative.

The narrative style also differs from the secular romances we have considered on the level of the scenes. Most of the scenes are minimally amplified, while the links are unusually long and contain much material in summary form which would normally be expanded into scenes. Again, this is not merely a result of the brevity of Sir Gowther. It is not so in Sir Orfeo, for example, which is even briefer than Sir Gowther. Although the primary purpose of Sir Gowther appears to be entertainment, the didactic

element is strong enough to alter the structure from one in which the individual scenes and episodes are more important in structural terms than the work as a whole, the usual case in secular romances. Like other narrators with homiletic intentions, the narrator emphasizes those parts of the narrative which point clearly to the theme he is trying to convey, and he subordinates other parts which, however interesting they may be in purely narrative terms, do not support that theme.⁴¹ Even in the event that the impoverished scenic structure is the result of reduction from a longer original, the redactor must consciously have shaped the narrative in such a way as to heighten Gowther's religious experience by means of the choice of material to be used as scenes.

Sir Gowther opens with a prayer that God may shield us all from the Fiend. This prayer is not selected at random, for it develops that the Fiend plays an important part in the story. The narrator introduces Gowther's parents, the Duke and Duchess of Austria, and recounts their marriage and subsequent childlessness. When the duke threatens to divorce his wife for failing to provide him with an heir, she prays to God and Mary that she may conceive a child "On what maner sche ne roghth."⁴² This careless attitude leads to the misfortune which precipitates the action of the tale.

The first scene begins in the middle of the sixth stanza. It narrates with all possible speed how the lady meets a man in her orchard (a motif from the Fairy Lover

cluster). Although this man looks exactly like her husband, as soon as he has made love to her, he turns into a devil (incubus) and announces that a child has been conceived who "'in his yothe full wylde schall bee / And weppons wyghtly weld'" (74-75). A two-line transition introduces the second scene, which is even briefer. However, though only eight lines long, it contains the basic elements of a real scene: a description of the setting and a rudimentary dialogue, in which the duchess informs her husband that "'An angell com fro hevon bryght'" has prophesied that they will conceive a child that very evening.

The narrative moves more or less directly from the day Gowther is conceived to the day he discovers the diabolic nature of his conception. After the first two scenes and a six-line transition, the narrator reminds us in his own voice that the child is Merlin's half brother (on the father's side, of course), and then continues with a summary of a hundred lines describing Gowther's birth, infancy, and youth. There are some vestigial scenes in this narrative, but none is developed. This is an unusual amount of summary for such a short narrative. In the secular romances brevity is determined by the number of episodes and the reduction of transitions to a minimum number of lines, not by condensing scenic material into summary narrative. In Sir Degare, for example, which contains 1073 lines to Sir Gowther's 750, there is a similar condensation of the hero's youth, but the summarized material is only 34 lines long and

all the other transitions are much shorter. This is not the case in Sir Gowther, as we shall see. At this point, the purpose of the summary is to heighten Gowther's recognition of the source of his evil life, justifying his later suffering by listing the heinous deeds of his youth. The end of the episode, like the beginning, consists of two short scenes connected by a brief transition. In the first scene, an old earl comes to Gowther and tells him that he suspects that Gowther is related to the Devil. Gowther then rushes to his mother's castle, and elicits the truth from her at the point of a knife. He immediately prays for salvation and sets out for Rome.

The second and final episode depicts the process of Gowther's salvation. The episode begins and ends with a scene including Gowther and the Pope. These two scenes enclose several more of varying length up to six and a half stanzas, in which we see Gowther doing penance for his sins.

The first scene, Gowther's audience with the Pope, contains a good example of the narrator's fairly sophisticated use of the stanza form for dialogue. The content of the dialogue is not remarkable, but the technique of rapid exchange within one stanza is unusual. In this scene (lines 262-300), the narrator goes so far as to change speakers in the middle of a line (275). In his audience with the Pope, Gowther explains who he is, confesses his sins, and receives penance and absolution. The scene concludes in mid-stanza, as do three out of the four scenes in the first episode.

Curiously, the composer's use of the stanza form is more flexible than that of many others who use tail-rime stanzas, whereas his ability to build up extended scenes using those narrative blocks is limited. This seems to be a result of his unwillingness to linger over amplification long enough to fill out a stanza.

After a twenty-one-line transition in which Gowther begins to do penance for his sins, there is a second scene, which, like the first, is three and a half stanzas in length. Here Gowther gains entrance to the hall of a certain unnamed emperor. He is sympathetically accepted as a court fool, since, according to the terms of his penance, he neither speaks, nor eats any food except that which he can get from dogs. But it is in the following transition and scene that the action of the episode is initiated. In this transition the narrator discloses the existence of the emperor's daughter, and in the next scene of one and a half stanzas, a messenger announces that his lord, "Tho sawdyn that is of mykyll myght" (379) wishes to marry the emperor's daughter, and will wage war on the emperor until his wish is fulfilled. The emperor replies that his daughter is dumb, and furthermore, that he has no intention of giving her in marriage to a heathen hound. The coincidence of his daughter's being dumb, like Gowther, except that it is not out of choice, sets up a strong sympathy between them which informs the rest of the episode.

Subsequently there are three battles with the sultan,

in which Sir Gowther figures prominently wearing first black, then red, then white armor, a series symbolic of his purification.⁴³ Each of the three battles is introduced by a few lines in which Gowther prays for and receives the armor from God. The first battle is narrated in summary form, and is followed by two transitional scenes. The first of these two scenes is important, although it is only nine lines long. After the first battle, the emperor's daughter, who is the only one to recognize Gowther in his armor, takes to washing out the mouths of two greyhounds with wine, and delivering food to Gowther in this manner, apparently as a reward for his anonymous efforts in the battle. This indicates a new stage in Gowther's penance.

On the following morning, a messenger comes from the sultan with another challenge. The account of the second battle, three stanzas long, differs from that of the first battle chiefly in its fifteen-line monologue, in which the emperor extols the prowess of the unknown knight in red, and compares him to the knight in black of the previous day. Apart from the monologue, the narration cannot be said to depart from summary narrative. Gowther's actions are merely named without being described, and most of the actions so named are iterative. Such items as "He hewde in sondur helm and schelde" (469) are to be taken as general examples of what he was doing throughout the day. After the battle, there are two scenes longer than, but similar in function to, the two transitional scenes following

the first battle. In the first the emperor's daughter feeds Gowther, known as "Hob the fole" (508), as she had on the previous occasion. The scene differs from its counterpart just as the second battle differed from the first, in the inclusion of a monologue by the emperor, reported partly in indirect and partly in direct discourse. In it, the emperor thanks God for the victory, and gives credit to the knights in black and red, without whom the battles would have been lost. The transition following this scene shows Gowther lying exhausted in his chamber, unconcerned for anything except the salvation of his soul. Again, as on the previous mornings, a messenger arrives and renews the challenge.

The final battle scene is by far the longest in the romance, with six and a half stanzas. However, the narrator achieves greater length as much by unimaginative repetition as by the addition of new details. In the first stanza, unrecognized by any save the emperor's daughter, Gowther rides out to the emperor, who is in the front lines. The stanza concludes with some more or less meaningless battle formulas. Diverging from the usual economy of the narrative, the second stanza gives an extended description of the sultan's armor. The account of Gowther in battle contained in the next stanza and a half is banal and lacking in specific detail, except that Gowther kills horses as well as knights and causes the footmen to run away. The narrator comments dryly that those whom Gowther struck down did not need to look for a doctor. Again in this passage, however,

the statements are representative rather than specific (e.g. "Ylke a dyntte that he smotte / Thro-owt steyll helmus it boott" [586-87]). And the narrative becomes even more generalized as the narrator continues. He remarks that throughout the day Sir Gowther would neither speak out, no matter how provoked, nor eat, however hungry he was, anything he could not get from dogs. The next stanza continues with more generalized battle formulas: no Saracen, however strong, dared come within a spear's length of Gowther and the emperor because they were so doughty, etc. Finally, Gowther is able to behead the sultan, but is badly wounded in the shoulder by a Saracen immediately thereafter. Predictably, upon seeing this from her tower, the emperor's daughter faints dead away and remains unconscious for two days.

A good example of the extremely abbreviated style of the narrator is the eighteen line transition which follows:

Tho lord come hom, to meyt was seytt,
 And tho doghtty knyght, withowt leytt,
 That had in tho batell byn
 To chambur he went, dyd of is geyre,
 This gud knyght, syr Gwothere,
 Then myssyd he that meyd on schene.

Emong tho howndus is meyt he wan;
 Tho emperour was a drury man
 For his doghttur gent.
 He gard erlys and barons go to Rome
 Aftur tho pope, and he come sone
 To hur enterment;
 And cardynals to tho beryng
 To assoyle that swett thyng:
 Syche grace God hur sentt
 That scho raxeld hur and rase
 And spake wordus that wyse was
 To syr Gwother varent.

(636-54)

The lord comes home and goes to dinner, while Gowther goes to his room and removes his armor. "Then," he misses the fair maiden. Does he sense or know what has happened to her? We are not told. The next thing we know, he is already in the hall eating his usual fare, but no mention is made of his reaction to the news, although we hear of the emperor's sorrow. This leads to the emperor's order that the Pope be sent for. Now, without so much as a "but" or a "then," God sends the girl grace so that she is able to arise and speak. Her speech takes up most of the following scene. She announces that God has forgiven Gowther all his sins, and that his penance is at an end. She reveals Gowther's identity as the knight who fought for the emperor against the sultan. Then the Pope (no word about his journey or arrival, since he is only important for the role he plays in Gowther's salvation) shrives and kisses Gowther, saying that he is now God's child.

The remainder of the work consists of summary narrative and commentary. Here the religious element finally dominates completely. As soon as he has married the emperor's daughter, Gowther returns to Austria and arranges for his mother to marry the earl who started him on his way toward salvation. He founds abbeys, one with a convent in it in memory of the nuns he once burned to death. Later he succeeds his father-in-law as emperor. The narrator goes on to say that Gowther was always ready to help the poor, and also the rich (in any righteous cause), and to support the holy Church. After

Gowther dies, God performs miracles for his sake; if they seek his shrine, the pure in heart may be cured of their ills. In short, Gowther becomes an unofficial saint, though not a martyr.

The pattern of scenes in Sir Gowther is well balanced, but the scenes themselves are, in romance terms, underdeveloped. Although in many cases the scenes barely emerge from summary narrative, it is safe to say that the narrative depends mainly on scenes of personal encounter, but uses three battles (only one of which even begins to qualify as a scene) at the turning point of the story. The compromise between romance and didactic narrative can be seen here, because the turning point in his penitential experience seems to result from his feats of arms as much or more than from his acts of self-abnegation. The fact that he fights against Saracens is not enough to distinguish his actions from those of any other knight, since Saracen forces figure in many secular romances. The same can be said of the conclusion, where although Gowther continues to grieve over and atone for his sins, he also lives out the rest of his life happily married and powerful. These compromises distinguish the narrative distinctly from a saint's or martyr's legend, and weaken the impact of the miracles performed at Gowther's shrine. However, the shape of the episodes and scenes is consistently arranged to emphasize the religious aspect of the story.

All of this adds up to the fact that if Sir Gowther

does not strictly imitate a saint's legend in form, is not a "hagiographic romance," as Delehay calls it,⁴⁴ neither is it a romance in the full sense of the word. Quite apart from the content-edifying commentary etc.--the structure of the narrative differs from that of the secular romances in its use of summary narrative. Whether one wishes to argue for or against the notion of a romance "genre," it seems that in the Middle Ages romance content and the romance mode generally associate themselves with a certain type of structure, and that deviations from that structure often go together with deviations from the other romance elements, as in the so-called "borderline" romances.

Sir Isumbras was composed near the northern border of the East Midlands in the early fourteenth century.⁴⁵ It is written in six, twelve, and eighteen-line stanzas, but it is not clear whether this was done by the composer or the scribe. It appears to be a romance derivative of the Eustace legend, which in turn is connected with the Eastern legend of the Man Tried by Fate.⁴⁶ Sir Isumbras combines two motifs common to the Eustace legend, the trial and salvation of the hero by suffering, and the adventures of the separated family before their reunification. However, in this version the narrative concentrates primarily on the hero, in order to emphasize his penitential suffering for the sin of pride. Nevertheless, the story contains more romance material, perhaps due to its Eastern antecedents, than does Sir Gowther.

Sir Isumbras opens with a conventional description of the hero in romance terms. He is "dowghty," "ryche," "curteys," "hende," noble, generous, and loved by all.⁴⁷ Perhaps the only one of these epithets that gives a clue to the nature of the story is "ryche," because power and wealth are often taken for granted in romance unless the plot turns on the withdrawal of these things from the person who has them. That this will be so becomes clear at the end of the introduction (after a six-line description of Isumbras's fair wife and three children), when the narrator turns from the initial pleasantries to more solemn matter:

Into his herte a pryde was browghte
That of God yafe he ryghte nowghte.
His mercy ones to nevenne.
(37-39)

Isumbras persists so long in his pride that Jesus sends him a warning. This statement opens the first scene.

The first scene, twenty-seven lines in length, develops the Choice of Woe motif. In the first stanza, a bird delivers the message that Isumbras must choose between suffering woe in old age or in youth, as a punishment for his pride. In the second stanza, Isumbras promptly yields to the will of Christ and chooses to suffer in youth. The second scene is closely bound to the first in a cause and effect relationship. After a three-line transition, Sir Isumbras goes on his way, only to have his horse die from under him and his hawks and hounds desert him in all possible haste. Soon Isumbras

has been deprived of all his worldly possessions, in Job-like fashion, and is left with nothing but his wife and children. Rather than reduce this account to summary, the narrator uses the device of reports brought to Isumbras by "a lytyl knave" who has been sent to him, and by various "herdeman" he meets along the way. His response to the news that his dwelling has burned to the ground is to rejoice that at least his wife and children are safe; to the herdsman's report that all his cattle and horses have been stolen, he replies that "God bothe yeveth and taketh" (100). This pious tone also prevails in his conversation with his wife and children, whom he meets along the way. He explains that

'All the sorrow that we ben inne
Hit is for owre wykked synne:
Worthy we be wel more.'

(118-20)

Thus the dialogue is used to emphasize the pious message embedded in the plot line. The remainder of the story is a combination of adventure and religious trial in which the further consequences of Isumbras's choice are played out.

A twenty-four-line transition (lines 142-65) beginning and ending in mid-stanza, depicts Isumbras and his family wandering as beggars, on their way to the Holy Land. Then, in Episode II, Isumbras loses his wife and children.

The first scene is a rapid narrative account of how the two eldest children are carried off, one by a lion and

the other by a leopard. The twenty-seven lines afford a modest development in this scene. Most of the scenes in Sir Isumbras are more fully developed than those in Sir Gowther. The second, third and fourth scenes of two and a half, six, and two and a half stanzas respectively, show how Isumbras loses his wife. In scene 3, a heathen king who lands somewhere on the coast of "the Grekys see" with a fleet of ships, becomes enamoured of the wife of Isumbras, and offers to buy her. He also tries to convince Isumbras to join his service and renounce Christianity. Isumbras refuses both these offers in pious terms, with the result that he is beaten soundly and left on shore with his youngest son and some gold, the gold in exchange for his wife. In the fourth scene, his wife just manages to give him a recognition token and some food and drink before the heathen king sets sail, taking her with him.

A thirty-line transition separates this group of scenes from the final scene of the episode. In summary form, the narrator relates how, after Isumbras and his son have wandered for a day and spent the night on a hill, a unicorn carries off his son while a griffin flies away with the gold. Now Isumbras' deprivation is complete, although he still has his health, unlike Job. The final three stanzas of the episode describe his actions once he is completely alone. The first of these stanzas consists largely of a prayer in which Isumbras appeals to God for guidance. The second stanza contains four lines in which Isumbras

encounters a group of smiths, four lines of dialogue in which they offer him work and he accepts, and four more which slip into summary narrative. The final stanza summarizes his seven-year apprenticeship, during which Isumbras works energetically while he is learning to make himself a suit of armor. With that, the second episode concludes and the narrator turns to new matter.

The third episode is very brief and covers its narrative ground with dispatch. A stanza of summary narrative informs us that during that seven-year period, the heathen king (of Episode II) was at war with Christendom. A date is set for battle between the heathen forces and those of a Christian king, and Isumbras decides to join the battle in the armor that he has made. Following the transition there is a thirty-line battle scene and a six-line conclusion to the battle in summary narrative. The active participation of Isumbras in the battle does not begin until the eighteenth line of the scene, however, since considerable attention is given to his prayer for grace in the field, and his blessing himself as he starts into battle on a draught-horse. The actual deeds of battle are dealt with in cursory fashion, as follows: "Ther was no man withstode his dynte / Tyll his sory hors was sleyn" (437-38). Lines 439-44 depict a more specific occurrence: after his horse is slain, an earl leads him out of the battle and provides him with a new horse and a new suit of armor. When he returns to battle, however, the narration becomes vague: "The knyghte

slewe all that byfor hym stode" (449) etc. The six lines of summary which conclude the account of the battle explain that Sir Isumbras slew the heathen king and won the battle. In the second of the two scenes in this episode, Isumbras claims to be a "smythes manne," and is praised by the Christian king ambiguously when he says, "I trowe nevur smythes manne / In werre were so wyghte" (469-70). But Isumbras remains silent, for his humility is a part of the penance he is doing to atone for his pride.

In a twenty-five-line transition, Sir Isumbras, while recuperating at a convent, decides to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Episode IV begins with forty-two lines of summary interrupted by a brief scene in which Sir Isumbras has a vision. The episode opens with a report of Isumbras' seven years of penance in the Holy Land. One day in a vision he sees an angel, who tells him that his sins have been forgiven. The rest of the summary narrative then moves Isumbras quickly along to the point where his fortune will start to improve as a consequence of his successful period of repentance.

In the final section of summary narrative before the second scene, Isumbras wanders about still destitute, until he hears of a rich and generous queen who gives a florin to all who come to the castle gate, and takes in fifteen of the poorest every day. Of course the queen takes pity on Isumbras and invites him into the hall. This thirty-four-line personal encounter consists largely of narrative rather

than dialogue. The narrator describes the queen briefly, emphasizing her wealth and power. A steward leads Isumbras to a place of honor. Isumbras, who has become melancholy and nostalgic at the sight of so much joy and "game," attracts the attention of the queen. She summons him to sit by her and asks him about his travels. At the end of their conversation, she decides to give Isumbras a chamber and a page to serve him, for her lord's soul, "And for his love if he on lyfe be" (590). Needless to say, this is a hint to the audience that cannot be ignored.

This hint is soon followed by another. After a twenty-one-line transition in which Isumbras attracts the queen's attention again by his brilliant performance in a tournament, a brief scene follows in which he discovers the gold he had lost, in the nest of a griffin. More transitional narrative makes use of the discovery to bring about a recognition scene. A rumor spreads to the effect that Isumbras is in possession of some gold which he must have stolen from the queen. Squires bring her the gold, and recognizing it, she immediately calls for Isumbras. Then partly in dialogue and partly in indirect discourse, the story is told, the recognition tokens produced, and the reunion effected. Although the scene is seventy-two lines long, there is a minimum of amplification, for the recognition motifs are highly dramatic in their simplest form. In fact, these motifs are so effective that they temporarily cast a shadow over the religious theme. The narrator presents the reunion

for its own sake and refrains from presenting it as the reward for the piety of Isumbras. This is of course implicit in the plot.

In contrast, the following scene seems to be a contrived lesson in piety. It has the potential to be an episode in its own right, but is condensed almost to the minimum and tacked onto the end in order to tie up all the narrative threads. In the transition following the recognition scene, Isumbras is crowned king and returns to a state of earthly joy. He challenges the Saracens, and they assemble in the hope of destroying him. In the ensuing battle scene, the supporters of Isumbras all flee, leaving no one but Isumbras himself and the queen. Not wishing to lose Isumbras a second time, she decides to go into battle with him and face what seems to be certain death: two Christians against over 30,000 Saracens. However, at the last minute three knights arrive, the first on a leopard, the second on a unicorn, and the third on a lion. Together, the five Christians manage to slay the 30,000 Saracens along with their two kings, for Christ has mended their sorrows. After the battle the knights disclose their identity, and Isumbras kneels and prays for Christ's blessing. A twenty-line summary conclusion states that Isumbras has all his subjects christened, gives kingdoms to his sons, and lives devoutly for the rest of his life.

Sir Isumbras has four episodes containing a total of fourteen scenes, of which eight are personal encounters,

three are purely narrative scenes, two are battle scenes, and one is a vision. Although the scenes on the whole are more fully developed than those in Sir Gowther, there is somewhat less dialogue than is usual in secular romances, where scenes are often constructed almost entirely out of dialogue. Furthermore, like Sir Gowther, Sir Isumbras has an unusual amount of summary narrative for a romance of this length, 288 lines out of a total of 798, that is, over a third. The narrator concentrates closely on the material essential to Isumbras' fall from prosperity, penance, and reward. However, some of the motifs connected with this plot development, such as Gowther's battle with the sultan who abducted his wife, and the recognition scene, are common in secular romances and are here only tangentially religious in their implications. Judging from the apparently widespread popularity of this work,⁴⁸ it exemplifies a very successful blend of entertaining and pious material, of which the latter is almost entirely in narrative as opposed to homiletic form.

Emare is a late fourteenth century version of the Constance saga and the legend of the Outcast Wife. While no immediate source is known, there is considerable evidence to support the theory of a French source.⁴⁹ Apparently contemporary compilers considered it to be a legend or devotional tale, since they placed it among religious works in the collection now known as Cotton Caligula A.II.⁵⁰ Despite the theme of patient suffering and the female pro-

tagonist, Emare is usually classified as a romance because of its folktale themes--for example Paternal Persecution (father-daughter incest), Accusation of Animal or Monstrous Birth, and Exchanged Letter (wicked mother-in-law)⁵¹--the romantic amplification of these themes, and the lack of overt homiletic explications of the pious themes. In his book Exemplarische Romanzen im Mittelenglischen, however, Hanspeter Schelp has shown that the romance elements actually support the exemplary purport of the text.⁵²

The first two stanzas of Emare comprise a prayer, a justification for opening with a prayer, and a statement of the subject of the narrative. The following four and a half twelve-line stanzas introduce the Emperor Artyus and his daughter Emare, emphasizing her great beauty and describing her upbringing. Beginning on line seventy-nine, the first scene recounts the visit of the King of Sicily, who brings the emperor a gift of richly decorated gold cloth. Once in motion, the narrative continues for ten lines, shifts to description for six, and then, after a stanza of dialogue (stanza 9), lapses into description again for another sixty lines. In short, by line 180, there have only been a total of thirty-four lines of scenic narrative and dialogue. The summary narrative and non-narrative material are far from gratuitous, however, since, as Schelp has shown, the robe to be made out of the cloth so lavishly described is a symbol of Emare's virtue. The lovers depicted on the robe exemplify faithful love, the unicorn and the maiden represent chastity,

and, according to Middle English lapidaries, the jewels either symbolize chastity or are only effective in its presence.⁵³ The weight given these static elements is borne out in the rest of the narrative, where Emare, wearing the robe, impresses everyone she meets as an unearthly creature, and is constantly protected from harm by her faith and virtue.

Following scene 1, there are two stanzas of summary narrative, in which we learn that the emperor longs to speak with his daughter Emare, although we are not told why. Thereafter there are two transitional scenes describing first Emare's return from a ride, and then her dining with the emperor. It is typical of the mediocre technique of the composer that this second scene is barely distinguishable from the transitional matter, despite its central importance to the plot. It is here that the emperor becomes infatuated with his daughter and determines to marry her.

The rest of Episode I works out this unfortunate turn of events. A transitional stanza describes the emperor's successful petition for the Pope's permission to marry his daughter. Three additional lines of the next stanza narrate that, on hearing of the Pope's approval, the emperor has a robe made for Emare out of that gold cloth presented to him by the King of Sicily. In scene 4, lines 244-67, the emperor proposes the idea of marriage to Emare, who rejects it in a fourteen-line speech that blends the idea of eternal damnation with that of worldly censure. Oddly enough, the

latter misfortune appears to have the upper hand in her mind, although this may simply be a result of the vagueness of the dialogue. In any case, the result is not long in coming, for after a six-line transition, the emperor puts his daughter out to sea without provisions of any kind. No sooner is the boat out of sight, however, than the emperor realizes his folly, and the rest of the scene, twenty-one lines, is filled with expressions of his remorse: "I wrowght a-ȝeyn Goddes lay, / To her þat was so trewe of fay" (295-6). (The skeptical modern reader may wonder why the Pope did not think of that, but this is of course merely a device to move the plot along towards Emare's evil fate.) After another stanza in which the emperor's subjects search for his daughter at sea and fail to find her, the narrative shifts to Emare herself. This is the beginning of the second episode.

Episode II opens with four stanzas of summary narrative which describe the stormy week which Emare spends at sea, until by the grace of God, the ship lands on the shores of a country called Galys. The narrator stresses the suffering that Emare undergoes from fear, hunger and thirst, commenting that everything that happens is the will of God. In the final stanza of summary, Sir Kadore, the steward of the King of Galys, is introduced into the plot. What follows in stanza 30 is just barely to be distinguished from summary narrative by its limitations of time and space, and its indirect discourse. In the scene, Sir Kadore discovers the boat and the enfeebled Emare, who conceals her name, calling

herself Egare instead. In the next two stanzas the narrative returns by degrees to summary, as Sir Kadore takes Emare home, and she is taken in, restored to health, and becomes a part of the household.

The rest of the episode concerns Emare's meeting and eventually marrying the King of Galys. There are three more scenes of approximately three stanzas each, connected by three-line transitions. Scene 2 is an amplified version of the scene in Episode I in which Emare's father becomes enamored of her. Here the narrator expands on the background of the scene, on Emare's beauty, and on the king's reactions as he falls in love with her. As in the first of these scenes, however, there is no dialogue. In the third scene, the king questions Sir Kadore, and announces his wish to marry Emare. In the final scene the king asks his mother's opinion of the match. Her response is to associate Emare's great beauty not with virtue, as do the other characters in the narrative, but instead with diabolical traits. Episode II concludes with two stanzas of summary narrative in which the king marries Emare, despite his mother's wishes, and a child is conceived.

The fact that Emare's mother-in-law has already been introduced in scene 4 of Episode II might suggest that there should be no change in episode between that scene and the Exchanged Letter material. However, in addition to the stasis achieved by the two stanza summarized account of Emare's marriage, three more stanzas draw the king away from

the scene into a war against the Saracens, just before Emare gives birth to their son Segramour. Thanks to the arrival of Segramour and the absence of the king, the old queen is enabled to set her plan in motion, for naturally the king must be informed of the happy news by letter. Thus Episode III develops the Exchanged Letter theme. In the first scene, two stanzas in length, the mother-in-law gives lodging to the messenger, and while he is asleep, she replaces the letter bearing the news of Segramour's birth with one describing the child as a devil. Scene 2 describes the king's reaction to the letter. It is thirty lines, a little longer than scene 1, for the narrator likes to amplify speeches delivered by characters in the midst of adversity. The third scene shows the messenger returning to the castle of the old queen, and the queen replacing the letter containing the king's response with a forged one of her own, to the effect that Emare and the child must be set adrift in a ship. The fourth scene is three stanzas long. The length may be accounted for by the narrator's amplification of Emare's reaction to the disastrous news. A whole stanza is devoted to a speech in which she accepts God's will and bids the courtiers do so as well.

Episode IV is short; one might say that the whole episode is transitional. It consists of two scenes connected by a stanza and a half of summary narrative, which in turn is followed by a transitional scene of one stanza and a concluding section of summary narrative. The first scene

depicts Emare at sea trying to comfort the child while she experiences terrible fear of her own. Instead of describing pious resignation, the narrator includes a rather angry lament, in which Emare resolves that she ought to curse the sea as soon as she gets to shore for having brought her so much shame. After that she prays, and the narrator emphasizes again that Emare's fate is in the hands of God. In the second scene, a rich merchant named Jurdan discovers Emare and Segramour after the boat has washed up near Rome, and he takes them home with him. The following transitional scene shows him bidding his wife make Emare welcome. Finally the episode closes with two stanzas describing Segramour's childhood.

The beginning of Episode V overlaps in time with Episode IV, and is, in dramatic terms, the conclusion of Episode III rather than an introduction to the resolution of the plot. This modest interlacing seems to support the theory of a French source, for it is not essential and could easily be eliminated. The first scene is forty-eight lines long, quite extensive for this work. In it, the King of Galys, having returned from the war, asks after Emare. He and his steward and the ill-fated messenger discover the old queen's plot in a series of revelations, which give rise to tremendous lamentations. This scene is followed by eighteen lines of summary narrative in which the king's lamentations are stretched out over the same seven-year period mentioned at the end of Episode IV. This brings us up to the point of the resolution.

The remainder of Episode V opens with two stanzas of summary narrative recounting how after seven years of suffering, the king decides to do penance in Rome, and sails there. The rest of the episode consists of four closely connected scenes in which, fortuitously, the king is entertained at the home of Jurdan. Emare sends Segramour to serve his father, who is very moved by the boy's great courtesy and the apparent coincidence of his name with that of his own lost son. Perceiving the king's response, Emare bids the boy reveal his identity, and in the final scene of the episode, the reunion takes place. These scenes are two to three stanzas long, and because of their close proximity in space and time, run right along with minimal transitions. Even in these intimate scenes, however, the dialogue is unusually sparing, about one-third of the total lines.

The same arrangement recurs in the final episode, for the emperor, Emare's father, also concludes that he ought to go to Rome to do penance. In the first scene, Emare tells Segramour to test the emperor's reaction, as he had the king's, and in the second, the boy brings them together for a joyful reconciliation. The work concludes in a single stanza in which the narrator says that a great feast was held in celebration of the general reconciliation. He claims that the story is a Breton lay, and closes with a brief prayer.

However we wish to label Emare, it cannot be called a successful work of art. It is often banal and repetitive,

relatively poor in vocabulary and variety of formulas,⁵⁴ as well as in narrative themes. The basic plot already contains the duplicate banishment, and this leads the narrator to repeat whole scenes, sometimes almost verbatim. Certainly the reader suffers from a sense of déjà vu at any number of points in the narrative. On the other hand, the duplicated plot does afford a nice circularity at the end, when husband and father are restored to Emare in the reverse order of her expulsion from them.

In contrast, let us consider Le Bone Florence of Rome,⁵⁵ composed in the late fourteenth century, probably in the North Midlands.⁵⁶ Also based on themes of treachery and banishment, Le Bone Florence captures the reader's interest because of its skilled narration. The plot is carefully organized in such a way that the main story, that of Florence's separation from her husband, dominates the narrative, while her adventures during this period are subordinated; that is, without being too short to arouse dramatic interest, they are short enough not to take over the narrative so completely as to obscure the main issue. The scenes average over three and a half stanzas in length, and this length results from the amount of detail the narrator is able to include, both descriptive and dialogic. Vivid descriptive detail is a common feature not only of the scenes themselves, but also of the transitions, although these are proportionally somewhat shorter than the ones in Emare. In the scenes, the dialogue, though strictly conventional, stays to the

point and accurately displays the emotions and thoughts appropriate to the situation at hand. Less passive than Emare, Florence's virtue also remains at the center of the tale from the time of her role as a romance heroine at the beginning, to her exemplary role as a healer at the end. Partly, I suspect, because her virtue is not expressed primarily in the form of passive suffering, there is proportionately less summary narrative than in Emare. However, even Le Bone Florence's 34% is significantly higher than that in the secular romances.

Emare, on the other hand, often referred to as a borderline romance, deviates from romance forms in certain important respects. Structurally, Emare contains an unusual amount of summary narrative, over four hundred lines or almost two-fifths of the total number of lines. At the same time, the scenes are not richly developed. The majority of them are two to three stanzas long, with several transitional scenes of one stanza. Part of the reason these scenes seem scantily amplified is that the dialogue is very limited; little more than two hundred of the 1035 lines contain dialogue. In addition to these structural elements, the thematic material differs from the mainstream of romance, in that the protagonist is a woman who is a passive rather than an active participant in her adventures. The theme of patient suffering does not, however, produce a clearly didactic work, or even a moralized work with a clear message to convey. This may be the result of incompetence on the part of the adaptor, who seems content to narrate such scenes as that in which Emare refuses her father's incestuous proposal, or the

one in which Emare is adrift at sea with her new-born child, and ignore the thematic potential of such dramatic moments. Even without knowing the source, one can go so far as to say that the author of the extant version of Emare was not strongly aware of shaping his material according to any principle, whether aesthetic or didactic. Emare fails to recreate the Constance saga successfully either as a didactic work or as a romance.

Another Middle English romance which makes considerable use of summary narrative is the northern version of Octavian. Both the northern and the southern versions of Octavian were composed in the late fourteenth century, and both seem to be abbreviated adaptations of the French Octavian, written earlier in the same century.⁵⁷ The southern version retains more of the scenes, though reduced in length, of the original French, and it also retains the mild interlacing of the original. In contrast, the northern version, which is slightly shorter than the southern, and little more than one-third the length of the French Octavian, uses a great deal of summary narrative--about fifty-three percent of the total verses--to condense the original. Some of this summary serves to highlight the piety inherent in the tale, but much of it does not seem to have such a purpose. Curiously, few Middle English romances follow this practice; most retain or intensify the scene-dominated episodic narrative of any given French original, no matter how drastically they reduce its size.

A derivative of the Eusace legend, the plot is based on the theme of the Innocent Persecuted Wife. It concerns Octavian, Emperor of Rome, his wife, and the twin sons they have--after fourteen years of marriage in the French Octavian, after seven years in the northern Middle English version, and immediately in the southern version. When the twins are born, the emperor's mother, whose motives are not made clear, accuses Octavian's wife of adultery and arranges for her son to find his sleeping wife in bed with a kitchen knave. The rest of the story deals with the fate of Octavian's wife and the adventures of her two sons. Although related in some of its themes to Sir Isumbras and other derivatives of the Eustace legend, the plot focuses on the exploits of the two sons, especially those of Florent in Paris, not on the moral experience of the emperor or on the hardships endured by his outcast wife. Thus Octavian cannot be called a didactic romance.

The northern Middle English Octavian has four episodes, of which the third is about five times as long as the others. The first episode recounts the childlessness of the emperor and his wife, their decision to found an abbey in honor of the Virgin, the subsequent birth of twins and betrayal of the empress by her mother-in-law. Falsely accused of adultery, the empress is condemned to be burned to death. But the emperor has mercy on her and exiles her instead with her two children. All of this takes place in six short scenes, connected by transitions which range from 0 to 27

lines. The only obvious signs of piety up to this point appear at the beginning, when the empress suggests the founding of an abbey, and at the end of the episode, when her main concern is that the children may be baptized before they are committed to the flames along with her.

The narrative structure shifts markedly in Episode II, which, unlike the French original, is composed primarily of summary narrative. First there is a two-and-a-half-stanza transition between the two episodes, in which the empress is given forty pounds of gold florins and escorted into the wilderness, where she soon loses her way. The only two scenes are transitional, in that they are actually prayers placed in a sketchy setting. In the first prayer she bewails her plight and asks for divine aid. This is followed by five stanzas of summary narrative, which recount the abduction of her children, one by an ape and the other by a lioness. As a further complication, a griffin catches the lioness and the child and flies off with them to an island somewhere in the "Grekeysch See," only to be killed and eaten by the lioness. The lioness then devotes herself to caring for the child. Having lost both her children, the empress prays again, this time expressing her intention to go to the Holy Land. Now, another section of summary narrative ten and a half stanzas in length, narrates her journey to and arrival in Jerusalem. The ship of pilgrims she has boarded happens to land on the very island where the lioness is dwelling with the infant Octavian. The

mother is reunited with her son, and gains the lioness as a companion, since the lioness will on no account be separated from the boy. By the time they reach the Holy Land, their fame has spread before them, so the king invites the empress to stay in his castle in Jerusalem, along with her son and the lioness. All of these events are narrated in summary form. In Episode II, the narrator departs from the summary expressly to illustrate the piety of the empress, and at no other time.

Episode II, which takes up over three-fifths of the whole romance, concentrates on the youth of the other twin, Florent. This episode has a higher proportion of scenic narrative than do the other three episodes, but this still amounts to only sixty percent of the total number of lines in the episode. There are sixteen scenes of which the shortest is twelve lines and the longest, the recognition scene, is 108. These scenes are connected by transitions that are nearly as long as the scenes themselves. In the third episode, the composer of the northern Octavian is able to create both pathos and humor by the use of scenes which are economically narrated without being too vague or generalized, or so overcome by poor use of conventions as to slip by the memory without leaving a trace. In fact, Baugh points to the northern composer's appreciation and embellishment of the humor in the French version, especially that connected with his use of the character known as Clement le Velayn, as his unique contribution to the story.⁵⁸

The narrative returns to the time when the ape made off with Florent into the forest. In the introductory narrative, a knight manages to save Florent from the ape, but is later overcome by outlaws, who steal both the child and the knight's horse. In the first scene, we meet Clement le Velayn, a citizen of Paris, who is on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In this eighteen-line scene composed mainly of dialogue, Clement, always shrewd and thrifty, bargains with the outlaws and buys Florent at half-price. A fourteen-line transition brings Clement back to Paris with the child, where in another brief dialogic scene he tells his wife that Florent is his illegitimate child. From the start it is obvious that Clement typifies the attitudes of the petite bourgeoisie, and as such, he provides the opportunity for much humor and satire, an element that distinguishes this part of the romance from the tone of the first two episodes.

A two-stanza transition describes Florent's childhood, and concludes by remarking on Clement's intention of making a businessman out of him. The following series of four little scenes is designed to show the error of this decision, for when given the opportunity to drive a bargain, Florent prefers to purchase a falcon, and later a white steed, rather than settle for a pedestrian exchange. In the second instance, Florent actually gives the man more than he has asked, because he feels that the man has not evaluated the white horse at its true worth. In each case, Clement flies into a rage, but is placated by his wife, who perceives that

Florent is a natural aristocrat and no son of Clement's. These scenes concerning Florent's infancy and childhood are not an episode in themselves, like the "enfance" of Perceval, since they develop no pattern of conflict and resolution. Rather, they are an introduction to the central issue of the episode: Florent's part in a war between the French and the Saracens.

Despite the disproportionate length of Episode III, it cannot easily be broken down into smaller episodes because the themes and situations that are generated at the beginning continue without any major shift of focus from scene to scene. With the arrival of some hostile Saracen troops in France, Florent has the opportunity to show off his inborn prowess, dressed as he is in some rusty old armor which belongs to Clement. He slays a giant and saves a Saracen princess, who immediately falls in love with him. During the war against the Saracens, in which he plays a prominent role, he is reunited with his father, who has come to the aid of the French. All this while, he and the Saracen princess are trying to devise a scheme whereby they can be reunited. It is the weaving of this theme into the material about the war, along with the absence of any verbal indications of a change in episode, which prevents Episode III from breaking down into smaller parts. The episode concludes, however, before Florent and the princess can put their plan into effect, for Florent is captured by the Saracens, along with his father Octavian. This impasse opens the way for a new series of events.

The final episode returns to the young Octavian and his mother. Octavian hears of the war against the Saracens, and wishes to go to his father and help him in the struggle. He and his mother journey together to France. Octavian and the lion defeat the Saracens and free their prisoners, among whom Octavian's father and brother are numbered. Subsequently, the final reunion and reconciliation take place, Florent marries the Saracen princess (after she has converted to Christianity), and the emperor's mother commits suicide when she is condemned to death for treachery. As in Episode II, this episode has only two scenes, albeit more developed ones. The first of these scenes shows the young Octavian asking permission of the King of Jerusalem to depart for France, and the second is the reconciliation scene. However, these scenes take up only forty-eight of the episode's 171 lines. This episode is also abbreviated in the French Octavian, though there are more scenes, and all of them are more fully developed than in either of the two Middle English versions. Quite the contrary is true of the French chanson de geste, where the adventures of Florent's brother Octavian are spun out at length. The chanson is not, however, a source of the French romance, but rather an amplification of it.⁵⁹ Aside from this particular version, the others all emphasize the adventures of Florent.

Of the northern Middle English Octavian, Trounce writes that it "has been recognized by the editors as the poem

which exerted the most influence over the others [of the Eustace/Constance type], and it is significant that it is not only the best poem of them, but also in a formal sense a specially characteristic tail-rime poem."⁶⁰ But the position held by these editors and by Trounce had already been contested by E. Adam, the editor of Torrent of Portyngale, who argues that

. . . the contents of Octavian are a great deal more complicated and copious than those of Isumbras, which is simple in its plot and style, and shows the nearest resemblance to the old Eustache legend, whilst Octavian is a refined and adorned version of the legendary tale with considerable change in the plan. Isumbras, of course, bears a strict resemblance to Eustache, but not to the Emperor Octavian, who has but little of the character of a suffering saint, as he does not become an outlaw himself, nor is to lose his earthly goods. Even those of his adventures which are conformable to the original--the separation from his family, the rape of the children, the final reunion--are exhibited in a different manner.

The principal contents of the romance of Octavian bear internal evidence of its later origin, as it treats chiefly of the adventures and exploits of Florent, Octavian's son; especially in the second half of the story, exploits of Florent so prevail that the romance might justly bear his name on the title instead of his father's. I therefore believe that Sarrazin's opinion that Isumbras is nothing but a bad imitation of Octavian is wrong; and I am rather inclined to think the two poems were composed independently of each other, after French originals, as is evidently the case with Octavian, and probably with Isumbras.⁶¹

It is interesting that this "different manner" is actually more marked in the French original than it is in the two

Middle English versions. However, when Trounce claims that in a formal sense it is a particularly characteristic tail-rime poem, either this "formal sense" does not include narrative structure on the level of episodic structure, or his definition of tail-rime poem only includes those of the pious type. It might be possible to say that the Middle English poets were trying to undo the secularization of the French version, although this would be difficult to prove. But the fact remains that the alterations from scenic to summary structure are most pronounced in those sections that utilize the theme of the Innocent Persecuted Wife. It is probable, therefore, than in reducing the French romance, the two English poets were influenced, whether consciously or unconsciously, by the structure of other pious romances in tail-rime stanzas that deal with a similar theme.

Amis and Amiloun is another romance that makes use of summary narrative differently from its French and in this case its Latin analogues.⁶² The genesis of the romance and hagiographic versions of the tale has been presented by MacEdward Leach in his edition of Amis and Amiloun (EETSos 203). He takes the view that this story of sworn brotherhood ultimately derives from folklore, and subscribes to Huet's theory that its plot is basically a combination of two widespread folktales: The Two Brothers and The Faithful Servitor. Leach breaks the story down into its several motifs and shows how some developed from their origins in folklore into the form we encounter in romance, while other motifs were abandoned.⁶³

The first recorded version of the story as we know it is in a group of eleventh century letters written in Latin distichs by Radulfus Tortarius (Raoul le Tourtier), a monk of the Abbey of Fleury-sur-Loire. Celebrating various famous friends, he claimed that the story of Amici and Amelii was already widely known.⁶⁴ This 204-line capsulized version of the story contains one scene, the judicial combat, a scene which takes up almost half of the narrative as a whole. The next extant records of the tale are extended narratives which developed into two types, the romantic and the hagiographic.

According to Leach, the romantic versions are closer to the primitive folktale roots, while the hagiographic versions add elements not essential theme of friendship. "The formula is: the non-hagiographic, non-Christian French chanson de geste of Amis and Amiloun plus the Vita Hadriani and the Annales [regni Francorum] gives the hagiographic and Christian Vita Amicii."⁶⁵ The extant chanson de geste,⁶⁶ which dates from between 1200-1250, is, according to Leach, a somewhat later version of an eleventh century poem that inspired both the romantic and the hagiographic branches of the story.⁶⁷ Actually, though, it has more in common with the hagiographic versions in the details of the youths' infancy and childhood, their later connection with Charlemagne, and their death at Mortara. However, their martyrdom is not stressed as it is in the hagiographic versions.

In structure the chanson de geste is almost purely

scenic. After the initial ninety lines of introductory narrative, most of the laisses contain scenic narrative rich in dialogue, while the transitions are very brief. The hagiographic versions contain a fairly large proportion of scenic narrative as well. In the Vita Amici et Amelii carissimorum⁶⁸ the proportion of scenic narrative to summary is approximately sixty to forty. However, nearly half of the summary narrative belongs to the telescoped conclusion describing the war between Charlemagne and Didier of Lombardy, in which Amicus and Amilius are killed, as well as their subsequent burial in separate churches, and the miraculous rejoining of their tombs in one place. Discounting the (in Kölbing's edition) 122-line conclusion, the rest of this prose narrative is dominated by dramatized encounters, some of which are quite well developed.

The Middle English Amis and Amiloun has nearly the same proportion of scenic narrative as its probably source, an Anglo-Norman poem of which the earliest extant manuscript dates from around 1200.⁶⁹ In both the Middle English and the Anglo-Norman poems, about a third of the verses are devoted to summary narrative, including the introduction and conclusion, although the Middle English version is twice as long. The subject matter, too, is very similar, differing in certain important respects from the hagiographic versions. Here is the plot as divided into episodes by Dale Kramer:

(section one)

1 -	24	author's preview of plot
25 -	60	conception, birth, and description of boys

61 -	132	duke's feast, and invitation to boys
133 -	203	knighthood, pledging of first troth
204 -	216	steward described
217 -	240	death of Amiloun's parents
241 -	276	duke refuses to let Amis leave with Amiloun
277 -	336	parting of Amis and Amiloun; cups given
(section two)		
337 -	348	transition; happiness at duke's court
349 -	396	conversation between Amis and steward
397 -	408	transition of a year and a half
409 -	468	duke's feast; introduction of Belisaunt
469 -	492	Belisaunt's languishing over Amis
493 -	516	duke goes hunting, Amis goes to the warden
517 -	672	garden scene between Amis and Belisaunt
673 -	720	feast; steward notices Belisaunt's looks toward Amis
721 -	780	bedroom tryst; steward watches
781 -	900	steward reveals all to duke; duke attacks Amis; the trial is set
(section three)		
901 -	924	Amis laments about 'forswearing'
925 -	972	consultation between Amis and Belisaunt; decision to go for Amiloun
973 -	1008	journey, on horse and foot, of Amis
1009 -	1042	Amiloun has dream; prepares self, and leaves home
1043 -	1140	meeting of Amis and Amiloun in forest
1141 -	1188	first day of Amis at Amiloun's house
1189 -	1248	arrival of and arming of Amiloun at the battle
1249 -	1284	warning by the angel
1285 -	1392	fight, awarding of Belisaunt to Amis (Amiloun)
1393 -	1422	healing; journey of Amiloun home
1423 -	1452	Amis and Amiloun meet; part for separate homes
1453 -	1500	Amiloun and wife; he tells all; she castigates him
1501 -	1524	marriage of Amis and Belisaunt
(section four)		
1525 -	1560	transition--Amis to dukedom, Amiloun to leprosy
1561 -	1608	Amiloun's illness increases
1609 -	1692	life in hut of Amiloun and Amoraunt
1693 -	1716	wandering in land of plenty
1717 -	1752	life in a town; famine comes
1753 -	1788	they get an ass from Amiloun's wife
1789 -	1860	travelling; sell ass, buy cart
1861 -	1884	arrival at Amis' castle
1885 -	1908	description of Amis' feast

1909 - 1950	Amis' servant and Amourant talk; Amourant refuses to leave his master
1951 - 2017	Amis' servant and Amis talk of the beggar
2018 - 2034	squire gives wine to Amiloun
2035 - 2064	squire and Amis talk of beggar's gold cup
2065 - 2184	beating of Amiloun; recognition ⁷⁰

Here I would argue for an additional episode marker, not only because the first test has its own episode, but because the closure after the recognition scene and the stasis of the twelve month period seem to demand it. Kramer continues,

2185 - 2196	transition; 12 months
2197 - 2244	visits by angel to Amis and Amiloun (separately)
2245 - 2268	Amis' decision; others go to church
2269 - 2316	Amis kills children
2317 - 2364	Amis bathes Amiloun in blood
2365 - 2421	Amis tells wife; rejoicing; find boys alive
(section five)	
2422 - 2448	trip to Amiloun's land
2449 - 2471	disruption of the bridal
2472 - 2490	Amiloun disposes of his possessions
2491 - 2508	conclusion; death of both ⁷¹

The romance opens with a long introductory episode. The first 216 lines of summary narrative describe the youth of the boys and their oath of brotherhood. The remainder of Episode I has three short scenes which correspond to Kramer's "death of Amiloun's parents" (Amiloun asks leave to return to his land); "duke refuses to let Amis leave with Amiloun"; "parting of Amis and Amiloun; cups given." Only the third of these scenes is fully developed with dialogue and actions. The transitions, lines 241-58 and 276-88, are nearly as long as the first two scenes.

In the second and third episodes the structure is more obviously akin to the purely secular romances. Episode II has nine scenes ranging from one to twelve stanzas in length. The longest of these scenes is that in which the duke's daughter Belisaunt woos Amis in the garden. The narrator dramatizes this scene in a charming way, while at the same time he skillfully suggests the sinister possibilities which are to be played out in the rest of the romance. Other substantial scenes include the steward's observing Amis and Belisaunt as they dine, and the confrontation between Amis, the steward and the duke. Aside from one forty-eight-line transition between scenes 1 and 2 in which Belisaunt and Amis are described, the rest of the transitions are modest in length.

The structure of Episode III is similar, with five short scenes grouped into two time frames. The first of these incidents concerns Amiloun's dreaming that his brother needs him, and his finding Amis asleep in the woods. Amis has been searching for Amiloun to ask for his help, so they exchange identities and Amiloun sets out for the duke's court. The second group consists of three closely related scenes of three, four, and six stanzas respectively: Amiloun's arrival in the place of Amis; the angelic warning of the consequences of his actions; and the battle between Amiloun and the steward. Again, after a thirty-six-line transition between Episodes II and III, the transitions do not exceed twenty-four lines, and they are primarily con-

cerned with moving the characters from one location to another. In Episode IV, however, the narrative structure alters considerably.

The subject of the first half of Episode IV is the patient suffering of Amiloun as he endures leprosy, humiliation, banishment from his home, and finally starvation. In his article "The Middle English Amis and Amiloun: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?"⁷² Ojars Kratins explains that in the Middle Ages leprosy was regarded as a disease sent by God either as a punishment for sins or as a test of saintliness. The Middle English poet improves the traditional story line by associating Amiloun's leprosy with the ambiguous oath that he takes in order to save Amis, instead of his marrying Belisaunt in place of Amis, as it is in other versions. Kratins points out that

By transposing the warning to a spot before the combat, the English adaptor provides a sound reason for Amiloun's illness and thus links the two sacrifices constituting the test of trewþe in the strongest possible way . . .

The angel does not threaten Amiloun with punishment (þou schalt haue an euentour strong" is a morally neutral statement); rather, he puts Amiloun's trewþe to the test by placing before him a choice. Thus the meaning of the disease in the English poem is no different from that in the Vita: it is a visitation of divine grace with the goal of verifying, before the tale is over, that both friends in the severest trials "trew weren in al þing," as the poem states at the outset.⁷³

Kratins concludes that because Amiloun meekly responds to his

affliction as a test of his trewþe, this romance must be set apart from the usual secular romances, whose values are of a more worldly nature. In contrast to most secular romances, Amis and Amiloun conforms to the pattern of a saint's life, which Kratins sees as a literary genre with a narrative pattern based on piety as its raison d'être and principal characteristic. Amis and Amiloun are not saints, of course, because it is their loyalty to each other, rather than to God, that is being tested. However, according to Kratins, the analogy between their trewþe and faith in God is undeniable.⁷⁴

The structure of the first half of Episode IV supports Kratins' thesis. Here the structure deviates noticeably from the plan of Episodes II and III, for there are large blocks of summary narrative connected by scenes of one or two stanzas at the most, rather than the other way around. The theme of patient suffering does not lend itself to dramatization, since suffering as such is by nature a passive activity. In this section, Amiloun's disloyal wife and his faithful nephew Amoraunt (Owaines) provide occasion for all of the very sparse dialogue. The 330-line section devoted to Amiloun's period of affliction is a considerable amplification of the corresponding material in the Anglo-Norman version (if this is in fact the source, or close to it). It contradicts the usual tendency of amplification in romance to expand summary narrative into scenes. The importance of this section, as Dale Kramer shows, is that although it is

poetically flat and undramatic, it adds to the spiritual depth of the narrative and helps to justify the later child sacrifice.⁷⁶

The second half of the episode, which contains the recognition scene between Amis and Amiloun, supplies the drama lacking in Amiloun's period of suffering. This twenty-four-stanza scene, the longest in the romance, develops with excellent timing the intense encounter between Amis, now the duke, and Amiloun. At first Amiloun does not wish Amis to know who he is, so he sends Amoraunt to beg for some food and drink. When Amis learns that a leper outside his gates possesses a cup exactly like the one he gave to Amiloun, he runs outside and accuses the leper of murdering or at least benefiting from the murder of his friend and brother. He begins to beat him violently, until Amoraunt feels compelled to reveal Amiloun's identity. Amis's and Belisaunt's joyful acceptance of the leprous Amiloun into their home sets the stage for the second test of fidelity.

Episode V consists of five scenes of six stanzas and less, connected by transitions of no more than one stanza. These scenes depict the testing of Amis. In the past few years, critics such as Kramer, Kratins, and Mehl have begun to appreciate and praise the skill displayed in this narration. Kathryn Hume demonstrates how the pathos of the duke's decision to sacrifice his children for the sake of his friend and his wife's generous response to the deed are particularly well expressed in the Middle English version.

Having distinguished Amis as the more passive in the friendship, as well as in the shaping of his own fate, Hume shows that the severity of his trial corresponds to the fact that it was his initial passivity which precipitated the trouble.⁷⁶ After Amiloun has been restored to health and the children restored to life, the poem concludes with a rapid, summarized account of Amiloun's return to his country. Here he punishes his wife and gives his lands to Amoraunt. Finally, he rejoins Amis, they have an abbey built in Lombardy, and ultimately they are buried there in one grave.

The superimposition of Christian motifs on the pre-Christian theme of sworn brotherhood creates some moral ambiguities that the Middle English poet deals with effectively but cannot completely eliminate. For example, in his book The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature, Saul Brody shows that Amiloun is fully conscious that in sacrificing himself for his friend, he is sinning against God. Therefore, according to Brody, the leprosy is definitely a punishment as well as a test of loyalty.⁷⁷ Kratins attempts to resolve these ambiguities with his concept of "secular hagiography"; that is, he sees the Middle English Amis and Amiloun as a secular tale that makes use of some of the narrative conventions peculiar to saints' legends. To support this argument, he points to the use of explicit references to a Christian universal order in the Middle English text, the angelic warning (as opposed to "une voiz" [l. 1077] in the Anglo-Norman poem), the use of leprosy and

Amiloun's patient endurance of it, and the miraculous restoration of the children to life on Christmas Eve. On the other hand, Hume is skeptical of Kratins' concept for two reasons. First, she questions the validity of equating with saints heroes who must kill innocents and lie to escape just punishment. Second, she notes that Amis and Amiloun retains "the essential thrust toward earthly prosperity and all the romance harmonies, rather than heavenly bliss."⁷⁸ Perhaps Kratins pushes the heroes' piety a bit too far. However, in its use of divine intervention and the theme of patient suffering, the poem deviates significantly from romance structure.

The romances covered in the first half of this chapter present little or no difficulty in classification. The subject matter is chivalric, the mode--with minor exceptions--idealized, and the structure scenic. It is among the pious romances that we encounter the deviations from the usual romance format which cause such works to be labeled "didactic," "homiletic," and "exemplary," even though not all of the works so labeled are explicitly religious or heuristic. For our purposes, the cause of the deviation, whether it is the intention of the composer or the influence of other forms, is less important than the results. It is essential to note that deviation from romance structure, especially the extended use of summary narrative, is not a necessary concomitant of exemplary narratives. However, where the romance structure has been altered, the results can readily

be seen in the content and mode of a work as well. These works are the "borderline" romances.

In the following chapter, I should like to look at some alliterative works, among which there are other significant deviations from romance form.

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CHAPTER III

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CHAPTER IV

Alliterative Romances and Heroic Narratives:
The Influence of Heroic Themes

In comparison to the romances in couplets and tail-rime stanzas, the alliterative long lines, with their potential for detail and ornamentation, slow down the pace of the narrative, whether the works are stanzaic or continuous longlines. In one sense the alliterative line is similar to the shorter lines of the other verse forms, in that the bulk of information comes in the first half of the line, because the second half must concern itself with completing the structural unit.¹ The purely narrative information in each line may not exceed that of the shorter four stress lines of romance couplets, but the specificity of detail within an individual line is often significantly higher, as we shall see. And this potential is increased by the tendency, mentioned by Benson, to elide subjects and condense clauses.² In short, the loosely termed alliterative "romances" employ a different type of poetic progression to narrate what sometimes proves to be a rather different kind of story.

Religious principle as a source of cause and effect is not the only kind of deviation in the structure of the Middle English romances. We have already seen how certain

northern poems such as the Carle of Carlile, the Avowynge, and Sir Perceval of Galles question the validity of the courtly ideal, even though they make use of a code based on that ideal to predicate action. The tendency to depart from certain aspects of romance mode and structure while using romance properties is even more pronounced in the alliterative poems, which are associated with an heroic tradition quite separate from French courtly narrative. There is a whole body of formulas and themes inherited from, or influenced by, Old English alliterative poetry, which help to shape the Middle English alliterative romances somewhat differently from the English romances composed in couplets and tail-rime stanzas.

Since there are relatively few extant alliterative narratives, and some are of the highest quality, the plan of this chapter differs from that of the previous chapters in that it concentrates primarily on two major works, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Morte Arthure. First, an examination of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, along with the Taill of Rauf Coilyear, will illustrate the tendency of northern alliterative romances to alter the idealized mode common to the Middle English romances in couplets and tail-rime stanzas. Second, a consideration of the Seige of Jerusalem, the Morte Arthure, and the Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy will show how deviations in content, mode, and structure cause these works, sometimes classified as romances, to depart altogether from the realm of romance.

First I shall discuss two romances composed in alliterative stanzas, the Taill of Rauf Coilyear and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Written in the last third of the fifteenth century,³ the Taill of Rauf Coilyear is composed in stanzas of thirteen lines riming ababababcbdddc. The final four lines in each stanza are two stress and not necessarily alliterative. This "Gawain-school" stanza suffers neither from the relentless pace of the four stress couplets, nor from the restricted syntactic patterns of the tail-rime stanzas. The wheel at the end of the stanzas in Rauf Coilyear, with its triple rime, conveys a strong sense of closure at the end of each stanza, but the periodic finality is counteracted by the relative freedom of the longer lines in the rest of the stanza. The narrative structure of Rauf Coilyear conforms to the familiar pattern. In its three episodes there are thirteen scenes, of which eleven are personal encounters dominated by dialogue, one is an interior monologue, and one is a battle scene that includes a considerable amount of dialogue. The narrative links are typical of short romances, varying from 0 to 39 lines (three stanzas). Hence the importance of Rauf Coilyear lies not in its overall structure, but in the type of story associated with this structure.

The poem belongs to the Charlemagne cycle inasmuch as Charlemagne, here Charles, and Roland are two of the main characters, but its setting and point of view are far removed from any French influence. The tale is based on the folklore

motif known as the King in Disguise.⁴ This motif, which also turns up in certain non-alliterative northern tales such as King Edward and the Shepherd,⁵ lends itself to a distinctly popular tone. However, in keeping with Per Nykrog's suggestion about the courtly authorship and satiric intent of the French fabliaux,⁶ one can see that in this northern Middle English romance, the popular tone creates a satiric level, although it is not always clear who or what is being satirized by means of the popular tone--the court, the populace, or the romance mode itself. What is clear is that the tale contains a level of burlesque which is difficult to reconcile with the idealized tone of the majority of English romancers, who (unlike certain continental romancers such as Cr  tien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach) avoid mixing registers. Bloomfield's comment in his essay "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: An Appraisal" is pertinent: "But not all romances are straightforward tales of adventure, or rich pageantries of chivalry, or even religious quests, but some indeed are at one and the same time witty, ironical, and religious. Such a one is, I believe, Sir Gawain."⁷ In this respect, Sir Gawain and the vastly inferior Rauf Coilyear share a humorous element which is more pervasive than it is in the majority of southern romances.

Rauf Coilyear opens with three stanzas of summary narrative which recount how Charles and his retinue ride out one winter morning only to be separated from each other by a sudden and frightful storm. Descriptions of storms are

often particularly convincing in northern poetry--no doubt the element of personal experience gives life to the tradition--and the two-stanza account in Rauf Coilyear is no exception. Needless to say, there is no trace of L'Ile de France in the landscape presented to us as the countryside surrounding Paris. The storm is described as follows:

And as that Ryall raid our the rude mure,
 Him betyde ane tempest that tyme, hard I tell,
 The wind blew out of the Eist stiflie and sture,
 The deip durandlie draif in mony deip dell;
 Sa feirslie fra the Firmament, sa fellounlie it fure,
 Thair nicht na folk hald na fute on the heich fell
 In point thay war to parische, thay proudest men and pure,
 In thay wickit wedderis thair wist nane to dwell.
 Amang thay myrk Montanis sa madlie thay mer,
 Be it was pryme of the day,
 Sa wonder hard fure thay
 That ilk ane tuik ane seir way,
 And sperpellit full fer.⁸

In order to begin discussing the alliterative style, I shall compare this passage with one from Ywain and Gawain in which Colgrevance describes the storm he produced at the well of Salados the Rouse:

þe weder wex þan wonder-blak
 And the thoner fast gan crak.
 þare come slike stormes of hayl and rayn,
 Unnethes I might stand þare ogayn;
 þe store windes blew ful lowd,
 So kene come never are of ðlowd.
 I was drevyn with snaw and slete,
 Unnethes I might stand on my fete;
 In my face þe levening smate,
 I wend have brent, so was it hate,
 þat weder made me so will of rede,
 I hopid sone to have my dede;
 And sertes, if it lang had last,
 I hope I had never þeþin past.⁹

This account is narrated in the first person, and the storm itself results from supernatural causes, but there are enough other similarities in the two descriptions to warrant a comparison.

Because it is supernatural, the storm in the second passage produces the ill-effects of more than one type of storm at the same time, and these effects are represented by a list of nouns, "thoner," "hayl and reyn," "windes," "cloud," "snaw and slete," "levening," and the verbs that go with them, "gan crak," "come," "blew," "smate." A few adjectives and adverbs add even more specificity to the picture, "wonder-blak," "fast," "store," "ful lowd," "kene," "hate." In addition, several phrases of the knight's reaction, though repetitive, intensify the effect of the scene (lines 372, 375, 376, 378, 379-83). The sentence structure is paratactic; that is, each couplet is a separate syntactic unit. This structure produces a simple accretive gradation of intensity leading up to Colgrevance's desperation in the last four lines (379-83).

Whereas the rapid metric pace of the couplets and tail-rime stanzas creates a strong tendency to depend on individual nouns and verbs, the longer alliterative lines not only afford the opportunity to replace vivid verbs and nouns with more elaborate adverbial and adjectival collocations, it often requires such a group of words to meet the demands of the alliterative versification. Thus we hear that the wind "blew out of the Eist stiflie and sture" (RC, 16), and the

"deip" (meaning unknown) "durandlie draif in mony deip dell" (RC, 17), But far from moving rapidly along from one new cause and effect to another as in Ywain and Gawain ("hayl and rayn, / Unnethes I might stand þare ogayn"; "snaw and slete, / Unnethes I might stand on my fete"; "levening smate, / I wend have brent, so was it hate"), the alliterative poet adds specificity to what he has already described: "Sa feirslie fra the Firmament, sa fellounlie it fure, / Thair nicht na folk hald na fute on the heich fell" (RC, 18-19). He builds up a total explanation of why the king and his retinue are on the point of perishing, and only then makes a statement to that effect, twice, for emphasis. Then in a perfunctory manner more akin to that of the four stress couplet, the narrator uses the wheel to report that the knights were dispersed in all directions. This is a cumulative, as opposed to an accretive, gradation.

In the fourth stanza of Rauf Coilyear the narrative opens out into the first scene, in which the king, separated from his retinue, happens to meet Rauf the Collier. In this stanza the king approaches Rauf and asks him his name. The collier tells the king what he is called, what he does for a living, and where he lives. Although Rauf is disposed to complain about his hard lot in life, this does not seem remarkable, because "villains" often have a comic function in romances which otherwise adhere consistently to a lofty tone, a serious middle style. However, the motif of the King in Disguise extends the possibility of humor from the

collier himself to the king, and indeed, Rauf promptly takes the king to be a highwayman. This creates a shift in register that dominates the romance from this point until the end. In the first episode the king is at Rauf's mercy; later the tables are turned. The tone depends throughout on a chain of comic narrative devices: Rauf's gruff treatment of the king, his surly courage in the face of Roland's condescension, the king's practical joke and dubbing of Rauf, and the account of Rauf's winning his spurs. This late romance, which at first seems to be making fun of an ill-mannered peasant, slowly develops into a burlesque on knight-hood.

In the first scene, Rauf agrees to give the king shelter for the night, but criticizes him sharply for expressing his gratitude before he sees how he is received. The transition to the second scene is a mere two verses at the end of the seventh stanza. The second scene, three stanzas long, takes place in front of Rauf's cottage. Here, as Rauf rather harshly orders his wife to prepare a fire and some supper, his roughhewn generosity begins to show through. At the same time, however, he insists quite violently on his dignity, humble though he may be. When the king offers to let him enter the house first, he takes hold of the king and pushes him through the door, protesting aggressively that the king must have forgotten all the courtesy he ever knew, not to grant him, Rauf, the honor of being lord of his own possessions, that is, of entering the house last. The remainder

of the narrative is based on these themes, Rauf's generosity and petulant courage in defending his honor.

The following three scenes form a dramatic unit, consisting almost exclusively of dialogue. The first of these scenes is a dramatic expression of the two themes mentioned above. Just as Charles had refrained from entering the house before Rauf, he now is unwilling to be the first to sit down at the supper table. For this discourtesy--as Rauf sees it--Rauf strikes the king to the floor. But when the king, though infuriated, finally begins to see the wisdom of obeying Rauf's commands, Rauf immediately becomes open-hearted and confidential. He entertains the king with all kinds of "daynteis," not the least of which is a generous helping of venison from the king's forest, while complaining bitterly about harassment from the king's game wardens. After one last cup of wine, they retire to the hearth.

Although the characters remain in the same place during the next few stanzas, these stanzas must not be considered as an individual scene, because they are separated by a considerable lapse of time, which is compressed into five lines of summary narrative (lines 222-26). After some hours of conversation, Rauf asks the king who he is. The king answers that he is a gentleman of the queen's bedchamber, named "Wymond of the Wardrop" (241), and adds that if Rauf comes to court, he will see to it that his coals are sold at a good price. On the following morning, in the final

scene of Episode I, Charles repeats his offer of the night before, as Rauf has refused any payment for his hospitality. The device of setting a peasant up for a practical joke as a means of rewarding him is not original to this poem, but is a component of the King in Disguise motif. Here, the humorous potential is well developed in the dialogue. In taking advantage of the audience's special knowledge, the narrator suggests the contrast between the proud Rauf we have seen, and the baffled, if not terrified, Rauf we are going to see in Episode II.

The dialogue of Episode I owes some of its effectiveness to the alliterative form itself. The longer lines do not necessarily bring with them a more sophisticated syntax, since in many cases the half-lines resemble the full lines of the couplet or tail-rime stanza forms, both in length and amount of information conveyed. (See lines 237-9 in Rauf Coilyear and 109-114 in King Edward and the Shepherd.)¹⁰ Two other factors create this greater flexibility. First, the syllabic count is looser, for the couplets tend towards a certain syllabic regularity, if scarcely towards a true iambic meter. Second, there is a reduced (elsewhere a non-existent) demand for rime words, so that the syntax is not brought up short every three to eight words. In the couplets, the rime words produce a tendency toward syntactic closure of sub-units in a given sentence, whereas the phrases in the alliterative lines would often amount to enjambement if the half-lines were written out one by one. In other

words, the long line can be a single, unbroken syntactic unit, although it need not be. The necessity of using alliterating words, often set formulas, restricts the vocabulary and the syntax, in that it necessitates the use of numerous adverbial and adjectival phrases, often redundant. But the very opportunity to use those phrases, as opposed to the compressed subject-verb-object continuum and brief modifiers of the couplets, makes the alliterative line a better vehicle for convincing dialogue, though not for fast-paced narration.

The longest transition in the poem, three stanzas of summary narration, stands between Episode I and Episode II. Here we learn that Charles rides off, and meets Roland and Oliver, who have been searching for him all night with a force of a thousand men. They return together to Paris to celebrate Christmas. The first scene of Episode II, only two stanzas in length, returns us to Rauf and his wife, who dispute the advisability of Rauf's going to court. Gyliane remembers how hard her husband struck the stranger, and also suspects that he is not as lowly a person as he claimed. But Rauf replies, "That I haue hecht I sall hald, happin as it may, / Quhidder sa it gang to greif or to gawin" (382-83). This insistence on keeping his word is the beginning of an identification of Rauf with the conventions of knighthood.

The following stanza and a half present a borderline scene, really transitional in intention. Charles summons

Roland, and in a speech of nine lines, bids him to watch on the moors and conduct the first man he meets, whoever he may be, to court. He repeats this command at length, for emphasis. Roland finds the idea rather peculiar, but sets out to do what he is told. The following scene of 155 lines gives a detailed account of the encounter between Roland and Rauf, in which Rauf meets Roland's insolence with great spirit. The scene features a classic two-stanza description of Roland's armor, encrusted with gold and precious stones, a stunning sight which affords Rauf the opportunity to ponder skeptically, "War he ane manly man, as he is weill maid, / He war full michtie" (486-87). This scene culminates its parody of knighthood, in which Roland is the ill-mannered aggressor and Rauf the hero defending his honor, with Rauf's challenging Roland to do battle on the following morning.

After two more brief scenes, Rauf, still undaunted, makes his way into the royal hall. The hall itself merits another lavish two-stanza description, which prepares the audience to sympathize with Rauf's stunned reaction to it. But the difference between Rauf and his counterpart in King Edward and the Shepherd is that despite his misgivings, the incongruity of a collier in the midst of the highest nobility, and their scornful treatment of him, he moves on courageously until he catches sight of the king--not because he wants to earn money from the sale of his coals, but because he has given his word. His relationship to his surroundings here is not unlike the relationship of a full-fledged knight to

the supernatural surroundings of a fairy castle, except, of course, that here his wonder is described ironically. Despite the irony, however, and despite Rauf's very real terror when the king begins to describe his boisterous hospitality, it is significant that Rauf does not merely wish he were back on the moor, but rather that he were back on the moor with either the king alone or one of his knights, however bold. This indicates that Rauf is perfectly prepared to defend himself, as long as the odds are fair. Although this is to some extent a celebration of the manly courage of the populace, Rauf's reward in romance terms cannot be to become an heroic representative of the common man, but instead he is knighted, giving him symbolic eminence to match his inner courage.

The third episode begins with an interior monologue, in which Rauf reflects that it would be a disgrace not to live up to the honor bestowed on him by the king, and he determines to fulfill his promise to meet Roland (783-93). The remainder of the episode concerns Rauf's first battle and the aftermath. Lest we forget that we are hearing a tale which purports to be part of the Charlemagne cycle, Rauf's initial battle proves not to be with Roland, as he first imagines, but with a Saracen. The humor of this scene lies in its conventionality; that is, the diction and actions of a stock battle between knightly heroes are applied to Rauf, sometime collier, and a fierce Saracen astride a camel. The narrator does not make use of the

ignorance motif as in Perceval, but lets both these worthies rush at each other with such violence that their spears are shattered into splinters and their steeds slain from the force of the collision. They continue to do battle on foot. The narrative is a banal though mercifully brief recitation of battle formulas, but the dialogue is lively. Once Rauf discovers that his opponent is not Roland but a Saracen, he fights on with renewed vigor until the arrival of Roland himself. At this point the narrative gives way to six stanzas of dialogue between Roland and the Saracen, a stock argument between Christian and pagan knights, in which the latter is ultimately convinced to convert to Christianity (see the Sowdon of Babylon). The three knights swear eternal friendship and return to court, where Rauf is awarded the position of Marshal of France. He then sends for his wife, and founds an abbey on the spot where he met the king. Thus the tale concludes. Although it deviates from the expectations about romance that one develops by reading the secular romances in the southern tradition, Rauf Coilyear offers an idealization of its own. The faults and excesses of knighthood are parodied, along with conventional behavior and type-scenes, but Rauf's simple courage emerges victorious from the challenge of the nobility, from the king's practical joke, and from the sport of the narrator's parody.

On a more sophisticated and courtly level, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight also contains a pervasive level of humor and irony which is unusual in English romances in

other verse forms, especially those written in the south. To some extent, such irony counteracts the idealization which is a typical feature of the romance mode. The well-meaning irony with which the hero is viewed in Sir Gawain leads to a second deviation from this mode, since Gawain appears to be only relatively "superior in degree" to ordinary men. Because of the hero's fallibility, the morality of the tale is more accessible than that of tales in which the ethical position of the hero is either unquestionable, or not at issue. Furthermore, unlike many romancers who stress the hero's ethical purity, the Gawain-poet refrains from didactic commentary, preferring to weave the moral issues into the fabric of the text situations. It is Gawain himself who finally comments on his own shortcomings. Moral without being didactic, this romance is idealized in a more profound sense than that of romances about superhuman heroes, for it is a celebration of courage and humility in the face of human weakness.

Although the structure of Sir Gawain reflects many of the basic features of the romance form, it has also been influenced by the Old English poetic tradition. Larry D. Benson has shown how the Gawain-poet uses bracketing devices, parallel structures, and the structural variations of the Old English literary tradition in order to indicate meaning through the form of the poetry.¹¹ Let us examine the poet's manipulation of some of these structural devices in relation to the linear progress of the story and the pattern of scenes and episodes.

At the beginning of the romance, after establishing the historical frame in order to distance and authenticate the tale, the narrator introduces the initial situation in the third and fourth stanzas: it is the Christmas season, and more particularly, New Year's Day, at Arthur's court in Camelot. In stanza 5, the narrator prepares the audience for the "outrage aventure" he has promised them in the introduction. He does this, of course, by means of the motif of Arthur's refusal to dine on festive occasions until he has heard a tale of some marvel or adventure, or until a knight in the court has been challenged to a joust. Given the binary nature of narrative choices, the audience learns that the very first event narrated will of necessity be strange and adventurous, without knowing what kind of event it will be. The Gawain-poet uses this stock device to produce a characteristic effect, for he conceals not only the nature of the coming adventure from the audience, but also the dramatis personae. In order to extend the atmosphere of suspense, the poet includes another stanza describing the feast and the most important members of the company, without focusing on anyone in particular (he has already described Arthur and Guenore in the preceding stanzas) or deviating from the atmosphere of joy and equanimity. Thus the hero of the romance does not become detached in the mind of the listener from the other members of Arthur's court until the fifteenth stanza, the first time he is required to act.

Long before this occurrence, however, the stasis is shattered by the "aghlich mayster" who is, we learn at the very end of stanza seven, completely green. This is another instance, much commented upon, of the Gawain-poet's technique of withholding information until the moment when it will have the optimal effect on the audience, and of his dramatic use of the wheel.¹² A further example of the poet's sense of timing is his use of description, which in this case delays the action predicated by the entrance of the Green Knight for three stanzas.¹³ The intricate description of his person, clothing, horse, and of the huge axe he bears along with a holly branch betokening peace, is an amplification of the brief effictio in stanza seven.

In giving us three stanzas of pointed information about the Green Knight, the poet also allows us time to respond with the same astonishment as the narrator later attributes to Arthur's court. The ambiguity of the narrator's comment on their stunned silence, "I deme hit not al for doute, / Bot sum for cortaysye,"¹⁴ is the first obvious sign of what Burrow terms "the unheroic temper of Ricardian poetry."¹⁵ In a parody, it would be clear that their reaction had nothing to do with courtesy, while in a more conventional romance, the idea of looking critically at the response of the members of Arthur's court as a whole would be far less likely to occur to the narrator. In the world of the Gawain-poet heroism exists, but it exists within the context of fear, and is consequently more impressive.

This more realistic approach is mirrored in the delayed introduction of the hero, who does not become important until he is in fact important in the narrative, that is, at the moment of his response to the Green Knight. First, however, the narrator presents a dialogue between the Green Knight and Arthur, who at this point still appears to be the hero of the romance. Unlike his courtiers, Arthur is fearless, and he answers the Green Knight's hostile words¹⁶ with an invitation to dismount. In the rest of this stanza and the following one, the Green Knight states his challenge in detail. It is not until the wheel of the fifteenth stanza that Gawain asks permission to take on the adventure.

The remainder of the scene, six stanzas, is an even mixture of dialogue and pure narrative. Five of these stanzas present Gawain's encounter with the Green Knight. The initial stanza contains an elaborate speech by Gawain, an amplification of lines 341-42 in which he asks Arthur to grant him the adventure. It is the first example of Gawain's articulate courtliness, of his humility and his courage.¹⁷ The function of this speech is manifold: as amplification it is ornamental, but it also introduces Gawain to the audience dramatically, while at the same time suspending the narrative in order to create suspense.

The flexibility of the Gawain-stanza is evident in the next stanza, which moves from narrative to indirect discourse to direct discourse between Arthur and Gawain, and then, after two more lines of narration, to direct discourse

between Gawain and the Green Knight, in which Gawain restates and binds himself to the agreement. This kind of inclusiveness is virtually unknown in the tail-rime stanza form. It is the result of the alliterative long line, the variable number of lines in each stanza, and the absence of rime, except in the wheel. But above all, although the Gawain-poet tends to build up his story in blocks of narrative, dialogue, and description in a manner at least superficially similar to that of other romancers, one of the signs of his art is that he does not confine himself to blocks containing only one of these elements at a time, unless he wishes to create a specific effect.

The following three stanzas conclude the action of first scene and episode. After one stanza of dialogue in which Gawain and the Green Knight discuss the details of Gawain's fulfillment of the bargain, an entire stanza is devoted to a narrative account of Gawain's beheading of the Green Knight, and the Green Knight's recovering his head and mounting his steed. Both of these stanzas, like almost all the other stanzas in the scene, are highly pointed. The dialogue is prolonged and specific, circling around important issues, such as the terms of the "game," rather than pushing the story ahead in a general way, as it often happens in romances in couplets and tail-rime stanzas. The narrative of the next stanza is equally pointed. Four lines are devoted to the moment when the Green Knight bares his neck. Each part of the action--his taking a stand, bowing his head so that

the flesh is revealed, and laying his hair over his head in order to expose his neck completely--is examined individually. Gawain's stroke takes six lines, its effect on the body of the Green Knight another three, and the Green Knight's unexpected response the remaining fifteen lines of the stanza. This pointing is a form of amplification; rather than narrating a string of actions, the Gawain-poet chooses what he feels are the essential ones and concentrates on them, breaking them down into their component parts. Thus the "vignette" effect can be applied not only to the construction of a whole romance, but also sometimes to the construction of individual scenes.

In the final stanza of the first fitt, the action draws to a close when Arthur reassures both Gawain and Guenore, despite his own misgivings, and prepares to dine, since the conditions of his partaking of the meal have been amply fulfilled. Nevertheless, the narrator includes certain unstable elements at the end in order to provide for the continuation of the plot. He remarks that the people at court had no more idea where the Green Knight had gone than whence he had come, thereby adding a negative or fearful element that casts a shadow over the apparently lighthearted laughter with which Gawain and Arthur respond to the Green Knight's departure. The gaiety of the feast has been qualified by what has happened, and more particularly, by what is going to happen. In conclusion, the narrator addresses Gawain in his own voice, admonishing him not to

forget his responsibility to complete the adventure he has begun.

Much has been written about the cycles of history and nature as presented in Sir Gawain. The latter cycle is based on a time scheme of exactly a year, from one New Year's Day to the next, within which time the principal events of the romance take place. Less emphasis is placed, however, on the imperfect nature of this cycle, and yet it is precisely on the mutability inherent in the cycle and the mortality which it connotes that the serious tone of the romance depends. The sense of mortality is responsible for the beauty and the sadness of the transition between the first and second episodes. This passage is one of the finest examples in English literature of what a skilled poet can do with a conventional theme (descriptio quatuor temporum anni¹⁸). The poet creates an impression of the swift and irrevocable passing of the year by using a large number of dynamic verbs--most of which are present active indicative--in alliterating positions, and a significant number of concrete nouns, creating sense impressions that intensify the feeling of loss and uncertainty with which the poet concludes the passage, and returns to Gawain's "anious uyage" (535).

That Episode I should consist of a single scene is not characteristic of the romance form, even among other romancers in the alliterative school. But this deviation does not create a gap between Sir Gawain and the ordinary episodic form of romance. Rather, it uses that form to its best

advantage, concentrating on certain crucial moments in the narrative instead of stringing out a series of scenes to create the accretive intensity of the better romances in couplets and tail-rime stanzas. In contrast, Episode II is more conventional in its format, being a combination of summary narrative, scenes, and highly pointed description. The poet's choice of what to narrate in detail and what to summarize indicate an attitude towards chivalry in which civilization and the society of one's fellow men, with all their complexities, refinements, and dangers, are more important to and representative of the human experience than armed combat with human or other foes.

Episode II opens on All Hallow's Day at a feast being given in honor of Gawain. The narrator characterizes the feast in a general way as a display of unfelt mirth that veils the sorrow of the court on the occasion of Gawain's departure. After the banquet, the narrative shifts from summary to the specific moment when Gawain approaches the king to take his leave. At the end of the stanza, the narrative returns to summary in order to describe both the general dismay at the apparently inevitable loss of so fine a knight, and Gawain's courageous good cheer in the face of their grief. In short, the "scene" imbedded in this stanza is minimal, and moves away from summary only long enough to give us a brief illustration of Gawain's resolution and the sorrow of the court. The effect of this is to give the impression, through the narrative, that Gawain is facing certain death.

The next two stanzas depict the arming of Gawain, followed by an additional two stanzas explicating the significance of the pentangle painted in gold upon the red background of Gawain's shield. Like the transitional scene above, the two descriptions can only be called "scenes" in the broadest sense. Although they both concentrate on specific moments in the progress of the narrative, the pointing in both sections is almost completely static; the few action verbs are merely a thread connecting the highly specific nouns and adjectives. What little action there is exists mainly in the brief transition between the two descriptions, during which time Gawain goes to Mass and then takes final leave of the king and the lords and ladies of Camelot. As soon as Gawain reaches the courtyard, his horse's equipment is described in minute detail, as is his helmet. Then, when the narrator begins to describe Gawain's shield in the following stanza, he admits that he proposes to abandon all pretence of continuing the narrative while he explains the significance of the pentangle. Although this is in fact a digression from the narrative, and even to some extent from the Arming of the Hero theme, it has the utmost relevance to the audience's developing concept of Gawain and his relation to the action of the romance. In his book, A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, J. A. Burrow, citing patristic and medieval authorities, speculates that the poet may have intended the figure of the pentangle, or endless knot, to represent the idea of trawþe, in the sense

of the interdependence of each virtue on the others.¹⁹ In any case, the effect of the passage is to identify Gawain with the moral center of the poem. The parallels between the description of Gawain in Episode II and that of the Green Knight in Episode I establish Gawain as the second major figure in the poem, and its hero. There is no ambiguity about the poet's attitude towards Gawain, which he has now spelled out so that we are aware that the main thrust of the narrative is going to be a test of Gawain's inner values, even more than his physical courage.

In order to round off the scene of leavetaking--actually a series of tableaux rather than a scene--the narrator includes a final stanza, framed by Gawain's departure in the first two lines and again in the wheel, in which he depicts the reactions of the people Gawain is leaving behind. These people take the "reasonable" position that Arthur is at fault for sacrificing Gawain for nothing more than a Christmas game. This highlights the fact that Gawain himself appears to be moved by nothing except his promise to find the Green Knight by the end of the year.

From this point until Gawain catches sight of the castle on Christmas Eve, the events of his journey are recounted entirely in summary narrative. Although the focus of the romance is on the testing of Gawain's personal integrity, he must first be shown as a conventional romance hero in the realm of action, before his moral courage can be meaningfully explored. The meaning and intensity of the interdependent

form. The technique is an example of the poet's use of amplification, for the narrative does not continue in the following stanza; rather, that stanza is an amplification of lines 734-39, this time in the form of a scene instead of a summarized account. The poet illustrates Gawain's progress in atten line description of the wild forest through which he is riding. Because Gawain himself could hardly complain about the winter weather and still remain in character, the poet represents the harshness of the cold dramatically by describing the pained song of the birds sitting in the bare branches. The rest of the stanza, fifteen lines, is devoted to Gawain's concern with finding a dwelling where he can attend Mass in honor of the birth of Christ. His prayer to that effect is included, in direct speech, and in the wheel we see him lamenting his sins and crossing himself. One of the most characteristic and wonderful examples of the mysterious nature of romance causality is the appearance of "A castel þe comlokest þat euer knygt a3te" (767) in the following stanza, apparently, but not explicitly in answer to Gawain's prayer. Like the description of Gawain's armor, that of the castle is really a double description, linked by eight lines of narrative in which Gawain gives thanks to Jesus and Saint Julian, and prays for good lodging. In the wheel of the second stanza of description, Gawain calls to the porter who welcomes Gawain warmly, and is joined in his welcome by a number of lords and squires once Gawain is within the walls.

After a transitional scene depicting Gawain's initial encounter with the lord of the castle, the narrator moves on to describe the chamber being prepared for Gawain's visit. The description focuses immediately on the bed, a device which for the moment seems to be a mere rhetorical flourish. The poet continues by emphasizing the very comfortable circumstances in which Gawain finds himself after his long journey. During the dinner that ensues (still part of the scene in Gawain's chamber), Gawain reveals his identity--one of the motifs connected with Gawain is that he never refuses to reveal his name--while the lord of the castle remains anonymous. Having discovered his identity, the entire court rejoices at the opportunity to observe such an excellent example or source of refined chivalrous behavior and discourse.²⁰ Furthermore, as counterpoint to the theme of gracious social intercourse and "luf-talkynge" the author introduces the motif of the lady's alluring good looks. Gawain is quick to notice this when he sees her for the first time, after a brief transitional scene in the chapel, at which point he compares her favorably to Guenore. The lady's attractiveness is also underlined by the author's insistence on the comparison between her and her aged companion. Finally, in a transitional stanza describing the Christmas feast, the poet strikes an ominous note in the wheel, where, despite the assertion that their conversation is "clene cortays carp closed fro fylþe" (1013), he draws attention to the lady and Gawain as a couple when he says,

"Vche mon tented hys, / And þay two tented þayres" (1018-19). This is one of a number of veiled hints that Gawain is slowly being drawn into a situation of which the very charm and sense of well-being constitute as great a threat as the beheading test to follow.

Normally, the matter covered in the second and third fitts would be the subject of one, not two episodes. The hero remains in the same place, with the same people, and more importantly, nothing really happens in terms of the narrative development until Episode III. In Episode II, Gawain is merely being set up for the temptation scenes. This accounts for the fact that the second episode appears to be "something of a piecemeal, Balkan affair."²¹ However that may be, when Gawain says "'Now acheued is my chaunce'" (1081), it becomes clear that from his point of view something definite has happened, for he set out to find the Green Chapel, and it now appears that he has found it.²² The sense of closure here creates a kind of double exposure: on the one hand, Gawain assumes that the events occurring between Saint John's Day and New Year's Day will be a mere interlude between one stage of his adventure and another. On the other hand, the introduction of the Exchange of Winnings theme at the end of Episode II, along with the insistence on the "couenaunte₃" between Gawain and Bercilak, indicates to the audience that Gawain is probably wrong in that assumption.

The scenes in Episode III have been discussed at great length by scholars and critics from the standpoint of both

theme and structure. But because of the high level of sophistication and artistry of the poem, and of these scenes in particular, recent commentary has tended to emphasize the structural aspects of Episode III, especially parallels between the hunting and bedroom scenes. Savage's theory of demonstrable similarities between Gawain's behavior and that of the hunted animals²³ has been largely rejected, except in the case of the fox. Taking up Savage's notion of Gawain as prey, however, Benson observes that the meaning of the situation can only be understood in the light of both narratives, which, taken together, "are a set of variations that blend to point up the nature of Gawain's trial and the extent of Bercilak's involvement in it."²⁴ Interesting in generic terms is Burrow's idea that the effectiveness of the bedroom scenes depends to some extent on a shift from the romance mode to that of the fabliau.²⁵ Martin Stevens sees the comic element as a fourteenth century parody of the outworn courtly love cliché.²⁶ He feels that if the new Gawain presented in this comic tone is outwardly less heroic, he is inwardly a nobler man, "precisely because, like other mortals, he sometimes loses the games he plays."²⁷ In short, it is clear that in order to draw out the significance that the poet sees in the story material, he alters and transcends the very romance conventions on which the story is based.

In order to create a time scheme of simultaneity, the Gawain-poet has interlaced the scenes in Episode III to the

extent that the bedroom scenes are encapsulated within or framed by the hunting scenes, and each of these groups is connected to the next by a scene depicting the actual Exchange of Winnings. In the first and third group, the bedroom scenes have more prominence (in numbers of lines) than the hunting scenes; in the second group the hunt is more extended, while the bedroom scene is compressed. Thus the A B A pattern of the individual groups reflects the structure of the whole episode, and indeed of the whole work.

In the first group, the hunt is not a conventional scene, but small tableaux and iterative narrative which together compress the events of an entire day into two stanzas while giving the impression of pointing by means of a series of "highlights." We see the horses being saddled before dawn, the lord of the castle eating a hasty breakfast after Mass, the hounds rushing out of their kennels to the sound of hunting horns. In the following stanza the hunters enter the forest, and as the terrified deer attempt to escape to higher ground, the does are singled out and driven into a valley. Then, in a fine example of iterative narrative, the activity of the hunt is depicted in terms of the flight of arrows, their striking their target, the wounded deer fleeing from the hounds, and the pursuit of the hunters: "Hunterez wyth hy3e horne hasted hem after / Wyth such a crakkande kry as kÿffes haden brusten" (ll65-66). Thus, by giving a few telling details, the poet is able to give the impression of speed and vigor without losing the vividness typical of highly pointed scenes.

Typical of such pointed scenes is, of course, the first encounter between Gawain and the lady of the castle in Gawain's chamber. On one hand, we see the action primarily from Gawain's point of view, both in the detailed description of the lady's approach, and later in the dialogue.²⁸ But on the other hand, we also see Gawain from an ironic distance, for if the situation gradually becomes more serious as the lady becomes more intent on her prey, the treatment is light and humorous, in keeping with the spirit of what at first sight appears to be nothing more than a Christmas game. The humor and brilliance of the dialogue, in which the lady tempts Gawain to prove his identity by making amorous advances, veils the dangerous intensity of the test to which Gawain is being put. Thus the poet uses the motif of the Unrecognized Test to suggest that the most important human struggles take place on the moral level, and in particular, when they are least recognized as such.

The breaking up of the deer²⁹ is followed by a stanza and a half which depict first Exchange of Winnings. At the end of this scene, as in the two scenes to follow the next two hunting/temptation groups, the poet stresses the renewal of their agreement, sealed with a ritual beverage in the presence of the court. Then, in mid-stanza, he jumps ahead to the following morning and the beginning of the second hunt.

The boar hunt has the properties of a real scene, because the narrator focuses on individual actions that take place

within a restricted time. It is easier to do this in the case of a hunt that involves only one animal. Nevertheless, in order to make the amount of time cover a whole day, the scene is divided by the wheel of the first stanza, which slips into iterative narrative with the statement, "Ful oft he bydeþ þe baye" (1450) etc. After more pointed description of an individual encounter between the hunters and the boar later in the day, the narrative shifts to summary in mid-sentence. The lord gallops after the boar, blows his horn to summon the hounds, and rides through the thick underbrush "Suande þis wylde swyn til þe sunne schafted" (1467). In the same stanza, and again in mid-sentence, the narrative shifts to Gawain and the lady.

The second temptation scene is a variation on the theme of Gawain's identity and his reputation for skill in courtly manners and amorous discourse. Then, after the three-stanza continuation of the boar hunt, the Exchange of Winnings takes place for the second time. By now, Gawain realizes that he is in serious difficulty with the lady, if he is to continue to be loyal to his host and courteous to her. However, he makes no connection between this dilemma and the renewed bargain with his host.

Having given Gawain his word that he will reach the Green Chapel on time even if he stays another day, Bercilak repeats the conditions of the bargain a third time, adding,

"For I haf fraysted þe twys, and faythful I fynde þe.
Now 'þrid tyme þrowe best' þenk on þe morne,

Make we mery quyl we may and mynne vpon joye,
 For þe lur may mon lach when-so mon lyke3."
 (1679-82)

The serious tone of these words belies the jovial context in which they are spoken, and indicates to the audience that Gawain is being tested on some level before he ever reaches the "real" test, that is, the test that Gawain is aware of facing. But thanks to the poet's fine sense of narrative timing, the audience becomes dimly aware of the sinister possibilities and the magnitude of the present test situation, without having any idea, or at least any certainty, of whether or not Bercilak is aware that Gawain is being tested by his wife, or whether there is the slightest connection between this test and the Beheading Game.

The connection begins to emerge in the final group of scenes in this episode. In the hunting scene, the narrator loses no time in bringing out the traditionally wily and devious character of the fox. In the second stanza the scene fades into iterative narrative (note the three instances of "ofte" in lines 1725-28). We see the last of the fox, for the time being, in a final sentence of summary narrative that proves to be the same sentence which introduces Gawain, as he "holsumly slepe3" (1731). And in this same stanza, we learn that, in contrast to Gawain, the lady is not sleeping, but arising in all haste "Ne þe purpose to payre þat py3t in hir hert" (1734). The poet describes how she is dressed, making it quite clear that she has chosen the clothes

she has on for their seductive value. She enters Gawain's chamber, opens the window, and begins to speak. The stanza concludes, "He wat3 in drowping depe, / Bot þenne he con hir here" (1748-49). Thus, in a single stanza, the narrator has included the (temporary) conclusion of the hunting scene, the introduction of the two characters in the following scene, what they are doing, what one of them is wearing and why, and the beginning of the scene proper, with the lady's entrance into Gawain's chamber, her words, and his initial response. Merely to include all these forms of narrative and description in one stanza, and to shift from one scene to another--not only in mid-stanza, but in mid-sentence--would set the Gawain-poet apart as uniquely versatile in the use of the stanza form. But in addition, the poet seems to include all of these things in a single stanza for a purpose, and that is to reveal the significance of the poem by the close proximity of the fox hunt, the lady's seductiveness, and Gawain's depression about the fate which awaits him on the following morning.

The following stanza, linked to the preceding one by the word "drowping" / "droupyng" (1749, 1750), expands on the subject of Gawain's depressed state of mind. He soon notices, however, that the lady poses a very attractive contrast to his thoughts about the following day. But in the next stanza, Gawain faces the temptation offered by the lady and rejects it, his final and definitive comment on the subject coming, characteristically, in the wheel. It is at

this moment, when the worst seems to be over, that Gawain is in the greatest danger--an echo of a similar moment at the end of Episode II. The poet now spends the better part of a stanza narrating Gawain's refusal to give the lady a keepsake, and he continues with another complete stanza in which Gawain persists in refusing one from her, of whatever value. The narrator hints at a possible connection of this test with that of the Green Knight when, in a final attempt to persuade Gawain to change his mind, the lady offers him a green girdle embroidered with gold.

The following transitional stanza has been much disputed.³⁰ In it, Gawain dresses, hides his girdle, goes to confession, is absolved of his sins, and then joins the ladies. That he feels some sense of guilt is obvious when he hides the belt, not to mention his behavior in the final Exchange of Winnings scene. The structure of the stanza encloses the confession between a passage showing Gawain hiding the belt and one describing his evident relief. This sequence seems to indicate that Gawain, in his anxiety and his reluctance to lose his life, has relegated the agreement with his host to sphere in which it was proposed to him in the first place, that of a game.³¹ Otherwise the poet would not assure us that Gawain's confessor "assoyled hym surely, and sette hym so clene / As dome3day schulde haf ben di3t on þe morn" (1883-84). And yet the juxtaposition is meant to suggest to the audience, I believe, that such a rationalization, while not a mortal sin, is a much more serious breach of his own code than Gawain realizes at the time.

After the conclusion of the fox hunt, Episode III ends with the final Exchange of Winnings. Unlike the pattern of the previous Exchange of Winnings scenes, Gawain, dressed in a blue mantle,³² approaches the lord and asks to be the first to fulfill his promise. This uncomfortable exchange is followed by a summary of the ensuing festivities, followed by Gawain's leavetaking. Near the end of the last scene, the lady of the castle and her elderly companion commend Gawain to Christ "with ful colde sykynges" (1982). Since they are both parties to the testing of Gawain, their sorrow and sighs at Gawain's departure not only represent the end of the tests Gawain has undergone so far, but are also part of the next series of tests, which are designed to make Gawain's encounter with the Green Knight as appalling as possible.

At the conclusion of Episode III, the narrator speaks in his own voice, as at the end of Episode I. He addresses the audience with the comment, "3if he ne slepe soundly, sayne ne dar I" (1991). The pleonastic ne in the first clause and the poet's declaration of ignorance in the second strike a negative note for the whole passage. This affects our response to the narrator's remark, "Let hym ly3e þere stille, / He hat3 nere þat he so3t" (1994-95). This comment creates a sense of stasis preparatory to a new phase of action, and introduces that new phase by reminding us of Gawain's quest. The poet rounds off the final wheel with a stock request for attention from the audience, and a promise to satisfy their curiosity about the denouement.

Gawain's preparations for departure at the beginning of Episode IV could more nearly be described as a scene than their counterpart at the beginning of Episode II. Here, the arming is incorporated into the already fully described scene of Gawain's awakening (if it can be called that) on New Year's Day. Furthermore, having described his armor so elaborately the first time, the poet restrains himself from repeating the same material again (an uncommon virtue among romancers), preferring to focus on the green belt. He continues to encourage an ambiguous response to Gawain's possession of the belt by describing it in very positive terms, and in particular, how well it looks next to the red cloth that he has taught us to associate with the pentangle. At the same time, he continues to emphasize the fact that Gawain did not value the belt for its material worth, but "for gode of hymseluen" (2031), and "for to sauen hymself" (2040). These remarks cause some confusion in the mind of the listener (or reader) who probably feels, as Stevens says, that Gawain deserves a "handicap,"³³ but who must sense at the same time that the attitude represented by these remarks falls short of the ideal of perfect knighthood as symbolized by the pentangle.

After the departure scene in the courtyard, Gawain sets out with his guide. It is typical of the Gawain-poet that the summary narrative between that moment and the dialogic scene which follows is also pointed, without deviating however into any distracting scenes, let alone

adventures, as would be the case in many another romance. The poet amplifies the basic narrative statement, "And went on his way with his wy3e one" (2074) . . . "Til hit wat3 sone sesoun þat þe sunne ryces / þat tyde" (2085-86), by eight lines of description. The description gives an intense impression of the wild country and ominous weather, that sets the tone for Gawain's encounter, and constitutes a natural correlative to the response Gawain can be presumed to have towards the situation, a device similar to the use of the snow storm at the very beginning of Episode IV. This is another example of the way in which the relationship between narrative, description, and dialogue, is inseparable from the meaning of the poem as the story material itself.

The dialogue between Gawain and his guide is one of the temptations which are part of the Beheading Game. Even though the guide associates the Green Knight with inevitable death,³ Gawain refuses to be swayed, and rides on. The form of the scene is almost entirely dramatic after the introductory wheel. This in itself is not unusual; on the contrary, the dramatic dialogic scene is a commonplace in romance. What is noteworthy is the subtlety with which the aspect of temptation begins to emerge, for example, in the single adverb "gruchyng," in "quoþ Gawayn, and gruchyng he sayde . . ." (2126). The guide is essentially suggesting that Gawain deny his own nature by an act of rank cowardice.

The climactic scene of the romance begins with pure narrative, becomes gradually more dialogic until after the

Green Knight's third stroke, and then develops into almost uninterrupted dialogue. The narrative is highly pointed, and includes Gawain's reactions. In the first stanza of the scene (2160-88), we see both Gawain's actions and his surroundings in detail, as he rides according to the directions given him by the guide, stops his horse and looks about, notices the "lawe" in a clearing, dismounts and ties his horse to a rough branch on a linden tree, examines the Green Chapel, and responds to it. The degree of specificity is sufficiently high even in the purely narrative passages such as this to explain the unusually integrated role that description plays in the narrative. Unlike much romance narrative, that in Sir Gawain proceeds in a richly, if selectively, described three dimensional world, one which--despite the Gawain-poet's "instinct for the picturesque"³⁵--is rarely an end in itself, but on the contrary is inseparable from Gawain's responses, and thus from the meaning of the romance. In the following stanza, Gawain's misgivings about the diabolic nature of the chapel are further amplified in a monologue. Then, as Gawain approaches the "chapel," apparently in confirmation of those misgivings he hears a dreadful noise, said, in a four line onomatopoetic passage, to sound as if someone were grinding a scythe on a grindstone (2201-04). This similarity is turned to account in another monologue, in which Gawain concludes that the sound is meant to be a threat to him. It is at this moment that the narrative shifts to dialogue.

The narration of the three strokes of the axe takes up five stanzas. Because of the (as yet unexplained) relationship between the present situation and Gawain's behavior in the previous episode, the violent actions of the Green Knight are played down, while their effect on Gawain receives great attention. To express this effect, and intensify it, is the function of the dialogue, which amounts to approximately half of the lines in these five stanzas. The fierceness of the Green Knight's winding up for the blow is actually more tolerable than his holding his hand, an action that provides both relief and further anxiety at the same time. This warfare of the nerves escalates in the taunts of the Green Knight, indicating the essentially psychological nature of the test. It is not a battle in which the opponents are equally matched, but a "game" requiring that Gawain wait for a year in anticipation, and then make an active effort to allow himself to be killed without offering any defense. The narrator's expert sense of timing and control of audience response, apparent throughout these five stanzas, is even more evident in the rest of the scene, as we become aware of the relationship between this scene and the rest of the narrative.

The poet does not reveal the moral significance of the beheading scene until after the Green Knight deals the third stroke, and Gawain leaps out of his reach. Far from being a tacked-on applicatio, however, the revelation of these matters is an integrated part of the narrative situation--

albeit almost purely dialogic--in which the narrator builds up Gawain's understanding of the tests, and ours, while he works out Gawain's relationship with the Green Knight, or Bercilak, to its natural conclusion. He begins this part of the scene with one of the most richly suggestive gestures in the poem, the Green Knight's setting down of his massive axe, and leaning on its blade, in order to observe Gawain. He likes what he sees. After explaining the meaning of the three strokes and minor wound, the Green Knight affirms that Gawain is

"On þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote 3ede;
As perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more,
So is Gawayn, in god fayth, bi oþer gay kny3te3."
(2363-65)

However, the sophistication of the romance may be attributed in part to the fact that Gawain's success is not complete. In contrast to the treatment of a similar theme in didactic romances, here there are no remarks in the narrator's own voice on the subject of man's susceptibility to temptation. Instead, the poet has long been preparing us to perceive Gawain's weakness as the Green Knight does:

"Bot þat wat3 for no wylyde werke, ne wowyng nauþer,
Bot for 3e lufed your lyf; þe lasse I yow blame."
(2368-69)

Not surprisingly, Gawain does not share this view, since it is not up to the individual to have a charitable and merciful attitude towards his own misdeeds. Thus the morality is

expressed in terms of both forgiveness and remorse, however we may care to interpret Gawain's confession to the Green Knight theologically.

As a part of the final revelation, the poet gives the Green Knight a twenty-seven-line speech in which he explains who he is and how the adventure came about.³⁶ Within the context of the tale, the motivation of Morgne is unnecessary, since the test is sufficient in itself to support the narrative, psychological, and moral themes which it sets in motion before Gawain leaves Camelot. And what does Morgne's longstanding hostility towards Guenore and her desire to frighten Guenore to death really have to do with testing the renown of the Round Table? We are not told. Of course Morgne, or Morgan, is sometimes associated with fidelity tests, although this is usually the fidelity of a lover to his beloved.³⁷ But on the structural level, we should observe that the identification of Bercilak and the introduction of Morgne come immediately after Gawain's confession of his "surfet." At this moment the tale could follow two possible developments: it could either continue with the theme of repentance, moving closer to the homiletic mode, or return to the romance mode. The homiletic mode suggests itself (despite the poet's treatment of the temptation scenes at Hautdesert) not only because of Gawain's failure to live up to the characteristics symbolized by the pentangle, but also because the two test themes themselves throw him into an uncharacteristically passive role on the plane of action,

except during the transitional account of his journey to Hautdesert. However, for all its possible exemplary aspects, the poet chooses to continue the story within the sphere of romance. This is the moment when the poet introduces the stock themes of Morgne's hatred of Guenore and her relationship to Arthur, firmly re-establishing the romantic superstructure. The scene then concludes as Gawain rides off to Camelot, while the Green Knight makes his exit from the tale "Whiderwarde-so-euer he wolde" (2488), as mysteriously as he entered into it the year before.

Most of the scenes in the romance, including the second "beheading" scene but excluding the hunting scenes, are personal encounters. In the romances we have looked at so far, personal encounters have consistently outweighed battle scenes, especially in romances about individual heroes, and Sir Gawain is no exception to this tendency. The special richness of these scenes results not only from the high sophistication of the dialogue, but also from the relationship between it, the action, and the description. As in much good medieval narrative, these elements sometimes occur in large blocks, and at other times they are intermingled. The description serves to vivify and idealize the surface of the world Gawain moves in, and it helps--sometimes rather mechanically--to relate that world to the psychological and moral planes, particularly in areas that could not be expressed in dialogue. In addition, description often serves as a means of creating suspense between two blocks of narra-

tive. There are relatively few narrative passages within the scenes, except in the hunting scenes, and their function is largely introductory. Once the scenes have been set in motion, the crucial effects usually emanate from the dialogue, and occasionally, as in the pentangle passage and the third temptation scene at Hautdesert, from authorial comment. The description, narrative, and dialogue are all highly developed in their use of romance conventions, as well as in their deviations from those conventions. Of the latter, the most telling examples are the poet's manipulation of the modal tonality of the work.

The idealization of the hero is not strictly in harmony with the dominant romance heroic image, in that although Gawain has the highest possible personal standards, he is subject to failure. The poet purposefully leaves the tension between ideal and fallible unresolved, right through the final scene at Camelot. Some of the "realistic" touches such as the descriptions of the weather and the winter landscape suggest the suffering that Gawain endures both physically and psychologically, so that his fortitude impresses one even more than that of the romance hero who proves to be absolutely superior in degree, but is moving in a world which is cut from the same cloth. Furthermore, the very humor and ironic detachment of the narrator, besides being entertaining, which they assuredly are, also develop a breadth in our response to Gawain that leads to an understanding of how his humiliation at the end represents

another kind of exaltation. For as Auerbach writes in the first chapter of Mimesis, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, "Humiliation and elevation go far deeper and higher than in Homer, and they belong basically together."³⁸ The poet idealizes the hero in a romance context, but on a scale of Christian values which he makes applicable to the world of ordinary men by challenging the boundaries of the romance mode. The tendency to deviate from the romance mode is inherent in the northern romance tradition, but the brilliance and depth of this dramatic, non-didactic portrayal of heroism on the moral plane are the poet's own.

The remaining alliterative works to be discussed, all written in continuous long lines, deviate in some important respects not only from romance mode, but also from romance content and structure. Until now, most of the narratives under consideration have depended heavily on scenes of personal encounter, while battle scenes played an essential but subordinate role. This emphasis in turn affected the episodic structure, for the episodes were based almost entirely on the cast of characters as they revolve around the hero, very seldom on military campaigns alone. Even those romances that did have a structure based largely on campaigns, such as Richard Coer de Lyon and Arthour and Merlin, still had a loose, episodic structure that depended on changes in dramatis personae and/ or location for their transitions. However, in most of the

alliterative works,³⁹ it is the battle itself which predominates, and although there are distinct episodes, the structure cannot be called episodic in the same sense. On the basis of these structural disparities, we must question the classification of these works as romances.

A comparison between two related works, the alliterative Siege of Jerusalem and Titus and Vespasian,⁴⁰ written in couplets, will make this point clear. We shall see that the Siege of Jerusalem imposes heroic attitudes and structures on the story material, although these attitudes and structures are not built into the tale.

In the Siege of Jerusalem, we find quite a different treatment of the material from that in Titus and Vespasian, one which is consistent with the approach of other alliterative works, such as the Morte Arthure. The author of Titus amplifies the circumstances of Jesus' treatment of and by the Jews into an initial episode of 1164 lines, in order to justify the pitiless revenge taken by Vespasian later on. The author of the Siege, on the other hand, justifies that vengeance by briefly but graphically describing the violence of the crucifixion in the first twenty-four lines. Similarly, in a 266-line episode containing three scenes, the author of the Siege covers roughly the same material that takes up 1600 lines in Episode II of Titus. This episode narrates how Vespasian is healed of two severe bodily afflictions by gazing at the miraculous portrait of Christ brought to him by Veronica (Veroyne). In gratitude he vows to avenge the

death of Christ. This brings the narrative up to the point where the European forces arrive in Jaffa.

At the beginning of the second episode in the Siege, which corresponds to the beginning of Episode III in Titus, the author compresses the warnings to the Jews into an eight-line apostrophe. In twenty lines he narrates the devastation of Syria as the Europeans pass through, following this with a fourteen line description of their chieftains' tents, pitched outside the walls of Jerusalem. In the first scene, messengers arrive from Jerusalem to learn why Vespasian has come. In answer, he tells them that he has come to avenge Christ, and that unless they surrender within twenty-four hours, he will destroy the city entirely. There are two transitional scenes after this, in which Vespasian's messengers are humiliated and disfigured by the Jews, they report to him, and he orders his men to be prepared for battle at dawn the next day. It is at this point that we begin to see the essential differences between this work and Titus. The two most obvious structural differences between these works are the overall construction and the emphasis on war. Very rarely does the author of the Siege digress from the main line of the narrative, in this episode not at all. In contrast, the author of Titus constantly retards the flow of the plot with lengthy monologic flashbacks, doctrinal material, and digressions such as a four hundred line biography of Judas. In the Siege, the only material not directly participating in the flow of narrative is descriptive,

Vespasian addresses his troops at length. Then the battle begins, amid the cry of trumpets, pipes, tambourines, and drums. The narration of the actual battle first generalizes about the actions of the armies and the appearance of the battle field: they take their lances and leap together as does fire from a flintstone; dust rises on high, clouding everything over as if during a thunderstorm. After these general remarks, the narration focuses on the individual deeds of Titus, Vespasian, and Sabyn of Syria, who leads the rearguard. The account is noteworthy for its numerous similes: Titus looks like a boar; Vespasian and the vanguard attack their adversaries like angered griffons; the field gleams with armor and precious stones like beams of the sun; the Jews fall in masses like hail from heaven. While Christ protects the Europeans, the Jews suffer terrible losses and are forced to flee in order to defend the city from the walls. The European forces retire for the night. This is the first of three substantial battle scenes. The second and third of these scenes go into detail about the strategies of attacking and defending the walls of the besieged city. Between these two scenes is a summarized account of the punishment meted out to Cayphas and his clerks. The episode ends with a war council of thirty-seven lines, in which Vespasian and all of his knights determine that the best strategy is to starve the Jews into submission.

Although the third episode, dealing with the effects of the siege, is not as coherent as Episode II, it is a model

of construction in comparison to its counterpart in Titus (lines 3166-5182). The circumstances at the beginning of the episode differ slightly from those in Titus. When news of Nero's death and Vespasian's election as emperor arrives, Vespasian deliberates with his council at some length as to whether he can return to Rome and still keep his vow to avenge Christ. Sir Sabyn convinces him that what is done by his own men is done by himself. Therefore, Vespasian leaves his son Titus in control and goes to Rome to become Emperor. He does not return, as he does in Titus. The rest of the campaign is carried out by Titus. The famine is described briefly in a summary transition, and one scene depicts a specific example of the madness to which the hunger drives the citizens: a mother roasts and eats her own child. (A more elaborate version of the same scene appears in Titus.) There are two brief battle scenes, separated by more description of the effects of starvation on the behavior of the Jews. Finally, in a purely narrative scene, Titus enters Jerusalem, destroys the temple and razes the city walls. The last scene is a dialogue between Titus and Pilate in which Pilate discloses that Jesus was sold for thirty pennies. Accordingly, Titus determines to sell the Jews into slavery at thirty men for one penny. After an eight line account of the fate of Pilate (not two hundred lines, as in Titus) the narrative concludes with the following words:

Whan alle was demed & done : þei drow vp tentis,
 Trossen her tresour ⁊ & trompen vp þe sege,
 Wenten syngyng away ⁊ & han her wille forþred,
 & hom riden to Rome ⁊ Now rede ous our lord!
 (1331-34)

It is important to note that while Vespasian's vow to avenge Christ is emphasized, the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem is practically ignored, as is the religious significance of the war, as the concluding lines demonstrate. The author of the Siege carefully excludes or compresses all narrative, however interesting in its own right, that does not add substantially to the effect of the whole. This work is about the war and only about the war. Battle scenes predominate, whereas the scenes of personal encounter, so prevalent in the majority of romances, are here few and strictly subordinated to the progress of the campaign. It is these qualities--emphasis on the themes of war and vengeance, and the subordination of all local effects to these themes, as well as the exclusion of any love interest--that distinguish this and other heroic narratives from the romances.

The Morte Arthure was composed around 1360 in what was perhaps a Northeast Midland dialect.⁴¹ Although it has been categorized as an epic and a medieval tragedy, it is often listed as a romance because of its Arthurian subject matter (derived primarily from Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth). For example, in her article "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance,"⁴² Kathryn Hume considers it to be one of

those works midway between hero-centered and pseudo-historical romances, a narrative that emphasizes the hero while at the same time the background is "particular, necessary, and to some degree independent of the protagonist."⁴³ According to Hume, the Morte falls well within the provenance of romance as opposed to history. However, Hume makes no distinction between romance and heroic works. Other scholars take this distinction for granted, basing their analyses on the assumption that the Morte is an heroic poem and not a romance. In order to assess the validity of this distinction on the structural level, let us compare the narrative structure of the Morte with those structures that are typical of romances.

The Morte is divided into three overall sections that contain a total of five episodes. The first section introduces Arthur at the point where he has conquered Great Britain and much of Europe, and is challenged by the Emperor Lucius of Rome. The second section, announced by a dream prophesying victory for Arthur, deals with the war against Rome. A second dream depicting Arthur's fall from the Wheel of Fortune introduces the third section, which recounts Arthur's ultimate defeat at the hands of Mordred. It is on the basis of Arthur's ascent to "heigh degree" and subsequent fall, expressed in the image of the Wheel of Fortune, that the work is sometimes called a medieval tragedy.

Although the Morte is genetically close to the chronicle tradition, William Matthews argues,⁴⁴ one can see in its

structure the balanced rise and fall of fully developed medieval tragedies. The effect of the many changes from the received material, apparently made by the Morte poet himself, is to intensify the theme of vengeance, to enlarge Arthur's role and make it central, and to introduce an element of tragedy which offsets Arthur's triumph. Matthews contends that the tragedy is related to Arthur's mounting cruelty, covetousness, and imperialistic ambition, which he relates to similar traits associated with Alexander. Larry Benson cautions us not to look for a tragic flaw in the Aristotelian sense, since the villain is the human condition, the unforeseen chances of life, "for the lesson of medieval tragedy is simply that man is not master of his own destiny."⁴⁵ Naturally, those who stand in "heigh degree" have the farthest to fall. Benson sees the conflict in the Morte not as between good and evil, but as between two goods, Christian detachment and the heroic ideal. The flaw, then, is not in Arthur, but in the worldly ideal of heroic kingship.⁴⁶ Thus, the Morte is an heroic poem, but one in which the heroism is seen in a somewhat different light from that of Old English epic poetry.

The heroic aspect of the narrative arises from its themes of, as Helaine Newstead puts it, "large-scale warfare for political ends and actions with a public rather than a personal significance."⁴⁷ Erich Auerbach emphasizes in Mimesis that the reverse is true of romances: "Here the feudal ethos serves no political function; it serves no

practical reality at all; it has become absolute. It no longer has any purpose but that of self-realization."⁴⁸ Now this process of self-realization is connected with the loose episodic structure of romance, for no matter how excellent an author's grasp of the whole may be, the episodes of a pure romance still dominate the structure as relatively independent adventures or tests of a hero's excellence. In contrast, the five episodes of the Morte are distinctly subordinate to the progress of the whole concept of the rise and fall of a national hero.

The introductory section of six scenes does not deviate in any obvious way from structures typical of romance. After a prayer and a general description of the knights of the Round Table, the poet proceeds to list Arthur's conquests up to the point at which the narrative begins, and he explains how Arthur founds the city of Caerleon. Like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Morte begins with a New Year's Day feast which is interrupted by a hostile challenge. The following five scenes and the transitions between them are--if elegantly worded--equally unremarkable in their narrative structure. The first transition describes the end of the feast and the exit of the knights to the scene of the council. Arthur, as in Sir Gawain, masks his misgivings with an apparently cheerful demeanor. A very brief transition concludes the council and passes over a week, after which Arthur summons the senators to hear his answer to Lucius. Twenty lines of summary narrative take the senators

from Carlisle to Rome, where they report to Lucius. The fifty-five-line link between scenes 4 and 5 contains a conventional list of countries and rulers to whom Lucius writes demanding aid, and a description of the assembling of Lucius' allies at Corneto (Tarquinia) in central Italy. Immediately following these fifty-five lines there is a transitional scene of eleven lines in which Arthur bids his knights prepare for war, and his mariners assemble his fleet at Sandwich. Then the scene changes abruptly to York, where Arthur holds a parliament and names Mordred as viceroy. Equally abrupt is the shift from scene 5 to scene 6, in which Arthur takes leave of his knights and goes to Waynor's chamber.

In its personal tone, the departure scene appears at first sight to conform nicely to our expectations of romance. However, the poet's primary purpose does not seem to be to provide the audience with a love scene, let alone with a motive for Arthur's subsequent achievement. This is very far from the motivation at work in Arthour and Merlin, for example, where Merlin asks Guenevre to kiss Arthur before a battle, and then embarrasses Arthur into a surge of valor by reminding him that he must fight hard to deserve the kiss. Rather, as George R. Keiser observes in his article, "Narrative Structure in the Alliterative Morte Arthure, 26-720," "Surely he adds this scene and the preceding scene with Mordred in order to provide some sense of the personal relationship existing between Arthur and each of the charac-

ters who will betray him, which makes their betrayal, when it comes, seem a much more powerful emotional event than in Wace."⁴⁹ Both scenes are more important as a foreshadowing of future tragedy than they are in their own position in the narrative, a departure from the episodic to a more organic type of narrative. The predominance of this organic structure becomes gradually more obvious in the second and third sections of the narrative.

The first episode (and section) concludes in nineteen lines of summary narrative, as Arthur rides off to Sandwich, where massive preparations are in progress. The second section, which includes four episodes and comprises the bulk of the narrative, begins on line 736, with a vivid and detailed set-piece describing the activities involved in getting the ships under way. Here, as in the third section, the narrative proper begins with a scene depicting a dream and its interpretation. In this case, Arthur dreams of a battle between a dragon and a bear. As soon as he awakes and recounts his dream, two learned clerks interpret the victory of the dragon as a symbolic prediction either that Arthur will conquer a tyrant who is tormenting his people, or that he will conquer a certain giant in single combat. Both of these predictions are fulfilled in the course of the second section of the narrative. In other words, the dream sequence introduces the entire second section, not just the episode which follows it.

In itself, the Mont Saint Michel episode is more

romantic in its structure and implications than the other four episodes in the poem, although, even here, some attempt is made to show political significance in terms of Arthur's destroying a tyrant on behalf of the people. The primary purpose of the incident, however, is to establish Arthur individually as a superlatively courageous and skillful Christian knight, before the war against Rome begins. But the Christian element can be overemphasized. Despite the giant's fiendish appearance and loathesome crimes against Christian innocents, during and after the battle much more attention is given to Arthur's prowess and his physical victory over the giant than to his piety. Arthur is no Sir Galahad. His stock comment attributing the victory to God⁵⁰ is certainly overshadowed by Bedwere's joke about the "saint" whom Arthur has sought out on Mont Saint Michel (1161-69). The tone of the encounter is heroic rather than pious, and the humor concerning the deed is an integral part of that heroic tone.

Several alterations in the narrative have made the episode considerably more dramatic than its counterpart in Wace. At the beginning of the episode, the Morte has a whole scene in which Arthur learns of the giant from a Templar, while in Wace news of the giant is merely reported in summary form by the narrator. Then, in a transitional scene, Arthur tells Sir Cayous and Sir Bedwere that he wishes to go to Mont Saint Michel on a pilgrimage, and when they arrive at the foot of the mountain, Arthur bids them await

him there. In Wace, Arthur tells the two knights his real purpose, and he sends Bedevere ahead to reconnoiter. Clearly, these changes are designed to shift the emphasis onto Arthur alone. Other attempts to sharpen this focus are the elaborate twenty line Arming of the Hero passage, and the compression of the Riton episode from Wace into this one (998 ff.). The descriptions of the giant and his treatment of his victims are more graphic, detailed, and according to Finlayson, symbolic of his fiendish nature.⁵¹ An interesting addition is the final scene of this episode, in which Arthur's grateful subjects thank him for his destruction of the tyrannical giant, and Arthur, after attributing his victory to God, distributes the giant's treasure to the clergy and the common people of the country. In this way, the narrative returns to the political themes that control the work as a whole.

Now that the narrator has established Arthur as an invincible champion, he widens the scope of the narrative in order to deal with the war against Lucius. This is the subject of Episode III. Here we begin to see another deviation from romance structure, for there are more lines devoted to battle scenes than to all the scenes of personal encounter and the transitions put together, although there are only three battle scenes in all. The structure of the battle scenes on the level of motifs is slightly different from that of stock battle scenes in romance, in that, whereas the same organization and the same types of motifs are used,

the motifs are sometimes more graphic and thus harsher. The preponderance of battle as such in the work as a whole is an even clearer indication of a disparity between the narrative structure of the Morte and that of romances, even the ones dealing with warfare on a large scale.

At the beginning of Episode III, two scenes create the situation that precipitates the first battle scene. As in Episodes I and II, this episode is initiated by the utterance of a message, in this case from the Marshal of France. The messengers beg Arthur to deliver the people from Lucius, who is ravaging the country. Arthur sends Sir Boice, Sir Berille, Sir Bedwere, Sir Gryme, and Sir Gawayne to challenge Lucius. It is in the following challenge scene that the heroic theme of demesure is introduced, a theme whose importance grows throughout the course of the narrative.

Scenes 2 and 3 are closely allied by means of cause and effect. In scene 2, Gawayne, as spokesman for Arthur, insults Lucius thoroughly in delivering the challenge. This in itself is nothing but the declaration of a conventional hostile challenger. However, when Gawayne is insulted in turn by the emperor's uncle, Gawayne beheads him and dashes off with his companions. This is a rash, unorthodox act that would be frowned upon in the world of romance. Here, in the immediate context, it appears to be an act of courageous daring and heroic pride. But at the same time, the author employs a theme which he develops gradually into one of the causes of Arthur's ultimate defeat, for it is Gawayne's

demesure which allows Mordred to overcome Arthur's forces. Needless to say, after Gawayne's behavior in scene 2, scene 3 is a battle scene, in which the British forces are victorious. In scene 4, Arthur thanks God for the victory and disposes of the prisoners.

The theme of demesure, developed further in the following group of three scenes, begins to acquire a darker side. In a transitional passage which includes two speeches but no real scenes, Arthur sends a company of twelve knights led by Sir Cadore, and their men at arms, to conduct a captive senator and his knights to Paris. On the way, they encounter a large force sent by the emperor. A scene of 116 lines ensues, based on the motifs of the Challenge and the Leader's Speech of Exhortation. The poet emphasizes the knights' loyalty to Arthur and their opponents' refusal to engage in a fair fight. The length of the passage that amplifies the Challenge motif is unusual; apparently its function is to justify the losses sustained in the following battle scene. Essential to the heroic presentation is the wrath of Sir Cadore, which he feels both for his own sake and on behalf of the Round Table. And although this small band of men is able to defeat thousands of adversaries, the results differ dramatically from those typical of romance. Sir Cadore returns to Arthur and recounts the incident in scene 7, mentioning the number of the enemy that had been killed or taken prisoner, and then lists the relatively small number of their own knights who were lost. Weeping at the news, Arthur responds with these words:

"Sir Cador, thi corage confundez vs alle!
Kowardely thow castez owtte alle my beste knyghttez!
To putte mene in perille, it es no pryce holdene,
Bot the partyes war puruayed, and powers arayed;
When they ware stade on a strenghe, thou sulde hafe
with-stondene,
Bot 3if thowe wolde alle my steryne stroye for the nonys."
(1922-27)

Thus, not only is the heroic theme of demesure introduced fairly early in the narrative, but also a counter-theme stressing its destructive qualities, qualities which will ultimately precipitate the final disaster. The destructive element of demesure appears to be of minor importance at this point, but it shows the poet's concern to unify the work into a coherent whole.

The final two scenes in Episode III depict the full-scale confrontation with the Romans and their allies. After a four line summary conclusion to scene 7, there is another summary section of sixty lines introducing the battle plans. At last the poet presents the climactic battle scene. This scene, 284 lines in length, is very well developed. The scene opens as Arthur and his troops trap the Romans in a valley. When the Romans have prepared for battle, Lucius boasts that they cannot fail to win, since Rome has already conquered all of Christendom and much Saracen territory as well. With that, the engagement begins, opening with individual combat, and alternating between it and generalized battle narrative.

Four of Arthur's knights in succession ride against the enemy, each killing or wounding his opponent. Sir

Lancelot, for example, badly wounds Lucius. The following section becomes more general, as it describes the activities of the British archers, German dart throwers, and a large band of giants. Even in generalized battle narrative, the poet never abandons the use of specific detail to create variety and interest. Briefly, the narrative switches to individual combat, when Arthur takes on Golapas, the fiercest of the giants, then returns to a generalized account of the defeat of the giants and the withdrawal of the Romans. This, however, is far from the end of the battle.

As the Romans begin to retreat, the British pursue them. In a lengthy "close-up," we follow the actions of Sir Kayous, who, after dispatching a large number of the enemy at the edge of a cliff, is mortally wounded himself. The battle continues with Arthur in a fury, avenging Kayous' death. One of the remarkable things about this passage is not merely the amount but the kind of detail. In romances, battle descriptions usually confine themselves to the conventional severing of limbs, cleaving of bodies or heads in twain, and decapitation. The description of wounds is vague and brief. Here, in contrast, the author intensifies the conventional battle motifs by the addition of a more varied and detailed amplification on the subject of the wounded and their wounds, as well as by the occasional grim litotes. For example:

By that swyftely one swarthe the swett es by-leuede,
 Swerdez swangene in two, sweltand knyghtez
 Lyes wyde opyne welterande one walopande stede;

Wondes of wale mene werkande sydys,
 ffacez feteled vn-faire in filterede lakes,
 Alle craysed for-trodyne with trappede stedez,
 The faireste fygured folde that fygurede was euer,
 Alls ferre alls a furlange, a thosande at ones!
 (2145-52)

With a launce of Lettowe he thirllez his sydez,
 That the lyuer and the lunggez on the launce lengez.
 (2167-68)

He merkes thurghe the maylez the myddes in sondyre,
 That the myddys of the mane on the mounte fallez,
 The tother halfe of the haunche on the horse leuyde.
 Of that hurte, alls I hope, heles he neuer!
 (2206-09)

The impression of battle he creates is harsher than that common to romances, in that it includes the horrors of combat as an essential backdrop to the exploits of war.

The battle scene continues with another lengthy passage in which first Gawayne, and then Arthur, attacks Lucius himself. After receiving a vicious blow on the nose, Arthur kills Lucius. As a conclusion, the poet shows the final rout and pillaging, more grim details which would be ill-suited to the world of romance.

In the final scene, Arthur grants mercy to two senators, on condition that they deliver a message to Rome. Episode III concludes with some summary narrative and two speeches, neither of which is part of a scene. The first speech is Arthur's command to the senators to tell the Romans never again to be so bold as to fight for Arthur's lands, or ask for other tribute than the bodies of the slain that he sends them at that time. The second speech is the senator's delivery of the message in Rome, and their account of the

roman defeat. The narrator closes Episode III with a comment that the powerful Romans have been rebuked forever.

Episode IV concerns Arthur's triumphant advancement from Metz to Rome, with emphasis on the conquering of Lorraine. The episode functions as a transition between the major campaigns against Lucius and Mordred. Because of its transitional nature, Episode IV resembles a romantic episode more closely than either III or V. John Finlayson believes that this episode is a typical roman d'aventure encounter. To support his argument, he cites the conventional spring-time opening and Gawayne's motivation, which arises from a need to prove himself in the manner of an errant knight rather than from any socio-political considerations. Finlayson concludes that in some respects, "this encounter serves to contrast the purposeless ritual of the typical romance combat with the serious, political and religious context of the whole poem. This change of atmosphere comes, significantly, at the point where Arthur's wars have ceased to be lawful and have become wars of conquest."⁵² The "change of atmosphere" described by Finlayson does indeed alter the tonality of the work, temporarily, for the urgency of fateful necessity is absent. However, there are indications that the author perceives this more romantic episode as subordinate to the episodes dominated by socio-political motivation. Amplification is somewhat reduced, for the episode begins and ends with extended passages of summary narrative broken only by isolated speeches, as opposed to

scenes, in the manner of much chronicle narrative. Even the climactic issue, the subduing of Rome, takes place in summary narrative, indicating that the episode as a whole is a sort of appendage to the war against the Romans, tying up loose ends. In dramatic terms, it serves to show off Arthur and Gawayne in their roles as conquering heroes, to gratify and lull the audience, delaying and increasing the impact of the final holocaust.

Like the first section of the narrative, the third section consists of just one episode, Episode V. This episode is a sequence of eight scenes which are closely tied to each other by cause and effect. The poet introduces this sequence with an elaborate dream vision in which Arthur sees himself being honored by a beautiful duchess who has descended from the clouds, only to be dashed off her Wheel like the eight Worthies before him. The interpretation of this dream by a "philosophre" expresses the moral theme emphasized by Matthews and Benson. He warns Arthur:

Thow arte at the hegheste, I hette the for-sothe!
 Chalange now when thow wille, thow cheuys no more!
 Thow has schedde myche blode, and schalkes distroyede,
 Sakeles, in cirquytrie, in sere kynges landis;
 Schryfe the of thy schame, and schape for thyne ende!
 (3396-3400)

Although the themes of pride and cruelty are highly important, it does not seem to me that they bring about the specifically religious tone suggested by Matthews. The caprice of Fortune in regard to the powerful seems to be a more important element than any penitence on the part of Arthur. Unlike the

first dream, this one is an integral part of the episode that follows. This dream, however, like the first one, is followed by an elaborate description of Arthur.

Scene 2 introduces the turn of events prophesied in scene 1. At sunrise, Arthur meets his cousin, Sir Cradock, on the road to Rome. Suspense builds up before any disclosure is made, as a result of their failure to recognize each other. Hints of the tragic nature of Sir Cradock's message to Arthur occur before he delivers it. First of all, Arthur's dream and the interpretation create the expectation that Arthur's doom is close at hand. Second, before Arthur knows Sir Cradock, he warns him that the area is exceedingly dangerous, and Sir Cradock replies, "I salle for-gyffe hym my dede, so me Gode helpe! / Onye grome vndire Gode, that one this grownde walkes!" (3488-89). This attitude does not bode well for the news we suspect the "pilgrim" may bring. Third, when Arthur realizes by his accent that the man is from Britain, and remarks that he speaks in such a kindly manner that it comforts his heart (3506), one of the most successful devices for building suspense is at work, for although we fear that the comfort is about to be dashed to pieces, we also hope momentarily that such kindness and comfort may not be the vehicle for catastrophic news. That hope soon dies, however, as Sir Cardock begins to explain the purpose of his journey, and they reveal their identities. Sir Cradock reports that Arthur has been utterly betrayed by Mordred, who has taken over Great Britain, crowned himself

king, and married Gaynor. The scene ends with Arthur vowing to take revenge.

As soon as possible after Sir Cradock's disclosure, Arthur calls a council meeting, which is the subject of scene 3. In a thirty-six-line monologue, Arthur informs his men of the betrayal, and declares his intention to return to Britain immediately. Certain knights are to be left behind to govern. A brief transition then takes Arthur and his troops through Tuscany, Lombardy, and Germany to Flanders, whence he sets sail for Britain. The remainder of the episode concerns the war against Mordred.

Following Arthur's arrival off the shores of England, a series of three well developed scenes recounts the first battle against Mordred. The opening scene in this group, scene 4, contains two sections. The first is an introductory section in which the preparations for a sea battle against Mordred's allies, the Danes, are shown, as well as Arthur's exhortation. The poet depicts the preparations on both sides in graphic detail similar in its pictorial quality to that used in descriptions of battle preparations in the Siege of Jerusalem. The ensuing battle is equally specific in the impression it creates, although it includes no individual encounters. Here is an example:

Be thane cogge appone cogge, krayers and other,
 Castys crepers one crosse als to the crafte langes:
 Thane was hede-rapys hewene that helde vpe the mastes;
 Thare was conteke fulle kene, and crachynge of chippes!
 Grett cogges of kampe crasseches in sondyre!
 Mony kabane clevede, cabilles destroyede!

Knyghtes and kene mene killide the braynes!
 Kidd castelles were corvene with alle theire kene wapene,
 Castelles fulle comliche, that coloured ware faire!
 (3666-74)

Clearly, the specifics in this battle are designed to portray the fate of the ships rather than the fate of individual combatants. The absence of descriptions of individual combat causes this scene to be shorter than the other battle scenes in the Morte. The dramatic emphasis in this episode is not on the sea battle narrated here, in which Arthur's forces win a decisive victory, but on the two subsequent battles, which seal the fate of Arthur and the Round Table.

One of the causes of Arthur's downfall is the demesure embodied in Gawayne. By the time they have won the battle at sea, the tide has gone out, preventing Arthur from landing. Arthur wisely delays his attack on the land forces in order to tend to the wounded and prevent the loss of horses. In contrast, Gawayne, unwilling to wait, takes a ship up a channel until it is grounded. Then, "for grefe" (3726), he jumps overboard and wades ashore. At the outset, Gawayne and his men succeed in destroying the Danish vanguard. Had Gawayne acted prudently after his victory, by holding his position, he might have prevented catastrophe and helped Arthur to defeat Mordred. But the demesure which was the cause of so many victories in the past causes the destruction of Gawayne's force, and ultimately of Arthur's.

The desire for vengeance completely overwhelms Gawayne's rational judgment. Again unwilling to wait, he advances

toward Mordred. Unfortunately, as soon as Gawayne and his followers come into the open, Mordred is able to surround them with the help of his allies, the Danes, the Saracens, and others. Weeping for his men, Gawayne promises that those who fight bravely in the worship of Christ will be rewarded with the joys of Heaven, whereas those who surrender while still able-bodied will never be saved. Gawayne's speech, along with the presence of Saracens in large numbers among Mordred's allies, adds a religious element to the moral implications inherent in the theme of treachery. Nevertheless, in the scene as a whole, it is a secular and heroic standard of values which dominates. This may be seen in the emphasis placed by the poet on Gawayne's heroic wrath. For example:

3it sir Gawayne for wo wondis bot lyttille,
 Bot woundis of thas wedirwynes with wondirfulle dyntes,
 Alls he that wold wilfully wastene hyme selfene;
 And for wondsome and wille alle his wit failede,
 That wode alls a wylde beste he wente at the gayneste;
 Alle walewede one blode, thare he a-waye passede;
 Iche a wy may be warre, be wreke of an-other!
 (3833-39)

Gawayne loses his rational judgment and becomes like a wild animal. The poet refers repeatedly to his irrational, frenzied state. In this, Gawayne resembles Roland far more than he does any knight in romance.

Although the poet is not blind to the weakness of heroic irrationality, the portrait of Gawayne fighting against impossible odds is more moving than a similar account would

be in romance, where a single knight can crush an entire army without difficulty. After Mordred slays Gawayne with a knife, he eulogizes on the subject of Gawayne's nobility and courage. Mordred's respect for Gawayne causes him to feel deep remorse, because of which he withdraws from the field. In a twenty-two-line transition, Mordred retires to Cornwall and writes to Gaynor, telling her to flee with their children. Out of both grief and fear, Gaynor takes the veil. The following narrative returns to the time immediately following Gawayne's death. Arthur is appalled at the news of Gawayne's landing. He hastens to the field of battle only to find his best knights dead and Gawayne among them. Arthur takes Gawayne's body in his arms and laments his death in a passionate speech, in which he perceives that Gawayne's death is synonymous with his own destruction as a ruler. When the narrative has reached the moment of deepest tragedy, it also becomes the most typically heroic. Here Arthur vows to fight against what he now knows to be impossible odds, in order to avenge Gawayne's death. He swears to forsake all activities which would stand in the way of his taking this vengeance. Again in the following scene, in which Arthur delivers Gawayne's body to Winchester, he vows never to rest until he slays the slayer of Gawayne and pursues the pagans who destroyed his people. Thus the theme of vengeance overshadows all other considerations whatever.

These vows link the events leading up to Gawayne's death with the final engagement. The last battle scene,

though not unusual in structure, is beautifully realized. First, the approach of the two forces and their numbers are noted. Unlike the equally balanced forces in Wace, here Arthur's men are outnumbered by more than thirty to one. Arthur exhorts his troops to fight bravely, the trumpets blow, and the battle begins. The fighting is then described in general terms, interrupted by one dialogue between Arthur and a young knight named Idrous. When Arthur orders him to rescue his father, Idrous refuses on the grounds that his father has ordered him not to leave Arthur's side for any reason. This single courageous speech seems to represent the loyalty of all Arthur's men, who have every intention of fighting for Arthur to the death. After thirteen more lines of generalized battle description, the poet comes to the one individual encounter of this scene, that between Arthur and Mordred.

By refraining from the amplification of any other individual confrontation, the poet focuses on the crucial conflict between the betrayed and the betrayer. He immediately draws attention to Mordred's essential baseness, when he states that Mordred has been hiding in the woods until he ascertains that Arthur's forces have been defeated. Even then, he dares not confront Arthur openly, but approaches him in disguise. But despite Mordred's false coat of arms, Arthur recognizes him. At the same time, he recognizes his own sword, Clarente, in Mordred's hand, a sword which had formerly been reserved for peaceful purposes. After a speech

to that effect, one of his knights, Sir Marrate, attacks Mordred and is quickly defeated. The function of this short encounter, in which Mordred is described as "myghty, and in his moste strenghis" (4221), seems to be to demonstrate what Arthur will be up against. Once Sir Marrate has retreated, Arthur challenges Mordred and attacks. In this combat, Mordred deals Arthur a fatal blow in the loins, and Arthur kills Mordred outright. The moment Mordred dies, his followers flee from the field, only to be cut down by Arthur's few remaining men. The scene continues with an account of the aftermath of the battle, when Arthur gathers the bodies of his knights together, and then, distracted with grief, he faints. The remainder of the scene consists of two monologues, in which we can detect an heroic tone which persists throughout the rest of the narrative.

The first monologue occurs immediately after Arthur regains consciousness. Here, Arthur laments the death of the men who had made him "manly one molde, and mayster in erthe" (4279). He attributes the death of his loyal knights to the treachery of Mordred. Although he mourns the loss of his honor, and says that his joy is at an end, there is little evidence of the "penitential mood" mentioned by Matthews.⁵³ The same holds true for the second monologue, which he addresses to the seven score knights who have gathered around him. The monologue begins as follows:

'I thanke the, Gode, of thy grace, with a gud wylle;
That gafe vs vertue and witt to vencows this beryns;

And vs has graunted the gree of theis gret lordes!
 He sent vs neuer no schame, ne schenchiþe in erthe,
 Bot euer 3it the ouer-hande of alle other kynges:'
 (4296-4300)

This is not the speech of a man who is conscious of being punished for having engaged in unjust wars. Nor does it reflect any guilt for the pride he feels in his conquests. It is true that the poet, at the beginning of the episode, sets up a relationship between Arthur's pride and his present defeat. However, if the potentially religious element overshadowed the heroic in the poet's mind, I see no reason why he would not have spelled this out at the end. There is no sixty-six-line speech such as the one in which Darius warns Alexander that "all the welth of þe world · worthis at the last / To cayrayne and corrupcion."⁵⁴ No philosophers approach his tomb and say "Yesterday all the world was not enough for him; to-day four ells of it suffice him."⁵⁵ Furthermore, the only glimpse we have of contrition on Arthur's part is earlier, when he is weeping over Gawayne's body, and he says "He is sakles supprysede for syne of myne one" (3988). This is not enough, in my view, to claim that the narrative is dominated by a penitential mood.

The emphasis on treachery and vengeance is borne out in the final scene at Glastonbury. With his dying breath, Arthur appoints his cousin Constantine as his successor, requests the burial of his knights, and demands the slaughter of Mordred's children. This would be the place, if not before, where a medieval poet bent on displaying penitence

and the vanity of worldly ambition might cause a Christian hero to express some knowledge of his sin. But instead, Arthur says, "'I fore-gyffe all greffe, for Christez lufe of heuene! / 3if Waynor hafe wele wroghte, wele hir be-tydde!'" (4324-25). In other words, he feels himself to have been wronged, more than to have been in the wrong. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the degree of his contrition is "dramatically left uncertain," as Matthews puts it,⁵⁶ because it is not the major thrust of the narrative. The tragedy is there, and the criticism of Arthur is there, but it is the criticism and the tragedy of much heroic poetry. All men are subject to reversals of fortune and to mortality; those whose greatness enables them to defy the inevitable must suffer as a consequence.

There is nothing new or startling in the classification of the Morte as an heroic poem. The point is that, structurally, the fact of its being heroic does not conflict with its being a tragedy, but it does prevent it from being a romance. In its organic structure and its emphasis on battle, in its themes of vengeance, demesure, and fateful necessity, the Morte is essentially an heroic poem. Like many great works of art, however, it manipulates and exceeds the tradition it follows in such a way that, ultimately, it can only be defined as itself.

Another work whose structure differs markedly from romance conventions is The 'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy. Based on Guido delle Colonna's Historia destructionis

Troiaae, it was composed sometime between 1350 and 1400, probably in a Northwest Midland dialect.⁵⁷ Although it is divided up into thirty-six books, this epic work, like the Morte, is not episodic. The "books" often do not correspond to episodes, for they narrate an incomplete portion of a given incident. Similarly, of the "stages" outlined by Lumiansky in Severs' Manual,⁵⁸ some are less than a full episode, while others are more. Naturally, this 14,044 line work has episodes. But the twelve episodes all cluster around one event, the Trojan War. The first six develop the causes of the war, the last five follow the fortunes of certain heroes after the war is over, and the central episode of 8,931 lines depicts the war itself.

After a prologue based on the translatio studii motif, the narrator--always very much in the foreground--recounts the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece. In the tradition adopted by the poet, the story has been modified to explain the origin of the Trojan War. The first episode consists of summary narrative, interrupted by only one scene, a monologue. In this brief episode, Jason is sent to search for the Golden Fleece by his uncle Pelias, who hopes to inherit the throne in his stead. The second episode covers the quest for the Golden Fleece. Implanted in this story are the seeds of the Trojan War.

More fully developed scenically, Episode II corresponds to Books II and III of the text. The first part of this episode is missing, due to a "gap" in the manuscript;⁵⁹

therefore, the editors supply extracts from Guido. This extracted material is essential to the narrative, for it contains the origin of the conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans. In their search for the Golden Fleece, the Greeks decide to rest briefly on the shores of Troy. Laomedon, concerned about the arrival of strangers in his land, sends a messenger to demand that they leave. Incensed, Jason says that Laomedon would not be treated in Greece as he has treated them. Shortly thereafter, Jason's companion Hercules issues a warning to the messenger:

"Amice quisquis es secure referas regi tuo quod ad plus die crastina de terrae suae statione penitus discedemus, sed sequentis tertii anni dies non erit exitura dic illi quam nos videbit si vivet in terram suam velit nolit anchoras injecisse et de danda nobis tunc recedendi licentia nonerit sibi plena libertas cum talis litis ad presens inchoaverit questionem quod priusquam de eo possit superare victoriam ignominiosi dedecoris pondere depremetur."⁶⁰

It seems unlikely that the poet would have left this vital conflict out of the original version of the Destruction of Troy.

In any case, the episode continues in Middle English with Jason's arrival at Colchis. There is a description of the city, and, within a scene in which Aectes welcomes Jason, an extended description of Medea and her "crafte." Two well developed dialogic scenes follow in which Medea offers to help Jason in exchange for marriage, and Jason goes to her room to swear fidelity. There, after they have made love, Medea gives Jason the tokens and information he needs to

obtain the Golden Fleece. The poet loses no opportunity to admonish both Jason and Medea right in the midst of the scenic action. After a brief monologic scene in which Medea expresses her fears for Jason's safety, the final scene of the episode narrates Jason's winning of the Fleece. Finally, in an important summary transition, we see Jason depart secretly from Colchis with Medea, only to ignore her because of his growing rage at Laomedon.

In the third episode, contained within Book IV, the poet depicts the attack on Troy by Jason, Hercules, and the forces they have brought with them from Greece. After Hercules kills Laomedon, at the end of a lengthy battle scene, the Greeks plunder and destroy the city, and take numerous captives. Among these is Exiona, the daughter of Laomedon, who is given to Telamon, the first to enter the city. Here the poet deplores Hercules' rash deed, for in giving Exiona, out of spite, to a king whom he knew to be lecherous, he helped to precipitate the catastrophe which was to follow. Next comes the narrative conclusion of the episode, in which the Greeks depart with their spoils. However, this is not the final word on the incident. The narrator has certain comments to make, beginning with a proverb:

A word þat is wrappid, and in wrath holdyn,
May feson as a fyre with a fuerse lowe,
Of a sparke unaspied, spred vnder askys,
May feson vp fyre to mony freike sorow,
(1426-29)

From there he goes on to discuss the causes of the Trojan War,

anger and hatred, which were inspired by nothing more than "vnkynd wordes."

At the end of Book IV, there is a forty-four-line introduction to Episode IV. In this introduction, the narrator introduces Priam, Ecuba, their five sons, and their three daughters; he also alludes to the numerous other children Priam had by concubines. The beginning of the narrative is a brief summary passage in which Priam, informed of the defeat, returns home from a distant land. Overcome with sorrow, he decides not only to restore the city but to make it stronger than ever before. In a lengthy descriptive passage, the poet paints a picture of the new Troy, and of Ylion. The narrative continues with five scenes in which Antenor, chosen as messenger in a council meeting, goes to the Greeks to ask for the return of Priam's sister Exiona. He speaks to Peleus, Telamon, Castor and Pollux, and Nestor, respectively, and is told that Priam must win his sister in combat. The episode closes as Antenor, having returned to Troy on stormy seas, relates this message.

The fifth episode narrates the Trojan decision to respond to the challenge of the Greeks. This episode consists largely of three council meetings, of which the longest is that between Priam and his sons. In this scene Paris recounts his awarding of the apple to Venus; the incident occurred in a dream. After the decision has been made, the episode concludes with Cassandra predicting the destruction to come, in a series of apostrophes addressed to Troy, Priam,

and Ecuba. The narrator comments on the fact that Priam ignores both Cassandra's and others' warnings, and attributes the resulting catastrophe to Fortune.

The sixth episode (Book VII) concerns the expedition of Paris and his company of 3,000 men to Greece. After their arrival in Sithera, Elan (Helen) is inspired by a report of Paris' astonishing good looks to desire a meeting. Here the narrator digresses on the subject of the shamelessness of women, and points out in an apostrophe to Elan that the disaster might still have been averted, had she had the good sense to stay at home. When Elan enters the temple of Venus, Paris is captivated by her beauty, leading the narrator to a classic sixty-six-line description of the type recommended in the rhetorical manuals. Later, since Telamon is obdurate, and the Greeks are too few in number to take Exonia by force, Paris proposes instead that they seize the temple of Venus, take all the gold and other valuables, and abduct the ladies within, especially Helen (with whom he has fallen in love). They carry out this plan and sail for Troy. Although despondant at first, Elan is persuaded to marry Paris. The episode concludes not with the wedding and celebrations, but with Cassandra's response to the merry-making, a lengthy speech revealing the doom hanging over Troy. She is imprisoned for her trouble. Again the narrator intrudes in order to reflect on the folly of ignoring valid warnings. At every stage in the development of the plot, a plot whose outcome is already known to the audience,

the narrator emphasizes the inexorable nature of Fortune by pointing out what might have been.

In isolation, the structure of these six episodes is similar to that of romance episodes. The scenes are dominated by personal encounters, both dialogic and monologic, some amplified with a considerable amount of detail, as befits a work of this length. While there are twenty such scenes (not counting the material in Latin), there are only two purely narrative scenes and one battle scene. And although many of the scenes of personal encounter are closely related to war--war councils and the like--others are of a more personal nature, particularly the scenes between Jason and Medea, Paris and Elan. Furthermore, certain topoi commonly found in romances are present, such as the springtime opening and the extended effictio. But there is one characteristic of these episodes that negates their relationship to romance, and that is their function in relation to the whole. Far from being an end in itself, each of these episodes has but one purpose, namely, to point ahead to and explain the causes of the Trojan War. They are all subordinated to the war itself, which is related in one vast episode.

It is tempting to split up this 8,931 line episode into smaller parts, but the wording and arrangement of the narration prevents such a separation. For example, the first scene narrates Menelaus' reaction to the news that Elan has been abducted. This might well be the beginning of an individual episode in which the Greeks assemble and sail

for Troy. But instead of concentrating on the Greeks, the narrator brings in material about the Trojans as well. For instance, after scene 1 there is an extensive list of the Greek leaders, but this is followed by an equally extensive list of the Trojan leaders. After they gather their ships and hold a council meeting, the Greeks send a messenger to the oracle at Delos. This last occasions a digression on idolatry. At the same time, the Trojans also send their "Bysshop" Calchas to the oracle at Delos. On hearing that Troy will be defeated, Calchas defects to the Greeks. From this point, there is no pause in the narration until after the Greeks have won their final victory in Troy. The same type of ongoing narration is characteristic of the entire episode, so that places that might form a natural break, such as truces, are not indicated as such by the narration. Thus the narrative continues unbroken right through to the end of the war.

This immense episode contains seventy-seven scenes. The nature of the scenes and their relation to the whole differs from romance practice, as the emphasis is entirely on the war. The scenes of personal encounter, including dialogic, monologic, and primarily narrative, number fifty-one. Of these, twenty are monologic, which is an exceptionally high percentage. These monologues are usually public pronouncements rather than private reflections. Almost all of these scenes of personal encounter are directly concerned with the war. An exception is the story of Troilus and

Breisaid, which takes up only two short scenes; the rest is narrated in summary form. Furthermore, although the scenes of personal encounter constitute two-thirds of the total number of scenes, they account for only twenty-nine percent of the total number of lines in the episode. In contrast, the two purely narrative and twenty-four battle scenes account for thirty-eight percent of the total number of lines. On the average, obviously, the battle scenes are considerably longer than the scenes of personal encounter. Finally, the transitional material is unusually extensive: thirty-three percent of the total number of lines. It includes narrative, several elaborate descriptions, assorted lists, and some authorial commentary. The elaborate transitional material is in keeping with the learned tone of the work, and does not in itself separate this work from the romances. It is the content of the transitions and the content of the scenes they are linking, as well as the size of the episode and its relation to the work as a whole, which cause the narrative to deviate from romance. Very little that is not directly related to the war finds its way into this episode.

The battle scenes themselves do not have the same harsh, "realistic" quality as those in the Morte. Consider, for example, the most elaborate of all the battle scenes, scene 16. This scene is 735 lines long, not counting "missing" material added by the editors from The Ancient Historie of The Destruction of Troy.⁶¹ The explanation for the unusual length of this scene is two-fold. First, the

scene consists almost entirely of individual confrontations, rather than summarized, representative accounts describing the activities of whole divisions. Second, of course, is the large number of those confrontations; the narrator mentions fifty combatants by name or title. The motifs used by the poet are rather different from those used in the Morte, not in their basic content but in their quality. Far from being painfully specific, as in the Morte, the motifs in use here are even less specific than those commonly found in romance. Most of the combat is described with motifs of the "he struck him to the ground" variety. Soldiers are killed or wounded; how or where they are wounded does not concern the poet. There are only two similes in this scene, both very commonplace one-liners. Even the specificity that does exist, the naming of individual heroes, becomes tedious because their encounters are practically indistinguishable from one another, and are unrelieved by the occasional summarized, panoramic view of whole divisions fighting as units. In short, as important as battle is to the narrative as a whole, battle description is not the poet's strong point. As a matter of fact, the most interesting feature of the narrative as a whole is not the narrative material at all; it is the poet's commentary on the significance of the action.

After the war is over, there are five brief episodes, contained in Books XXXI-XXXVI, which follow the fortunes of various heroes, such as Telamon, Ajax, Agamemnon, ~~Aeneas~~, Aeneas,

Menelaus, Ulysses, and Pyrrus. The majority of this narrative is in summary form, and does not add a great deal to the total effect of the work. It is here, in the last 1,582 lines, that an episodic pattern develops, but this change does not influence the impact of the structure of what came before. These final episodes should rather be seen as an amplified conclusion than as a significant shift to another kind of narrative. True, the poet borrows certain devices from romance, not only here but throughout the narrative. However, the work as a whole, in the broad lines of the structure, is not a romance but an epic.

Looking back at the alliterative poems, we notice certain techniques and attitudes which separate many of these works from romance. To begin with, the prosody influences the scenic structure to the extent that the alliterative long line creates a more ornamented effect and a more leisurely narrative pace than the shorter line of works in couplets and tail-rime stanzas. These differences in narrative effect hold true regardless of the length of the alliterative work. However, the differences between alliterative and other narratives are not the result of the prosody alone; the audience and the literary models are equally important. A number of northern works, whether alliterative or stanzaic, display a certain skepticism about the courtly conventions more readily accepted in the south. Even though these conventions are ultimately accepted in many of the northern works, their value and significance are called into question.

This is true in Perceval and the Avowyngge of King Arthur; it is true in The Awntyrs off Arthure, Rauf Coilyear, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. On the whole, these works conform in structure to romance practice, although the mode is less idealistic and more humorous than it is in most other romances. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the humor and the questioning of romance values actually produces a tone that is idealistic in a deeper sense than the hyperbolic idealism of much romance would allow. Another group of narratives, more completely affected by the Old English heroic tradition, dispenses with many courtly conventions and adopts a more militant, heroic approach. Here the mode is strongly influenced by the content and the overall structure. The content focuses on battle, usually on one or two campaigns, and the structure is organic rather than episodic. These works are not "borderline" romances; they are not romances at all.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER IV

¹James Parker Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English (Manchester, 1930-35, ppt. Hamden, Conn., 1968), vol. 2, pp. 266, 381.

²Larry D. Benson, Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (New Brunswick, N. J., 1965), p. 154. See also John Turville-Petre, "The Metre of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," ES 57, 4 (1976), p. 328.

³H. M. Smyser, "The Taill of Rauf Coilyear," in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs, Fascicle I, p. 96.

⁴See Smyser, p. 97, and Elizabeth Walsh, "The King in Disguise," Folklore 86 (1975), 3-24.

⁵King Edward and the Shepherd, in Middle English Metrical Romances, ed. Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale (New York, 1930, rpt. 1964), pp. 949-85.

⁶Per Nykrog, Les Fabliaux (Copenhagen, 1956, rpt. Geneva, 1973), p. 95.

⁷Morton Bloomfield, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: An Appraisal," PMLA 76, 1 (1961), rpt. in Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 150.

⁸The Taill of Rauf Coilyear with the Fragments of Roland and Vernagu and Otuel, ed. Sidkey J. H. Herrtage, EETSes 39 (London, 1882, rpt. 1969), p. 3, lines 14-26. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

⁹Ywain and Gawain, ed. A. B. Friedman and N. T. Harrington, EETSos 254 (London, 1964), p. 11, lines 369-82. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹⁰ "Ane Chyld of hir Chalmer, Schir, be Sanct Jame,
And thocht my self it say, maist inwart of ane;
For my dwelling to night, I dreid me for blame."
Rauf Coilyear, 237-39

I haue a son is with þe Whene;
She louys hym well, as i wene;
That dar i sauely say.
And he pray her of a bone,
3if þat hit be for to done,
She will not onys say nay;

King Edward and the Shepherd, 109-114

¹¹Benson, pp. 162-63.

¹²For an analysis of the Gawain-poet's use of the wheel, see Dorothy Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, ed. P. Kean (Oxford, 1955), pp. 74-75.

¹³Marie B  rroff, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study, Yale Studies in English 152 (New Haven, 1962), p. 116.

¹⁴Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon (Oxford, 1925, corrected and rpt., 1930), p. 8, lines 246-47. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

¹⁵J. A. Burrow, Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland, and the Gawain-Poet (New Haven, 1971), p. 103.

¹⁶For an explanation of the Green Knight's manner of speaking as typical of the hostile challenger, see J. A. Burrow, A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (London, 1965), pp. 18-21.

¹⁷The speech is divided into three sections (three sentences in the Tolkien and Gordon edition) of five, six, and seven and a half lines respectively. The first five lines (343-47) are entirely devoted to Gawain's asking permission to speak his mind. In the second section (348-53), Gawain suggests that the Green Knight's request is not worthy of Arthur's exalted attention, however eager Arthur may be to take up the challenge, as long as he is surrounded by so many bold and able bodied men. In the third section (354-61), Gawain concludes that since he is the weakest and least intelligent of Arthur's knights (except inasmuch as he is related to Arthur) the loss of his life would be the least serious. Therefore, because the matter is beneath Arthur, and also because he, Gawain, is the first to ask, he repeats his request, concluding with the comment that the rest of the court should not be held responsible for any discourtesy he may have committed in the process.

¹⁸Matthieu de Vend  me, Ars Versificatoria, in Les Arts po  tiques du XII   et du XIII   si  cle: Recherches et documents sur la technique litt  raire du moyen   ge, by Edmond Faral (Paris, 1924, rpt. 1962), p. 146.

¹⁹Burrow explains in A Reading that the items of Gawain's armor are meant to signify the moral values which Gawain is to represent. Particularly interesting is his cautionary remark that the parrots, turtle-doves, and love-knots embroidered on Gawain's helmet by the young ladies of Camelot "should put us on our guard against taking too narrowly ascetic a view of the ideal which he represents" (p. 41).

Burrow asserts that the "gyld gere" points toward the gold of the pentangle, metaphorically signifying the righteous man, "voyded of vche vylany" (l.634). He goes into considerable detail about lines 625-26, "Hit is a syngne þat Salamon set sumquyle / In betoknyng of trawþe, bi tytle þat hit habbeþ," concluding that "trawþe" (truth, that is, integrity or righteousness) is the central and most important value which Gawain represents (pp. 49-50).

²⁰Burrow, A Reading, pp. 61-63.

²¹Burrow, A Reading, p. 71.

²²Burrow, A Reading, p. 67.

²³Henry L. Savage, "The Significance of the Hunting Scenes in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," JEGP 27 (1928), 1-15.

²⁴Benson, p. 160.

²⁵Burrow, A Reading, pp. 75-76. Burrow plays down the reversal of roles between the hero and the lady, since the Wooing Princess motif is not uncommon in romance. Instead, he stresses the time scheme of simultaneous action, which insures the absence of the husband during the temptation scenes, and the attitude expressed during the Exchange of Winnings that the favors Gawain has received are a commodity that he can offer to fulfill his side of the bargain.

²⁶Martin Stevens, "Laughter and Game in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Speculum 47, 1 (1972), p. 75.

²⁷Stevens, pp. 72-73.

²⁸Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London, 1968), p. 205.

²⁹See A. C. Spearing, The Gawain-Poet (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 9-10.

³⁰See Burrow, A Reading, pp. 104-10; P. J. C. Field, "A Rereading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," SP 68, 3 (1971), 255-69; Donald Howard, "Structure and Symmetry in Sir Gawain," Speculum 39 (1964), p. 429; W. O. Evans, "The Case for Sir Gawain Re-Opened," MLR 68, 4 (1973), p. 732.

³¹Michael F. Foley, "Gawain's Two Confessions Reconsidered," ChauR 9, 1 (1974), p. 76.

³²For a discussion of the color symbolism in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, see J. F. Eagen, "The Import of Color Symbolism in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," St. Louis University Studies (Nov. 1949), 11-86.

³³Stevens, p. 70.

³⁴For a discussion about the association of the Green Knight with Death, see Burrow, A Reading, pp. 26-28, 120-22.

³⁵George Kane, Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romance, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman (London, 1951), p. 76.

³⁶Morton Bloomfield, "Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance," in Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language and Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 109. Bloomfield sees the explanation of Morgne's role in the adventure as an example of the shadowy, if not non-existent, motivation which characterizes the romance form. Here the motive comes after the fact, and is insufficient even then. Burrow, on the other hand, believes that the function of Morgne is to enable the poet to split the tester, so that the onus of malice does not fall on Bercilak and weaken his credibility (p. 168).

³⁷Lucy Allen Paton, Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance (New York, 1903, rpt. 1970), pp. 89-90, 95.

³⁸Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), p. 18.

³⁹William of Palerne is an exception.

⁴⁰Titus and Vespasian or the Destruction of Jerusalem, in rhymed couplets, ed. J. A. Herbert (London, 1905). The Siege of Jerusalem, ed. E. Kolbing and Mabel Day, EETSos 188 (London, 1932, rpt. 1971). Subsequent references will be to these editions. There is no substantial proof that either of these versions was influenced by the other.

⁴¹Angus McIntosh, "The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative Morte Arthure," in English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien, ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), p. 239; John Finlayson, ed., Morte Arthure (London, 1967), p. 34.

⁴²Kathryn Hume, "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance," PQ 53, 2 (1974), 158-80.

⁴³Hume, pp. 161, 163-64.

⁴⁴William Matthews, The Tragedy of Arthur; A Study of the Alliterative "Morte Arthure" (Berkeley, 1960).

⁴⁵Larry D. Benson, "The Alliterative Morte Arthure and Medieval Tragedy," TSL 11 (1966), p. 79.

⁴⁶Benson, p. 84.

⁴⁷Helaine Newstead, "Malory and Romance," in Four Essays on Romance, ed. Herschel Baker (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 8.

⁴⁸Auerbach, p. 134.

⁴⁹George R. Keiser, "Narrative Structure in the Alliterative Morte Arthure, 26-270," ChauR 9, 2 (1974), p. 140.

⁵⁰Morte Arthure or The Death of Arthur, ed. Edmond Brock, EETSos 8 (London, 1871, rpt. 1967), p. 36, lines 1209-11. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

⁵¹John Finlayson, "Arthur and the Giant of Saint Michael's Mount," MAe 33 (1964), pp. 113-17.

⁵²John Finlayson, ed., Morte Arthure (London, 1967), pp. 18-19.

⁵³Matthews, pp. 135-37.

⁵⁴The Wars of Alexander, ed. Walter W. Skeat, EETSes 47 (London, 1886, rpt. Millwood, N. Y., 1975), p. 194, lines 3244-45.

⁵⁵The Wars of Alexander, p. 278.

⁵⁶Matthews, p. 136.

⁵⁷R. M. Lumiansky, "Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy," in Severs (see note 3 above), p. 115.

⁵⁸Lumiansky, pp. 115-16.

⁵⁹The 'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy, ed. G. A. Panton and D. Donaldson, EETSos 39 and 56 (London, 1869, 1874, rpt. as one vol., 1968), p. 11., note.

⁶⁰The 'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy, p. 13.

⁶¹The 'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy, pp. 226-27.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

A close examination of the form of Middle English romances reveals that a number of structural techniques are common to all of them. These techniques appear in the construction of the introduction, scenes, transitions, and episodes.

Introductions consist of stock elements which establish contact between the narrator and the audience. A technique virtually universal among the Middle English romances is the representation of a narrator who is physically present in front of a listening audience. Although the romances were probably delivered orally most of the time, the representation of the narrator is still a literary device posing as a reality, since the romances were written down in order that others besides the author might deliver them.¹ Furthermore, even in erudite romances which refer openly to the act of reading, the same image of the speaking narrator is constantly upheld by the narrator's requests for attention from a fictionalized audience.² Two other features of the introduction are widespread but not essential. One is the introduction of the hero (and other characters). The other, equally important, is the background narrative, recounted in summary form, which

gradually slows down to a point at which the narrator is ready to introduce the first scene with either a reference to a specific time or location, or an announcement of dialogue. The rest of the romance, until the conclusion, invariably consists of scenic narrative, divided up into episodes held together by a loose cause and effect relationship.

A scene is an amplification of a named event. In Middle English romance, the component parts are pointed narrative which recounts the actions and reactions of the characters, a modest amount of description (usually of the setting and/or the characters), and dialogue which adds to the narrative progression, alternating with monologue and indirect discourse. In Middle English romance, scenes fall into three major categories: scenes of personal encounter, battle scenes, and scenes of miscellaneous narrative, such as a journey or the working out of a plan, in addition to a few monologues and visions, which fall into none of these categories. The large majority of scenes in romance depict personal encounters, such as conversations, formal deliberations, and love scenes. Hence dialogue and indirect discourse are at least as important as narrative in moving the plot along. After personal encounters, battle is the most important type of scene. These scenes often occur at climactic moments in the narrative; they are fewer in number than the scenes of personal encounter, but they are often longer. Their greater length results from the necessity of

dealing with a larger physical setting, a longer period of time, and, in many cases, more characters. Not all scenes of personal encounter, battle, and miscellaneous narrative are pointed to an equal degree. The amount of detail given depends on the individual composer, to some extent on his source, and on the importance of the scene to the progress of the narrative. Some scenes are highly specific, while others are barely to be distinguished from summary narrative. Therefore, an intermediate class of transitional scenes exists. In order for a block of narrative to qualify as a scene, it must contain enough amplification to arrest a given action or speech in a specified location and time span.

Transitions between scenes can vary from one word, usually an adverb, to hundreds of lines of summary narrative. In the longer passages, the function of the summary narrative may be more than merely transitional. For example, the author may wish to avoid interlacing by compressing an entire episode into a transition, and then return to the period of time he left behind at the beginning of the passage. Transitions can include description and authorial comment, though these also occur within the scenes. Finally, transitions may occasionally contain monologue or dialogue, where these appear in temporal isolation within narrative that does not stop to describe the moment of the speech, whether to amplify the setting or recount reactions to the words of the speaker.

The proportion of transitional to scenic narrative in

the Middle English romances is relatively stable. With the exception of Arthour and Merlin and the stanzaic Morte, all the secular romances mentioned in this study that have not been influenced by pious themes contain under 25% non-scenic narrative. This figure includes introductions and conclusions. In the majority of secular romances, the non-scenic material adds up to between 15 and 20%. These percentages are not influenced by the length of the romance: Sir Orfeo and Generides, for instance, have about the same proportion of non-scenic to scenic narrative. The two exceptions to this rule have 30% non-scenic material. Both of these romances are influenced by the structure of the chronicle. A significant shift in the proportion of non-scenic material turns up in romances which have been affected by pious themes. Some romances with a pious moral framework, such as the Earl of Toulous and Sir Degrevant, are not affected. But those works in particular which are dominated by the theme of patient suffering differ markedly in their use of summary narrative. Amis and Amiloun, for example, has 35% summary narrative. But within the episode which depicts the suffering of the leprous Amiloun, the figure is 40%. Sir Isumbras has 36% and Emare 39% non-scenic material. Octavian has 52% and Sir Gowther 54%. These are not didactic romances in the sense that their raison d'être is heuristic; some, like Octavian, are not even primarily pious in effect. But these works have been influenced by such pious stories as Robert le diable and the Constance saga. In the case of heroic

narrative, the proportions do not seem to be particularly significant generically: the alliterative Morte has 18%, the Siege of Jerusalem has 34%, and the Destruction of Troy has 40%. Thus, although it is a useful device to distinguish between romances and borderline romances, the proportion of non-scenic narrative does not help to distinguish between romances and heroic works.

To make this distinction, we must turn to the overall structure of the romances, which is distinctly episodic. Although it is a commonplace to compare romance structure to beads on a chain, this notion helps to distinguish romance from certain other types of narrative, including heroic works. In romance, the episodes are relatively independent of each other; each seems to be more important in its own right than as an integral part of the whole. The structure is accretive rather than organic, while in heroic works, the individual narrative units are subordinate to the whole.

The predominantly scenic and episodic nature of romance structure is characteristic of all medieval vernacular romance, whether in prose or in poetry. Even the interlaced plots of the lengthy French prose cycles follow the beads-on-a-chain pattern, if one unravels them, as Malory and the author of Arthur and Merlin did. The interlacing only serves to intensify the episodic quality and increase the suspense by means of an accretive structure of sub-units, rather than of full episodes. In short, the themes in romance are subordinate to the narrative function of the episodes.

While certain structural techniques are common to all medieval romances, there are minor differences between one group and another. Scholars have already distinguished certain techniques that are characteristic of English authors, notably a rapid narrative pace with a minimum of description and authorial comment. Other differences in approach depend on the sociological background and the degree of learning of the romancer. Furthermore, among the Middle English romances, slight differences exist between one verse form and another. The structure of the narrative and the narrative pace are similar in the romances in couplets and tail-rime stanzas. However, the narrative pace of the latter has a staccato effect, caused by the self-contained syntax of the tail-rime groupings (aa[a]b), and by the sense of closure created by the tail-line itself. In the case of the alliterative romances, the narrative pace is affected more obviously by the alliterative long line. This verse form encourages a more elaborate syntax, thanks to the lack of rime restrictions which tend to break up the syntax into small units. Greater ornamentation is not only made possible but almost required by the exigencies of the alliteration. Both of these differences create a more leisurely narrative pace and more concrete, detailed narrative. None of the variations mentioned above, however, alters the basic scenic/episodic pattern of romance narrative.

In addition, the verse form groupings have a tendency to produce works with certain typical deviations from romance

structure. These deviations are not connected with the verse form itself; they may be a result of the available sources or the sociological background of author and audience in areas of the country where the use of the different verse forms predominated. I do not wish to imply that such structural deviations are restricted to works in a certain verse form. Here are three examples of exceptions that do not fit into the typical categories: one romance in couplets, the Lyf of Alisaunder, is dominated by non-scenic material.

Although some episodes contain well developed scenes, others scarcely develop a single unified set of actions. In the second half of the narrative, the episodic/scenic pattern weakens and finally disappears altogether in a mass of mirabilia. For almost two thousand lines, there is just enough narrative to string out an immense catalogue of the strange and wonderful inhabitants of the East. This can no longer be called descriptive ornament; the story has simply given way to an encyclopaedia of curiosities. A narrative in tail-rime stanzas, the Sege of Melayne, is an heroic work, not a romance. Rather than exhibiting an episodic structure, the entire course of the story is directly related to one military campaign. The tone of the work is heroic. Heavy emphasis is laid on war, both in the prominence of the battle scenes and in the discourse of other scenes. The discourse is public rather than private, and addresses itself to the issues surrounding the campaign. A southern alliterative work, William of Palerne, does not follow the

heroic models of the northern school, but is typically romantic in content, mode, and structure. It follows its French source quite closely, and contains neither the light parody of some, nor the heroic characteristics of other northern alliterative works. In conclusion, although the romances are not divided up into distinct categories of narrative structure according to the verse forms or "schools," as some people call them, deviations resulting from pious or heroic themes do tend to adhere to the stanzaic and the alliterative groups respectively.

The most important question raised by the isolation of romance structural techniques is whether or not they can be used to distinguish romance from other forms of narrative. Let us compare the narrative structure of romance with that of the narrative types that most closely resemble romance in structure: chronicles, heroic works, and saints' legends.

Chronicles and heroic works are closely related because of their emphasis on conflicts of historic importance. Structurally, chronicles are open-ended. They do not focus on the activities of one hero, but treat numerous personages with equal emphasis, often over a period of several generations or more. Chronicles contain significantly more summary than scenic narrative. Often isolated speeches of considerable length appear in the midst of summary narrative, where there is no trace of a scenic backdrop. Throughout the narrative, authorial comment on the significance of the events being narrated abounds; in fact, the narrator is very

much in evidence most of the time. In comparison to romance, then, chronicle can be said to exhibit incomplete dramatization. In contrast, heroic narratives are thoroughly dramatized. They emphasize scenes of battle and public debate rather than scenes of personal exchanges. Their narrative units are organized into an organic, as opposed to an episodic structure; the individual episodes are subordinated to the larger rise and fall of the narrative as a whole. Both chronicles and heroic works are dominated by political and historical themes as opposed to themes related to personal interaction. With or without reference to these themes, however, romances can be distinguished by means of structure alone from these two forms of narrative.

The same generalization cannot be made about the relationship between romance and saints' legends. The saint's legend is a form of narrative defined primarily by content and mode rather than by structure. Certain structures are typical of saints' legends, such as "conversion (or efforts to convert others), trial torture and triumphant death."³ However, the inclusion of miracles and apocryphal material can turn what may once have been an organic structure into one closely akin to the episodic structure of romance. Furthermore, although many saints' legends are dominated by summary narrative broken by isolated and highly didactic speeches, others do not follow this pattern. Saints' legends, as Wolpers has shown,⁴ were highly susceptible to the influence of contemporary secular narrative. Therefore,

to give one example, a legend such as Chaucer's Second Nun's Tale can be just as markedly scenic and dialogic as any romance. Although the structure of saints' legends often differs from that of romance in being less scenic and less episodic, this is not inevitably the case.

Therefore, we are forced to fall back on content and mode to distinguish romance from saints' legends. Normally, the social status of the saints and martyrs is unimportant, because, in devoting themselves to God, they abandon all worldly pretensions. Their conduct is charitable but not necessarily courtly. When faced with adversity in the form of the Devil or evil human opponents, their behavior and diction often lack courtly refinement altogether, since their purpose is not to be courteous but to resist temptation. Though both forms of narrative are idealized and even exemplary, saints' legends are exemplary exclusively on the spiritual plane, which causes them to be, in the ubiquitous presence of sin, heuristic. Romances, on the other hand, are exemplary on a plane which faces toward, rather than away from this world. Thus their function, as it has often been said, is to entertain rather than to teach.

Aside from these exceptions, however, structure proves to be a reliable device for distinguishing romance from other narrative forms. The structure of romance displays a strong tendency towards episodic and scenic narrative. These two characteristics, in turn, correspond to important attributes of romance content and mode. The strong emphasis

on dialogic scenes arises from the personal nature of the motivation, action, and response at work in romance. The episodic structure projects the conviction that the essential human task is unceasingly to test nobility in a world whose laws of cause and effect elude rationalization.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER V

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²Walter J. Ong, S. J., "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction," PMLA 90, 1 (1975), p. 12.

³Charlotte D'Evelyn, "Saints' Legends," in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, ed. J. Burke Severs, Fascicule II (New Haven, 1970), p. 417.

⁴Theodor Wolpers, Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters. Eine Formgeschichte des Legendenerzählens von der spätantiken lateinischen Tradition bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts, Buchreihe der Anglia, 10 (Tübingen, 1964), p. 409 and throughout.

APPENDIX

Some Structural Characteristics in Statistical Form of the Works Cited

Title	Total No. of Lines	% of Lines Devoted to Non-scenic Narrative	No. of Scenes of Personal Encounter	No. of Scenes of Pure Narrative	No. Battle Scenes
<u>Sir Orfeo</u>	604	24%	5	2	0
<u>Libeaus Desconus</u>	2205	1%	21	2	8
<u>Sir Degare</u>	1072	15%	11	2	4
<u>Squyr of Lowe Degre</u>	1131	18%	11	3	1
<u>Floris and Blancheflur</u>	1083	13%	18	2	0
<u>Eger and Grime</u>	1474	18%	27	2	2
<u>King Horn</u>	1650	18%	30	2	3
<u>Havelok</u>	3001	24%	32	3	3
<u>Sowdon of Babylon</u>	3274	18%	52	2	12
<u>Ywain and Gawain</u>	4032	1%	42	7	8
<u>Richard Coer de Lyon</u>	7258	19%	88	12	26
<u>Arthour and Merlin</u>	9656	30%	64	8	22
<u>Generides</u>	10086	25%	101	5	14
<u>Sir Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle</u>	660	20%	12	2	0
<u>Sir Launfal</u>	1044	19%	16	1	2
<u>Avowyng of King Arthur, etc.</u>	1148	19%	16	1	4
<u>Earl of Toulous</u>	1224	22%	20	2	2
<u>Sir Degrevant</u>	1920	23%	17	2	4
<u>Sir Perceval of Galles</u>	2288	20%	20	2	4
<u>stanzaic Morte Arthur</u>	3969	30%	52	6	8
<u>Sir Gowther</u>	750	54%	21	1	2

Title	Total No. of Lines	% of Lines Devoted to Non-scenic Narrative	No. of Scenes of Personal Encounter	No. of Scenes of Pure Narrative	No. Battle Scenes
<u>Sir Isumbras</u>	798	36%	8	3	2
<u>Emare</u>	1035	39%	18	4	0
<u>Le Bone Florence of Rome</u>	2189	34%	28	4	2
<u>Octavian</u>	1791	53%	20	4	1
<u>Amis and Amiloun</u>	2507	35%	30	3	1
<u>Taill of Rauf Coilyear</u>	975	19%	14	0	1
<u>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</u>	2530	16%	19	7	0
<u>Titus and Vespasian (in couplets)</u>	5182	36%	54	4	0
<u>Siege of Jerusalem</u>	1334	34%	9	4	5
<u>alliterative Morte Arthure</u>	4346	18%	24	4	12
<u>Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy</u>	14044	40%	74	4	25
<u>Lyf of Alisaunder</u>	8021	50%	59	11	13
<u>Sege of Melayne</u>	1600	19%	11	1	3
<u>William of Palerne</u>	5540	25%	59	16	4

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