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EPISODES IN ENGLISH VERSE ROMANCE

by

Mark J. Bruhn

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
May, 1995

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## ABSTRACT

Generic rather than periodic, this thesis analyzes the structural development of the verse romance in English literary history. The structure of romance is episodic and discontinuous; it is governed less by rational connections than by a principle of aventure. Given this transhistorical description, my study pursues two related questions: what types of non-rational organization do we find in verse romances, and how are these types situated historically?

The literary history of the English romance has been written largely in terms of its thematics and cross-generic influence. My study supplements this received view by approaching the genre in terms of its structure and its enduring verse legacy. From the thirteenth century to the early twentieth, romance structure persisted in English narrative poetry, proving amenable to thematic purposes ranging from feudal entertainment and instruction to imaginative autobiography. From period to period, this essential structure was nevertheless variously reformulated to express new relations of discontinuity and to admit new strategies of episodic integration.

Using Alistair Fowler's model of genre development and Roman Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy, I chart this persistence and change by discriminating the functional differences of episodic structure in its several historical formations. Through detailed readings of the anonymous King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Gamelyn, and Sir Degare, Chaucer's Canterbury romances, Spenser's Faerie Queene, Thomson's Castle of Indolence, Percy's Hermit of Warkworth, Beattie's Minstrel, Wordsworth's White Doe of Rylstone, Guilt and Sorrow, and Prelude, and Eliot's Waste Land, "Episodes in English Verse Romance" elaborates the structural poetics of the verse romance, reflecting the evolution of the kind in English literary history.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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M.B.

Dalhousie University

## NOTE ON THE TEXT

All quotations are taken from the editions listed in the Works Cited. In those from French and Hale's Middle English Metrical Romances, I have silently emended the characters thorn and yogh to their modern English equivalents. Quotations from Wordsworth's poems are in all cases taken from his "final" versions: 1842 for Guilt and Sorrow (from The Salisbury Plain Poems), 1845 for The White Doe of Rylstone (from Poetical Works), and 1850 for The Prelude (from The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850).

A somewhat different version of Chapter 2, section IV is forthcoming in Studies in Philology.

## Introduction

### I

As my title suggests, this thesis is generic rather than periodic; its topic is the structure of the English verse romance. I proceed from the idea of scholars like Erich Auerbach and Northrop Frye that episodic discontinuity is a transhistorical structural feature of the romance. Examining the English verse romance in three more or less distinct synchronic slices (roughly, Middle English, Renaissance, and Romantic), I measure and classify historical or periodic differences in the treatment of episodic structure in terms both of Roman Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy and of Alistair Fowler's generic schema of primary, secondary, and tertiary. I thus offer a taxonomic view of the development of the English verse romance over six centuries (13th to 19th), my general purpose being that which Frye defines as proper to all generic criticism, "to clarify... traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out...literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them" (Anatomy 248). Readers of this thesis will, I hope, emerge as better and more discriminating readers of the English verse romance.

With the attention of genre critics being turned more and more to the material and cultural meanings of various

forms at various points in history, I should probably address at the outset my decision to write a structuralist study of romance. It seems to me that the received wisdom on romance, the sort being refined upon by the newer approaches, is modal rather than structural in character. Gillian Beer's 1970 introductory book The Romance is, as it should be, characteristic of romance criticism, and it urges "at the start" the sort of distinction I mean:

We need to recognize at the start that there is a distinction--but not a constant distinction--between 'the romance' and 'romance' as an element in literature. The history of the romance...could almost be epitomized as a shift from form to quality. We tend to speak of 'medieval romance' but of 'the Elizabethan romance' and then of 'romance' in nineteenth-century novels. (4-5)<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the inconstancy of the distinction, the literary history of the English romance has in fact been written largely in terms of "quality" or content, rather than "form" or structure. Beer summarizes the familiar history thus:

There are two major turning-points in the history of

---

<sup>1</sup>A fellow graduate student, Nate Dorward, put this distinction concisely: "the romance died and rose again in the novel." This commonplace remark has a long critical history: Fielding and Clara Reeve made essentially the same point in the eighteenth century, Hawthorne and James in the nineteenth, Frye and Fowler in the twentieth.

the romance in England; they both have to do with an increasing self-consciousness about the way the form is used. The first was the publication of Shelton's translation of Don Quixote in 1612 and 1620....The second was the 'romantic revival,' bringing with it the conscious antiquarianism with which writers of the Romantic period viewed the romance....But whereas the immediately post-Cervantic attitude to romance tended to establish the exclusiveness of the romance world, thus increasing the danger of frivolity, writers of the Romantic period, such as Schlegel and Coleridge, recognized that the romance expressed a world permanently within all men: the world of imagination and of dream. (6-7)

Emphatically focused on the meaning and the matter of the "romance world," rather than on formal features of actual romances, this mini-history of the English romance is fundamentally modal, and fairly representative of the scholarship. Beer's phrases "increasing self-consciousness" and "world permanently within all men," for example, echo Harold Bloom's findings on the internalization of the quest romance, and her "exclusiveness," "frivolity," and "world of imagination and of dream" anticipate Patricia Parker's discussion of the poetics of the romance mode. Indeed, from Johnson's Dictionary to the most recent handbooks of literary terms, romance has typically been defined and

historicized in terms of its dramatic and thematic contents, or modally.

Thus for most critics, including new theorists of the ideology of romance like Jameson, the term "romance" implies some or all of the following features: idealized characters, a predominant interest in courtly love or chivalric adventure, exotic or temporally remote settings, non-naturalistic or supernatural representation, a main theme of questing or the loss and recovery of identity, a tendency toward moral or psychological allegory. Yet, as Fowler suggests, unaffiliated with a "specific external form," such features of the "generic repertoire" define romance as a mode of literary production and not as a kind (106-7). The father of modal criticism, Frye, therefore calls Shakespeare's Tempest and Blake's Songs romances (Anatomy 151ff.), even though in terms of kind, or of genre as determined by external form and what Frye himself calls "the radical of presentation" (246-7), the one is a drama and the other a collection of lyrics. Fowler observes generally that "it is modes rather than kinds, and a relatively small number of them, that have dominated recent literary theory" (111); certainly this is true of romance criticism. But Fowler's evolutionary explanation, deriving the pattern of theory and criticism from the pattern of literature itself, is not, in the case of the romance at least, fully satisfactory:



even after the adaptive possibilities of the "fixed" kind have been played out, its corresponding mode may remain lively. The mode, with its selection of constituents, is less dependent on external forms. It is as if the kind were limited by its structural carapace, so that it reached the end of its evolutionary possibilities. But its modal equivalent is more versatile, being able to enter into new commixtures and to continue in combination with kinds still evolving....Mode is not only a looser genre collateral with the fixed kind, but also its successor.

(167)

One of my purposes is to show that the history of the English verse romance is verifiably not one in which "external forms rapidly change" (Fowler 111), but rather one in which a fairly fixed external form, the structure of discontinuous episodes, remains viable over a period of six centuries and more.

I do not mean to discount the wealth of modal criticism of the romance or the cross-generic impact of the romance conceived as a mode rather than a kind; I mean simply to counter-balance the prevailing view. The presence of particular themes, motifs, and topoi can indeed signal the romance investments of a given work, but so can structure. Bloom speaks of The Prelude as one of the two greatest examples of the internalized quest romance, the distinctly

Romantic variety of romance in which "the poet takes the patterns of quest-romance and transposes them into his own imaginative life" (5, 8). But while Bloom pursues the psychological and archetypal implications of the second half of his definition, his fundamental point is a structural one. The clearest indication of The Prelude's romance investment is precisely its "pattern of the quest-romance," but that pattern inheres much less in the content of the poem than in its procedure as a narrative. We recognize the pattern not because Wordsworth casts himself as a knight or stages metaphorical tourneys or introduces the supernatural, but rather because he structures the tale of his own poetic upbringing as a series of discrete and discontinuous episodes. Much the same could be said of Shelley's Alastor or Eliot's The Waste Land or Stevens's The Comedian as the Letter C, all of which, like The Prelude, substantially forego what might be called the "modal panoply" of romance. What they share with more obvious and thorough-going romances like Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel, Keats's Endymion, or Tennyson's Idylls of the King is episodic structure. Romance criticism has generally neglected to address the persistence of this structure in English literary history, not to mention its specific function in different periods.

My position, then, is similar to Robert Jordan's, though not confined like his to Middle English romances

alone:

As a literary criterion, content is relatively unsatisfactory because it is finally reducible to non-literary terms. Content is therefore more amenable to historical or anthropological classification than to aesthetic analysis. This is true whether we speak of manifest content, such as knighthood, love, or war...or of latent, thematic content, such as moral quest or life-renewal. Both kinds of content exist outside of language as well as in it, and are therefore not uniquely answerable to definitive literary analysis. On the other hand, those attributes which are more integral to the actions of writing and composing are likely to provide a more detailed account of the literary and artistic character of narrative because they express those elusive, constantly shifting energies which constitute artistic expression. (The Question 78-9)

Certainly manifest content is the least valuable criterion for determining the generic history of the romance, for such content is itself determined by the preoccupations of each successive age and writer. For example, to restrict the generic designation "romance" to only those works admitting what Dryden called "the exploded fictions of chivalry" is to suggest that, for the most part, romance as a kind of literature ceased to be produced in England after the 16th

century. Such a view drastically limits the number of later poems to be classified as romances, and these must necessarily be considered, in Beer's words, "consciously antiquarian."

Frye's discussion of displacement in both The Anatomy of Criticism and The Secular Scripture gives us a better purchase on the matter: though specific plot elements or mythoi give way to more credible or as yet "unexploded" types of fictions, the basic structure of romance endures. There are no literal knights or dragons in a "low mimetic" poem like Wordsworth's Guilt and Sorrow or an "ironic" one like The Waste Land, yet both are organized as a series of more or less discontinuous episodes, and both are therefore susceptible to treatment as romances. This is not to say that episodic discontinuity alone is sufficient to indicate the generic influence of romance. As Fowler puts it, "a kind is a type of literary work of a definite size, marked by a complex of substantive and formal features that always include a distinctive (though not usually unique) external structure" (74). In addition to a structure of discontinuous episodes, some other "substantive and formal features"--like the Spenserian stanza of Guilt and Sorrow or the allusions and notes to Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance in The Waste Land--must also be present for a work to be classified as a romance.

Though his concept of displacement helps us to overcome

the generic limitations of manifest content, Frye himself tends to treat structure archetypally and transhistorically, that is, in terms of its latent themes of "descent" and "ascent," or social alienation and self-recognition. As a generic criterion, such latent content has a consequence opposite to that of manifest content: instead of narrowing the generic field, it opens the field indiscriminately and often blurs periodic distinctions among the works it admits. Because modal criticism has in general focused on latent rather than manifest content, we are accustomed to seeing the most disparate figures yoked in the same romance study, like Milton and Mallarme (Parker), or Shakespeare and Blake (Frye), or Sidney and Emily Bronte (Dobyns). As suggestive and useful as such studies are, they do not provide what Jordan calls a "definitive aesthetic analysis" of romance as a kind of literary production.

Very few studies of romance focus predominantly on external structure, and I know of none that investigates the various incarnations of that structure in English literary history. My effort here may be late in terms of the structuralist moment, but it is yet wanting in terms of romance criticism. Furthermore, apart from David Lodge's The Modes of Modern Writing, the structuralist methodology I use here has been applied only incidentally, and not systematically, to the study of genre in English literary history. Stuart Curran, introducing his generic study of

Romantic literature, makes the case that "as there are no simple rules for genre nor any unambiguous pattern of progressive development, so there is no rigid methodology for generic criticism"; he cites Fowler, Rosalie Colie, Barbara Lewalski as the "most useful models" (8). Like Lodge, however, I believe that Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy is an equally useful methodological model, providing "a common descriptive terminology for classifying and analysing types of literary discourse" and for pursuing the "historical concerns of criticism--the discrimination of periods, schools and movements in literature..." (123-4). Part of the value of this thesis lies in its development and illustrative application of Jakobson's metaphor and metonymy theory as a methodological tool for generic and historical analysis.

This work is Jakobsonian as well in its procedure by synchronic "slices." Fowler himself advocates this method, urging that "without some historical localization, discussion of genre tends toward the vacuous" (47-52). Many years earlier, in an essay called "Linguistics and Poetics," Jakobson made essentially the same case, only more generally:

Synchronic poetics, like synchronic linguistics, is not to be confused with statics; any stage discriminates between more conservative and more innovative forms. Any contemporary stage is experienced in its temporal

dynamics, and, on the other hand, the historical approach both in poetics and in linguistics is concerned not only with changes but also with continuous, enduring, static factors. A thoroughly comprehensive historical poetics or history of language is a superstructure to be built on a series of successive synchronic descriptions. (65)

While this study is by no means a "comprehensive historical poetics" of the English verse romance, it is, I believe, a significant step in that direction. I give "successive synchronic descriptions" of the typical external structures of the Middle English romance, of Chaucerian and Spenserian romance, and of Wordsworthian romance, as well as incidental descriptions of several other 18th- to 20th-century English verse romances. These descriptions provide a high degree of historical localization throughout, and they are sufficient in number to imply, at least in part, both the genre's historical "superstructure" and its internal "temporal dynamics." Specifically, they illustrate the endurance of the primary romance structure of discontinuous episodes, and at the same time document periodic differences and developments in the poetics of that structure.

---

<sup>2</sup>It should be clear from this that I agree with Curran (who is himself agreeing with Fowler) that "genres are never mere abstractions" or sets of "prescribed rules," but are rather sorts of "conceptual syntax," "derived from earlier examples" and "always individually recreated in a particularized time and space" (8). Historical localization is thus imperative: from similarities and differences among

To be sure, my "slices" and descriptions are only loosely "successive," because generic change and development are not, as Fowler amply shows, "once for all" matters. The fact that Chaucer is a Middle English poet and might equally be treated with the romances of my first synchronic slice is thus only an apparent problem. By grouping his romances with Spenser's, I hope to avoid the implication that the romance, even in the narrowed field of England, underwent a single and uniform chronological evolution. Much of what the romance became in the hands of these poets was already incipient in the anonymous Middle English romance, and in fact, as many critics point out, the Middle English romances often fail to realize the metonymic and metaphoric dynamics of their French and Anglo-Norman sources, some of which, like the poems of Chrétien, were undoubtedly known to the more "courtly" Chaucer and Spenser. Then, too, Chaucer's other non-English sources, many of them quite as sophisticated as his own romances, date back into the thirteenth century and before, and, on the other hand, the anonymous or primary Middle English romance continued to circulate and inspire imitations well into the seventeenth

---

sample works, we inductively grasp the systematic features of genre, as well as individual or periodic variations. From his analysis of three twelfth-century romances, for example, Peter Haidu concludes that the episode is the primary unit of the romance's "narrative syntax" (680). I concur with his finding and extend it to all English verse romances, which nevertheless differ from period to period because of the relative dominance of other features, like metaphor and metonymy.



century and beyond. Sir Degaré, for example, was copied in manuscript as late as 1650 and appeared in at least three print editions in the sixteenth century (Severs 296).

Likewise, though they belong to the period following Romanticism, Tennyson and Morris penned romances which seem structurally and even thematically more like Chaucer's and Spenser's than Wordsworth's or Byron's. The same might be said of some of Keats's poems, like Lamia and the first Hyperion. The introduction of new structures and more displaced contents in no way prevents a poet from using older structures or less displaced contents. My chapter divisions and groupings are intended simply to delimit roughly the historical stages in which a distinct tendency in the treatment of romance episodes became in some sense dominant in England.

## II

In The Secular Scripture, Frye defines a broad structural continuum for narrative literature, ranging from realism to romance:

In realism the attempt is normally to keep the action horizontal, using a technique of causality in which the characters are prior to the plot, in which the problem is normally: "given these characters, what will happen?" Romance is usually "sensational," that is, it moves from one discontinuous episode to another,

describing things that happen to characters, for the most part, externally. We may speak of these two types of narrative as the "hence" narrative and the "and then" narrative. (47)

At the outset of Chapter 1, on Middle English romance, I illustrate Frye's distinction of what are more technically termed rational and temporal structures with reference to several poems, chiefly The Tale of Gamelyn. Episodes in the Middle English romance function much like the "mutually quite independent scenes" of the chansons de geste, each of which, as Auerbach has it, "contains one decisive gesture with only a loose temporal or causal connection with those that follow or precede....Each stands by itself in the sense...that it contains no propulsive force which demands the next" (114-15). The "gestural" aspect of discontinuous or episodic structure I describe more precisely as a conceptual and stylistic dependence on metonymy rather than metaphor. Here a number of relatively obscure romances come under scrutiny, but all are available in French and Hale's Middle English Metrical Romances (still probably the best single-volume collection of Middle English romances). My specific choices were determined in part by Dieter Mehl, who argues strongly for the relative "unity" of the shorter English romances (500-2500 lines) as compared to longer English ones (thousands of lines, e.g. Guy of Warwick, Beves of Hamtoun) or to French originals and analogues (37,

passim). My discussion of the shorter romances makes clear that they are nevertheless fundamentally discontinuous in structure, even if they aren't as extensively discontinuous as the longer ones.

Chapter 2 treats the romances of Chaucer and Spenser. In grouping Chaucer with Spenser as a "secondary" figure (that is, one who refined upon the Middle English or "primary" romance), I am following A. C. Spearing, who urges that "Chaucer can properly be considered as, in some respects, a Renaissance poet." Like Spenser, Chaucer drew upon Italian poetry in the production of his own, and so a number of "Renaissance elements...entered English poetry through his works" (Medieval to Renaissance 2). Yet the Italianate influence on Chaucer, as Spearing describes it, resulted in "stories simpler, and as we would say more classical, in form than those of the chivalric romances, with their polyphonic interweaving of multiple plots" (38-9). Chaucerian romance is thus in another sense opposed to Spenserian, which is as "polyphonic" as they come. In terms of discontinuous structure, however, we may say that both poets display a structural control and coherence hardly to be found in the primary English romance, but that Chaucer's obtains in a predominantly metonymic relation of episodes, whereas Spenser's obtains in a predominantly metaphoric one. Though Chaucer's strategy of metonymic anticipation yields a "simple" or "classical" plot and Spenser's strategy of

metaphoric repetition yields "multiple plots," both strategies represent an aesthetic advance in the treatment of episodic structure.

My first two chapters, then, provide structural descriptions of primary and secondary English verse romances, of poems, that is, for which the generic designation "English verse romance" is already well accepted. These chapters suggest an overarching structural and stylistic continuum, ranging from a metonymic extreme (the typical Middle English romance) to a metaphoric one (The Faerie Queene); in between are late Middle English romances like those of Chaucer and that of the Gawain-poet.<sup>3</sup> My third chapter then shifts from a principal focus on the metaphor/metonymy distinction to a focus on what I've termed historicized romance structure, characteristic of Romantic romances. The Romantic, or tertiary, structure still develops metonymic and metaphoric relations between episodes, in the manner of Chaucer and Spenser, but it almost invariably inscribes these relations along a time line of (romance) past and (minstrel) present. Thus,

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<sup>3</sup>Obviously, individual works from every period could be placed at every point along this theoretical continuum, but in the aggregate works from each period would tend to cluster at one point or another. With their tendency toward antonymic development of episodic metaphors, the eighteenth-century and Romantic romances would fall nearer to Spenser's than to the typical Middle English romance; twentieth-century romances, on the other hand, would fall nearer the opposite end, because they tend to develop fragmentary episodes with little or at best ambiguous interrelation.

Chapter 3 implies a second theoretical continuum, ranging from the comparatively ahistorical primary and secondary romances (see Auerbach 133ff.) to the historicized ones of the tertiary phase and after. Wordsworth and Eliot, that is, write romances that incorporate both structurally and through displacement an acute sense of their own historical moment.

The distinguishing feature of the tertiary verse romance is its self-conscious admission of history as a structural principle. Following Curran, I suggest that this historicized structure is correlative with the emergence in the eighteenth century of literary-historical concepts and, in particular, the writing of the history of romance. The newly historicized genre was, I argue, historically received by Wordsworth and many others, and thus restructured by them not only for the purposes of internalization (or lyricization) but also for the purposes of historical differentiation. Spenser too, of course, received the romance as an already archaic genre (witness the letter to Raleigh and the proems to the several books), but not until the eighteenth century does the structure of romance significantly alter to reflect (and so to redeem) the genre's historical status. At the same time, the manifest content of the romance tends to be further and further displaced, so that we move from Thomson's Knight of Arts and Industry to Beattie's fictional poet, Edwin, and then from

Edwin to the actual poet himself in The Prelude. The tertiary romance adopts the structure of discontinuous episodes related by metonymic association or metaphoric repetition, but it adapts that structure as well to new historical, cultural, and individual interests.

My choice of Wordsworth as the illustrative Romantic romancer may at first seem a little odd, when names like Scott, Byron, Keats, Coleridge, and Shelley come more readily to mind. These poets are more obvious choices, I submit, only because they more regularly adopt what I've already termed the "modal panoply" of romance (I've listed them roughly in order from most to least conventional in their subject matter). Because he largely eschews that panoply, Wordsworth appears at first glance to be the least interested in romance, or even anti-romantic.<sup>4</sup> Modal romance criticism, in other words, tends to obscure Wordsworth's very real and extensive romance investments, whereas my structural approach, following the leads of Bloom and Curran, proves that a number of important Wordsworth poems derive from and can usefully be discussed in terms of the romance tradition. The three I analyze--The White Doe of Rylstone, Guilt and Sorrow, and The Prelude--are major poems that span not only Wordsworth's career but the entire

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<sup>4</sup>See, for example, my article "A Home Where the Heart Is," or Mary Jacobus's Tradition and Experiment, 262-72. Both studies insist upon Wordsworth's naturalism and anti-supernaturalism, though neither discounts his structural debt to earlier supernatural, or romance, verse.

Romantic movement, the latter two having been begun in the late-eighteenth century but not published until the mid-nineteenth century. Furthermore, these poems represent a continuum of tertiary displacement, with The White Doe being the most conventional of the three and The Prelude the least so. They thus collectively represent something of the full thematic range of Romantic romances: the "conscious archaism," social concern, and imaginative individualism that in greater and lesser degrees mark poems as diverse as Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel, Keats's Isabella, Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, and Shelley's Alastor. And, along with Byron's highly displaced Spenserian romance, The Prelude appears to have determined the subsequent course of the English verse romance in the twentieth century. As my conclusion suggests, themes of the poet's individual development and relationship to culture and nature--themes that had their full Romantic articulation in The Prelude--are the prime focus of ironic modernist romances, which are characterized by the absence, ambiguity, or subversion of metaphoric and metonymic relations among not only discontinuous but also radically diminished episodes.

Because I agree with Curran in so much else, I should probably say a few more words about my treatment of The Prelude as a romance. Certainly I do not mean to imply that it is exclusively a verse romance. Curran describes the poem as a "composite order" (180ff.), and few critics would

disagree that this is probably the best final term for The Prelude's genre. Yet Curran's discussion of the dialectic mix of romance and pastoral is primarily modal rather than structural: "the mode of romance," he argues, "enlarges the pastoral enclosure to universal proportions. The result is epic." Or again: "pastoral and romance through their limitations impel an epic vision that subsumes and redeems them" (188, 191). We can set against such statements Wordsworth's own, written just after his completion of the 1805 version of The Prelude:

This work [The Prelude] may be considered as a sort of portico to the Recluse, part of the same building, which I hope to be able ere long to begin with, in earnest; and if I am permitted to bring it to conclusion, and to write, further, a narrative Poem of the Epic kind, I shall consider the task of my life as over. (to George Beaumont, June 3, 1805; qtd. in Wordsworth, The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850, 534)

The implication is clearly that Wordsworth does not think of the thirteen-book Prelude as belonging to "the Epic kind," though his comment may suggest that he does nonetheless think of it as essentially "a narrative Poem." In any case, his criterion is most likely structural rather than modal: the later Excursion, with its proem-like "Prospectus" and summary Arguments at the head of each Book--neither of which appear in The Prelude and both of which structurally



indicate the epic genre--may be the narrative he here anticipates writing. Considered structurally, my argument runs, the narrative of The Prelude proceeds rather in the manner of romance, that is, through discontinuous episodes, or as Wordsworth calls them, spots of time. To be sure, The Prelude comprises much non-narrative (meditative, loco-descriptive, epistolary, etc.) poetry as well, which my argument admittedly does not address. But I agree with Don Bialostosky that

the effort to unify into an intelligible whole the significant moments of his life is the effort of the poem; the image of such a unity and the power to create it is the unachieved goal which is emblemized in the closing meditation on the scene from Snowdon. (179)

The Prelude, we may observe, contains any number of incidental images derived from the romance: nature is a "flashing shield" and a "fairy work," the theme of interior life and growth illustrates "genuine prowess," statesmen appear like "heroes in romance" and France like a "country in romance," the poet "sallies forth" to climb both the Alps in the center of the poem and Snowdon in the parallel episode at the end of the poem (I.586, III.185, VI.94 and 325, VII.506, XI.112, XIV.10). Such modal figures support Bloom's notion that the romance quest is the basic structural principle of the poem, organizing the "significant moments" and "scenes" of the poet's life into a

potentially "intelligible whole." The spots of time particularly, in other words, appear to be structurally akin to more traditional romance episodes. J. R. de J. Jackson approaches this notion when he observes of the climactic and emblematic episode on Snowdon that "Wordsworth would have expected his readers to remember Beattie's depiction of young Edwin's enthusiasm in The Minstrel":

And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb,  
When all in mist the world below was lost.  
What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,  
Like shipwreck'd mariner on desert coast,  
And view th'enormous waste of vapour, tost  
In billows, lengthening to th' horizon round,  
Now scoop'd in gulfs, with mountains now emboss'd!  
And hear the voice of mirth and song rebound,  
Flocks, herds, and waterfalls, along the hoar profound!

(134; The Minstrel I.xxii)

Recognizing his allusion, Wordsworth's readers should instantly see that not only the episode on Snowdon, but indeed the project of the entire poem, owes a good deal to the example of Beattie's Spenserian romance. With Beattie, the character of the poet becomes an explicit theme of the English verse romance, and his purpose, as he describes it in the preface to The Minstrel, clearly anticipates Wordsworth's in The Prelude:

The design was, to trace the progress of a Poetical

Genius...from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as a Minstrel, that is, as an itinerant poet and musician:--a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable, but sacred. (1)

Wordsworth too traces the growth of a "Poetical Genius," in part through the episodic structure of romance.

Finally, by way of conclusion I look briefly at Eliot's The Waste Land, a poem which places itself within the romance tradition and yet at the same time subordinates its episodic structure to a more meditative one. Clearly, Eliot does gesture toward and suggestively render quite a number of distinct episodes, but these are neither temporally nor rationally connected. Moreover, the relations among them, while reminiscent of the metonymic foregrounding and metaphorical patterning of earlier romances, are not really episodic. Instead, they are imagistic and covert, yielding not a narrative logic but a psychic one, more like free-association than story-telling. With Herbert Lindenberger, I take this structure to be the paradigmatic one of the ironic or modernist romance, which effectively displaces the episodic elaboration and ordering of the internalized quest, and thus its "fictions" of integration and coherence. As the episode loses its structural and semantic dominance, the verse romance becomes generically indistinguishable from

meditative forms. At this stage, the modal approach to the genre seems the only remaining option, unless, as Frye speculates, the modes really do "go around in a circle" (Anatomy 42), and the ironic mode of romance becomes the mythic precursor of a new romance kind, structured again episodically.

## Chapter One

### Metonymy and Metaphor in the Middle English Romance

#### I

The aim of this chapter is three-fold: first, to introduce key terms like "episode," "discontinuity," and "temporal" or "rational" order; second, to provide an orientation to the analytic method of the entire study, based on Roman Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy; third, to assess the episodic structure of the typical Middle English romance.<sup>1</sup> Given the relative obscurity of the primary materials of this chapter, the fact that many readers will have never read most or even all of the poems to which I am about to refer, it is probably best to defer for the moment any thesis statement or outline of my argument, and instead to offer a plot summary and structural description of The Tale of Gamelyn, a mid-fourteenth-century romance that is in many respects typical of the genre in the period. Like the two staple works in critical discussions of Middle English romance, King Horn and Havelok the Dane, Gamelyn's provenance is English legend and its

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<sup>1</sup>For convenience, I use the phrase "Middle English romance" to cover the vernacular verse romances produced in England from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century (the so-called "popular" or "minstrel" romances), but to exclude the romances of Chaucer and the Gawain-poet, as well as a handful of others, like Ywain and Gawain (the so-called "courtly" romances). This exclusion is explained in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 2.

preoccupations are matters of inheritance, "trowthe," and personal and political "tresoun." And like the vast majority of Middle English romances, Gamelyn adopts what A. C. Spearing calls the "essential" structure of romance in the period, "the unidirectional movement through time of a linear narrative" (Readings 86). It is well-suited to the purpose at hand, furthermore, because its maker<sup>2</sup> has consistently and explicitly marked the poem's episodic divisions. The precise lineaments of the poem's structure may thus be readily described, and our attention quickly shifted to the true problem at hand: the function of the episode and of episodic structure in the Middle English romance.

We need at the outset a definition of "episode," and M. W. Bloomfield provides a flexible and commonsensical one:

Critics may differ as to how many episodes a plot may be divided into, but by and large I suspect there will usually be a large measurement of agreement on the subject. I am using the term in the broad sense, of any natural unit of action, any section into which a plot may be with some reason divided. Episodes may be in other episodes, as clauses may be in other clauses. A knight embarks on a quest and meets a number of

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<sup>2</sup>Because their compositions depend so heavily on borrowings, translations, and/or formulaic additions and substitutions, I refer to the anonymous Middle English romancers as "makers" rather than "poets" or "adapters."

adventures and finally terminates his quest. The quest as a whole may be considered as a macro-episode in which episodes are embedded. There may even be, as in some Icelandic sagas, several macro-episodes in a narrative. Episodes may be unusual or decorative or essential; they may be of long or short duration. Some may consist of dialogue; others of described action; and still others a mixture of both. ("Episodic Motivation" 99)<sup>3</sup>

Gamelyn falls into seven "natural units of action" or episodes, plus an eight line introduction and a sixteen line conclusion. These episodes may be rendered in skeletal outline as follows, the quoted verses being the transitional markers that signal the end of one episode and the beginning of the next:

11. 9-168: Episode 1

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<sup>3</sup>Haidu finds this definition too general (658), but my study as a whole illustrates Bloomfield's point that episodic divisions in a given work may be fairly readily agreed upon, even though the resulting units may have substantial differences from those discerned in other works. From Aristotle forward, the problem of defining episodes and the episodic in the abstract has been a vexed one; see Rainer Friedrich, passim. Friedrich's distinction between "elaboration" and "epeisodion" is not consistently helpful in the analysis of romance structures, where the abstract plot is often threadbare and epeisodion far outweighs elaboration. The elaboration of the abstract plot of Book III of The Faerie Queene, for example, or of The Prelude would produce but a fraction of the total work, and it would be difficult to justify all of the interpolated episodes on the grounds of "probability" or "necessity." The neoclassical devaluation of romance as episodic was formulated on precisely this issue: compared to epic, romance appears digressive and disunified.

ll. 169-70: "Litheth, and lestneth and holdeth your  
tonge,/ And ye schul heere talkyng of Gamelyn the  
yonge."

ll. 171-288: Episode 2

ll. 289-90: "Now litheth, and lestneth bothe yong and  
olde,/ And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the  
bolde."

ll. 291-340: Episode 3

ll. 341-44: "Litheth, and lestneth and holdeth youre  
tonge,/ And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the  
yonge;/ Herkneth, lordynges and lesteneth aright,/   
Whan alle gestes were goon how Gamelyn was dight."

ll. 345-550: Episode 4

ll. 551-52: "Now lytheth and lestneth so God yif you  
goode fyn,/ And ye schul heere good game of yonge  
Gamelyn."

ll. 553-614: Episode 5

ll. 615-16: "Lete we now this fals knight lyen in his  
care,/ And talke we of Gamelyn and loke how he  
fare."

ll. 617-768: Episode 6

ll. 769-70: "Litheth, and lestneth and holdeth you  
stille,/ And ye schul here how Gamelyn had al his  
wille."

ll. 771-886: Episode 7

The two transitional devices here, the formulaic appeal for



attention and one that I call an "announced interlaced switch"<sup>4</sup> (between episodes 5 and 6), both common in Middle English romance, are supplemented throughout by other equally common devices, like narratorial comment and summary (ll. 167-8, 283-4, 339-40, 883-86) and "prospection" or anticipation (ll. 285-89, 349-50, 545-50, 770).<sup>5</sup> That these minstrel-like "fitt" divisions are fully conscious and not merely remnants of an outgrown oral tradition is suggested both by their regularity and by the incremental repetition with which the most frequently used device, the appeal for attention, is varied to reflect the progress of the narrative. After the second episode, for instance, in which Gamelyn proves his strength in a wrestling match, the formulaic phrase "Gamelyn the yonge" (170) is altered to "Gamelyn the bolde" (290); after the centrally-positioned fourth episode, when Gamelyn and his friend Adam are for the first time in grave immediate danger, the appeal indirectly

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<sup>4</sup>My use of "interlace" here follows, not that of Vinaver in his chapter "The Poetry of Interlace" in The Rise of Romance, but that of Todorov, in his Introduction to Poetics, 53. Sequences in a narrative (roughly equal to episodes) may be joined through embedding, linking, and alternation. "Interlacing" is synonymous with "alternation," and refers to the back and forth movement in a narrative between two simultaneously occurring stories (e.g. "Meanwhile, back at the ranch..."). For an example of an unannounced interlaced switch, see ll. 695-704 in Gamelyn, where it functions to answer a narrative exigency within an episode and not as a transitional bridge between episodes.

<sup>5</sup>Another very common transitional device, though not in evidence here, is the topos of travel, with the hero setting forth each morning upon a new adventure.

assures us of a "goode fyn" (551); likewise, on the verge of the final episode, the appeal announces what has been implied all along, Gamelyn's ultimate success (770). The insistence, explicitness, and consciousness of episodic division in Gamelyn confirm that its maker conceived of the work as whole in terms of isolable episodes, or episodically.

The episodes themselves present more or less isolated and complete actions, delimited sometimes spatio-temporally and sometimes conceptually. The first episode, for instance, is organized to motivate and illustrate the conflict from which the rest of the tale will proceed; its logic is thematic, not spatio-temporal or "scenic" (a number of years pass in between the episode's two distinct scenes). The episode begins with a dying father, Sir John, summoning some wise knights to help him dispose of his land among his three sons, of whom the youngest is Gamelyn. Sir John is especially concerned for Gamelyn, who is likely to be despoiled of any inheritance by his wicked eldest brother, Johan; as Sir John puts it, "Selde ye see ony eyr helpen his brother" (40). The gathered knights inexplicably advise dividing the lands among the two eldest and leaving Gamelyn nothing, but Sir John divides them instead with a clear partiality toward Gamelyn. There follows a passage (65-80) which telescopes time and brings us to the narrative present: Sir John dies; Johan despoils the young Gamelyn as

predicted, raises him as a servant, and lets his land and its buildings fall into disrepair; Gamelyn grows to be the strongest man on his brother's estate. Given the amount of time covered here, there is a temptation to find an episode break somewhere in this summary, but the absence of any rhetorical indication is telling, and the ensuing scene simply activates the conflict that was pointed in the previous one. "On a day" (81), the fully-grown Gamelyn answers Johan's commands with open revolt and curses his brother for depriving him of his inheritance; Johan orders Gamelyn beaten for his insolence, but Gamelyn defends himself so fiercely that his brother's men soon desist and Johan himself flees to a loft. To placate Gamelyn, Johan duplicitously agrees to restore his lands, and the episode closes with Johan sealing his "false tresoun" (168), Judas-like, with a kiss. By tracing Gamelyn's receiving an inheritance, losing it, and seemingly regaining it, the first episode names Gamelyn and Johan as the poem's protagonist and antagonist respectively, and it illustrates in miniature the exile and return plot based on feudal dispossession that is the poem's dramatic motivation as well as its principal theme.

The second episode is essentially scenic. Gamelyn decides to go to a wrestling tournament "to preuen his might" and to win "moche worschip" for his family's name (174, 185); Johan graciously provides a horse to get him

there, then prays that his neck be broken in the contest. Arriving to find a franklin whose two sons have nearly been killed by "a champioun" wrestler, Gamelyn undertakes to avenge their loss. He trades taunts and wrestles with the champion, and readily wins; he then shares a witty exchange on his prowess with the champion, the franklin, and two gentlemen, and receives the tourney's prizes, "the ram and the ryng" (280). Though the episode opens at Johan's estate and closes with a prospective glance at Johan locking its gate against Gamelyn's return, the main action is contained by the space and time of the tournament. Thus, Gamelyn's arrival back at the family estate falls into the third episode, which is also scenically organized, this time within the spatio-temporal limits of the week-long feast Gamelyn holds to celebrate his victory. Having broken through the barred gate, killed the porter, and tied-up Johan, Gamelyn lavishly entertains a "compaignye" with Johan's stores of food and drink. Just as the second episode illustrates Gamelyn's inborn sense of honor and his extraordinary strength, so this one instances both his fierce determination to be repossessed and the liberality which justifies that determination and which stands in opposition to Johan's avarice.

To this point, the conflict has been cast in personal and familial terms, but the ensuing episodes recast it in wider socio-political terms, simply by repeating actions

from the earlier episodes with an expanded cast of characters. In the fourth episode, the unbound Johan confronts, dupes, and binds Gamelyn. Gamelyn sometime later appeals to Johan's steward, Adam, to free him, and their conversation turns on the value of "trowthe" and the cost of "tresoun" in matters of feudal allegiance:

Thanne seyde Adam that was the Spencer,  
 "I haue serued thy brother this sixtene yeer;  
 If i leete the goon out of his bour  
 He wolde say afterward i were a traytour."  
 "Adam," sayde Gamelyn "so brouk i myn hals,  
 Thou schalt fynde my brother atte laste fals;  
 Therfor, brother Adam louse me out of bond,  
 And i wil parte with the of my free lond."  
 "Vp swich a forward," seyde Adam, "iwys,  
 I wil do therto al that in me is."  
 "Adam," seyde Gamelyn "also mot i the,  
 I wol hold the couenaunt and thou wil lose me."

(403-14)

Having freed Gamelyn, Adam then plots with him to test the ecclesiastical community at an up-coming feast of Johan's. The narrative then leaps forward to the feast (without an episode break), and when neither "abbot or priour[, nor] monk or chanoun" (509) will move to release the apparently-bound Gamelyn, Gamelyn and Adam beat them with staves and bind Johan. The scene recalls Gamelyn's defense of himself

with a "pestel" against Johan's men in the first episode and his binding of Johan in the third, but here the action extends the implication of collusion from the estate to the church. The fifth episode likewise implicates the legal establishment. The sheriff and 25 men come to apprehend Gamelyn and Adam for disturbing "the kinges pees"; a new porter bars the gate, here on behalf of Gamelyn rather than against him as in the third episode; Gamelyn and Adam once again take up staves and down five of the sheriff's men, and then escape into the forest. By this point, the role of antagonist has expanded to embrace the institutional powers of feudal society, to which Gamelyn and Adam alone, apparently, are opposed.

The sixth episode, organized conceptually, therefore similarly expands the role of protagonist by treating Gamelyn's association with outlawry and its consequences. In the forest, Gamelyn and Adam take up with the king of the outlaws and his band (prototypical Robin Hood figures), and when the king learns that his return to his own domain is safe, Gamelyn is crowned in his place. Meanwhile, Gamelyn has been publicly decried as a criminal; when he goes to the shire-court to defend himself, he is imprisoned and bound. Out of nowhere, the third brother, Ote, appears and agrees to stand surety against Gamelyn's return to court for a proper trial, so Gamelyn is freed and returns to the forest. In the seventh and final episode, Johan, now sheriff

himself, has bribed the jury to convict Gamelyn; Gamelyn and his men arrive to find the trial finished and Ote bound and condemned to hang in Gamelyn's stead. Vowing to dispense justice himself, Gamelyn unbinds Ote, forcibly takes the justice's seat, has the justice, jury, and Johan bound, and sentences them all to hang for their treachery. Though lacking in drama (inexplicably, Gamelyn meets no resistance here), the episode provides a servicable conclusion to the tale: the "outlaw" sits in judgment, purges his society of a widespread political and legal corruption of which he himself has been the chief victim, and is not only restored to his rightful inheritance, but also made "chef iustice of al [the] fre forest" (892).

As this summary makes clear, the episodic logic of Gamelyn is at the most elementary level a chronological progression, "the unidirectional movement through time of a linear narrative" which follows the protagonist in his quest to recover what is rightfully his. Both Havelok the Dane and King Horn share this basic theme and temporally organized structure, but neither proceeds as schematically as Gamelyn does, and so neither appears quite as discontinuous. While temporal ordering in itself invests a narrative with the minimal continuity of a time line, the heavily marked transitions of Gamelyn disrupt even this sense of continuity by isolating and self-enclosing episodes which would otherwise merge more seamlessly one into the

next, particularly where the relation between episodes, as between episodes 4 and 5 for instance, is rational or causal as well as temporal or successive (because Gamelyn and Adam beat the religious, the sheriff and his men come to apprehend them).<sup>6</sup> In Havelok, we have the opposite effect, even though its basic structure is in fact more schematic than Gamelyn's. The tale of Havelok's exile and return consists of three major movements, each of which represents a discrete phase in his development and culminates in the appearance of the miraculous light issuing from his mouth and the revelation of his king-mark;<sup>7</sup> these three movements are themselves embedded in a doubled one of two betrayals and two restorations. Such a structure could obviously lend itself to a discontinuous development, in which transitions between episodes would be heavily marked and the various repetitions strongly emphasized, and in fact Havelok begins in just this way, detailing first the good government and death-bed behests of Athelwold and the treachery of Godrich,

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<sup>6</sup>For further discussion of rational and temporal order in narrative, see Vinaver 9-10, and Todorov 41-5.

<sup>7</sup>See Mehl 163. The three phases punctuated by these three revelations are Grim's sparing and adopting Havelok, Havelok's winning and wedding Goldeboru, and Havelok's defeating the robbers at Bernard's house and being recognized by Ubbe as king. Each of these three movements might be taken loosely as an episode (or perhaps as what Bloomfield calls a "macro-episode") both in conceptual terms and, though each develops a number of distinct scenes, even in broadly-defined spatio-temporal ones: the first treats action in Denmark, the second action in Grimsby and Lincoln, the third action in a different locale in Denmark.



then, following an announced interlaced switch and narratorial comment (328-337), jumping from England to Denmark to detail the similar government and behests of Birkabeyn and the similar treachery of Godard. As the tale develops, however, the poet's use of transitional markers starts to flag, and the force of the temporal logic takes over, such that "we, and the narrator, lose sight of [the structural] ordering, and episode piles upon episode, climax upon climax" (Ganim 34). The quick succession of scenes, with their close and increasingly uninterrupted temporal and, in some cases, rational connections, actually blurs to some extent the boundaries of the episodes and the discontinuities implicit in the structure of the poem.<sup>8</sup>

King Horn shows a similar tendency to downplay its actual episodic discontinuity. Its structure, as W. R. J. Barron has it, is one in which

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<sup>8</sup>A good example of such blurring is provided by the episode in which Havelok overmasters the robbers at Bernard's house (1760ff). As Mehl admits, the action "could at first sight appear to be [an] unnecessary digression" (170): it is isolable in terms both of character and of scene (neither Bernard nor his house function anywhere else in the plot), and it is unmotivated in any rational sense (the robbers simply appear and take their beating). Mehl argues for the necessity of the episode as an illustration of "the lawlessness that has spread under Godard's rule" and a presentation of Havelok as "the champion of law and order," but its integration in the plot depends much more on the maker's efforts to downplay its very real discontinuities. Thus, in addition to leaving transitions into and out of the episode unmarked, he provides a rational motivation for Havelok's being at Bernard's (Ubbe's concern for the safety of the couple) and uses the episode itself as the rational motivation for Ubbe's subsequent care of Havelok and his decision to knight him (2042).

the individual scenes, each a moment of intense dramatic action, follow one another without explicit connection....Each is self-contained, carrying forward Horn's feud against the Saracens and his winning of Rymenhild alternately but largely independently....

(67-8)

But A. C. Spearing, commenting on the stylistic "transparency" of the poem, has described how the poet melds these self-contained scenes, largely by refraining from any rhetorical indication of their boundaries, so as to conceal disjunction:

the narrative structure is very complicated, involving three main settings (Westernesse, Ireland, and Suddene), each of which is visited several times; eight sea-voyages; and several cross-cuts from Ireland and Suddene to Westernesse and back again. But the voyages transport us along with the characters, without the narrator's seeming to be involved; and the cross-cuts are conducted with the utmost naturalness, often being masked by association of ideas....The effect is of what in film is sometimes called 'invisible cutting'. The transitions are seamless (or rather, the seams are concealed); there appears to be simply a continuous flow generated from within the story itself, and we need to make a conscious effort to notice that a narratorial intervention has in fact

occurred. (Readings 31-2)

The "continucus flow" of King Horn is of course primarily temporal, as it is in Havelok and, less continuously, in Gamelyn; to the extent that they forego a rational ordering of episodes, all three poems admit some degree of structural discontinuity, more or less explicitly.

To get a sense of the difference between rational and temporal ordering, we need only glance at the first scene of Shakespeare's As You Like It, a play which adopts, from Lodge's Rosalynde, the plot of Gamelyn. All of the obvious discontinuities in Gamelyn--the second episode's wrestling match, which inexplicably intervenes between the brothers' apparent reconciliation in the first episode and Johan's renewed treachery at the start of the third; the sudden introduction of Adam in the fourth episode and his largely unmotivated switch in allegiance; the sudden and entirely unexplained introduction of the outlaw king in the sixth episode and Gamelyn's unmotivated succession to his throne; the sudden introduction of Ote, not even named previously, in the sixth episode--all are rectified and rationalized within the first 173 lines of Shakespeare's play. Orlando (in Gamelyn's role) enters speaking intimately with Adam about his disinheritance by Oliver (in Johan's role) and his growing resentment; by the end of his 25 line speech, we have virtually the whole of the first episode of Gamelyn, and then some, for both Adam and Jaques (in Ote's role) have

been introduced, the first dramatically in a context that indicates his existing friendship with Gamelyn, the second by report in a comment that implies once more the tyranny of the eldest brother. Adam's conflict of allegiance is realized at line 63, when he tries to reconcile his "masters," and his determination to follow Orlando is motivated by Oliver's insult at line 81. The wrestler Charles's conversation with Oliver (97ff.) introduces the parallel plot, only hinted at in the anonymous outlaw king of Gamelyn, of Duke Senior, dispossessed like Orlando (except in this case by a younger brother) and hence living with his retinue in the forest of Arden "like the old Robin Hood of England" (116). Their conversation then turns to the wrestling match, Charles urging Oliver to keep his brother away (Charles does not want to hurt Orlando), and Oliver inviting him on the contrary to do his worst, and then departing at the scene's close to "kindle the boy thither" (172-3). All the necessary background and the key players of the Gamelyn plot have been placed, all the relationships from which the action grows indicated and motivated, and all within the dramatic moment of a single episode. Though the actions and choices that constitute the plot remain essentially the same, they are disposed in As You Like It rationally and continuously, creating a narrative world that feels much more unified and articulated

than Gamelyn's.<sup>9</sup>

Like Gamelyn, the typical Middle English romance is a temporally organized series of discrete and discontinuous episodes. The rest of this chapter explores the logic of this structure, with the aim of delimiting its semantic functions and potentialities. My point of departure is the stylistic tendency toward metonymy at every level of the Middle English romance, from the epithet to the episode. I will then consider the structural repetitions of these poems, in order to establish the extent to which similar episodes may be seen to be metaphorically related. What emerges is a description of the early or primary poetics of the English verse romance, a poetics in which chronologically ordered but discontinuous episodic actions are used to illustrate the heroic (or conventional)

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<sup>9</sup>This difference is, as Ganim argues, a mimetic one. The "mechanical narrative techniques" of the Middle English romance are related to those of the ballad, in which "transitions between episodes are usually understood rather than stated; scenes are simply juxtaposed" (42). In King Horn, for example, "the characters move like wind-up toys, jerkily moving here and there, setting each other in motion. For all the local directions, the space they move in seems to be a vacuum" (41). In Havelok, too, Ganim finds a "cartoon-like distortion" and a "flimsy and one-dimensional" narrative movement; where the poem attains to its unique "sensory realism in the scenes of Grim fishing, Grim's barnyard, and Havelok working in the streets of Lincoln (for the realism of the story is limited to this series of episodes)," the maker of Havelok "is attempting to harness energies for which the literary means have not yet been perfected" (25-39). Adopting Ganim's terms, we may say that in Shakespeare's drama, the means of literary realism have come far enough that the one-dimensional, temporal plot of Gamelyn can be elaborated as the more three-dimensional, rational one of As You Like It.

attributes and exploits of the protagonist, whose character, so realized, constitutes the essential theme of the poem. This incremental and metonymic portrait-in-action often involves more or less formulaic repetitions, or naive structural metaphors, whose semantic value is generally negligible but nonetheless always potential. Such metonymic and quasi-metaphoric episodic structure is definitive of the Middle English romance, and it stands in prototypical relation to the episodic structures later developed by more self-consciously literary romancers, like Chaucer, Spenser, and Wordsworth.

## II

In his essay "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance," Roman Jakobson describes two poles of language, metaphoric and metonymic, from which, he argues, all utterances are generated. Sentences, for instance, are composed both by lexical selection, a metaphorical process because of the range of similar words available in the language and the possibility of substituting one for another in the sentence, and by syntactic combination, a metonymic process because the words selected must be properly ordered and set in some contiguous relation. Both processes, says Jakobson, are at work "on any verbal level--morphemic, lexical, syntactic, and phraseological" (111)--but often, particularly at the level where sentences are combined into

more complicated utterances, one or the other tends to predominate:

The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The metaphoric way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively....In normal verbal behavior both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other. (109-10)

Now, narrative in general, and particularly prose narrative, almost always proceeds according to a temporal and often according to a rational order; both sequential contiguity ("and then") and causality ("hence") are aspects of the metonymic way. Verse, on the other hand, with its repetition or parallelism of sound and rhyme, of metrical and stanzaic form, and of patterns of imagery, always proceeds in one sense on the basis of the similarity of elements, or in the metaphoric way. Any narrative written in verse, therefore, may be said to be both metonymic and metaphoric in these fundamental ways, but this would be to

describe not "cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style," but rather essential and transhistorical properties of narrativity and verse-making themselves. In a description of the style of a work or of a number of works from the same period, such fundamental dependence on metaphor or metonymy should in general not be factored in, as it is a matter of formal necessity rather than artistic choice. Instead, we must consider how the discourse articulates and develops its meaning, or semantic content, within such frameworks, whether it proceeds from topic to topic more by a principle of metaphoric similarity or by one of metonymic contiguity.<sup>10</sup>

The stylistic preference of the Middle English romance is for the metonymic way, in everything from figures of speech to the organization of episodes. This point has been occasionally suggested or implied in critical discussion but rarely developed, except quite recently by Spearing. Describing the verbal features and imaginative possibilities of the "restricted code" of early Middle English romances, Spearing finds that "metonymy in [Jakobson's] sense proves to be of greater use than metaphor in enabling us to detect the features that are present in the narrative style..." for

these narratives, and King Horn above all, lack the

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<sup>10</sup>For an excellent primer on the theory of metaphor and metonymy and its use in analyzing literary structures, see Lodge 73-124.



manifest figuration based on metaphor and simile to which twentieth-century readers are accustomed to respond in a conscious way when they read poetry, with the result that we are scarcely able to grasp that their verbal form is having any specific effect on us.

(Readings 24, 34)

Thus, while King Horn contains only two poetic metaphors<sup>11</sup> (the punning on Horn's name and the fishing metaphor of Rymenhild's dream) and an "extremely rare" use of similes, all of which are conventional, it depends quite heavily on the metonymic figure of synecdoche, "especially in the form in which the part is substituted for the whole" (29-30, 34ff.).<sup>12</sup> Rather than repeat the details of Spearing's argument, which is after all limited to this one figure as it appears in this one text, I will offer a complementary analysis, working from the level of the phrasal and syntactic unit to that of the episode, and drawing examples from a number of different romances. What will be apparent throughout, I trust, is the considerable extent to which the

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<sup>11</sup>"Poetic metaphor" here designates metaphor in the usual sense, a figure involving an implicit comparison of two objects or ideas or the transference to one of the qualities of the other. Other figures and usages are metaphorical in Jakobson's sense, like personification, similes, parallelisms, and substitutions or developments based on synonymy and antonymy.

<sup>12</sup>Ganim refers to this synecdochal tendency when he says of King Horn that "time and place are largely represented by action and gesture" (44); see also Mehl's discussion of the importance of synecdochal gesture in Athelston (147).

verbal organization of most Middle English romances derives from the metonymic pole of language.

The first passage I would like to consider, from the mid-thirteenth-century Floris and Blancheflour, depends just about equally on metaphor and metonymy, and is therefore helpful at the outset in two respects. First, its development along both poles will permit a definition by contrast of the operation of each, and thus a sort of methodological orientation. Such development will also illustrate a point that should be borne in mind throughout the discussion: Middle English romances do instance a variety of metaphorical strategies, ranging from simple comparisons to extended poetic metaphors ("fishing" in Horn, "flowers" in Floris),<sup>13</sup> and I do not wish to imply at any point that these poems are devoid of metaphorical content; it is there, though in forms which are in general less frequent in appearance, less developed, and/or less vital to narrative meaning than those based on metonymy. The passage I've chosen stands out precisely because of its comparative metaphoric richness--suddenly the poem attains to a grace and sophistication that is almost nowhere else in evidence--yet even here, as we shall see, metaphor plays a fairly restricted role.

The dramatic context for the piece is straightforward

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<sup>13</sup>See also Gamelyn's metaphors of merchantry (270-8), of absolution (449, 503, and 516), and of drinking (596-8).

and familiar. Floris, a heathen prince, loves Blancheflour, a Christian, but his father, the king, opposes their marriage. He separates the lovers and has Blancheflour sold into the harem of the Amv. of Babylon; the Queen then tells Floris that she is dead and leads him to her "grave," where Floris swoons three times and laments,

"Blaunchefflour!" he seide, "Blaunchefflour!

So swete a thing was neuer in boure!

Of Blaunchefflour is that y meene,

For she was com of good kyn.

Lytel and mucche loueden the

For thy goodnesse and thy beaute.

Yif deth were dalt aryght,

We shuld be deed both on oo nyght.

On oo day born we were;

We shul be ded both in feere.

Deeth," he seide, "ful of enuye

And of all trechorye,

Refte thou hast me my lemman;

For soth," he seide, "thou art to blame.

She wolde haue leuyd, and thou noldest,

And fayne wolde y dye, and thou woldest.

After deeth clepe no more y nylle,

But slee my selfe now y wille." (271-88)

With Floris on the point of suicide, the Queen relents and explains the deception, and this, the second episode,

concludes with Floris setting out to recover Blancheflour. In addition to providing a dramatic climax to the first half of the story (the separation of the protagonists), the action here looks forward to the structurally similar action that concludes the tale, where Floris is again ready to sacrifice himself for love. Having been secretly reunited and then discovered, Floris and Blancheflour are condemned to burn by the Amyral, who had intended to take Blancheflour as his queen. As they are led toward the stake, the lovers nobly and piteously quarrel over a magic ring that will preserve its bearer, each insisting that the other must have it. The pathetic effect is virtually identical to that of Floris's plaint, and the Amyral, like the Queen before him, relents and allows the love he has tried to destroy. There follows at once the long-anticipated wedding of Floris and Blancheflour, which closes the tale.

Though not terribly significant, the structural parallels between these two climactic episodes are obvious enough, and it was perhaps the maker's sense of them that led him to embellish Floris's plaint with an unusual concentration of metaphorical forms. These are the comparative of line 272 and that of lines 277-80, which is further metaphoric in that it develops on the basis of the antonyms, "birth/death" and "day/night";<sup>14</sup> the

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<sup>14</sup>On antonyms and synonyms as metaphorical, see Jakobson 99. The principle is that both exist in a virtual "substitution set," in which "signs are linked by various

personification of lines 281-87, metaphoric in that the qualities of one object, the conscious human agent, are transferred to another, the abstract category "death"; and the grammatical and lexical parallelisms of lines 285-6 (including the antonyms "life/death"), which are reiterated in part in the "x y nylle, but z y wille" structure of the concluding couplet. If we trace the semantic development of this passage a little more closely, however, we find not only a roughly equal number of metonymic moves, but also a notable dependence upon metonymy in the elaboration of two of the metaphoric forms. The comparative of the first clause, for example, fails to activate or realize its metaphoric potential: Blancheflour is simply a sweeter "thing" than all other "things." There is no object or individual specified to which Blancheflour might be positively compared in terms of "sweetness," and while "in boure" could be taken to imply a comparison grounded upon relative sex appeal, the force of the phrase is rather to specify "anywhere at all," with "boure" synecdochally representing the entire courtly world. Even the epithet "sweet," which like all epithets implies some act of comparison, appears drained of its metaphorical value, a mere repetition of the formulaic "swete wyght" of line 241. As in other such phrases, like the "good kyn" of line 274,

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degrees of similarity which fluctuate between the equivalence of synonyms and the common core of antonyms."

or the more familiar "doughti knight" and "faire maiden," the epithet is attached to a substantive not in order to specify its meaning but because the two are traditionally associated; the metaphor is not there to increase the semantic density of the text, but because it belongs to the arsenal of poetic ornaments...

(Todorov 24)<sup>15</sup>

In effect, the comparative construction here does little more than to name a conventional attribute associated with Blanche flour: though the structure of the clause is implicitly metaphorical, its explicit semantic function is almost entirely metonymic.

The logic of the following four lines (273-76) is analytic and therefore metonymic (analysis involving the naming of the contiguous parts of a whole); the passage might be paraphrased, omitting the confusing shift from the third-person to the second, "The loss of Blanche flour is heavy, for she was noble, and loved by everyone for her goodness and beauty." The semantic content is almost exclusively contained in the nouns and noun phrases, each of which names an attribute associated in Floris's mind with the concept "Blanche flour" ("good kyn" being a metonymic name for "nobility," "lytel and much" for "everybody"; "goodnesse" and "beaute" simply name attributes and have no

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<sup>15</sup>Todorov is here summarizing Milman Parry's findings about the formulaic epithet in oral literature and extending them to written literature.

additional metonymic significance). The next period (277-280) develops metaphorically, Floris's thought proceeding from the fact of Blancheflour's death to the antonymic one of her birth, and thus his own on the same day, which gives rise to the comparison of their unequal fates and his determination to right the balance that night. The apostrophe to death follows, the first four lines of which, like the opening comparative, depend substantially on metonymy. Floris conceives death metaphorically as a conscious entity, and then elaborates that conception metonymically by naming death's characteristic attributes ("enuye" and "trechorye"<sup>16</sup>) and action (theft), the viciousness of which leads him by association to the notion of blame-worthiness. It could be argued that the nouns and verbs of this passage (including "clepe" in 287) also work metaphorically to extend the personification, increasing its density, so to speak, by making death appear more specifically as a thief; but I hardly think this is the intention or the effect, for the figure is so conventional<sup>17</sup> as to be without imaginative impact: we are not really

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<sup>16</sup>These attributes are not merely conventional: as the "trechorye" of Floris's parents leads to the present potential death scene and the "enuye" of the Amyral to the later one, both terms may be said to be thematically relevant.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. the "privee theef men clepeth Deeth" (VI.675) of Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale. The figure no doubt derives from the New Testament: cf. Luke 12:39, II Thess. 5:2-4, and Rev. 3:3 and 16:15.

invited to see a thief. Rather, we have a metaphorical device, personification, elaborated by conventional associations, or metonymy. The final four lines, with their grammatical balance and careful oppositions, close the plaint with a metaphorical flourish, for the most part free of metonymic tint (excepting the indication of temporal sequence, or contiguity, in the "now" of line 288).

Again, by comparison to the general verbal style of the rest of the poem and of most other Middle English romances, this passage is rich in metaphor, though it does not deploy any poetic ones or any similes as some other passages here and elsewhere do.<sup>18</sup> Such richness, however, is relative, and perhaps a brief digression is in order here to illustrate the extreme of metaphoric development, which neither Floris and Blancheflour nor any other Middle English romance even approaches. I have in mind the much more famous, yet in some ways surprisingly similar, plaint of Shakespeare's Romeo at the tomb of his lover:

Ah, dear Juliet,

Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe

That unsubstantial Death is amorous,

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<sup>18</sup>See the surprising, because unconventional, metaphor at lines 173-5, which describes the light emanating from a "charbuncle stoon" as being sufficient to light a wine cellar. This may be simply a variation on the more conventional "Hit shyned anyght so doth the sonne" (582), which can be found in many Middle English romances (cf. the description of the fairy castle in Sir Orfeo, 367ff.), and almost certainly derives from Revelation 21:18-23. See also Spearing, Readings 68-9.



And that the lean abhorred monster keeps  
 Thee here in dark to be his paramour?  
 For fear of that, I still will stay with thee,  
 And never from this [palace] of dim night  
 Depart again. Here, here will I remain  
 With worms that are thy chambermaids; O, here  
 Will I set up my everlasting rest,  
 And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars  
 From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your  
 last!

Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you  
 Doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss  
 A dateless bargain to engrossing death!  
 Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavory guide!  
 Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on  
 The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!  
 Here's to my love! [Drinks.] O true apothecary!  
 Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

(V.iii.101-20)

Like Floris, Romeo personifies death and resolves to kill himself, but in a verbal style that is relentlessly, even hysterically, metaphorical. Death metamorphoses in his thought from a "lean abhorred monster" to a lover, the tomb becomes a "palace," worms its "chambermaids." While the elaboration of the metaphor could be attributed to a process of metonymic association (the idea of a rival lover leading

to that of his palace, which in turn prompts the notion of chambermaids), each detail nevertheless opens out further metaphoric correspondences. Thus, more than simply extending the already activated tomb/palace metaphor, "chambermaids" animates the stock worms of the grave and asks us to imagine their grotesque office as a "sweeping up" and disposal of the dust which is the human body. None of the conventional associations which develop Floris's personification possesses this sort of enriching and imaginatively arresting metaphorical content, and likewise none of the antonymic oppositions that structure his utterance generate anything like the surprising semantic play of Romeo's "unsubstantial Death/engrossing death," an opposition that arises from paronomasia and results in paradox. Even the metonymic impulse by which Romeo anatomizes himself into eyes, arms, and lips is swallowed up in metaphor: the imperative address personifies each part, and "lips" are further transformed to "doors of breath," their kiss to a legal "seal" upon an eternal contract. The frantic metaphorical leaps that follow, as Romeo takes up the cup of poison and drinks, conflate death, the poison, and Romeo himself in a single imaginative cluster, structured by similarity: all three are, in effect, the "bitter conduct," "unsavory guide," "desperate pilot," and "true apothecary" Romeo invokes. One could go on at length

unpacking the passage's surfeit of metaphor,<sup>19</sup> but this summary suffices to illustrate the vast difference in verbal texture between a fully metaphoric style and the predominantly metonymic one of the Middle English romance, even where it attains to its greatest metaphoric density.

In verbal style and topical development, most Middle English romances operate much more on the principle of metonymic association and contiguity, than on that of metaphoric similarity and substitution. The superlative-laden character description, evident throughout the corpus, is fundamentally metonymic, as, for instance, this description of Athelwold in Havelok the Dane:<sup>20</sup>

He was the beste knith at nede  
That heuere micthe riden on stede,  
Or wepne wagge, or folc vt lede;

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<sup>19</sup>I can't resist one further point: the parallelism of the hemistiches of line 116 reinforces the synonymy of "bitter conduct" and "unsavory guide": the line is metaphoric, in other words, both syntactically and semantically.

<sup>20</sup>Just for the record: metonymy as a figure of speech appears incidentally in Havelok at ll. 152, 235, 285, 672, 1835, 1950, 2287, 2432, 2791, 2855, and 2927; similes and poetic metaphors appear incidentally at ll. 40, 63, 592-4, 1026, 1699, 1719, 1838-40, 1851, 1867, 1872, 1876-7, 1910-13, 1994, 1998, 2123-6, 2129, 2141-7, 2289, 2343, 2434-5, 2438-40, 2448, 2475, 2596, 2615, 2649, 2687, 2690-2, and 2919-21. This list of citations is not exhaustive, nor should the apparent preponderance of similes and metaphors be misleading, for they are almost uniformly conventional and not therefore particularly salient in terms of the verbal style: "hated hem so man doth galle," "Engelondes blome," "Of his mouth it stod a stem/ Als it were a sunnebem."

Of knith ne hauede he neuer drede,  
 That he ne sprong forth so sparke of glede,  
 And lete him [knewe] of hise hand-dede,  
 Hw he couthe with wepne spede;  
 And other he refte him hors or wede,  
 Or made him sone handes sprede,  
 And "Louerd, merci!" loude grede.  
 He was large, and no wicth gnede;  
 Hauede he non so god brede,  
 Ne on his bord non so god shrede,  
 That he ne wolde thorwit fede  
 Poure that on fote yede;  
 Forto hauen of Him the mede  
 That for vs wolde on rode blede,  
 Crist, that al kan wisse and rede  
 That euere woneth in ani thede. (87-105)

Notwithstanding the conventional "sparke" simile, the  
 antonymic opposition of "large/gnede," and the insistent  
 repetition of the "-ede" rhyme, the rhetorical amplification  
 of the initial clause depends almost wholly on the logic of  
 metonymy. Athelwold is described as the "beste knith" for  
 performing those actions associated with chivalric  
 excellence (riding horses, handling weapons, leading out  
 armies), and in battle he appears fearless and keen at the  
 outset, adroit with his weapons during, and victorious in  
 the end, winning his opponent's armor or horse or exacting

an admission of defeat. These actions and attributes are clustered not on the basis of their similarity (or on a principle of synonymic substitution<sup>21</sup>), but on that of their contiguity, conceptual in the case of Athelwold's knightly excellences and temporal and causal in that of his prowess in battle. Similarly, in the second period, the opening clause concerning Athelwold's liberality is followed by an illustration (he feeds the poor) and a statement of its motivation (to win heavenly reward); the topic of liberality prompts the narrator to move metonymically backward to its cause and forward to its effect, and he expresses each, moreover, partly by a further use of metonymy (the poor going "on fote" and Christ bleeding "on rode"). Metonymy generally plays the vital role as well in the direct narration of action:

[Athelwold] sende writes sone onon  
 After his erles euereich on;  
 And after hise baruns, riche and poure,  
 Fro Rokesburw al into Douere,

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<sup>21</sup>While it is clear that all of the examples illustrate the same thing (Athelwold being the "beste knith at nede") and may be considered as "synonymous" in this one respect, it is equally clear that they are not enumerated for their comparative value, but rather for their cumulative (or exhaustive) value. Thus, the comparison of the elements "riden on stede," "wepne wagge," and "folc vt lede" is unilluminating (there is no syntactic parallelism and the semantic values of the elements themselves and of the point to which they tend are in no way enriched); they are enumerated simply because they are parts of the same whole, a whole which is all the more evident and undeniable because of that enumeration.

That he shulden comen swithe  
 Til him, that was ful vnblithe,  
 To that stede the[r] he lay  
 In harde bondes, nith and day.  
 He was so faste wit yuel fest  
 That he ne mouthe hauen no rest;  
 He ne mouthe no mete hete,  
 Ne he ne mouthe no lythe gete,  
 Ne non of his iuel that couthe red;  
 Of him ne was nouth buten ded. (136-149)

Within a metaphorical framework of grammatical and lexical parallelism, the maker treats the topic of Athelwold's "writes" metonymically, observing first the destinations and then the contents of the letters; within each of these subdivisions his thought again develops by metonymy. Thus, the writs lead by association to their recipients, the realm's nobles, whose inclusiveness is represented by the metonymic specification of their titles, classes, and locations. The letter itself moves from the weak metaphor "harde bondes" to a metonymic amplification thereof, indicating duration ("nicht and day," functioning here not as antonyms but as the names of the two parts of the concept "all the time"), symptoms (he can't sleep, eat, or be free of pain), and prognosis (the illness is beyond the help of physicians, and nothing remains but to die).

Similarly, Middle English romances show a marked

preference for metonymy in their frequent and often extensive lists and descriptions, which are almost invariably analytic. Consider the following passage, also from Havelok, summarizing Grim's flight from Denmark with the child Havelok:

Grim solde sone al his corn,  
 Shep wit wolle, neth wit horn,  
 Hors, and swin, [and geet] with berd,  
 The gees, the hennes of the yerd;  
 Al he solde, that outh douthe,  
 That he eure selle moucte,  
 And al he to the peni drou.  
 Hise ship he greythede wel inow:  
 He dede it tere, an ful wel pike,  
 That it ne doutede sond ne krike;  
 Ther-inne dide a ful god mast,  
 Stronge kables, and ful fast,  
 Ores gode, an ful god seyl;  
 Therinne wantede nouth a nayl,  
 That euere he sholde therinne do.  
 Hwan he hauedet greythed so,  
 Havelok the yunge he dede therinne,  
 Him and his wif, hise sones thrinne,  
 And hise two doutres, that faire wore;  
 And sone dede he leyn in an ore,  
 And drou him to the heye se,

There he mith altherbest fle. (699-720)<sup>22</sup>

Each discrete action (selling his moveables, preparing the ship, boarding and sailing) is rendered by the instancing of its component parts, some of which are defined by further metonymies (i.e., the distinguishing features of the livestock, and the movement from the Grim's tarring and pitching to its purpose in preserving the ship). Almost as common in the Middle English romance as the list, the descriptive blazon also unfolds analytically, often according to a spatial logic (many lists, like that above, are organized by temporal logic; in some, the simple logic of association is unimproved by any other structure). In The Earl of Toulous (ca. 1400), for instance, the Earl's first sight of the Empress is occasion for a three-stanza blazon of "that lady free." Our eyes move with the Earl's over an essentially static figure, first from the earls who escort her to the "golde and ryche perre" adorning her; next to her face, with its grey eyes and finely-shaped mouth and nose; then down her side to her waist and back up to her shoulders, and finally down her arms to

Hur hondys whyte as whallys bonne,

Wyth fyngurs longe and ringes vpon;

Hur nayles bryght of blee. (325-60)

Nearly all such examples of description, listing, and direct

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<sup>22</sup>See also the list describing Grim's fishing in England, ll. 749ff.



narration display a similar texture and development, indicating, as Piero Boitani suggests in passing, that "the imagination that governs the narrations and descriptions is devoid of metaphorical elan: it is ruled, above all, by metonymy--that is, by contiguity and association" (59).

### III

As we move to larger structural levels, this point becomes increasingly crucial to the reasonable interpretation of the meaning of a given romance as a whole. The basic question may be simply put: in general, is the semantic function of the episode in itself and in relation to those which surround it also principally metonymic? The discussion thus far suggests that the structural development of individual episodes, their internal progress from topic to topic, is for the most part metonymic. That the typical structural development of entire romances, their progress from episode to episode, is similarly metonymic may be gathered from a fascinating passage in The Squire of Low Degree. Boitani rightly describes this late fifteenth-century romance as a "mannerist work," one which tends "to exaggerate those elements which are common in the medieval romance" (57). Its chief exaggeration in this respect is its excessive use of catalogues--nearly a quarter of the poem is taken up with more or less static lists of everything from trees and birds (27-62) to courtly pastimes

and trappings (737-852, 929-66) to musical instruments (1069-77). Another list, rendered by the King of Hungary's daughter to instruct the squire, her would-be lover, summarily describes the entire course of a knight's career. Her point is generic--this is the manner in which knights are made, and hence made worthy of their lovers--and the list itself therefore appears as a sort of metonymic schema for the whole of a very long romance:

"For and ye my loue should wyne,  
 With chyualry ye must begynne,  
 And other dedes of armes to done,  
 Through whiche ye may wyne your shone;  
 And ryde through many a peryllous place  
 As a venterous man, to seke your grace,  
 Ouer hylles and dales and hye mountaines,  
 In wethers wete, both hayle and raynes,  
 And yf ye may no harbroughe se,  
 Than must ye lodge vnder a tre,  
 Among the beastes wyld and tame,  
 And euer you wyll gette your name;  
 And in your armure must ye lye,  
 Euery nyght than by and by,  
 And your meny euerychone,

Till seuen yere be comen and gone..." (171-186)

Continuing in this vein for another 65 lines, she further directs the squire to undertake many battles "throughout the

land of Lumbardy" and to fight in Rhodes on "thre Good Fridayes" (187-200), then to assume the arms and accoutrements of a proper knight, described with lavish detail (201-230), and finally, after further "warres," to make offerings in Jerusalem "in tokenyng of the Trynyte" (231-50).

A number of complete episodes could readily be elaborated from this list, each of which would function illustratively and contribute one discrete idea to a series constituting the total meaning of the resulting romance. Or to state it the other way: the theme of the squire's winning his "shoon" would unfold incrementally, as the narrative moved from an episode in which the squire proves his endurance, to one or a set in which he proves his valor in combat, to one in which he is formally inducted into a chivalric order and thus emblematically integrated into courtly society, and lastly to one in which he proves his Christian devotion. The structure of each, as the catalogue itself shows, would be determined by a metonymic association of ideas, and of course their succession would follow a metonymic logic of temporal contiguity. More importantly, as each episode would serve to name one of the hero's attributes (endurance, valor, courtliness, devotion) by its synecdochal representation in action, the semantic value of each would be likewise metonymic. Individual episodes would function, so to speak, like an epithet writ large, and

cumulatively they would amount to what the Middle English romance so often is, a portrait-in-action of an ideal knight.

The example is hypothetical, but, as its short-hand reduction to a rhetorical catalog implies, not in the least far-fetched. It suggests that the predominant semantic function of the episode is commonly of a piece with that of the scenic synecdoche described by Spearing in King Horn, in which, for example, the single line "wringinde here honde" "stands in place of a possible more comprehensive description of...grief," just as the couplet "Horn gan his swerd gripe/ And on his arme wipe" "stand[s] in place of a possible far lengthier account of his preparations for battle" (Readings 35). At the episodic level, such illustrative action may be said to stand in place of other actions which would tend to the same point: Gamelyn, as we've seen, proves his strength by wrestling instead of jousting or slaying a dragon; he proves his liberality by holding a feast rather than feeding the poor or building a convent. Similarly, the brief background episode with which Floris and Blancheflour opens establishes the poem's initial proposition of the intensity of Floris's love for Blancheflour simply by giving an instance of it:

The Kyng behelde his sone dere,  
And seyde to him on this manere:  
That harme it were muche more

But his son were sette to lore  
 On the book letters to know,  
 As men don, both hye and lowe.  
 "Feire sone," [he] seide, "thou shalt lerne;  
 Lo, that thou do ful yerne!"  
 Florys answerd with wepyng,  
 As he stood byfore the Kyng;  
 Al wepyng seide he,  
 "Ne schal not Blancheflour lerne with me?  
 Ne can y noght to scole goon  
 Without Blaunchefloure," he seide than,  
 "Ne can y in no scole syng ne rede  
 Without Blaunchefloure," he seide.  
 The King seide to his soon,  
 "She shal lerne, for thy loue."  
 To scole they were put;  
 Both they were good of wytte.  
 Wonder it was of hur lore,  
 And of her loue wel the more.  
 The children louyd togeder soo  
 They myght neuer parte a twoo. (7-30)

Obviously, the point of the concluding couplet might have been illustrated in any number of ways, but the example of Floris's schooling entirely suffices to support the generalization, which stands then as a motive for all of Floris's later action, his noble suffering at separation and

his undaunted determination to be reunited. The dramatic action here, in other words, stands in metonymic relation to the precept which gives rise to it and which it demonstrates; the concrete part names the conceptual whole to which it belongs.

This sort of function is characteristic of the episode in Middle English romance, and appears, like anything else, in varying degrees of sophistication. A comparatively rich use of episodic metonymy distinguishes the final episode of The Avowing of Arthur (ca. 1425), in which Baldwin explains his lack of jealousy, his fearlessness, and his liberality with reference to three episodes from his past (781-1132). Embedded in the present one through Baldwin's past-tense narration of them (913-972, 1013-1045, 1053-1126), these episodes illustrate in action the principles which have guided Baldwin throughout the adventure of the vows, an episodic series of tests that emphatically name Baldwin's honesty and integrity, as well as his sure possession of three cardinal knightly virtues. Arthur's concluding comment to Baldwin is essentially the theme of the poem, or rather the cumulative semantic function of its episodic structure:

"In the conne we fynde no fabull;  
Thine avowes arne profetabull;"  
And thus recordus the Rownde Tabulle,  
The lasse and the more. (1129-32)

As these examples suggest, very frequently the metonymic function of episodes serves the purposes not only of thematic development, but also of characterization and character-development, normally absent in any other sense in these romances. Or more precisely, often the episodic development of the protagonist's character is the total theme of the Middle English romance (a point well-attested by their titles, wherever they appear in manuscripts, and introductory lines). Episodes that are discontinuous in terms of action and motivation often appear quite sensible in terms of such thematics: in Gamelyn, for example, though the sixth episode provides no rational logic for Gamelyn's becoming the outlaw-king or his brother the sheriff, its action may be seen simply to transpose their local feud to a wider, public sphere, where the two are realigned as the titular heads of social forces divided by a corrupt legal system. The episode names them to these positions and thus designates the broader ramifications of their conflict, such that the theme of justice, embodied in action by Gamelyn, may be fully articulated in the court scene of the final episode. Or again, in The Earl of Toulous, the third episode (481-804) appears radically discontinuous with the previous two, for it switches the narrative focus from the Earl to the Empress and initiates a new and unrelated action, yet it works both to create a narrative exigency (the Empress's needing the aid of a noble and devoted

knight) and to establish an essential fact of character (the Empress's chastity). Both functions are metonymic, the first in the structural sense of conditioning a temporal and naively rational logic through which the Earl and Empress may be united, the second in the semantic one of naming a character's attribute.<sup>23</sup>

Another excellent example of such metonymic functioning is provided by King Horn, in the episode set in Ireland (756-920). Except for temporal succession, the action here is completely discontinuous: banished from Rymenhild and Westernesse, Horn simply sets sail; the wind drives him to Ireland, where he is instantly welcomed at King Thurston's court. The action parallels that of his original exile from his own kingdom, Suddene, and his welcome in Westernesse, except that now he has lost his love too and reached the nadir of his fortunes. His single adventure in Ireland, the Christmas battle with the giant Sarazin, is accordingly designed to prove him worthy both of his father's throne and of his lady's hand. Horn himself seems to see the thematic stakes in the midst of the fight:

Biuo[r] him sagh he stonde

That driuen him of londe,

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<sup>23</sup>The episode's semantic function, the metonymic naming of the Empress's fidelity and honor, is later made perfectly clear when both the Empress's uncle and she herself attest to her virtue (1024-32, 1072-80). They must persuade the Earl of what has been episodically demonstrated to us, the Empress's chastity and the purity of her earlier gestures "for loue of that knyght" (339).



And that his fader slogh;  
 To him his swerd he drogh.  
 He lokede on his rynges,  
 And thoghte on Rymenhilde.  
 Ho smot him thuregh the herte,  
 That sore him gan to smerte. (869-876)

Fired by thoughts of Murry's death and Rymenhild's love, Horn quickly dispatches his opponent, thereby signaling his full readiness to recover his land and lady, eventualities which are then promptly foreshadowed in Thurston's naming Horn heir to his throne and offering him his daughter Reynild in marriage. Horn, of course, must refuse these substitutes, but his winning them nonetheless marks a development in his character and the turning-point in the course of the narrative. When Horn departs Ireland, loss and exile are behind him: hereafter, the episodes express the second and final phase of the theme, Horn's recovery and return.

Rather than instancing more episodes whose function is predominantly metonymic (the type is clear enough, I trust, and examples enough will come ready to hand), I would like to pursue instead the metaphorical dimensions of the episode in Middle English romances, already hinted at in the example from King Horn. With its principle of substitution, whereby Thurston may be said to "equal" both Murry and Aylmar (the latter is Rymenhild's father, king of Westernesse) and

Reynild to "equal" Rymenhild, the episode clearly functions to some degree metaphorically. That is, its characteristic (and characterizing) metonymic value, the conceptual point illustrated by its action, depends for its full expression on a structural substitution based upon similarity, albeit of the most superficial kind. In all of the examples given thus far, we must assume a process of selection whereby the illustrative action actually in play was chosen from a set of similar possible actions (Gamelyn can wrestle, joust, or slay a dragon to prove his strength); this is an essential metaphoric activity without which an episode cannot exist. Such selection can have real stylistic consequences of course (in terms of register, for instance), but these are observable only by the comparison of a number of works in the genre and period. Within the structure of a text itself, the selected action stands essentially divorced from the substitution set of roughly synonymous possibilities available at that point to the poet: the manifest action can signify independently, without any reference to those hypothetical ones that might have served in its place. What we have in the Ireland episode from King Horn, however, is not potential, but actual substitution, such that the full interpretation of the action depends upon an intra-textual reference to something recognizably similar in the previous action. The maker can thus be said here to have intentionally and literally constructed a metaphoric

relation between episodes. For our purposes, the presence of metaphor at the episodic level will be admitted only where such explicit structural similarities can be shown to determine the semantic function of one or more episodes.<sup>24</sup> This last proviso, as we shall see, is crucial in the case of Middle English romances, where verbal style is so insistently marked with repetition.

#### IV

If the episodic metaphor is to be defined as a relation based upon structural similarity, similarity itself must be further defined as repetition with an essential difference. As a general rule, the greater this difference is, the more productive of meaning the metaphor will be. We noticed, for instance, a structural likeness in the two

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<sup>24</sup>In this, I am departing a bit from Jakobson (99) and Todorov (14), who, speaking very generally, call a text's relations in absentia "metaphoric" and its relations in praesentia "metonymic"; Todorov confusingly implies as well that all signification, including the type I've here termed metonymic, is essentially metaphoric. Certainly, the co-presence of any verbal elements depends upon contiguity, and that is their irreducible relation. But as Todorov himself admits, "segments of a sufficiently long book can be found at such a distance from each other that their relation is no different from a relation in absentia" (13). Episodic discontinuity, I would argue, creates just this sort of distance: Thurston and Reynild appear out of nowhere and are characterized merely as a fatherly king and an available princess, functions which acquire some additional significance because of their conspicuous earlier presence and present absence in Horn's life. The metaphorical interpretation of Thurston's actions, involving comparisons to Murry and Aylmar, is irresistible: see particularly Anne Wilson's discussion (60ff.), which no doubt pushes the metaphoric implications of the poem's episodes too far.

climactic episodes of Floris and Blancheflour, but a comparison of the two actions discovers only incidental differences and yields little increase in the meaning of either. Their function remains essentially metonymic, a naming of the protagonists' love, very much what it would be had we failed to consider the parallels. In the example from Horn, on the other hand, the metonymic function would be incompletely realized if we did not glimpse the metaphorical identity of the poem's kings and princesses, while at the same time registering their essential and ironic difference in fact: Horn proves himself worthy of his desire and is rewarded accordingly, but since Thurston is neither Murry nor Aylmar, his victory here remains simply indicative, one in principle only. Still, though Thurston's similarity to the poem's other kings in function and difference from them in actuality produces a meaningful metaphoric relation, this relation is nevertheless of the most schematic kind and very much restricted in scope. The act of comparison readily divulges the essential points of similarity and difference and the metaphor ceases at once to resonate; the meaning of the compared elements themselves (in this case characters) is in no way enriched by their metaphoric relation.

Again in King Horn, there is an obvious and equally schematic metaphoric relation between Horn's two friends, this time based on antonymity rather than synonymity:

Athulf was the beste,  
 And Fikenylde the werste. (27-8)

This opposition plays out chiefly in their involvement in Horn's relationship with Rymenhild: presented with the opportunity to court Rymenhild in Horn's place, Athulf honorably declines and Fikenhild traitorously leaps. Athulf's confession to Rymenhild points the full thematic value of the contrast:

"Thegh Horn were vnder molde  
 Other elles wher he wolde  
 Other henne a thusend mile,  
 Ihc nolde him ne the bigile." (317-20)

Fikenhild, of course, would and does, marrying Rymenhild by force while Horn is away reclaiming his own kingdom (1449-52). As in the previous example, the metaphoric relation between the two has very limited semantic impact, merely reinforcing that which is already metonymically indicated in the action of the respective episodes, the concepts of Athulf's fidelity and of Fikenhild's treachery.

To get a sense of how facile these structural metaphors are, we need only glance at a romance from a later period, like Keats's Lamia. Early in the poem, Lamia persuades Hermes to transform her from a serpent to a woman by granting him access to the evanescent nymph he desires. Lamia breathes on his brow and the nymph tremblingly appears:

...she, like a moon in wane,  
 Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain  
 Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower  
 That faints into itself at evening hour:  
 But the God fostering her chilled hand,  
 She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,  
 And, like the new flowers at morning song of bees,  
 Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.  
 Into the green-recessed woods they flew;  
 Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

(I.136-45)

In addition to its local metaphoric integrity (the flower  
 similes and metaphors, for instance, being reinforced by the  
 antonymic opposition of "evening/morning"), this passage  
 bears a metaphoric relation to another at the very end of  
 the tale, when Lycius, a mortal, reaches out to save Lamia  
 from Apollonius's withering rational gaze:

Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,  
 As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:  
 'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins;  
 Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains  
 Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.

. . . . .

In the bride's face, ...now no azure vein  
 Wander'd on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom  
 Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine

The deep-recessed vision:--all was blight;  
 Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.

(II.249-76)

Lycius's grasp recollects and reverses Hermes' "fostering" one: Lamia's sensual warmth gives way to iciness and "unnatural heat," her "soft bloom" fades from "blight," and she departs not for the "green-recessed woods," but into a "deep-recessed vision" of death. The structural similarity of the two episodes, expressed antonymically, points and amplifies the poem's principal theme, the painful barrier of mortality and the impermanence of transcendental experience. Certainly here the principle of "similarity with an essential difference" obtains, and the act of comparison substantially increases the semantic value of the given episode.

Keats's episodic metaphor is much more thoroughly articulated and hence much more significant than those of King Horn or any other Middle English romance. In these poems, the structural metaphor can be difficult to distinguish from mere structural redundancy, a feature that marks the verbal form at every level. What is often striking, in fact, is precisely a failure of substitution in the poet's narration of separate but similar actions, such that we find exact or nearly-exact repetitions where we might well expect restatement with a difference. In King Horn, to give just one brief example, when Aylmar bursts out

angrily at Horn, his words are all but identical to those Rymenhild had earlier spoken in anger to Athelbrus:

"Hennes thu go, thu fule theof,  
Ne wurstu me neure more leof;  
Went vt of my bur,  
With muchel mesauentur." (Rymenhild, 323-26)

"Awei vt," he sede, "fule theof,  
Ne wurstu me neuremore leof!  
Wend vt of my bure

With muchel messauenture." (Aylmar, 707-10)

If we construe this repetition as structural metaphor, our observations will be obvious at best (Rymenhild's anger has slightly more justification in fact) and misleadingly impertinent at worst (Rymenhild is her father's daughter). In truth, of course, the speech is merely formulaic, functioning metonymically in both instances to name the speaker's feeling; the identity of Rymenhild and Aylmar's expressions and feelings is incidental and has no semantic value whatsoever.<sup>25</sup> Such repetition or redundancy, Spearing comments,

can sometimes be convincingly explained as resulting from its practical usefulness for a listening

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<sup>25</sup>Spearing, speaking of Sir Orfeo, puts it thus: if the "style is formulaic, then some of the details of that style will not have individual meanings; they will 'mean' precisely the formulaic nature of the style" (Readings 67). Mehl (83) appears to arrive at the same conclusion.



public;...but a further point to be made about such cases of redundancy is that, in traditional narrative, redundancy or pleonasm may be one of the markers of social elevation and indeed of poeticality or literariness itself. (Readings 38)<sup>26</sup>

Because redundancy in Middle English romance appears so often to derive from the exigencies of oral delivery and from an aesthetic based on formulaic reiteration, the fact of verbal and structural similarities between episodes cannot automatically be taken to imply any metaphoric relation or intention. Again, the first sign of the episodic metaphor is repetition with an essential difference; the proof of such metaphor is its semantic pertinence and productivity.

Pamela Gradon addresses this same problem in her discussion of "patterned" narratives, where, as the following extract makes clear, her sense of "thematic links" and "pattern" is roughly equivalent to the idea of metaphoric relation I am developing here.

[W]heras it is evident when an author is using episodes with common characters and settings, it is not so obvious how he effects thematic links, or when such thematic links are to be assumed. Suppose, for

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<sup>26</sup>On the practical usefulness of repetition in oral delivery, see also Haidu 661; on formulaic repetition as a marker of literariness, see Mehl 8-10. For an exhaustive discussion of redundancy, see Wittig passim.

example, we take a scene from Havelok the Dane, the death of Havelok's father, and put beside it the death of Goldebru's father. It is evident that the two scenes have a folk-tale parallelism of structure. They have a common subject matter but not, I think, a common theme. We have a figure but not a pattern. But such repetition of episodes can constitute a pattern where the parts form a common theme. The temptation scenes in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and the three hunting scenes, would afford a test case. If the three hunting scenes are purely rhetorical amplification, with no thematic implications, then we have purely a figure of repetition, in which three recognisably similar narrative outlines have been coloured differently and stood side by side. If, on the other hand, the episodes have thematic significance, then we have a pattern, and the three episodes imply a comment on a single theme, the temptation. The repetition of episodes in Havelok, on the other hand, though markedly symmetrical, bears no relation to a common theme. (22; cf. 93ff.)

I will return briefly to Sir Gawain and The Green Knight in the next chapter; for the moment, I would like to pursue Gradon's comments on Havelok. Now, it is plain that the two death scenes, taken individually, do in fact have a common

thematic purpose: each metonymically indicates the poem's initial proposition of just government and feudal trust, the loss and recovery of which constitute the whole of the narrative action. Gradon's point, however, is that, as a comparison of the episodes yields no increase in the meaning of either, the structural parity itself is without thematic consequence; the episodes are related in a redundant rather than a metaphoric way. This, of course, is not to contradict Mehl's conclusion that the "doubling of plots is a means of intensifying the drama and underlining its significance" and "its exemplary character" (168-69). To be sure, the poem's structural parallelism of two heirs and two kingdoms renders its theme less individual and more social than it would otherwise be, but this is to describe the common amplifying effect of episodic redundancy in Middle English romance, and not an effect of metaphoric construction.<sup>27</sup> Gradon would allow, I think, the fact of metonymic reiteration in these episodes, but she rightly concludes against any metaphoric implications in their

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<sup>27</sup>Thus, for example, Mehl finds that Emaré's episodic "repetitions, far from being a sign of the author's incompetence and lack of imagination, bring home the exemplary character of the whole action and make it clear that we are not just listening to a tale of individual sorrow" (136-7). Haidu finds likewise of Floire et Blancheflor, the French counterpart of the English Floris, that "the function of the repetition [of sequences, or episodes] is not narrative, it is ontological and paradigmatic. Narratively empty repetition moves the text away from the concrete and thornily problematic, and toward the Neo-platonic, paradisiac, and idyllic" (664).

parallelism.

Another parallelism or redundancy of structure may be seen in the poem's two climactic episodes, in which the two villains, Godard and Godrich, are overthrown and punished (2378-2511, 2531-2841). Judith Weiss has argued that the early narrative parallels between these two figures are characterizing, and lead to a difference in their treatment at the tale's conclusion:

[The parallels] compel us to notice the difference between the two traitors--Godard being more villainous than Godrich--and prepare us for their trials, when they are eventually brought to justice: they both are judged by an assembly drawn from all classes in the land, but Godard's punishment is crueller, and his agony is described at length. (248)

A selective summary of the two concluding episodes will readily show both their structural similarity and the points of difference that lead Weiss to her conclusions. In the first, Robert (Grim's son and Havelok's "brother") confronts Godard, Godard punches him, and Robert wounds Godard's arm with a knife (2384-2406); in the second, Havelok himself confronts Godrich, Godrich wounds him in manly battle, and Havelok cuts off Godrich's hand (2700-53). Godard's army rushes to battle, flees almost immediately, and returns to instant destruction (2410-32); Godrich's army fights fiercely throughout the day (2620-2700). Godard is compared

in similes to a thief, a dog, a bull, and a bear; he is beaten after being captured, and summarily tried as a shameful wretch (2434-2487); Godrich is compared only to lightning, is protected from being beaten ("for he was knith") and is tried after some delay (2690-2837). Godard is flayed, bound backward on a horse, and lastly hanged (2488-2511); Godrich is bound backward on a horse, and then burnt at the stake (2838-41). Obviously, here and throughout Havelok the maker intends that we should see an essential similarity in the two characters' shared function as antagonists; the key question is the extent to which the structures that express this similarity are differentiated for semantic (or thematic) purposes.

Speaking of the structural parallels in the death-bed scenes of Athelwold and Birkabeyn, Weiss herself agrees with Gradon in finding that the local differences in the elaboration of the two episodes are not significant in themselves and appear simply to provide narrative variety, for "to have two such scenes of equal detail would be an artistic fault" (247). Differences in the portrayal of Godard and Godrich, however, strike her as essential: because Godard betrays Birkabeyn at once and consolidates his power by murdering Havelok's sisters and plotting to have Havelok killed, he is the more treacherous villain, and his punishment is accordingly swifter, more severe, and narrated in greater detail. Godrich, on the other hand,

murders no one and appears to consolidate his power and to betray Athelwold only after some time; he is therefore depicted more nobly in the end, both by the poet, who permits him some valor in battle, and by Havelok, who repeatedly calls him a "knight" and treats him accordingly. The self-consistency of detail in both cases is striking, and certainly indicates, as Weiss suggests, the consciousness and integrity of the poet's design. Yet the thematic value of these presentational differences is, if not moot, then very slight indeed. Godrich's portrayal as less villainous and more knightly may be owing simply to his Englishness, which both the maker and his audience share, and likewise the amplification of Godard's treachery may be the result simply of his closer connection to Havelok, whose life story is throughout rendered in more detail than Goldeboru's. Whatever their efficient cause, however, the contrasts between the two characters are largely incidental and ultimately unproductive, all apparent difference being essentially cancelled when the two are similarly executed for their similar acts of treason (I cannot see that being skinned and hanged is all that much crueller than being burned alive). The final structural emphasis in both episodes falls on their identity as traitors, and it clearly makes little difference to the poem's theme of political justice whether we understand them as comparatively more or less so. If the structural similarity of these episodes,

their repetition with a difference, suggests a potential metaphoric relation between them, it remains for the most part incipient and has little consequence in terms of the total semantic organization of the poem.

In general, structural repetition at the episodic level appears in most Middle English romances much as it does in Havelok and King Horn, as a feature of narrative and aesthetic design which rarely possesses more than a minimal metaphoric value. The affected episodes can normally express their full meaning independently and metonymically, and a comparison of them tends simply to underscore the value(s) already understood. Given the discussion thus far, we may say that, in most cases, the Middle English romance can be abstractly described as a temporally-organized series of more or less discontinuous episodes, the actions of which stand in metonymic relation to the theme (usually of the hero's ideal character or development) and, where they are structurally similar, in potential or minimal metaphoric relation to one another. This is, of course, a fitting description of any number of individual romances from other later periods as well, but it is a definitive one for the Middle English period, readily covering all of the romances instanced in this chapter and the vast majority besides. Still, it is by no means absolute, and I would like to close my discussion of the Middle English romance as I began it, with a description of a representative romance, but this

time one which consciously exploits both aspects of episodic structure, the metonymic and the metaphoric. Just as The Tale of Gamelyn may be seen to represent a minimum of metaphoric episodic development, its few structural repetitions being "figures not patterns" (Gradon) and serving simply to mark the "exemplary character" of the action (Mehl), so this poem, Sir Degaré (ca. 1325), may be seen to represent the maximum of such development in the period (excluding, of course, Chaucer's romances and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight). Like those we saw in King Horn, Sir Degaré's metaphors are constructed with parallel type-figures and comparable actions, but here the resulting relations carry indispensable, if still somewhat simple, thematic meaning. In few romances of its era does the total semantic organization depend so clearly or so essentially on the episodic metaphor.

The episodic structure of Sir Degaré is just as evident as that of Gamelyn, though the transitions are more skillfully and subtly effected. Instead of using intrusive minstrel formulae, the maker marks each shift in episode internally by having the hero come into possession of some significant object(s) and then set out at once from one distinct scene and action to another. The only exception to this rule comes in the first episode (7-156), in which Degaré does not act but is merely engendered; here it is Degaré's mother who receives the significant object (the



fairy knight's tipless sword) and travels (back to her father's castle). The episode begins with a passage of relevant background information, which metonymically clusters several essential narrative propositions and hints at a thematic one, incest:

In Litel Bretaygne was a kyng  
 Of gret poer in alle thing,  
 Stif in armes vnder sscheld,  
 And mochel idouted in the feld.  
 Ther nas no man, verraiment,  
 That mighte in werre ne in tornament,  
 Ne in iustes for nothing,  
 Him out of his sadel bring,  
 Ne out of his stirrē bringe his fot,  
 So stron[g] he was of bon and blod.  
 This Kyng [he hadde non hair]  
 But a maidenchild, [fre and] fair;  
 Here gentiressse and hire beaute  
 Was moche renound in ich countre.  
 This maiden he loued als his lif:  
 Of hire was ded the Quene his wif:  
 In trauailing here lif she les.  
 And tho the maiden of age wes,  
 Kynges sones to him speke;  
 Emperours and dukes eke,  
 To hauen his doughter in mariage,

For loue of here heritage;  
 Ac the Kyng answered euer  
 That no man sschal here halden euer  
 But-yif he mai in turneyng  
 Him out of his sadel bring,  
 And maken him lesen his stiropes bayne;  
 [Many assayed and myght not gayne.] (7-34)

Instead of concealing it, the parataxis seems to underscore the logic: the king cannot be beaten in tournament; his only heir is his daughter, whom he loves as his life, particularly because his wife died bearing her; because he does not want to lose her too, he requires her suitors to do the apparently impossible, beat him in tournament. The action then begins on the anniversary of the queen's death: as the king and his retinue ride to a memorial mass at a nearby abbey, his daughter and two other maidens get lost in the forest; the two fall asleep under a chestnut tree, and the daughter, wandering further afield, meets a handsome and well-appointed knight, who explains that he is a fairy and that he has long loved her. He insists that she be his lover, and when she resists, he rapes her; afterward, he gives her a tipless sword and tells her to give it eventually to the son she is now carrying; he himself keeps the tip, and departs as mysteriously as he came. Promptly finding her companions and being reunited with the king's company, the daughter returns home and "ther-while she

might, she hidde here sore" (156).

The second episode (157-332), organized conceptually rather than scenically, summarily covers the first twenty years of Degaré's life. Justifiably worried that "men wolde sai [of the child] be sti and strete/ That mi fader the King hit wan" (166-7), the daughter delivers her child in secret and, with the help of a confidant, has him conveyed to a hermitage; she encloses money for his upbringing, a pair of fairy gloves, and an anonymous letter explaining, among other things, that the gloves will fit only her and can therefore be used by the child when he is grown to identify her. The hermit gladly adopts the foundling, names him Degaré (presumably from the French égaré, meaning "strayed," or the "thing that not neuer whar hit is" [254 and n.]), and puts him in his sister's care; ten years later, Degaré returns and spends ten more years learning "clerkes lore" (285) from the hermit. The episode ends with Degaré's receipt of the money, gloves, and letter and his setting forth to find his mother, armed only with an oak staff (he refuses armor offered by the Hermit). His journey evolves from here into a typical episodic quest, leading him from complete self-ignorance to full self-realization.<sup>28</sup>

The third episode (333-418), roughly equivalent to the wrestling episode in Camelyn, functions metonymically to

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<sup>28</sup>The theme of the hero's identity is pointed in the fact that Degaré is the only character in the poem who is actually named.

illustrate Degaré's strength and honour: wandering in the forest, Degaré comes upon a dragon and an earl battling; the earl cries for help, and Degaré kills the dragon with his staff. As reward, the earl offers Degaré land and treasure, but Degaré conditions his acceptance on the gloves fitting some lady in the realm. When trial discovers that they do not, the earl knights Degaré and gives him armor and a horse--thus formally naming Degaré to the identity he has already displayed in action--and Degaré departs to continue his search.

In the fourth episode (419-715), Degaré unwittingly arrives in his own kingdom, hears of a joust against the king (his grandfather) for the princess's (his mother's) hand, and decides to take the challenge. Lacking experience, Degaré takes crushing blows from the king in the first two passes; in the third, both men break their lances, and in the final pass Degaré triumphantly unsaddles the king, accomplishing that which the poem's opening lines set up as effectively impossible. Like the hero knight in many a romance, Degaré wins through his native prowess a bride and a kingdom, but here the generic pattern is ironically complicated by the genetic truth. As Degaré marries his mother, the theme of incest, implied earlier, becomes explicit, prompting the most substantial of the poem's few narratorial interjections:

Lo, what chaunse and wonder strong

Bitides mani a man with wrong,  
 That comes into an vncouthe thede  
 And spouses wif for ani mede  
 And knowes nothing of hire kin,  
 Ne sche of his, neither more ne min,  
 And beth iwedded togider to libbe  
 Par auentoure, and beth neghe sibbe!  
 So dede Sire Degarré the bold,  
 Spoused ther is moder [hold],  
 And that hende leuedi also  
 Here owene sone was spoused to,  
 That sche vpon here bodi bar:  
 Lo, what auentoure fil hem thar!  
 But God, that alle thingge mai stere,  
 Wolde nowt that thai sinned ifere[.] (611-626)

On the point of consummating the marriage, Degaré remembers the letter's instruction "that he ne louie no womman in londe/ But this gloues willen on hire honde" (213-14); when the gloves fit his bride/mother, she joyfully explains everything. Having confirmed his superlative knightliness and his courtly lineage, Degaré receives the tipless sword from his mother and departs to seek out his father.

Unexpectedly, the fifth episode (716-987) recounts, not the anticipated reunion of Degaré and his father, but instead what at first appears to be a totally unrelated adventure. Degaré rides deep into "theld fforest" and comes

to a castle that is well-provided but mysteriously empty. As he sits to wait before a fire in the hall, four damsels with bows and venison glide silently into and out of the room, then a dwarf comes and silently sets the table, and finally "a dammeisele of gret honour" (800), accompanied by ten maidens, enters and feasts with Degaré, but again none will speak a word. Struck with love, Degaré follows the lady and her maidens to their chamber, and promptly falls asleep to their harping. The next morning, the lady wakes Degaré and chastises him for not keeping watch over the women, and Degaré, apologizing, asks what has become of all of the castle's men. Her answer reveals not only the mystery of the castle, but also the key structural features of the episode:

Mi fader was a riche baroun,  
 And hadde mani a tour and toun.  
 He ne hadde no child but me;  
 Ich was his air of this cuntre.  
 In mene ich hadde mani a kigh[t]  
 And squiers that were gode and light,  
 An staleworht men of mester,  
 To serue in court fer and ner;  
 Ac thanne is thar here biside  
 A sterne knight, iknawe ful wide.  
 Ich wene in Bretaine ther be non  
 So strong a man so he is on.

He had iloue me ful yore;  
 Ac in herte neuere-more  
 Ne mighte ich louie him agein;  
 But whenne he seghge ther was no gein,  
 He was aboute with maistri  
 For to rauisse me awai;  
 Mine knightes wolde defende me  
 And ofte fowghten hi an he;  
 The best he slowgh the firste dai  
 . . . . .  
 Mine men of mester he slough alle,  
 And other pages of mine halle.  
 Therfore ich am sore agast  
 Lest he wyne me ate last. (870-901)

Like Degaré's mother in the opening episode, this unmarried heiress is threatened with ravishment by an enamored and overpowering knight. Were we to take the episode solely on its own, ignoring its structural repetition of the first episode's action, it would appear to be largely metonymic in function. When Degaré presently defeats the knight and wins the lady and her kingdom, the action illustrates his superlative fitness as a courtier, a noble admirer and bold defender of women; the lady rewards him accordingly and emblematically with sumptuous armor and a shield emblazoned with "thre maiden es heuedes of siluer bright" (1020; cf. 985). Because Degaré vows to return in a year to marry the

lady and become heir to her throne, we may sense as well that this episode is to some extent structurally redundant of the previous one, where Degaré similarly proved his chivalric excellence, fighting not for love and women's honour but simply to win renown (cf. 460), but could not finally accept the proffered bride.

In addition to such typical meanings, however, the episode expresses a crucial metaphoric one, which more than any other justifies the placement of this episode in the penultimate position, just before the reunion of Degaré and his father and the close of the poem. Given the structural parallel between the besieged lady and Degaré's mother, Degaré's opponent here must be understood as a type of his father; indeed, we are quite likely on a first reading to assume that he is Degaré's father, still up to his old tricks. By defeating the knight and liberating the lady, Degaré metaphorically avenges his mother upon his father and purges from the plot the sexual aggression with which it originated. That original aggression, of course, is two-fold, the rape having as an efficient cause the possessiveness of Degaré's grandfather, the widower-king who loved his daughter as his life and fought to keep her as his own.<sup>29</sup> Because the besieging knight here appears

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<sup>29</sup>The fact that her rape occurs on the anniversary of the Queen's death suggests as much, as do the princess's fears about the likely attribution of paternity if she reveals her pregnancy.



undefeatable and opposes Degaré in knightly combat for a lady, he also metaphorically typifies the king, who occupied the very same position in the previous episode. Thus doubly metaphoric, Degaré's victory over the besieging knight represents his expulsion of the very forces, incest and lust, which governed his birth and dictated his self-ignorance. Far from being digressive, the episode indicates through structural metaphor Degaré's essential readiness for the full revelation of his identity.

In the seventh and final episode (988-1073), Degaré wanders once again into the forest and encounters a well-appointed knight (his father).<sup>30</sup> They ride against one another ferociously and are both unsaddled; when Degaré draws his tipless sword, his father recognizes him and stops the battle. The two are swiftly and joyfully acquainted, and, in the tale's conclusion (not surviving in all versions), Degaré's father and mother are reunited and Degaré himself marries the lady from the sixth episode. The rapid denouement and easy reintegration of Degaré's father could obviously not have been effected without the previous metaphoric development, which effectively cancelled the father's status as rapist. And as we step back from the poem to consider it as a whole, further metaphoric relations

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<sup>30</sup>The maker, we should note, contrasts their shields: where Degaré's depicts three maidens' heads, his father's depicts "thre bor-heuedes" (996), as though to indicate his comparative bestiality.

will likely come into focus.

We have already observed that each episode terminates with the hero's receipt of a significant object; individually, these function for the most part as metonyms (the oak staff signals Degaré's inexperience, the sword and gloves represent their owners). Since they occupy the same structural position, however, the relation among them is metaphoric and serves to mark the progress of Degaré's self-discovery. Thus, the oak staff with which he begins his quest is replaced by proper armor after he defeats the dragon and is knighted, and this in turn is replaced after the sixth episode with a finer suit of armor designating his superlative courtliness. Though relatively facile, the gradation of value clearly is determined by a process of comparison. This graded progress suggests that the actions of the episodes themselves should be understood progressively, and at least one critic has discussed the poem accordingly as "a mounting stair of adventures" (Stokoe 525). But comparison of the four principal episodes (the ones in which Degaré acts) reveals a further and more significant metaphoric relation based on equivalence. In each, Degaré faces an opponent in battle, first a dragon, then his grandfather, then the besieging knight, and lastly his father. As the third of these battles indicates, the opposing character stands in a virtual substitution set with the others, such that the defeat of one implies the defeat

of all. Their structural identity complements the poem's explicit interest in the incest theme, for it suggests that, just as the knight "equalled" both Degaré's father and grandfather, so they both "equal" each other, and all three, insofar as they threaten courtly civilization, "equal" the dragon, are dragon-like in their sexuality. Structural repetition here is neither redundant nor facile, but genuinely metaphorical and vital to the poem's realization of its theme.

Relatively few Middle English romances make so much of the metaphoric potential of structural reiteration; on the other hand, by comparison with a poem like The Faerie Queene or Lamia, the episodic metaphor even in Sir Degaré functions in a fairly simple and schematic way. In general, as I hope the foregoing analyses show, the discontinuous episodes of the Middle English romance are related one to another primarily by their temporal contiguity and by their common metonymic and thematic focus on the character of the hero. Structural similarity in these poems normally appears to be the product of formulaic redundancy, and thus without semantic value, but it occasionally conditions a meaningful, if somewhat obvious and uncomplicated, metaphoric relation of episodes. As it moved into more courtly circles, late in the fourteenth century with Chaucer and the Gawain-poet and monumentally two hundred years later with Spenser, the English verse romance was altered in two distinct

directions, one involving a further metonymic enrichment of episodic structure, the other a metaphoric one. To such "courtly" transformations, exemplified in the romances of Chaucer and Spenser, we may now turn our attention.

## Chapter Two

### Episodic Developments in Chaucer and Spenser

#### I

We have thus far been considering what is commonly called the "popular" or "minstrel" romance; the ensuing discussion focuses on the so-called "courtly" romances of Chaucer and Spenser. At the start, however, I would like to recast the popular/courtly dichotomy, alternately known, thanks to Schiller, as a naive/sentimental dichotomy, in the less evaluative terms proposed by Alastair Fowler, "primary" and "secondary" (160-64).<sup>1</sup> Briefly put, a primary work in a genre appears ingenuous in its use of convention; its imitation of preceding works is "natural," that is, not highly conscious or explicitly thematized. It is often, though not necessarily, a member of the inaugural phase of the genre in literary history. By comparison, a work appears secondary when it reflexively calls attention to its use of convention and explicitly sets out to imitate and refine upon its exemplary precursors. In the paradigmatic example, Homeric epic is primary, Virgilian secondary. Such classifications are, as Fowler points out, "naturally relative to historical viewpoint. Every writer is secondary

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<sup>1</sup>Fowler supplements the conventional scheme by proposing a tertiary stage in the development of a genre; the English verse romance arrives at its tertiary stage, as I discuss in Chapter 3, in the eighteenth century.

in relation to some generic model" (161-2). But the classifications are nevertheless useful for understanding the diachronic dimensions of a genre. From the "historical viewpoint" of English vernacular literature, the anonymous Middle English romances occupy the primary position, establishing the basic conventions, episodic structure among them, of the English verse romance.

Thus, while no distinction between primary and secondary forms can be absolute, most readers of the English romances do not hesitate to position those of Chaucer and the Gawain-poet, not to mention that of Spenser, in a separate class from the typical Middle English romance. The scholarship abounds in pronouncements like this one:

It is not merely a matter of increased syntactic flexibility that distinguishes the sense of continuity in Chaucer and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight from the relatively episodic quality of earlier romances. Certainly there is a strong element of quantitative, "Gothic" structure in the later poets. But the sense of flow, subordination, and connection of incidents is far stronger in the fourteenth-century poets. Even when their poems display a formalized, structured architecture, that architecture is dazzlingly reflected and refracted into facets, as if to encourage

continuity and relationships. (Ganim 48)<sup>2</sup>

Many features might be noticed in distinguishing the secondary romance from the primary, such as an increased use of metaphor, a more developed or self-conscious narratorial role, more conspicuous literary borrowing and allusion, an increased interest in character psychology and motivation, and, in general, greater intellectual depth.<sup>3</sup> The feature that I am primarily interested in here, however, is the structural one to which Ganim refers, the increased attention in the secondary poets to episodic connection and subordination.

In relation to romances like The Tale of Gamelyn and King Horn, even The Squire of Low Degree and Eger and Grime, fifteenth-century romances that in other respects might be considered primary, show some movement toward the sophistication of episodic structure, and thus some degree of secondariness. We've already considered the lady's instructions to the Squire of Low Degree on how to attain his knighthood and prove himself worthy of her hand by a series of episodic exploits; to be sure, the Squire

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<sup>2</sup>Similar judgments can be found in, among many others, Beer 28, 31; Bloomfield, "Sir Gawain" 147; Boitani 224; Burrow 47-92; Jordan, "The Question" 79; and Mehl 15, 160.

<sup>3</sup>On metaphor in Chaucer, the Gawain-poet, and others, see Spearing, Readings 24ff., and Medieval 24-5; and Burrow 130-41. On Chaucer's narratorial roles, see Spearing, Readings 92ff., and Jordan, Chaucer 71ff. On character psychology in the secondary romances, see Vinaver 26, and Boitani 219-20. On Chaucer's intellectual stock, see Brewer 23ff.

undertakes and accomplishes all that she outlined, but, remarkably enough, the maker foregoes the opportunity he had provided himself for the episodic elaboration of his tale, and instead simply summarizes, in twenty-two bare lines, the Squire's seven year journey abroad (884-906). As a result, the poem, despite all its other incongruities, maintains some semblance of unity of place, and so a somewhat firmer sense of episodic connection than it would otherwise have. In Eger and Grime, the title characters undertake in turn the same adventure, armed combat with the giant and malignant knight Gray-steele, but rather than giving them equal space, the maker subordinates Eger's attempt to Grime's. Thus, the action begins with Eger returning to the house he shares with Grime and simply reporting the details of his adventure and defeat. Grime instantly decides to take up the adventure on his friend's behalf, and the narrative then follows his exploits to their successful conclusion. The strategy is akin to that in the English Ywain and Gawain (c. 1350), copied from Chrétien, where Colgrevance simply recounts one evening at Cardiff the adventure that befell him six years earlier and that Ywain will presently bring to successful conclusion. His adventure is thus thoroughly subordinated to Ywain's, as Eger's is to Grime's; in both cases, the result is a



tighter, more focused narrative line.<sup>4</sup>

Much more impressive is the structural integration of episodes in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a poem, as Spearing puts it, "so intricately wrought that everything in it connects with everything else" (Readings 200). The entire episode at Hautdesert, for instance, apparently a digression from the main adventure, turns out to be its very heart: each temptation is linked to each stroke of the ax at the Green Chapel as cause to effect. Again, as in The Squire of Low Degree, the poet lets episodic opportunities pass, as when Gawain rides in search of the Green Knight and encounters foes of all descriptions; "unlike most medieval romances, these peripheral adventures are not narrated but left implicit, so that the story's thread runs straight and does not have to be unravelled" (Boitani 63; cf. Mehl 201-2, and Ganim 66). Then, too, among all the poem's other symmetries of structure, there is the juxtaposition of the three hunts with the three bedroom scenes, a design which not only overcomes, in a way new to the English romance, "the difficult problem of simultaneity in narration" (Bloomfield, "Sir Gawain" 155),<sup>5</sup> but which also increases,

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<sup>4</sup>Mehl implies his appreciation of the secondary status of Yvain and Gawain when he says that its "neatness of design," "balanced symmetry of...episodes," "logical coherence of...plot," and "tight structure" make it "so different from many other Middle English romances" (181).

<sup>5</sup>The more usual device for narrating simultaneous action, used by Chaucer as well, is the announced interlaced switch: "Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,/..../ And of

as we earlier found Gradon suggesting, the thematic density of the main narrative line. The framing and coordination of each temptation with each hunt produces two distinct effects, a metaphoric one that suggests analogical relationships between Bertilak's sport and his wife's,<sup>6</sup> and a metonymic one, activated simply by the arrangement of the parts, which forces us to see the life-threatening Bertilak as being both before and behind, in the causal as well as the spatial sense, the otherwise "harmless" dalliance of the bedroom scenes. In all these respects and many others, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight shows itself to be a secondary romance, the sort that "savor[s] the primary kind aesthetically, and so in a sense 'reinterpret[s]' it" (Fowler 163).

Generally speaking, the secondary romance poet attempts, not to alleviate the episodic discontinuity of the romance by rationalizing the temporal line of the narrative, but rather to harmonize, so to speak, the discontinuous,

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Arcita forth wol yow telle" (The Knight's Tale, I. 1334-36).

<sup>6</sup>The analogies have been variously worked out by various critics, but the most extremely metaphorical reading is surely Wilson's, 80-3 and 100ff., which treats both hunt and temptation as parallel projections of Gawain's mind. Her reading is clever but, I think, unlikely. For all such readings, P. M. Kean cautions that though we may regard the hunting scenes as "implied comments" on the main plot, "there is nothing in the author's actual treatment which compels us to do so" (61-2). "Nothing" is an overstatement in the other direction, however: see Marie Borroff's careful and reasonable description of the significant parallels (111-12).

making episodes appear integral even though they lack rational and even temporal continuity. The strategies with which such poets achieve this enrichment of episodic structure fall into two general types. In the first, evident in each of Chaucer's Canterbury romances, the carefully arranged and graded presentation of image and action maximizes the cohesiveness and narrative impact of the discontinuous; as it necessarily occurs along what Jakobson calls the axis of combination, this strategy is principally metonymic. In the other, magnificently displayed throughout The Faerie Queene, the episodic metaphor, always potential in the Middle English romance, is fully articulated, such that discontinuity is bridged by structural similarity; as similarity subsists on the axis of selection, this strategy is principally metaphoric. The use of one strategy, of course, in no way precludes the use of the other, but in a given poet one will normally predominate. For the sake of clarity I will address the two strategies separately and successively, looking first at Chaucer's metonymic development of the romance and then at Spenser's metaphoric one, but I do not mean to imply by this that Chaucer is entirely innocent of the metaphoric variety or Spenser of the metonymic variety. In poets of their calibre, such exclusive dependence could hardly be possible.

## II

Chaucer's substantial debt to the primary Middle English romance is well-documented and needs no rehearsing here.<sup>7</sup> I begin rather with his parody of such romances, The Tale of Sir Thopas, a poem which by itself establishes Chaucer's secondary status: the critical reception of a genre expressed in literary parody necessarily implies the work's reflexive relation to a more primary form. But what Chaucer criticizes here, he elsewhere turns to account; in poems like The Knight's Tale, The Franklin's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale, and The Squire's Tale, Chaucer "uses the genre but transfigures it: and the irony of Sir Thopas demonstrates that he himself was perfectly conscious of this" (Boitani 38-9). Of the many ineptitudes of the primary English romance that Chaucer here exposes and in his more characteristic romances rectifies--ineptitudes of "prosody, rhyme, style, pacing, characterization" (Jordan, "The Question" 81)--one is certainly the randomness of construction, the failure to properly organize and integrate all of the elements of the plot. Following the opening description of the hero and scene, with its absurdly inconsequential detail (his "shoon" and "hosen"!) and comic deflation ("many a wilde best,/ Ye, bothe bukke and hare"), the action of Sir Thopas begins, only to be immediately in-

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<sup>7</sup>See Brewer passim; Burrow 12-23, Kean 61ff., and Spearing, Readings 83ff.

terruted by two glaringly misplaced romance catalogues, one of herbs, the other of birds (VII. 760-71). The distraction is not ours alone, however, for when the action resumes, or rather begins again, Thopas is suddenly amorous, for no other reason apparently than the birdsong of the previous stanza; after "prikyng" madly about to no end, he dismounts for a rest and soliloquizes on the elf-queen of his dreams, the insubstantial real cause of his wild "love-longynge." Such abruptly introduced and unpurposeful detail characterizes the entire narration, and though the scene presently changes to the "contree of Fairye" and Thopas encounters the "perilous" Olifaunt (797-816), the episode is completely without issue. The subsequent narratorial interventions (833-38, 887-902), normally useful as episodic markers, are utterly incongruous in the absence of any real action or episodic development. All is formulaic rant, a point emphatically made when the narrator is interrupted just as he says, "Til on a day" (918), a phrase conventionally used to signal the beginning of a new and discontinuous episode but which here, given the foregoing, makes no sense at all. Throughout, Sir Thopas suggests Chaucer's acute awareness of the tendency in the typical Middle English romance simply to tack together the disjunct with no preparation or justification other than mere temporal progression. In his other romances, which Jordan has amply shown to admit as much discontinuity as any of the primary kind (see Chaucer

passim), Chaucer solved these problems of coherence and motivation, and at the same time sharpened the thematics of his romances, through a highly-conscious organization and gradation of what might be called the narrative syntax of imagery and action.

As Bloomfield has argued, discontinuity in the romance is most commonly the product of "vertical rather than horizontal motivation"; while some actions follow logically enough from preceding ones, others have no necessary antecedents in the narrative line and consequently appear as "marvellous," or mysteriously motivated from without the poem ("Episodic Motivation" 108, 120). This is what gives romance, in contrast to epic, its characteristic sense of "aventure": as the knight sets forth in an amorphous wood, new scenes and antagonists crop up, literally, out of nowhere (see Auerbach 123-42). Chaucer, to be sure, does not customarily resort to conventional romance marvels; in his Boccaccian romances, for instance,

there are no fairy mistresses or lights shining from the hero's head or magical vessels of plenty or green knights or life-preserving girdles. Wonders remain, but they may be reduced to science or illusion, as with the 'disappearance' of the black rocks in The Franklin's Tale....Or again, wonders may be seen historically, as part of the religion of the classical past..." (Spearing, Medieval 39)

Yet, despite the fact that it is unconventional and can in some cases be reduced to illusion or appropriately historicized, the marvellous and/or discontinuous remains just that in all of Chaucer's romances, Boccaccian and otherwise. In The Squire's Tale, for example, a conventional enough marvel, a magic ring, leads to the digressive episode narrated by the heart-broken falcon; in The Wife of Bath's Tale, nothing in the previous action prepares for the hag's high discourse on gentility, poverty, and age; in both The Knight's Tale and The Franklin's Tale, likewise, though the vertical motivations of the gods and of astrological "magyk natureel" may be fully displayed, they are no more rational or less marvellous for that. What makes such marvels so different from the primary variety is not so much their content or relative explicability, but rather Chaucer's technique of metonymic foreshadowing.

Nowhere is this technique more evident, or used more effectively, than in The Knight's Tale. Although Chaucer is regularly and rightly credited for his reductions to Boccaccio's Teseida and his achievement thereby of a more narrowly focused and unified tale,<sup>8</sup> the process of reduction

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<sup>8</sup>For full discussion, see Robert Pratt passim, and N. R. Havely passim. Spearing's comment summarizes the findings of most of the source studies: "In The Knight's Tale Chaucer has ruthlessly cut Boccaccio's Teseida, reducing twelve cantos to four parts, and leaving no narrative complications, no irrelevancies, none of that procedure by digression that is the typical method of medieval romance" (Medieval 38-9). One feels this ruthless cutting in the Knight's frequent use of occupatio (I. 859-92, 1201, 2196-

nevertheless left him with, and indeed probably even exacerbated, certain problems of continuity. We note, for instance, Chaucer's fairly rigorous attempt to reduce the scenic diversity of his original and to maintain an essential unity of place as well as of action. While the pared-down plot still calls for two scenes in Thebes, the Knight/narrator dispenses with them quickly in order to return the action to the much more central locale of Athens. Thus, Theseus's campaign in Thebes on behalf of the widows is rendered summarily in fifteen lines (I. 985-1000), allowing the narrator to move swiftly to the more important but barely more elaborated matter of the capture of Arcite and Palamon and their return to Athens to be imprisoned (1001-32). Likewise, though Arcite later sojourns in Thebes for "a yeer or two" following his release from prison, the only important action the narrator relates from this period is the dream that sends him back again to Athens (1355-1413). Within Athens, too, Chaucer localizes and unifies the scene, not always quite flawlessly: both Theseus's enormous royal lists and Arcite's funeral pyre are said to be constructed in the very grove where Arcite and Palamon first bloodied their ankles over an unwitting Emily (see Kolve 135-6). Similarly, Chaucer transplants Boccaccio's heavenly houses of the gods to Athens, reconstructing them in the temples

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2208, 2919ff.), his passing over large stretches of time with barely a comment (1381, 1426), his tendency to describe only essentials (1187-9, 1459-61, 2264, 2821-2).



that are themselves relocated to the newly-constructed lists (see Kolve 114). All such efforts, however, can only heighten our sense of the radical discontinuity of one of the poem's key episodes, where we abruptly leave not only Athens but terra firma altogether and find ourselves in the celestial company of the gods. Though the scene is brief (2438-78), it is in respect of vertical motivation more audacious than just about anything in the primary English romances, and certainly more arresting than even the upstart "furie infernal" that later kills Arcite, a marvel to be sure but one which at least inhabits the same spatio-temporal plane as the protagonists. The interventions of the gods may be thematically justified insofar as they embody the capriciousness of Fortune and so lend point and poignancy to Theseus's philosophizings, but the actual appearance of Venus, Mars, and Saturn as actors in a separate narrative present is utterly lacking in even temporal motivation, not to mention rational. Yet no one objects: for all their discontinuity, these squabbling gods seem to belong in the poem.

Both Kolve and Spearing discuss the feat of historical imagination that Chaucer performs in The Knight's Tale, realizing and confining himself to the pagan world of his characters, both "for the self-limitation that such choice entailed upon him" (Kolve 86) and "to gain the impetus and the courage to interrogate his own God" (Spearing, Medieval

57). Obviously, the belief in pagan gods, in either their mythological or planetary aspects, belongs to the pagan world, as a part to the whole. The gods enter the poem in just this capacity, as metonymic and contingent features of pagan life; for the first two parts and half of the third, they are reducible to conceptual propositions held by the characters and are manifest only emblematically in the products of human art. Their influence may be deduced and described by the characters, but it is nowhere asserted as a narrative proposition in its own right, nowhere realized or enacted, until the latter half of part three. When the gods here literally burst upon the scene, the entire narrative world is suddenly reconstituted, as it were, inside out: the realm of human experience and action must henceforth be regarded as absolutely (even if arbitrarily) contingent upon the very forces it had earlier seemed, at least in terms of narrative exposition, to contain. This is precisely one of the major themes of the poem, but what concerns us here is not so much its meaning as its structural justification, the narrative strategy that renders this emphatically discontinuous admission of the gods somehow natural and inevitable.

The Knight himself provides an apt metaphor for Chaucer's strategy when he proposes to tell his tale "by foreward and by composicioun" (I. 848). Though in context

it means simply "by previous agreement,"<sup>9</sup> the phrase suggests at least two figurative meanings which describe Chaucer's narrative method here and in his other romances. The first of these roughly parallels the sense intended by Chrétien when he spoke of conte and conjointure; as Vinaver explains it,

A medieval romance writer..., being both a conteor and a learned man well versed in the art of rhetorical adaptation, maintains quite naturally the incoherent fragments of a conte, or isolated traditional themes, while cultivating at a higher level a coherent courtly, or chivalric, narrative [through conjointure]. (42ff.)

Jordan, citing Vinaver, discusses this aspect of Chaucer's romances, in which what might be called "fore-words," words and themes which come before, the conte, so to speak, of Boccaccio and other romancers, are remodelled by an art of conjointure, "of composition in the etymological sense of the term, that is, as the conscious construction of a whole out of many constituent parts" ("The Question" 80ff.). The second figurative meaning, and the one that I most want to pursue here, has to do with the arrangement of words, images, and actions within the poem, the compositional

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<sup>9</sup>See "Foreward, sb<sup>1</sup>," OED. Etymologically, there is no relation between "foreward" and "foreword"; yet clearly the Knight has already "given his word," agreeing to tell a tale in accordance with the Host's plan, or "composicioun." This sense of "a word coming before" and determining present action is the one I metaphorically develop in my discussion of Chaucer's metonymic "forewords."

effort that positions certain narrative materials in such a way that they look forward to certain others, conditioning in the reader if not exactly the expectation of these others, then at least a receptivity to them when they appear. This composition by forewords, the narrative organization of agreeable parts for coherence and effect, yields something comparable to the magic mirror of The Squire's Tale, which some believe to work "Naturelly, by composiciouns/ Of anglis and of slye reflexiouns" (V. 229-30). Just as "anglis" may be seen to be a "slye reflexioun" of "English," so Chaucer's romance compositions, often slyly mirroring and revising foreign originals, may be seen to proceed and succeed by virtue of sly internal reflections, foreshadowings and recollections that make discontinuity mirror, or bear the appearance of, continuity.

While my adaptation of "reflexiouns" may imply that Chaucer's method is essentially metaphoric, an analysis of the forewords that anticipate and the composition that integrates the gods of The Knight's Tale shows it instead to be largely metonymic, not a repetition of similar structural elements, but a careful widening of the presentational scope and prominence of the same element.<sup>10</sup> The first references

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<sup>10</sup>This is not to say that Chaucer does not deploy metaphor more extensively than the primary English romancers. On the contrary, Chaucer resorts to metaphor much more frequently than his English forebears, as a glance at just about any fifty line passage in his canon will show; the Knight, for instance, is less than thirty lines into his tale when he digresses for a moment to describe his tale and

to the gods in The Knight's Tale are entirely incidental and seemingly inconsequential, but these are the forewords from which Venus, Mars, and Saturn will ultimately spring. In the opening action, the widows who appeal to Theseus for succour frame their petition before the temple of "the goddesse Clemence" (a Chaucerian addition to the Pantheon), and Theseus then rides out under the banner of Mars to do battle with Creon (I. 928, 975-80). Like the episodes that contain them, these details metonymically identify the narrative world as a pagan one and Theseus as ruler invested both with mercy and with martial prowess. The narrator conjures merely the gods' associated virtues and locates them in Theseus; the "statue" of Mars on Theseus's banner aside, the gods themselves do not in the least come to view. Some hundred lines later, Arcite, misconstruing Palamon's

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his powers of narration metaphorically: "I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,/ And wayke been the oxen in my plough" (I. 886-87). Then, too, whole episodes in Chaucer's romances can have metaphoric dimensions, like the falcon's embedded narrative in The Squire's Tale (V. 499-629). The verbal surface of this passage, with, among other things, its thorough-going personification, is richly metaphorical. And though the falcon's tale is a kind of exemplary warning about men's duplicity in love, and thus metonymic in the sense I developed in Chapter 1, the metonymic point can be obtained only by a constant metaphoric translation of the literal image (a bird discoursing about her feathered lover) into its figurative meaning (human males are likely to be as treacherous, to flit off with the next pretty kite to swoop by). On the whole, however, Chaucer's episodic strategies are metonymic, both in terms of how episodes function in themselves (i.e., illustratively) and in relation to others (i.e., being motivated more by arrangement than by repetition). For an excellent discussion of non-episodic metonymies in Chaucer, see Brewer 37-53.

love-struck sigh as one of anguish, assigns their misfortune to the influence of Saturn, but here again we are meant to conceive (dramatic irony notwithstanding) not a conscious and willful pagan god, but only an inauspiciously disposed planet:

For Goddes love, taak al in pacience

Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be.

Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.

Som wikke aspect or disposicioun

Of Saturne, by som constellacioun,

Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;

So stood the hevene whan that we were born. (1084-1090)

As his repetition of the indefinite adjective "som" suggests, Arcite's astrological explanation is actually provisional guessing, a blind assertion of an impersonal first cause in the fate constellated for them at their births. Though he blunders here onto a truth he himself will never comprehend, in the dramatic moment his counsel is sheer misinterpretation, "a veyn ymaginacioun" (1094), as Palamon explains. If we entertained his theory at all, we must instantly discount it, just as we discount Palamon's hyperbolic misconstruction of Emily, Theseus's very human sister-in-law to whom we've already been introduced, as Venus (1101-11). Again, we are not really invited to imagine the goddess: Venus's conventional attributes of beauty and desirability are simply arrogated to a human

character, and the effect is meant to be comic, as Arcite's mockery of this "affeccioun of hoolynesse" shows (1156-59).

In the next episode, Palamon himself turns philosophical and blames his undeserved misfortune generally on the "cruel goddes that governe/ This world" and specifically on Saturn, Juno, and Venus (1303-33). Here, indeed, the idea of self-motivated pagan gods becomes for the first time truly tenable, but only in the vaguest way. Like Arcite before him, Palamon is working by conjecture and not by revelation, and nothing in the narrative thus far suggests that we should seriously entertain his view. The burden of his speech, as of Arcite's in the same episode, is rather to expose him as a benighted pagan struggling blindly to comprehend his fate. Still, in the movement from the off-hand mention of the temple of Clemence to Palamon's thesis of actual heavenly influences, we see Chaucer incrementally widening the lens, if ever so slightly, upon the gods, giving at least the idea of them an inobtrusive but nonetheless firm place in the minds of his characters, and in ours.

Through Part I, Chaucer contrives to introduce the gods and at the same time radically restrict our imaginative attention to them. They seem to be merely part of the furniture of a pagan Greece and a pagan world-view, a mimetic counter in Chaucer's reconstruction of an alien past, but less essential apparently to the structure and

meaning of the poem than even the "pilours" who discover Arcite and Palamon alive in the pile of Theban corpses or the Perotheus who secures Arcite's release and permanent exile from Athens. The action to this point is wholly human, as is the cast, and the narrative conflict, the experience of misfortune, appears therefore to be stated solely in human terms, indeed to be conditioned on the limitation to the human point of view. Part I thus appears to work metonymically, much in the manner of the primary English romance, as a temporally organized series of episodes naming Arcite and Palamon to two positions of adversity, adversity in war, or chivalric opposition, and adversity in love, or courtly opposition. Both of these more or less traditional themes are then philosophically enriched by the narrative focus not so much on the fact of the action, but on the heroes' Boethian attempts to comprehend it.

Part II, very much occupied with the same matters, episodically advances the action to an apparent point of climax, with both oppositions about to be resolved by armed combat in a wooded grove; most of its references to the gods accordingly function in the same limited and metonymic way as those of Part I. As Theseus rides out hunting, for instance, rather than to battle, the narrator carefully points out that "after Mars he serveth now Dyane" (1682), a comment that has much more to do with Theseus's skill in



venery than it does with Diana, but which nevertheless introduces by foreword at least the idea of this goddess into the narrative. Finding Arcite and Palamon thick in battle, Theseus musters his martial self again and swears two oaths by the god, apparently more rhetorically than earnestly (1708, 1747). Earlier, lamenting the fate of Thebes and his own duplicitous residence in Athens as Philostrate, Arcite faults a cruel Juno and fell Mars (1542-62), but this is merely desperate speech (he proceeds to fault Emily as well) and no authoritative insight into real causes. All such references to the gods, including the narrator's analogical one to "geery Venus" (1536), impact directly upon the narrative world only as another set of metonyms with which Chaucer constructs pre-revelation past, a merely human point of view.

Yet, given Arcite's dream of Mercury in the episode that opens Part II, all of these forewords collectively begin to sound a more significant note:

Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,  
 Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie  
 Biforn hym stood and bad hym to be murie.  
 His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte;  
 An hat he werede upon his heris brighte.  
 Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,  
 As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;  
 And seyde hym thus: "To Atthenes shaltou wende,

Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende." (1384-92)

While Mercury is still thoroughly circumscribed by the mind of a human character--the verb "thoughte" underscoring his dreamy insubstantiality--the passage forces us to imagine the god actively and concretely, to literally see, if only momentarily and still contingently, the divine intervening in and shaping the course of human affairs. In addition to its local function as the mainspring of an episodic action designed to get Arcite back to Athens, the dream has a further structural value as a metonymic enlargement of the earlier forewords to the gods, one which quietly acclimates our minds to the possibility of their direct and visible action. Hereafter, even Part II's most incidental gestures to the gods bear a somewhat greater resonance, appear somewhat more charged with semantic potentialities, than corresponding ones in Part I. In terms of our approach to the actual appearance of the gods in Part III, the dream sequence promises what it doesn't quite perform, much as the god within it points to, but does not reveal, the "shapen ende" of Arcite's woe.

The divine foreknowledge implied in Mercury's message--subsequently reaffirmed three times in Part II, by the narrator (1466), by Arcite (1566), and by Theseus (1843), all of whom take up from Mercury the word "shapen"--has two significant analogs in Chaucer's narrative art. One is obviously the poet's invention, the foreconceit according to

which the narrative is structured and elaborated, or "shapen." In the creation of a fictional world and the disposition of its characters, the poet is like "Juppiter, the kyng,/ That is prince and cause of alle thyng,/ Convertynge al unto his propre welle/ From which it is dirryved" (3034-38). The other, less definite, kind of foreknowledge, and the type we are tracking here, is the reader's, itself the product of the poet's "convertynge" or "composicioun." As the poet's intimations and anticipations accumulate, they condition the reader for what is to come, for the revelation that is therefore half-expected, half-remembered, and all the more aesthetically satisfying for that. In the temple descriptions, the series of prayers, and finally the episodic leap to heaven of Part III, as the theme of the gods finds its first explicit and its splendidly fullest articulation and the gods themselves at last inhabit their own, no reader will escape the sense that, despite the very real discontinuities here from episode to episode, the action is nevertheless building to a single "grete effect" (2482). Since Chaucer suffuses Part III with forewords of his protagonists' "shapen ende," their aventure as a whole and its vertically motivated "grete effect" betray all the signs, appropriately enough, of the foreknowledge and shaping hand of a higher order.

Taken as a whole, Part III constitutes a prolonged digression; given the first two parts, with their

comparatively terse style and single focus, we would logically expect that action to follow immediately which is instead delayed until Part IV. The intention to digress here is explicit from the outset, both in the narrator's uncharacteristic solicitude--"I trowe men wolde deme it necligence..." (1881)--and in his abrupt rhetorical switch from narration to description, occupatio to amplificatio. In the three remarkable set pieces describing the temples within Theseus's "noble theatre," the narrator turns the romance catalogue, so common in the primary poems yet so often without clear thematic purpose, to account, using its static metonymic amplitude to assemble before us the complete images and human meanings of the gods. As Kolve well argues, the chaos of detail here is itself meaningfully "shapen" to inform our later responses:

Chaucer's temple paintings...combine mythographic and astrological traditions, emphasize malign planetary influence above all else, and are experienced as modally indeterminate, spatially unfixed, and devoid of any clear internal structure. Like the human experience that is their subject, they can be imagined in parts but not as wholes. Chaucer's amphitheatre contains, at three points within the perfect geometry of its circle, a menacing potential for disorder, communicated to us in a peculiarly turbulent and disquieting way. As a narrative image it at once

summarizes the causes of the action so far and intimates that its resolution will come only at some appalling cost. (122)

The dominant "narrative image," however, is much less of the amphitheatre (it gets only 17 lines of description) than of the pagan gods alone; only partly and faintly outlined in most of the first two parts but visible as in miniature in the dream of Mercury, this image is now brought into what might be termed an exemplary and ritualistic focus. We are still well-anchored in the human world of the characters, looking not at the gods directly but at their cultural representations and significations, yet our attention is nonetheless diverted from the main thread of the narrative and, for the moment, we are occupied solely with Venus, Mars, and Diana and their fatal influence on human beings. For the first time in any significant way, the gods are embodied and objectified, and though still something short of actual agents, they now at least figuratively inhabit the very fabric of the narrative world. Though digressive, this episode is crucial not only for its metonymic embodiment of the theme of divine influence, but perhaps more importantly for its enlargement of our perspectival take on the gods. Bringing the idea and image of the gods to a new prominence, it stands as a structural foreword to their oracular and marvellous interventions in the main action later in Part III, both of which are themselves preparatory to Saturn's

final and dire intervention in Part IV.

When presently Palamon, Emily, and Arcite offer their orisons in the temples just described, the oracular responses of the gods, including the brief apparition of Diana, indexically confirm what the temple icons can only assert: the gods are truly operative in this very narrative world, and they have at least direct knowledge of the characters' destinies, if not indeed the participatory power to shape and alter those destinies at will. Coming tremblingly but no less vitally to view, the gods here signal their determining influence in this earthly "aventure of love," and in a way that darkly foretells its end. Diana states the matter definitively to Emily:

Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.

Among the goddes hye it is affermed,  
And by eterne word writen and confermed,  
Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho  
That han for thee so muchel care and wo;  
But unto which of hem I may nat telle.  
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.  
The fires which that on myn auter brenne  
Shulle thee declaren, er that thou go henne,  
Thyn aventure of love, as in this case. (2348-57)

Diana's relation to Emily is paralleled by the narrator's to us: we here receive authoritative notice of an underlying design, one that prophesies the effect it all the while

appears to conceal. Like the characters, we faithfully search the heavenly portents for their forewords, blindly at first but thereafter with an increasing appreciation of the consciousness behind them. Palamon prays "nat tomorwe to have victorie," but to "have fully possessioun of Emelye," and Venus accordingly gives "signe" that she will grant his "boone" after some "delay" (2221-70); Arcite prays "that I tomorwe have victorie" and asks "namoore," and Mars murmurs, "ful lowe and dim," "Victorie!" (2373-2437). Knowing the final issue, we realize the compositional integrity of the poem, where any detail may be just as portentous as the shaking statue of Venus or the ringing hauberk of Mars, may be just as much informed with the total structure of the action. In this, Chaucer's forewords resemble the sign Emily receives, darkly "declaring" what is to come:

The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,  
 While Emelye was thus in hir preyere.  
 But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,  
 For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,  
 And guyked agayn, and after that anon  
 That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;  
 And as it queynte it made a whistelynge,  
 As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge,  
 And at the brondes ende out ran anon  
 As it were blody dropes many oon..." (2331-40)

Spearing suffers from an uncharacteristic myopia when he

suggests that this image is "evidently a symbol of the loss of virginity that awaits her" (Medieval 51); no one should mistake that the first fire which quits and then rekindles represents Palamon, who will later appear to lose his lady but then win her after delay, and the second which quits for good and issues blood represents Arcite, whose apparent victory will be extinguished in death. Though most of Chaucer's forewords are metonymic, they work like this metaphoric one to naturalize the marvel of romance, by preparing for it, as it were, a fitted place. When the vertical and heavenly, whether a discontinuous episode or a manifest god, erupt suddenly upon the horizontal and earthly, we have been in some vital way readied for it through the compositional arrangements of the poet.

What next erupts, of course, is the revelation the narrative has been driving to all along: the scene in heaven, which at last unveils the gods and the arbitrary determinations that bind the human characters to their several ends. Chaucer's imagination of a pagan past here reaches a new height, for it is no longer limited to the perspective of the characters or to the spatio-temporal dimension they inhabit; indeed, the view narrator and audience now share is precisely the one from which all of the characters are necessarily and perplexedly excluded. As if to downplay this radical break from what had been a fairly consistently limited point of view, the narrator



proceeds without the slightest rhetorical notice from the conclusion of Arcite's prayer and the promise of his victory to the "strif ther...bigonne,/ For thilke grauntyng, in the hevene above" (2438-39), omitting until the conclusion of the episode the device, the announced interlaced switch, with which he characteristically marks a change of venue and of episode (cf. 2479-82). This direct causal transition is something of a feint, for the preceding action develops entirely along a temporal and occasionally rational continuum that, in terms of narrative logic, can only motivate further actions on the same continuum. Whereas that plane of action had appeared to be self-sufficient, fully constitutive of the narrative world, it is now absolutely displaced by a transcendent plane of action and shown to be itself much less a cause than a continuous and contingent effect thereof. The overall structure of Part III reflects this transposition of the narrative world, for the two episodes focusing on human action, the arrival of the opposing armies and the protagonists' prayers in the temples, are contained by two others focused narrowly on the gods, on the one hand representationally and artificially in the temple descriptions, and on the other presentationally and "naturally" in an independent sphere of existence. As the arrangement indicates, the gods are literally before and behind all human and mundane action; what motivates their appearance just now is not the petitions of the humans or

their own cross-purposes, but rather Chaucer's strategy of progressive foregrounding, which has led subtly and skillfully from the incidental references of Part I to the dream of Mercury in Part II, from this to the iconic and then indexical appearances of the gods earlier in Part III, and from these to the actual revelation of the gods in the scene at hand.

Here again, as Saturn promises Venus that Palamon "Shal have his lady.../ Though Mars shal helpe his knyght" (2472-73), we see the "shapen ende" of the whole tale foreordained, and though as first readers we are likely to construe this as a promise of victory in the lists for Palamon, ever after we will recognize in it a foreword of his defeat there, of the fate that he, like all the other human characters, must abide "By force and eek by composicioun" (2651). From these characters' perspectives, such force and composition are Theseus's, and are manifest in the ritual order he imposes on their conflict and in the magnificent lists he constructs. But all human determinations and dispositions, like Theseus's that no blood should be spilled in the lists and that the winner should wed Emily, are ultimately subject to a higher order. What Theseus proposes, Saturn disposes otherwise, with truly binding force and composition, known to the characters only by its irresistible "grete effect" and to which they can respond, as Theseus counsels at length, only by making a

virtue of necessity. Yet we, Chaucer's audience, are made privy to the gods' designs, thanks to the poet's even more encompassing one, of which the whole machinery of the gods frequently seems but a metaphorical expression:

Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,  
That knew so manye of adventures olde,  
Foond in his olde experience an art

That he ful soone hath plesed every part. (2443-46)

Knowing indeed many romance "adventures olde," both primary English ones and secondary Italian ones (not to mention the stock of France), Chaucer in The Knight's Tale hits upon an art that, like Saturn's, "plese[s] every part," that works "by foreward and by composicioun" to produce an aesthetic concord of episodically developed actions and images which would otherwise remain simply disjunct and discontinuous.

As Kean has argued from different evidence, Chaucer has thus achieved a poem which has, on the one hand, a great superficial similarity to a kind of romance which would be more familiar to his audience than his source, and, on the other, a method of handling the narrative entirely new to a work of this type. Both his purpose and the way he sets about achieving it show that he was fully aware of the problems of narrative structure and had a clear idea of certain ways in which they could be solved. (70)

Chaucer's "clear idea" in The Knight's Tale is felt

powerfully when, with a quick final glance to heaven, the plotted "myracle" springs in Part IV (2652-99), and it is described analogically in Theseus's grand oration on the stable and eternal order that binds all temporal things in a perfect whole. Because of the structural preparations I've described, the tragic reversal embodied by the "furie infernal" is at once surprising and expected, marvellous and integral. Chaucer situates the episodic and unmotivated, the vertical, firmly along the horizontal axis, embedding it, to borrow Theseus's words, in a metonymic "cheyne of love" that binds all of the elements of the narrative world in logically graded "progressioun" and "successioun" (2986-3016). He thus admits the discontinuous as a structural feature of his own romances, but in a way that renders it fully congruent with the overarching narrative movement and thematic purpose. If in the primary romance the episode functions metonymically to illustrate some aspect of character or theme, then in Chaucer's secondary romances it is doubly metonymic, like the primary type in its local semantic realization but surpassing that type in its total structural integration.

Consider the vertical interventions in The Wife of Bath's Tale, a romance in which Chaucer introduces discontinuities into a plot which, excepting the opening rape and closing metamorphosis, is otherwise relatively rational. The main action of the knight's marriage bargain

with the loathly lady can be found in a number of primary analogs, like the fifteenth-century The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell and The Marriage of Sir Gawaine, but in Chaucer the narrative line is broken up and punctuated by the Wife's episodic digression to the tale of Midas's wife (III.951-82), by her narratorial apology for an omission of conventional romance topoi (1073-82), and by the hag's erudite disquisition in the episode of the wedding bed (1109-1216).<sup>11</sup> The first of these, the turn by a specifically female narrator to a single "ensample" from a single "auctoritee," anticipates the last, with its learned

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<sup>11</sup>Thus we would say more readily of The Wife of Bath's Tale than of its analogs that it "is based on an additive principle of composition" in which a "series of largely self-contained and clearly articulated parts often varying in size, style, and degree of relevance to the conte [traditional plot and theme], are more or less loosely strung together to form an 'inorganic' whole" (Jordan, "The Question" 87). I partly disagree, however, with Jordan's assertion that the "meta-narrative" passages in Chaucer's version are not integrated "in more than superficial fashion with the thematic imperatives of the story" (87-8). Chaucer's (or the Wife of Bath's) interpolations are in fact designed to alter the "thematic imperatives" of the traditional version, not merely to reproduce them. Certainly, such discontinuous additions are integral to the Wife's thematic purposes, even if in the end such purposes remain comically unattained. For example, though the Wife's "ensample" from Ovid ironically works against her purposes--she misremembers her "auctoritee" so that the episode now illustrates that women cannot keep counsel or promises, and so are probably not fit for sovereignty--it is not therefore structurally superficial. As I suggest, the Wife's motivation as narrator is, if misguided, nonetheless fairly obvious: she intends to give an example of female learnedness in preparation for the dramatic realization of that theme in the hag. In addition to this explicit illustrative function, the episode has a further implicit one, the ironic characterization of the Wife as a less than rigorous thinker and narrator.

reference to many examples and authorities; both, of course, are of a piece with the Wife's Prologue, which stands in relation to them as a brilliantly articulated foreword in every sense of the term. These vertically-motivated interventions, including the Wife's confession that she cannot narrate the wedding feast because there was none, are in their way more radically discontinuous than Saturn's in The Knight's Tale, for they intrude from beyond the world of the romance altogether.

Yet if they thus seem to defy generic expectations, they do so in a cooperative and thematically-pointed way. The narrative action is born, after all, with a knight's lusty "oppressioun" (889) of a maid, a violation of the courtly ideal of service to women, and its issue is meant to prove not just that "wommen desiren to have sovereynetee" but that their sovereignty is worth desiring and having. So long as the knight fails not only in the performance of courteous submission to women, but more importantly in the whole-hearted realization of its value, the romance world remains, as the absent wedding feast implies, threatened, opened up to alternative narrative directions. The Wife's successive impositions upon the traditional plot are an attempt to redefine the woman's conventional role therein, to expand it by metonymic demonstration to comprehend her intellectual fitness for the position of power and governance. Once again, in other words, the discontinuous

and digressive (including the Prologue) feels consciously and significantly placed in the total structure of the poem. Though the fairy-tale ending, restoring the traditional and familiar romance order, may ironically imply that the action and theme of The Wife of Bath's Tale are "only wish-fulfilment on the part of its ageing teller" (Spearing, Medieval 36), the tale's structure nevertheless works like that of The Knight's Tale to integrate what it cannot efficiently rationalize, to naturalize the discontinuous.

In The Franklin's Tale, too, Chaucer integrates the discontinuous or marvellous through episodic forewords, and this in spite of the fact that one of the tale's key narrative propositions, stated definitively in the express motivations of its heroine, is precisely the impossibility of the marvellous: Dorigen makes her vow in full certainty that the removal of the perilous rocks off the coast of Brittany "shal never bityde" (V. 1001). Such certainty, which Aurelius shares for "two yeer and moore" (1102), sets realistic bounds to the narrative world and defines an entirely human perspective on the action; the marvellous or discontinuous intervention here, quite unlike those of The Knight's Tale and The Wife of Bath's Tale, is to erupt from within this single narrative line, as though rationally. The compositional problem Chaucer faces is fascinating--how to present the huge rocks as more or less absolutely fixed and then convincingly cause them to disappear--and he solves

it handily through a series of increasingly pointed episodic anticipations.

In the first substantial episode of the poem (816-900), the inconsolable Dorigen fixates upon "thise grisly feendly rokkes blake," interrogating "Eterne God" about "this werk unresonable" and praying, with no real hope of an answer,

...wolde God that alle thise rokkes blake  
Were sonken into helle for his sake!

Thise rokkes sleen myn herte for the feere. (865-93)

The second episode begins at once with a shift of focus from these hellish rocks to a paradisal garden, about which the narrator, apparently incidentally, waxes poetic:

And this was on the sixte morwe of May,  
Which May hadde peynted with his softe shoures  
This gardyn ful of leves and of floures;  
And craft of mannes hand so curiously  
Arrayed hadde this gardyn, trewely,  
That nevere was ther garden of swich prys,  
But if it were the verray paradys. (906-12)

Having portrayed a conspiracy of May and man to "peynte" and "craft" a "fresshe sighte" that is the very antithesis of the previous one, the narrator immediately introduces Aurelius, a man "That fressher was and jolyer of array,/ ...than is the month of May" (927-28). The superlative descriptions of both man and month are, of course, romance stock-in-trade, but they are quietly turned to account here,



for the comparison of Aurelius to May significantly links him to the craft of scene-painting, at which he will indeed prove to be more capable, just as he is "fressher," than May. There follows Aurelius's declaration and Dorigen's vow "in pley" (988), after which Aurelius prays, as Dorigen had before him, to see the rocks sunk down to Pluto's "dirke regioun." His prayer, however, is pragmatic where Dorigen's was abstract: Aurelius petitions not the Boethian prime mover but the planetary Apollo, and he proposes a conspiracy of sun, moon, and sea to produce a two-year spring flood, a temporary "miracle" at the level of nature (1030-81). While this prayer has no more hope of answer than Dorigen's, it nevertheless occupies, structurally and conceptually, a medial position between the fixed image of the rocks expressed by Dorigen and the much more fluid one, so to speak, later contrived by the clerk of Orleans: here, Aurelius paints the scene, if only imaginatively and momentarily, of the submersion and "disappearance" of the implacable rocks.

Given the role of "Lucina" in such a flood, the next development in the action, Aurelius's brother's recollection of a book of "magyk natureel" that "spak muchel of the operaciouns/ Touchynge the eighte and twenty mansiouns/ That longen to the moone" (1101-64), represents a third naturalizing step toward the "illusioun," a term only now introduced. As we move from Dorigen's abstract idea of

divine intervention, to Aurelius's more concrete one of a natural miracle, to this new idea of astrological "sciences/ By which men make diverse apparences," the marvellous becomes progressively more the focus of narrative attention and progressively more probable. Accordingly, the notion of illusion is at once substantiated and confirmed as possible, first with a catalog of hearsay illusions (1142-51) and then yet more emphatically with a catalog of actual ones, the romance scenes, "al this sighte merveillous," with which the clerk of Orleans entertains Aurelius and his brother (1189-1214). This whole carefully arranged approach to the marvellous culminates with the extended and abstruse description of the "grete effect" finally being wrought, an episode which affects to "cause" with a superfluity of "termes of astrologye" the "myracle" we have by now been thoroughly conditioned to expect (1239-1305). When Dorigen, confronted in the following episode with the impossible and discontinuous, exclaims "That swich a...merveille" "is agayns the proces of nature" (1344-45), we are securely positioned to retort, "on the contrary," having witnessed not only the fact of "magyk natureel," but more vitally the structural process that has naturalized that fact, made it feel, if you will, accomplished. To gauge the value of Chaucer's design, we need only imagine the plot in the hands of a primary romancer: the rocks would disappear all the same, the trap spring, but without that satisfying sense of

inevitability that is here fashioned by foreword.

A brief, final instance of Chaucer's metonymic enrichment of episodic structure is provided by The Squire's Tale. Though unfinished, enough of the romance survives to trace the characteristic strategy of motivating the marvellous by anticipating it in image and action. In this case, the marvel is the talking falcon, with her discontinuous narrative of her very human troubles in love. But, as we've amply seen, marvels may be measured in degrees, and so Chaucer introduces this one subtly and naturally as he sets the scene of the opening action:

Ful lusty was the weder and benigne,  
 For which the foweles, agayn the sonne sheene,  
 What for the sesoun and the yonge grene,  
 Ful loude songen hire affecciouns. (V. 52-55)

Though slight, the personification looks forward to its full articulation in the episode of Part II by acclimating us to the image of birds voicing their "affecciouns." What remains implicit here the mysterious knight soon restates explicitly, carefully pointing out, as though to cue his words to this opening passage, that he brings a ring to Canacee "ageyn this lusty someres tyde," and only then explaining its virtues, one of which is a magic ability to communicate with birds (142-55). He thus takes up and confirms a structural logic in which "lusty" weather is associated with and directly precedes the notion or

appearance of speaking fowl. The narrative realization of this marvel in Part II is orchestrated accordingly, with a description of the "lusty seson soote" effectively triggering the subsequent appearance of singing "foweles"; possessed of the ring, "right anon [Canacee] wiste what they mente,/ Right by hir song, and knew al hire entente" (382-400). Though the marvel is underway, another 80 lines intervene before it is fully enacted and we literally hear and understand a feathered speaker. In the meantime, the distraught falcon is vividly and dramatically described (409-431), the ring's translational virtue is reiterated (432-38), and Canacee is shown humanely imploring the bird to speech (447-71). All of these narrative gestures, from the opening personification to the direct presentation of Canacee's empathetic point of view, all are arranged in a graded series that brings the image of a humanized bird into clearer and clearer focus, until finally it dominates the scene (478ff) and the marvel is complete.

Such a considered structural approach to the discontinuous marks Chaucer as a secondary figure in the English romance, one who adopted the verbal and mimetic materials and the episodic structure of the primary romance and reconfigured them in a more highly artificial, or literary, way. In this new configuration, the episode remains discontinuous in any rational sense and even often in the temporal one, yet it appears now to be as

structurally integrated as it is thematically integral. The key difference here is that the episodic marvel, the "grete effect" of the romance, is firmly situated in a graded series of structural anticipations, arising incidentally and occasionally and gaining in prominence episode by episode. Through such progressive metonymic enlargement, a "statue" of Mars on a banner grows into the living and all-disposing Saturn, a knight's "oppressioun" of women grows into the hag's polemics, Dorigen's fixation on the rocks grows into the illusion of their disappearance, and the singing fowls of a "lusty" March grow into a speaking falcon and her tale of woe in love. In none of the romances treated in Chapter 1 is the vertical and discontinuous--Gamelyn's becoming king of the outlaws, say, or the light issuing from Havelok's mouth, or Degaré's encounters with the dragon or the besieging knight--inscribed so insistently throughout the total structure of the narrative.

And the integration Chaucer accomplished by such metonymic means, he may have intended to attempt in a more metaphorical way, enriching precisely that structure available to him in romances like Sir Degaré, where the dragon and besieging knight, though lacking in direct metonymic relation to each other or anything else in the poem, nevertheless have metaphoric relations to the other threatening but more essential figures, Degaré's father and grandfather. Though The Squire's Tale breaks off just after

the episode with the falcon, the narrator outlines something of its intended total form, a proliferation of "grete mervailles" which would clearly be organized by a structural redundancy akin to Sir Degaré's:

But hennesforth I wol my proces holde  
 To speken of adventures and of batailles,  
 That never yet was herd so grete mervailles.

First wol I telle yow of Cambyuskan,  
 That in his tyme many a citee wan;  
 And after wol I speke of Algarsif,  
 How that he wan Theodora to his wif,  
 For whom ful ofte in greet peril he was,  
 Ne hadde he ben holpen by the steede of bras;  
 And after wol I speke of Cambolo,  
 That faught in lystes with the bretheren two  
 For Canacee er that he myghte hire wynne.

And ther I left I wol ayeyn bigynne. (658-70)

The passage, as Kean remarks, "suggests a composite romance of the scope of a Faerie Queene" (64), one in which the multiple exploits of several heroes are related to one another less by metonymic foreword than by episodic metaphor. Such a romance, of course, Chaucer did not write, but Spenser two centuries later did, taking his cue for one part, in fact, from these very lines.

## III

In Book IV of The Faerie Queene, or "The Legend Of Cambel And Telamond, Or Of Friendship," Spenser famously picks up where Chaucer left off in The Squire's Tale, narrating the tournament for Canacee's hand and making of it, through the addition of Cambina, the Book's central illustration of Concord, perhaps the principal aspect of the virtue of friendship. But though central in this respect, the episode nevertheless plays what can only be termed a small and discontinuous part in the total structure of the Book. It is, after all, a retrospective digression from the Book's narrative present, occupying only a canto and a half of twelve, and featuring characters who, though the Book's nominal heroes, are only here introduced and shortly, following minor appearances in the next episode, disappear from view. In the preceding episodes, there is virtually no metonymic preparation, in the manner of Chaucer, for the sudden introduction of these characters and the action they perform, nor do they themselves or their actions metonymically prepare for succeeding episodes. Rather, the character roles and action here, the tournament to decide which of the brothers Mond should have the right to Canacee's love and hand, conform to those of the otherwise unrelated surrounding episodes, all of which, from the Book's opening through Satyrane's tournament, treat of more or less knightly combats for the right to a lady. In other words,

the structural and thematic integration of discontinuous episodes is achieved here primarily through repetition and metaphoric interrelation, after the manner of Sir Degaré but, as we shall see, with much greater semantic force.

That metaphor dominates Spenser's style throughout The Faerie Queene may be seen in everything from the syntax to the stanza form to the abundant epic similes and lists, all of which, like the larger episodes that contain them, are produced and organized by principles of repetition, parallelism, similarity, and analogy. Take, for example, the following stanzas, which stand as a proem to Canto ii of Book IV:

Fire brand of hell first tynd in Phlegeton,  
 By thousand furies, and from thence out throwen  
 Into this world, to worke confusion,  
 And set it all on fire by force vnknownen,  
 Is wicked discord, whose small sparkes once blowen  
 None but a God or godlike man can slake;  
 Such as was Orpheus, that when strife was growen  
 Amongst those famous ympes of Greece, did take  
 His siluer Harpe in hand, and shortly friends them  
 make.

Or such as that celestiall Psalmist was,  
 That when the wicked feend his Lord tormented,  
 With heauenly notes, that did all other pas,



The outrage of his furious fit relented.  
 Such Musicke is wise words with time concented,  
 To moderate stiffe minds, disposd to striue:  
 Such as that prudent Romane well inuented,  
 What time his people into parts did riue,  
 Them reconcyld againe, and to their homes did driue.

Such vs'd wise Glauce to that wrathfull knight,  
 To calme the tempest of his troubled thought....

(ii.1-3)

In addition to the local metaphors, like the imaging of discord as a "firebrand of hell," what is immediately striking about these lines is their metaphoric structure, aligning the four figures both grammatically, in parallelisms marked by the anaphoric repetition of the pronoun "such," and conceptually, by virtue of their analogical similitude. Orpheus, David, Agrippa, and Glauce--all metonymically associated with the production of concord through music or singing or speech--are linked in a series and drawn into a significant relation on the basis of metaphoric likeness alone.

At the episodic level, the same principle of structure prevails: each episode in a given series metonymically illustrates or indicates a particular theme, and all are metaphorically bound as a series by their structural, and therefore thematic, similarities. Just as there is no

temporal or rational connection between the Greek Orpheus, the Hebrew David, the Roman Agrippa, and the Elizabethan Glauce, but only an analogical one, so in the construction and sequencing of episodes Spenser will often entirely forego temporal and rational motivation, and depend solely on the episodic metaphor to provide integration and coherence. This is not to say that Spenser does not sometimes maintain an essential temporal continuity among episodes which are nonetheless metaphorically patterned--Books I and II, for instance, are obviously structured in this way.<sup>12</sup> But in the so-called "Ariostan" Books, III and IV, such patterning alone must frequently suffice to bind together what are otherwise radically disjunct episodes.

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<sup>12</sup>The temporal continuity of Book I is well attested in Canto vii, where the dwarf (26) and then Una (43-51) summarily recount all of the Book's preceding action. No character in Books III or IV could offer such a recollective view, precisely because there is no continuous temporal connection among these Books' successive episodes. Furthermore, even where Spenser maintains temporal continuity, it is nevertheless in respect of motivation and meaning insignificant by comparison to the metaphoric relations of the involved episodes. Of Book I, for instance, Parker, summarizing Nohrnberg's ample study, admits: "In one respect, the beginning of Red Cross's quest would seem to be identical with its end. His final battle--the end and purpose of his questing--is to be with the Dragon laying waste the kingdom of Una's parents. In terms of the archetypes within which the Legend moves, the monster Errour and the Dragon surrounding Eden are, metaphorically, one. The episode of Errour contains, in ovo, the whole theme of the emergence of the dragon-killer--a Theseus who threads a labyrinth and kills a monster, a Perseus who escapes 'stonifying,' and an Apollo who begins by killing the Python" (68). Such structuring by metaphoric "archetype" is the dominant feature of Spenser's narrative method.

Generally speaking, the thematics of The Faerie Queene depend much more vitally and continuously, as Frye ("The Structure"), Tuve, Nohrnberg, and many others have suggested, on the episodic metaphor or structural analogy than on any allegorical scheme or even the characters of the heroes of the six Legends:

We change from character to character but never leave Temperance. We cannot keep straight what happened next to Artegall but we watch each canto add lines to the drawing of a just knight. We find no hero at all to embody it, but we do not misunderstand the nature of Friendship or its opposite; we are discontent with the portrayal of the Courteous Knight, but we find no objections to raise to the portrayal of Courtesy. We shift rapidly from incident to incident and place to place, but we pursue steadfastly and without agitation the question of the nature of Chastity. Especially this last unit will be seen to adhere carefully to the exposing or opening out of its subject, once we define Chastity with its traditional Christian overtones of total fidelity, love purified of idolatry, lust, and self-indulgence. (Tuve 368)

As Tuve's insistence on the incidental variety of each Book implies, this "exposing or opening out" of a given subject or theme is conducted episodically and metaphorically, through serially arranged actions bearing a key structural

likeness one to another. Like Tuve here, I too will place special emphasis on Book III, which of all the Books admits the most discontinuous of matters into a structure governed by metaphor, and which, in the House of Busyrane episode, yields what is probably the poem's most dramatic metaphoric climax and resolution. First, however, we need a clearer sense of Spenser's method, which can readily be described with reference to the section of Book IV already at hand, Cantos i-v.

The opening episode of Book IV (i.5-15) presents an action which stands as a structural prototype for the various actions of the next several episodes. Having recently "won" Amoret from the House of Busyrane, the apparently-male Britomart arrives with her lady at a castle into which no knight may come without his "loue" or "lemman" (9). Before they can enter, an unescorted "iolly knight" challenges Britomart, claiming "That fairest Amoret was his by right" (10). A joust ensues, and Britomart easily wins; then, taking pity on her defeated opponent, she solves his problem: she reveals herself as female, and allows that she, as the victorious knight, will escort Amoret, but will herself be escorted, as a lady now, by the jolly knight. This courteous gesture forging "goodly fellowship" and "accord," all enter the castle, and the episode closes. The brief incident establishes a basic structural pattern of character and action, in which one knight challenges another

for the right to that other's lady, they battle, and then some intervention secures a friendly concord.

The action of the next episode (16-37), following the long allegorical introduction of Ate as a figure of discord, conforms to this pattern in all but its resolution. Britomart and Amoret, travelling again, encounter Duessa, Ate, Blandamour, and Paridell. After trying unsuccessfully to incite Paridell to challenge for Britomart's "faire paragon, his conquests part" (33), Blandamour himself challenges, and is, like the jolly knight before him, promptly defeated. This time, however, Britomart does not stay to forge an accord, but departs with Amoret. We then follow the remaining foursome into the third episode (37-54), where they encounter Scudamour and Glauce. Blandamour recognizes Scudamour by his shield, depicting "the God of loue, with wings displayed wide" (39), as the knight to whom he has sometime previously lost a challenge for Amoret; still weak from his defeat by Britomart, he again incites Paridell, this time successfully, to take up his part and prove upon Scudamour his right to the absent Amoret. Scudamour defeats Paridell, though not nearly as handily as Britomart had defeated either of her opponents in challenges for the same lady. (Scudamour's "difference in similarity" here is a fair indication of his knightly imperfection by comparison to Britomart, a point already demonstrated in the action at the House of Busyrane, which I discuss below).

Now, Blandamour, Duessa, and Ate set about to work, not concord, but its opposite, discord, provoking Scudamour's jealousy by telling him that Amoret has given her love and her body to the "stranger knight" (Britomart) whom they have recently encountered. The episode and first canto close with Scudamour in a "flaming furie," threatening to avenge himself upon Glauce for the absent Britomart's "sinfull lust" (53-4).

The prevailing structural pattern is equally obvious in the three episodes that occupy Cantos ii and iii, which progressively return the pattern from its present pitch of discord to its original resolution in "goodly fellowship" and "accord." His company coming upon Sir Ferraugh and False Florimell, Blandamour for a third time attempts to incite Paridell to challenge, but Paridell, just bitten, is twice shy. Blandamour himself then rushes the unprepared Sir Ferraugh, and so "wins" False Florimell (ii.4-10). The next episode (11-29) is rationally connected, for as Blandamour woos his prize and she encourages his blandishments, Ate, again aiming to create discord, kindles Paridell's jealousy, driving him to cast friendship aside and challenge Blandamour for possession of False Florimell. They meet like two warring ships crashing on the sea (16), but in the midst of their fracas the Squire of Dames arrives and negotiates an "accord" of "friendly sort" (29). Though very temporary, his intervention nevertheless recalls

Britomart's similar one in the first episode and anticipates Cambina's in the next, the expansive retrospection on Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond and their tripartite challenge for the right to Canacee at Cambel's tourney (ii.30-iii.52).

The one conflict that has motivated all of the episodes thus far is in this new episode of Cambel's tourney elevated and ritualized: all of the combatants are noble, and their energies are regulated and sanctioned within the ceremonial forms of the chivalric code. The battles are accordingly fierce and vividly described, as they had not been before, and Cambina intervenes in the last, between Cambel and Triamond, with arrestingly marvellous effect:

But when as all might nought with them preuaile,  
 Shee smote them lightly with her powrefull wand.  
 Then suddenly as if their hearts did faile,  
 Their wrathfull blades downe fell out of their hand,  
 And they like men astonisht still did stand.  
 Thus whilest their minds were doubtfully distraught,  
 And mighty spirites bound with mightier band,  
 Her golden cup to them for drinke she raught,  
 Whereof full glad for thirst, ech drunk an harty  
 draught.

Of which so soone as they once tasted had,  
 Wonder it is that sudden change to see:

Instead of strokes, each other kissed glad,  
 And louely haulst from feare of treason free,  
 And plighted hands for euer friends to be.  
 When all men saw this sudden change of things,  
 So mortall foes so friendly to agree,  
 For passing ioy, which so great maruaile brings,  
 They all gan shout aloud, that all the heauen rings.

(iii.48-9)

This is a climax of sorts, coming as it does on the heels of five similarly structured episodes and triumphantly resolving the conflict that motivates them all. The new friends are presently further "Allide with bands of mutuall couplement," Triamond taking Canacee to wife, Cambel taking Cambina. This foursome then stands as a replete image of concord, metaphorically opposed to the discordant foursome--Duessa, Ate, Blandamour, Paridell--of the previous four episodes and metaphorically aligned with the comic "foursome" constituted by Britomart, Amoret, and the jolly knight in the first (cf. Hieatt 75-9). The thin temporal continuity Spenser maintains through this series (even the final retrospective episode is cued by the arrival of its protagonists in the narrative present) barely masks its essential discontinuities and has itself no semantic or thematic value whatsoever. The integration and full meaning of each episode obtains only in its metaphoric repetition and reformation of the single structural pattern, which may



be described abstractly as a contest of knights for the right to a lady resulting either in discord or concord, enmity (here in the form of jealousy) or friendship.

Returning to the narrative present, there follow two brief incidents, one in which Cambina averts a contest between Blandamour and both Cambel and Triamond and another in which Braggadochio arrives, challenges for False Florimell, and then backs down when Blandamour accepts (iv.1-13). The next major action is Satyrane's tournament for Florimell's girdle (iv.13-v.28), a contest clearly resembling Cambel's tourney in its ritual re-enactment of the basic pattern, but which, drawing together all of the characters of the last six episodes and then some, proposes to answer their variously displayed but metaphorically single conflict by determining the knight and lady who most conform to the chivalric ideal, and whose "rights" to one another may therefore fairly be said to be absolute:

It hath bene through all ages euer seene,  
 That with the praise of armes and cheualrie,  
 The prize of beautie still hath ioyned beene;  
 And that for reasons speciall priuitie:  
 For either doth on other much relie.  
 For he me seemes most fit the faire to serue,  
 That can her best defend from villenie;  
 And she most fit his seruice doth deserue,  
 That fairest is and from her faith will neuer swerue.

(v.1)

Here, finally, the rationale of the knightly challenge, the assertion of a superior skill in arms and thus a superior right to "serue" a more or less virtuous lady, is made explicit. The two-part action of Satyrane's tourney, the three-day battle and the beauty contest afterward, definitively proves Britomart, the champion of the Knights of Maidenhead, to be the knight "most fit the faire to serve," and Amoret, who alone can wear Florimell's girdle of "chast loue" and "wiuehood true" (3), to be the lady "most fit his seruice [to] deserue."

In the end, of course, Satyrane's effort at a ceremonial and principled resolution, quite unlike Cambel's, collapses in discord, with most of the knights rushing off to win False Florimell by renewed combat. Yet given our vantage, from which it is impossible to mistake the episode's metonymic assertion of the nobility and virtue of Britomart and Amoret and the corresponding ideality of their relationship as knight and lady, the tourney in one sense comes to its intended conclusion. If hereafter Spenser lays aside for a time the one episodic pattern that to this point has governed Book IV, it is because that pattern has now reached its full metaphorical extension, ranging from Braggadochio, whose cowardice renders him unable to maintain even his own challenge, to Blandamour and Paridell, whose unprincipled challenges and exposure to Ate destroy their

apparent friendship, to Cambel and Triamond, who through a noble challenge and the intervention of Cambina forge an indissoluble friendship, to Britomart, who can "best defend" her lady--as Satyrane's tournament, the first two episodes of Book IV, and the concluding episode of Book III well show--"from villenie." Our evaluative position in terms of the pattern is now, thanks to the principle of similarity in difference, fully determined, such that we will easily recognize right and wrong action, and all the degrees in between, whenever we again witness a challenge for a lady, as in the retrospective episode of Scudamour's triumphant assault on the Island of Venus, through which he wins Amoret (IV.x).

What the metaphoric structure of this series does not account for, however, is the irony at the top of its hierarchy, the fact that Britomart is a woman herself and so presumably not interested in possessing that virtuous lady who has been amply demonstrated to be hers by right. Spenser shortly enough settles the irony by stating his meaning and the nature of their relationship directly--their love is "most fit" insofar as it exists "For vertues onely sake, which doth beget/ True loue and faithfull friendship" (IV.vi.46)--but this generalization hardly captures the full dramatic and thematic significance of their ideal fitness as knight and lady. To understand the full value of their coupling, we must turn back to Book III and to another

metaphoric pattern, one which structures a series of even more radically discontinuous episodes and which culminates in Britomart's original challenge for Amoret at the House of Busyrane.

#### IV

One of the difficulties besetting the reader of Book III, as Helen Gardner suggests in a late essay, "Some Reflections on the House of Busyrane," is precisely the matter of structure, which seems to admit of two different, and perhaps mutually exclusive, descriptions. Citing readings of the final two cantos of Book III by Thomas Roche, Jr., Janet Spens, C. S. Lewis, A. C. Hamilton, and J. E. Hankins, Gardner faults "almost all explicators" for the "use of Book IV to explain Book III" (405). She specifically objects to the interpretation of the Busyrane episode on the basis of those details about Amoret and Scudamour, some of which we've been discussing, that are presented literally after the fact in Book IV. Straightening out the chronology of Amoret and Scudamour's tale, a chronology intentionally disordered by Spenser, certainly provides a temporal background and may even uncover a rational motivation for Amoret's thralldom to Busyrane, but this strategy, Gardner suggests, contradicts Book III's actual structure and blurs the episode's chief interest. Like the Redcross Knight's betrothal to Una in

Book I and Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss in Book II, Britomart's liberation of Amoret is the climax of a discrete legend. Its first concern as such, says Gardner, is "the triumph of Britomart, who endures the great test of her virtue" (406), and not the conjugal difficulties of Amoret and Scudamour.

Though Gardner's argument rests on the structural analogies between the poem's several heroes and their several quests, her point can be supported even more immediately. As readers, we approach the House of Busyrane with Britomart, and our vantage is hers throughout the episode. Though Amoret and Scudamour have been mentioned previously in connection with the Garden of Adonis (III.vi), they here make their first appearance as actors in Faeryland's narrative present, and only at the episode's commencement and close. Their joint subjection to Busyrane arises not as motivated, but as given action; we could take it, therefore, simply as a pretext for the narrative display of Britomart's attentiveness and craft, her courage and victory. Thus Gardner:

I do not think we should weaken our response to what immediately captures the imagination in Britomart's adventure in the House of Busyrane by puzzling over Amoret, and trying to find some explanation for her torment. (408)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Gardner further notes, and I think rightly so, that for the six years between the publication of Books I-III in 1590 and Books IV-VI in 1596, Spenser's readers, lacking

But the prime objection to this argument is obvious enough: what if the thing that immediately captures our imagination is--as was no doubt the case for the very authors whose studies Gardner cites--Amoret's torment? A. Leigh DeNeef, for instance, seems taken by Spenser's first revelation of Amoret, her breast "entrenched deepe with knife accursed keene" (xii.20), as by no other moment in Book III:

The description is at once dramatic and shocking, and the detail with which Spenser loads it is clearly intended to pull the reader up short. Prepared for a metaphorically wounded Amoret, we are given instead a picture which emphasizes its own literalness. It is difficult here to adjust our focus sufficiently to see that the bleeding heart is Amoret's own willful perception and not ours, that it is a psychologically myopic extension of a terrified perspective (a psychomachia), not a perceptible fact....our inability here to distinguish our perception from Amoret's perspective instructs us that the false view is very human. (15-6)

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access to further information, "had no reason to think of Scudamour and Amoret as anything but lovers" (406). Though Spenser did choose to amplify their story in Book IV, we can probably learn something about his structural strategies by confining our attention, at least temporarily, to Book III alone.

DeNeef's argument, here concluding, tracks "the key act of wounding which is repeated throughout the book [III]" (3) and amply justifies, without recourse to Book IV, this final emphasis on Amoret. His conclusion, of course, would rattle Gardner: searching Amoret's wound, DeNeef loses sight of Britomart, who first sees, and from whose vantage we see, this "willful perception" that is "not a perceptible fact." Yet even if he has misdiagnosed the action, it is clear that for him and many others Book III virtually insists upon the interpretation of just this moment. Amoret's transfixed heart is, after all, the dramatic centerpiece of Busyrane's house and, as DeNeef rightly argues, the culminating image in a metaphorical series that spans the entire Book. Unless we understand something of the cause or nature of its abduction, how are we to assess the significance of Britomart's "great test"?

Or even more pointedly: if we do not try "to find some explanation for her torment," how are we to account for Amoret's determining role in Britomart's triumph? When Busyrane wounds Britomart, her fierce response is nearly catastrophic:

So mightily she smote him, that to ground

He fell halfe dead; next stroke him should haue  
slain,

Had not the Lady, which by him stood bound,

Dernely vnto her called to abstaine,  
 From doing him to dy. For else her paine  
 Should be remedillesse, sith none but hee,  
 Which wrought it, could the same recure againe.  
 Therewith she stayd her hand, loth stayd to bee;  
 For life she him enuyde, and long'd reuenge to see.

(xii.34)

DeNeef registers the "shock" that attends upon our first sight of Amoret, but this moment, I find, is even more arresting. Amoret starts suddenly to life here, is transformed in an instant from a static image of female suffering to a vital intelligence, intervening in and redirecting the narrative action. If Britomart's "endurance of her test" is "poetically equivalent to Guyon's achievement of his quest" (Gardner 406), then Amoret's intervention here is surely akin, poetically, to the Palmer's in the Bower of Bliss, when his well-timed rebuke at Acrasia's fountain dampens Guyon's "kindled lust" and guides him to his quest's proper end (II.xii.63-9). Britomart, no doubt, can vanquish Busyrane, but her achievement of the adventure depends, ultimately, on Amoret's knowledge and guidance.

I mention these two arguments not so much as a prelude to a reinterpretation of the Busyrane episode (though I will offer some reflections of my own), but rather to illustrate something of the complexity of Spenser's metaphorical



structures. While the episodic pattern we observed in Book IV is relatively straight-forward and unambiguous, clearly that (or those) at work in Book III and particularly its conclusion admit of some debate. Both DeNeef and Gardner approach Book III in terms of its structural repetitions and both position the House of Busyrane episode as "a fine conclusion" (Gardner 406) to Britomart's legend and not as a beginning, in medias res, of the fragmented tale of Amoret and Scudamour. But where Gardner attends principally to the overarching structure of discrete books and legends, DeNeef instead focuses on a recurrent and sub-episodic pattern of imagery, and the result is a significant discrepancy in their weightings and interpretations of the action at the House of Busyrane. Both critics would, I suspect, offer their readings in answer to the methodological question A. C. Hamilton posed some time ago--"what interpretation does an episode invite, sustain, and control?"--but neither, I think, gives an accurate account of "how subtly Spenser manipulates the response of his readers" (142, 160). In our reading experience of Book III, and of the Busyrane episode in particular, the most influential of Spenser's metaphors is that which structures the basic and most obvious unit of the narrative, the episode.

Reading forward through the various actions of Book III, we come at last to Scudamour, Amoret, and Busyrane, three figures who are, at this point in the whole structural

sequence of the poem, essentially without character. They simply crop up, romance-fashion, and we are left to deduce their several characters from their roles and performances in the discontinuous action of the episode. Our deductions may of course later be tempered and trued by various actions in Book IV, like those attesting Scudamour's jealousy and boldness and Amoret's fear and virtue, but such retrospective confirmation and correction are, as Gardner suggests, vastly different from the metonymic anticipation that would obtain if their tale were told in temporal and rational order. As it is, however, the preceding and startlingly diffuse series of discontinuous episodes provides virtually no metonymic preparation for the action at the House of Busyrane. Even Britomart's role is largely undetermined, for she has been conspicuously absent from nearly half of Book III, disappearing from the time she wounds Marinell in Canto iv until her brief appearance at Malbecco's castle in Canto ix, and then falling out of sight again until Cantos xi-xii and the grand finale of her legend. The intervening episodes--the Petrarchan drama of Belphebe and Timias, the mythical tale of Chrysogone, Diana, and Venus, the meditation on the Garden of Adonis, the vagaries of Florimell, the fabliau of Malbecco and Hellenore--cannot but diminish, pace Gardner, our immediate awareness of Britomart's centrality to the Book or of her quest as its organizing principle. By the time we reach

Busyrane, we are necessarily quite accustomed to scrutinizing what may be called the "accidental" characters and action of Spenser's "Legend Of Britomartis, Or Of Chastity."

I mean here something more than a general readiness on the part of the reader for a new set of characters and a new field of action, for episodic discontinuity. Each episode in the series enumerated above is a configuration, a patterning, of the same conceptual materials--the abstract categories "male" and "female," "lust" and "love," "eros" and "chastity"--and each thus affords one take on a constant but complex "matter." As episodes give way one to another, previous patterns of action and character press forward, as it were, providing a more or less irresistible context for the evaluation of the particular actions and characters at hand. Realizing, for instance, that Amoret's thralldom to Busyrane is a patterned repetition of Florimell's to Proteus,<sup>14</sup> we are likely to intuit, as Hieatt does, further correspondences:

as the sufferings of Florimell, culminating in a seven-month imprisonment beneath the sea at the hands of a being who was trying to make her love him, had been precipitated by the watery and cold defectiveness in love of the sea-descended coast-dweller Marinell, so

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<sup>14</sup>Both of these thralldoms are, by the way, metaphorically related to the archetypal one of Una's parents by the beseiging Dragon, described at I.vii.44.

the seven-month imprisonment of Amoret, by a being making an identical demand, in a house whose portal was filled with sulphurous fire, ought to proceed from an opposite defect in Scudamour: his fiery and demanding quality as a lover, bolder than he ought to be. (96)

Though Hieatt draws here on Book IV both for the term of Florimell's imprisonment (xi.4) and for Womanhood's "sharpe rebuke" of Scudamour "for being ouer bold" (x.54), the core of his analogy is nearly inescapable,<sup>15</sup> and he sets it to work in the right direction, forward. Cued by the structural repetition of the "captive and sexually-constrained lady" motif, our recollection of Florimell's imprisonment by Proteus in III.viii, and of the evaluative position that action determined for us, instantly informs our appraisal of who Amoret and Busyrane are and what they are about. In an important sense, Spenser's "juxtaposition of analogous incidents" supplies, to borrow Vinaver's description of one aspect of Malory's romance method, "all the necessary preparation," "bringing to light something which would otherwise have remained unknown or unexplained"

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<sup>15</sup>Spenser himself points the analogy retrospectively in the opening lines of Book IV:

Of louers sad calamities of old,  
Full many piteous stories doe remaine,  
But none more piteous euer was ytold,  
Then that of Amorets hart-binding chaine,  
And this of Florimels vnworthie paine...(i.1)

The syntactic parallelism of the final couplet perfectly underscores the episodic parallelism of the two characters and their captivities.

(100, 105). It is this metaphoric self-contextualization that I take to be the most salient feature of Spenser's episodic structure, that which most manipulates and controls our immediate response to his poem.

Depending on the reader's retentiveness and the prominence of the structural pattern, a given episode can be contextualized and determined in this manner by any previous one in the poem. Florimell's near rape by the fisherman and her "rescue" by Proteus, for instance, is patterned after and thus contextualized by Una's near rape by Sansloy and rescue by satyrs in Book I. The two episodes are nearly identical, not only in action, but in lexical, rhetorical, and stanzaic elaboration as well. The rapist in each case is allotted four stanzas of effort, the narrator proceeding from direct description in the first three to reflection in the fourth (I.vi.3-6, III.viii.25-8). In either episode's next stanza, the narrator announces the rescue before it happens, attributing Una's to "eternall prouidence" and Florimell's to "the heauens...voluntary grace," describes the given lady's "shrill outcryes and shriekes so loud" or "shrilling shriekes," and then identifies the rescuer(s) (I.vi.7, III.viii.29). The rescue itself transpires in the following stanza or two and the rapist exits in duress, and in the next the given lady is shown "with ruffled rayments, and faire blubbred face" (I.vi.8-9, III.viii.30-2). Two final stanzas describe by simile, each involving a vehicle

from the animal world, the victim's new anxiety about her uncouth rescuer(s), who then attempt to ease her mind (I.vi.10-1, III.viii.33-4). To be sure, these episodes are hereafter vastly disparate, the satyrs turning out to be uncharacteristically sensitive, Proteus unexpectedly villainous. But given the parity of the women's plights and even appearances as well as of the verbal structures that depict them, we are clearly invited to read Florimell's character and predicament in light of Una's. To put it another way, the structural analogy may be said to infuse Florimell with the valuations that earlier attached to our response to Una. Insofar as we recognize that Florimell's character has thus been metaphorically invested with something of her predecessor's holy innocence and faithful virtue, we will likely sympathize with the narrator's apostrophic excess in the following stanzas and readily credit his rapt summation of Florimell's ideality:

Eternall thraldom was to her more lief,  
 Then losse of chastitie, or chaunge of loue:  
 Die had she rather in tormenting griefe,  
 Then any should of falseness her reproue,  
 Or looseness, that she lightly did remoue.  
 Most vertuous virgin, glory be thy meed,  
 And crowne of heauenly praise with Saints aboue,  
 Where most sweet hymmes of this thy famous deed  
 Are still emongst them song, that far my rymes exceed.

Fit song of Angels caroled to bee;  
 But yet what so my feeble Muse can frame,  
 Shall be t'aduanche thy goodly chastitee...

(III.viii.42-3)

Given the length and episodic diversity of the narrative, however, and the real limits of our retention, such metaphoric patterning is most pronounced and most determining where it is most immediate, in the relations between contiguous (but nonetheless discontinuous) episodes. While only close study will discover the structural parallelisms through which Spenser "advances" Una's "goodly chastitee" to Florimell, even a first reader of Book III will probably sense and respond to the parallelisms through which Spenser advances something of Florimell's chaste character to Amoret.

Though thoroughly discontinuous, the final three episodes of Book III share a basic structural pattern, featuring a victimized female figure, in some fashion captivated and/or molested by one or both of two male figures. Florimell encounters the fisherman/rapist and is rescued, sued, and enthralled by Proteus. Hellenore, effectively imprisoned by Malbecco, is happily "raped," as the argument to Canto x has it, by Paridell. Amoret, "her small wast girt round with yron bands," is bound "Vnto a brasen pillour" and ravaged by Eusyrane, while her true love, Scudamour, waits helplessly nearby (xii.30). Moving

in sequence, we find that, metaphorically, Hellenore is set over against Florimell, Malbecco against Proteus, and Paridell against both Proteus and the fisherman. Having in the first of these episodes taken some evaluative stock, so to speak, of the pattern's constitutive roles and actions, we make valuations about the second accordingly, tempered, of course, by the new episode's "difference in similarity," the specific tonal shifts, allegorical contents, and circumstantial details that accompany its transformation of the basic pattern. Emerging then from the Hellenore and Malbecco episode with a firmer sense of the prevailing pattern and a broader index to its argument about the relations of men and women and the virtue of chastity, we are in fact well-provided to evaluate the marvellously discontinuous but metaphorically patterned characters and action of the Busyrane episode.<sup>16</sup> Let us observe this progress a little more closely.

Moving from the mythical depths of Proteus's underwater "bowre" and "Dongeon deepe" to the terra firma of Malbecco's castle, we perhaps first sense, not similitude, but antonymic opposition. The proem to Canto ix prepares us

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<sup>16</sup>I thus entirely agree with Donald Cheney's suggestion that "one might...see the concluding incidents of Book III as affording parallel and complementary stories, in which a woman is freed from a figure of abuse who attempts to imprison her and keep her from full womanhead" (198). As readers subject to Spenser's episodic structure, we cannot help but see, or at least repond to, such parallelism and complementarity, and in much more crucial ways than Cheney hints.



for an "odious argument" about the "loose incontinence," the "fault" and "mis," of a "wanton Lady." She, we might expect, will be far other than that "most vertuous virgin" Florimell; she will be laid bare, in moral terms, by the sheer force of contrast. But though the ensuing fabliau could not be further in tone from the pathetic tale of Florimell, Hellenore "seems to escape to something other than damnation," arriving instead at "a kind of innocent self-realization at the level of nature" (Nohrnberg 31). To some extent, Hellenore escapes her anticipated damnation even before her tale begins, when the narrator's voice is supplanted by that of the Squire of Dames, who shifts the moral focus of the narrative, the burden of "fault," immediately and, through alliteration, emphatically to Hellenore's husband, Malbecco:

Then listen Lordings, if ye list to weet  
 The cause, why Satyrane and Paridell  
 Mote not be entertaynd, as seemed meet,  
 Into that Castle (as that Squire does tell.)  
 Therein a cancred crabbed Carle does dwell,  
 That has no skill of Court nor courtesie,  
 Ne cares, what men say of him ill or well;  
 For all his dayes he drownes in priuitie,

Yet has full large to liue, and spend at libertie. (3)  
 The Squire then prefatorily sketches the character roles and motivation of the action to follow, recasting Hellenore now

as a "louely lasse" cruelly enthralled to a possessive spouse:

...she does ioy to play emongst her peares,  
And to be free from hard restraint and gealous feares.

[He] in close bowre her mewes from all mens sight,  
Depriu'd of kindly ioy and naturall delight. (4-5)

Taken alone, the stanzas I quote from render the conventional polarities of a January-May marriage--Malbecco is old, fearfully jealous, and impotent, Hellenore young, free-spirited, and sexual--and place our sympathy, conventionally, with the lusty wife. But the phrasing here metaphorically recollects the actions and themes of the previous episodes, aligning Hellenore's "hard restraint" "in close bowre" with Florimell's, and her sexuality with the metaphysical sort that animates the Garden of Adonis, from whence "all plentie, and all pleasure flowes,/ And sweet loue gentle fits emongst them throwes,/ Without fell rancor, or fond gealosie" (vi.41). So contextualized, Hellenore appears not as the chaste Florimell's moral antithesis, but as her erotic repetition and counterpart, similarly subjected to a perverted male desire. And as Satyrane promptly remarks in response to the Squire's preface, the chaste "containment" of her sexuality vitally depends upon the courtly reformation of her husband:

It is not yron bandes, nor hundred eyes,

Nor brasen wall, nor many wakefull spyes,  
 That can withhold her wilfull wandring feet;  
 But fast good will with gentle curtesyes,  
 And timely seruice to her pleasures meet  
 May her perhaps containe, that else would algates  
 fleet. (ix.7)

Given the basic structural pattern and the specific local details, we can only conclude, with Helen Cheney Gilde and many others, that "there is nothing perverted about [Hellenore's] sexuality, only about what causes her to express it in such ways" (235).

The narrator's opening insistence on her difference notwithstanding, Hellenore in fact reprises in this episode the role of Florimell in the last, and our evaluative take on the patterned female figure is simply extended, not reversed. This is not to say that Hellenore herself embodies any of Florimell's particular attributes. Quite obviously, her "lustihed" and exuberant cuckolding of Malbecco--take the moment when she cries out that Paridell "would beare her forcibly,/ And meant to rauish her, that rather had to dy" (x.13, cf. viii.42)--are parodic transformations of Florimell's resolute virtue and helpless duress. But because Spenser turns the parody throughout the episode against Malbecco (and, to a lesser extent, Paridell), he forestalls what would otherwise be our spontaneous judgment of Hellenore by the standard of

Florimell. Accordingly, Hellenore escapes at the last into a kind of pastoral idyll, described without a trace of moral indignation:

The iolly Satyres full of fresh delight,  
 Came dauncing forth, and with them nimbly led  
 Faire Helenore, with girlonds all bespred,  
 Whom their May-lady they had newly made:  
 She proud of that new honour, which they red,  
 And of their louely fellowship full glade,  
 Daunst liuely, and her face did with a Lawrell shade.

. . . . .

All day they daunced with great lustihed,  
 And with their horned feet the greene grasse wore,  
 The whiles their Gotes vpon the brouzes fed,  
 Till drouping Phoebus gan to hide his golden hed.

Tho vp they gan their merry pypes to trusse,  
 And all their goodly heards did gather round,  
 But euery Satyre first did giue a busse  
 To Hellenore: so busses did abound. (x.44-6)

Significantly, this procession is closely patterned upon Una's similar one in an episode we've already noticed, in which satyrs rescue her from the rapist Sansloy and

Thence lead her forth, about her dauncing round,  
 Shouting, and singing all a shepheards ryme,  
 And with green braunches strowing all the ground,

Do worship her, as Queene, with oliue girlond cround.

And all the way their merry pipes they sound,  
 That all the woods with doubled Eccho ring,  
 And with their horned feet do weare the ground,  
 Leaping like wanton kids in pleasant Spring.

(I.vi.13-4)

Una's single experience of rape and rescue, in other words, is metaphorically refracted and reiterated not only in Florimell's rape by the fisherman and rescue by Proteus, but also in Hellenore's "rape" by Paridell and "rescue" here by satyrs. The structural analogies again link Hellenore to Florimell, this time on the basis of their shared similarity to Una, and thereby further reinforce our evaluative sympathy for the besieged female, in whatever guise she appears. In terms of the prevailing episodic pattern, Hellenore and Florimell, parallel figures at opposite points on the continuum of female eros and chastity, share a single role, now doubly approved. We accordingly approach Amoret, the chaste lover who lies somewhere in between, very much determined to take her part. Through episodic conditioning, we may reasonably expect that, just as Hellenore's confinement in figurative "yron bandes" and "brasen walls" weighs against Malbecco, so Amoret's captivity in actual ones will weigh, not against her, but against Busyrane, whoever he may be.

As this last analogy implies, Busyrane appears as a patterned successor to Malbecco, who likewise discourteously bars access to his castle and whose gate, too, is nearly engulfed in "vnquenchable fire" (III.ix.17). Malbecco, however, plays not only the possessive tormenter (in the manner of Proteus), but also the dispossessed lover, a role which anticipates that of Sir Scudamour. With his woman whisked away and his treasure consumed by fire, Malbecco

Into huge waues of grieve and gealosye  
Full deepe emplonged was, and drowned nye,  
Twist inward doole and felonous despight;  
He rau'd, he wept, he stamp't, he lowd did cry,  
And all the passions, that in man may light,  
Did him attonce oppresse, and vex his caytiue spright.

(x.17)<sup>17</sup>

Setting out to recover Hellenore, whom he believes to have been forcibly abducted by Paridell, Malbecco finds Braggadochio and Trompart, who offer him, as Britomart will Scudamour, "noble succour." Malbecco's reply might just as

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<sup>17</sup>Malbecco's passion at his loss recalls the reaction of the witch's son in Canto vii, when he finds that Florimell, fearing his attentions, has departed their cottage in the night:

But that lewd loue did the most lament  
For her depart, that euer man did heare;  
He knockt his brest with desperate intent,  
And scratcht his face, and with teeth did teare  
His rugged flesh, and rent his ragged heare... (20)

By metaphorically correlating Malbecco with this "lewd loue," Spenser by extension once again positions Hellenore as the patterned successor to Florimell.

fittingly be Scudamour's:

Then sighing sore, It is not long (said hee)  
 Sith I enioyd the gentlest Dame alieue;  
 Of whom a knight, no knight at all perdee,  
 But shame of all, that doe for honor striue,  
 By treacherous deceit did me depriue;  
 Through open outrage he her bore away,  
 And with fowle force vnto his will did driue,  
 Which all good knights, that armes do beare this day,  
 Are bound for to reuenge, and punish if they may.

(x.27)

The "reuenge" of these "good knights," of course, is hilariously abortive (Braggadocchio and Trompart, fleeing in terror at the sound of the satyrs, stop long enough to fleece Malbecco), and Hellenore, as it happens, wants no rescuing. Despite the satiric deflation of his character, through which he becomes at the last a mere personification of jealousy, Malbecco's pain and self-recrimination nevertheless look forward to Scudamour's:

Griefe, and despight, and gealosie, and scorne  
 Did all the way follow him hard behind,  
 And he himselfe himselfe loath'd so forlorne,  
 So shamefully forlorne of womankind;  
 That as a snake, still lurked in his wounded mind.

(55)

In the House of Busyrane episode, then, Malbecco's two-part

role, first as the captor of Hellenore and then as her forlorn lover, is halved and metaphorically replayed by two distinct figures, Busyrane and Scudamour. Their joint structural descent from Malbecco signals, much as Florimell and Hellenore's similar descent from Una did about them, that their relation to one another is not simply antagonistic, but somehow also, and more essentially, complementary.

The transition to the Busyrane episode is effected, appropriately enough, with a proem that responds rhetorically to the foregoing episode and thematizes its action as an opposition of "Fowle Gealosie" and "Sweet Loue":

O hatefull hellish Snake, what furie furst  
 Brought thee from balefull house of Proserpine,  
 Where in her bosome she long had nurst,  
 And fostred up with bitter milke of tine,  
 Fowle Gealosie, that turnest loue diuine  
 To ioylesse dread, and maks't the louing hart  
 With hatefull thoughts to languish and to pine,  
 And feed it selfe with selfe-consuming smart?  
 Of all the passions in mind thou vilest art.

O let him far be banished away,  
 And in his stead let Loue for euer dwell,  
 Sweet Loue, that doth his golden wings embay



In blessed Nectar, and Pure Pleasures well,  
 Vntroubled of vile feare, or bitter fell.  
 And ye faire Ladies, that your kingdomes make  
 In th'harts of men, them gouerne wisely well,  
 And of faire Britomart ensample take,  
 That was as trew in loue, as Turtle to her make.

(xi.1-2)

The stanzas confirm the moral forbearance toward Hellenore's sexuality and moral pre-occupation with Malbecco's jealousy that we found in the last episode; in so doing, they indicate the continuing relevance of both attitudes to our reception of the action to follow. Again, we will be concerned with jealousy and sexual love, but in a new configuration of characters and action; again, key structural repetitions will prompt and determine our responses. Let me pursue this point by taking up the dramatic debut of Scudamour, after which I will return to the somewhat enigmatic matter of "faire Britomart's ensample."

When Britomart, tracking a gigantic male lust (Ollyphant), stumbles instead upon Scudamour, the evidence of episodic patterning weighs strongly against him. If we have the poem's earlier Books at all in mind, for instance, our first sight of Scudamour links him at once to figures

like Verdant and Mordant,<sup>18</sup> whose intemperance in the Bower of Bliss leaves them similarly "wallowed," or Redcrosse, "Disarmd, disgrast, and inwardly dismayd" before Orgoglio:

...there lay a knight all wallowed  
 Vpon the grassy ground, and by him neare  
 His haberieon, his helmet, and his speare;  
 A little off, his shield was rudely throwne...

(xi.7; cf. I.vii.11, II.i.41, II.xii.80)

The posture is all wrong, and while Scudamour, we learn, has "disprofessed" (xi.20) knighthood out of grief and desperation rather than lust or pride, the structural parallels nevertheless argue that his displaced arms signify a failure of character. This failure, as Scudamour's "bitter plaintes" make plain, is a lurking Malbeccean jealousy, which makes his "louing hart," to borrow the narrator's words, "with hatefull thoughts to languish and to pine,/ And feed it selfe with selfe-consuming smart."<sup>19</sup> Thus Scudamour, concluding his opening speech:

Yet thou vile man, vile Scudamour art sound,

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<sup>18</sup>The recollection of Mordant, I should note, simultaneously brings Amavia to mind, "in whose alabaster brest did sticke/ A cruell knife, that made a griesly wound" (II.i.39); her similarity to Amoret is obvious, and again predisposes us to take Amoret as an undeserving victim of her husband's vice.

<sup>19</sup>In Book IV, this image of self-consumption is reiterated and explicitly applied to Scudamour (vi.1), by way of summarizing the "gealous discontent," "gealous hart," and "gealous dread" that landed him in the House of Care (IV.v.31-46).

Ne canst her ayde, ne canst her foe dismay;  
 Vnworthy wretch to tread vpon the ground,  
 For whom so faire a Lady feeles so sore a wound.

(xi.11)

The contextual weight of Malbecco, I think, decides the alexandrine here, and Scudamour says more than he means: it is in some sense because of him that Amoret "feels so sore a wound,"<sup>20</sup> just as it is Malbecco who is truly to blame for Hellenore's "wilfull wandring." By the end of the scene, after Britomart penetrates Busyrane's flames and Scudamour is again rebuffed, the metaphoric correlation of Scudamour and Malbecco is all but transparent. Overwrought with "greedy will" and "enuious desire," Scudamour throws himself to the ground again and beats and bounces his head (26-7); despite the pathos of this excess, the image of Malbecco raving, weeping, stamping, and crying aloud cannot be far behind. Not surprisingly, what Britomart first notices inside Busyrane's house is a "goodly arras of great maiesty" in which "rich metall lurk[s]...Like a discoloured Snake, whose hidden snares/ Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht backe declares" (28). The simile itself declares the lurking presence of Scudamour's "ioylesse dread"--that "hatefull hellish Snake"--in the enthralling artifice of Busyrane, and it locates the patterned prototype of both in

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<sup>20</sup>The same ambiguity haunts the narrator's much earlier assertion that Amoret for Scudamour's "dearest sake endured sore,/ Sore trouble of an hainous enemy" (III.vi.53).

Malbecco's "hard restraint and gealous feares."<sup>21</sup>

This is not at all to say that metaphor is equivalent in any literal sense to identity, that Scudamour, for instance, is reducible to Malbecco merely because he is patterned after him. Rather, turning from the Malbecco episode with what Hamilton has aptly called "released moral energy" (161), we come abruptly upon the discontinuous characters and action of the Busyrane episode. We have at once to place that suspended energy and to find our bearings in this new and apparently unfamiliar narrative ground, and these needs are mutually answered by Spenser's episodic patterning. Such structural metaphors invite us to make recognitions and valuations on the basis of similarity, tempered of course by local differences in dramatic circumstance and narrative tone. Surely the psalm-like pathos of Scudamour's lament (see particularly xi.9) mark him as a being of a different order from the cuckolded

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<sup>21</sup>In the following catalog-like descriptions of the tapestries (which show "all Cupids warres" and the baleful and transforming powers of "his hart-percing dart"), of Cupid's altar, and of the gold reliefs (in which "loue in thousand monstrous formes doth oft appeare"), as well as in the dramatic masque of the final Canto, Spenser augments the metaphoric connection between Scudamour and Busyrane in a metonymic way, for Scudamour is associated with Cupid through his shield, "On which the winged boy in colours cleare/ Depeinted was" (xi.7). Furthermore, Amoret makes her first appearance in the masque of Cupid, and is followed immediately by the god himself, who is clearly responsible for her "torture" and "consuming paine" (xii.19-23). All of these figures of Cupid metonymically point both to the knight who bears his shield and to Busyrane, the efficient "cause" of them all.

Malbecco, and derision would be an entirely inappropriate response to his plight. But surely, too, as key verbal and dramatic details show Scudamour to be reprising something of Malbecco's role, we may properly compare the two in analogical and conceptual ways: just as Malbecco's worst fear is realized in Hellenore's sexual status as the satyr's "commune good" (x.36), so Scudamour's is in his own powerlessness to recover Amoret from the "strong enchauntments" (xi.16) of another; both understand women as objects that can be possessed. And when, in response to Scudamour's "threatfull pride," Busyrane's fire only swells the more with "imperious sway" (xi.26), episodic patterning both urges us and gives us the terms to place Scudamour to one side of a metaphorically constructed continuum of envy and possessiveness, and Busyrane to the other. Having found them out by virtue of Malbecco, we may comment more perceptively on the nature of Britomart's "noble cheuisaunce" and of her "true loue" for Amoret.

Two things are certain about Britomart's role at the House of Busyrane: she represents chastity, and she stands in for Scudamour. Scudamour himself, reacting to Britomart's vow to deliver Amoret "with prooffe of last extremity...or with her for you to dy," suggests the way in which these roles coalesce:

Ah gentlest knight aliue, (said Scudamour)

What huge heroicke magnaminitie

Dwels in thy bounteous brest? what couldst thou more,

If she were thine, and thou as now am I? (xi.18-9)<sup>22</sup>

Britomart appears to him (and throughout the episode) as a man, and he rightly construes her virtue, not as the self-conserving "goodly chastitee" of Florimell, but as the self-sacrificing "magnanimity" of the "heroicke" knight.

Scudamour, distracted and reduced by jealous fear, lacks precisely this quality, this disinterested commitment to threatened virtue; it is this precisely that fits Britomart to be the champion of Amoret's distinctly Florimellian chastity. This is the sense, I believe, of the narrator's opening comment (xi.2) about Britomart's "ensample" here of the wisely-governed male heart, a thing conspicuously lacking in the patterned actions of the previous episodes. The comment has two more or less obvious literal applications: as a female, Britomart will exemplify the wise governance of the male heart; as a male, she will exemplify that heart wisely governed. The first statement is dramatically accurate only insofar as it refers to Britomart's rule of her own figurative male heart, her

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<sup>22</sup>This sentiment, I suspect, has a good deal to do with Scudamour's "enuious desire" and "fell woodness" when the fire yields to Britomart: if she liberates Amoret, Scudamour fears, she (in his view, he) will prove herself the better knight and win, by right, Amoret's love. Imagine Scudamour's reaction were he to hear Amoret yielding herself, in thanks, Britomart's "vassal" (xii.39). Book IV, as we've seen, takes up the patterned action and theme of a knight's right to a lady's love.

assumed identity as a "gentle knight."<sup>23</sup> The second, of course, describes essentially the same thing--Britomart's conduct as a male--but points as well to her role as the knight who replaces Scudamour and bears "trew" love to his "thrald...gentle make" (xi.15), Amoret, by whom she will at the crucial moment be governed. In this last capacity, Britomart appears and acts as the wisely loving male, motivated not by possessive desire or brooding jealousy, but by pure devotion to chaste virtue. Such unmediated devotion, Book III leads us to conclude, is the prime mark of male chastity, without which Amoret's virtuous heart can be neither whole nor free.

I said above that each episode in a given series is a configuration of the same conceptual materials, similarly structured, and so it is here. Busyrane embodies male eros, drastically skewed toward possession; behind him stand Malbecco and Proteus. Amoret embodies chaste female erotic love, earlier termed "goodly womanhead" and "chaste affectione" (vi.51-2); behind her are Hellenore and Florimell. Scudamour embodies male erotic love, beleaguered by jealous dread; behind him are Malbecco, the witch's son of Canto vii and, by an inversion of his eros and jealousy, perhaps Marinell, the indifferent "lover" of Florimell. And Britomart, finally, enacting a role new to the principal

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<sup>23</sup>Though she overrules Busyrane's heart as well, she does so neither particularly wisely, as Amoret's "derne" intervention to save Busyrane implies, nor from "trew" love.

episodic pattern of the second half of Book III, represents chaste male love, the one force that can resolve the central conflict variously manifest throughout the series. We approach the discontinuous conclusion of Britomart's legend under the tutelage of Spenser's metaphoric structure, ready not only to marvel at this "highest flight of the romantic imagination in The Faerie Queene, combining mystery and horror with beauty," but also to comprehend the "deep moral feeling" with which it is "infused" (Gardner 406). Given the patterned actions and characters of the preceding episodes, we are indeed well left to our own reflections.

# V

Very much inspired by the Italian poets of their own centuries, both Chaucer and Spenser brought the English verse romance to its secondary phase, in which a variety of sophistications, and particularly that of episodic structure, render the genre a specifically literary vehicle. Where the primary romance organizes a series of discontinuous episodes simply by the temporal continuity of its hero's idealized life, the secondary admits of further and alternative strategies to bind and integrate its episodes, which can consequently be even more discontinuous than their primary cousins. In Chaucer's secondary romances, the basic primary structure is supplemented by a strategy of metonymic anticipation that "naturalizes" the



discontinuous through a graded and progressively amplified presentation of key ideas, images, and actions. In Spenser's secondary romance, on the other hand, the more or less naive (or formulaic) structural redundancies of the primary form are developed as metaphoric patterns of character and action that dominate and semantically determine whole series of radically disjunct episodes. Both these secondary strategies recur in the romances of the tertiary phase, but, as we shall see, in structures which are newly historicized and lyricized.

## Chapter Three

### The Romantic Romance: Wordsworth

#### I

Taken together, Chapters 1 and 2 implicitly outline the relations and distinctions that may be drawn between primary English verse romances and secondary ones, at least insofar as episodic structure is concerned. The prototypical metonymic quest with its structural repetitions informs the romances of the secondary poets, but in these new generic engagements, it appears retooled and aestheticized. The primary metonymies of temporal sequence and illustrative or synecdochic episodes are supplemented by a secondary metonymic strategy, involving the consciously progressive and therefore distinctly poetic presentation of image and action. Or, the metaphoric potential of structural repetition is realized in richly-pointed episodic patterns, in which successive images and actions construct, and at the same time attain their meaning from, a conceptual continuum ranging from synonymy to antonymy. In either case, the resulting secondary romance is structurally coherent and meaningful in a way that the primary romance, typically, is not.

Moving forward now from the end of the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century and the beginnings of

Romanticism,<sup>1</sup> we will usefully distinguish a third or tertiary generic stage of the romance, one in which secondary strategies are reinterpreted and redirected, even as the secondary had reinterpreted and redirected the primary. The tertiary phase in a genre "is reached," Alistair Fowler suggests, "when a writer takes up a kind already secondary, and applies it in quite a new way." The tertiary form is often "a symbolic reinterpretation of the secondary" and "seems to interiorize the earlier kind"; it "takes individual conventions as material for symbolic developments that presuppose allegorical, psychological, or other interpretations of them" (162-3).<sup>2</sup> In the Romantic or

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<sup>1</sup>In the seventeenth century, romance became, as Beer puts it, an "outlaw literary form" (14). This is not to say that romances ceased to be written (Kucich's recent survey of Spenserianism through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lays that idea to rest), only that they were devalued and hence not canonized. The prejudice against romance was maintained by many critics through the eighteenth century. Beer summarizes the objections to the form, with reference to Richardson's Pamela, thus: "it drowns the voice of reason, it offers a dangerously misleading guide to everyday life, it rouses false expectations and stirs up passions best held in check." It also was faulted for a "lack of intellectual power." See also Parker 159-64.

<sup>2</sup>Though I treat him too as a secondary figure, Spenser's relation to Chaucer may be termed, by this definition, tertiary. That is, in Book IV of The Faerie Queene, he "takes up a kind already secondary" (Chaucer's Squire's Tale) and submits its "individual conventions" to "symbolic developments that presuppose allegorical...interpretations of them." We needn't be troubled by Spenser's dual position as a secondary and a tertiary figure in the history of romance, for, as Fowler puts it, "primary and secondary [and, by implication, tertiary] are naturally relative to historical viewpoint. Every writer is secondary in relation to some generic

tertiary phase of the romance, such symbolic reinterpretation takes place on quite specific grounds, and may be seen most clearly in the widespread and insistent focus in romances of the period on two distinct time frames: a narrative present, in which the act of narrating a romance is dramatized, and an embedded narrative past, which constitutes the romance being narrated. Romance as a form, in other words, becomes a symbolic object within the romance itself, and the purpose of this development, as example after example shows, is exactly to "interiorize" and "psychologize" the genre, most often through structural metaphors and metonymies that express the significant connection of the present to the past, the minstrel to the matter of his tale.

To state this another way, romance as a genre becomes historicized in the eighteenth century, and is thus received and represented historically by figures like Coleridge, Scott, and Wordsworth. Romance appears as a recovered artifact in their tales precisely because that was its status to the literary culture of the eighteenth century, whose antiquarians and literary historians had not only rediscovered an enormous number of primary "minstrel"

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model....there is no permanent distinction" (161-2). Seen in relation to his eighteenth-century imitators, for example, Spenser may also be viewed as a primary figure. The categories are not meant to describe historical fixities, but the shifting dynamics of historical relationship. In the broad two-century synchronic slices I am treating here, Spenser is rightly cast as secondary.

compositions like those collected in Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765), but had also recanonized Spenser's secondary one. In submitting the romance to a framing structure that signals its historicized status and reception, and thus its temporal discontinuity with the present, the tertiary poet at the same time creates and confronts his own image in the minstrel figure of the frame. For the poet, this is not a compositional problem but a conceptual opportunity, permitting self-definition by the creation of structural continuities, similarities, and dissimilarities between the episodes within the embedded romance and the overarching episode which dramatizes its narration. To take an obvious case: the narrative present of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is occupied entirely by the Mariner's encounter with the Wedding Guest and his narration to him of events many years past; the embedded and discontinuous narrative of the voyage is the romance, the Mariner its minstrel. His obsessive retelling of the history of his own psychic apocalypse implies that the contents of that apocalypse should be taken as the true indices of his identity. Here, the historical determines the present and personal, relentlessly in the case of the Mariner, perhaps more hopefully in the case of the Wedding Guest, who emerges sadder yet wiser for having heard the tale. More typically, and indeed more in keeping with the new historical sense of the eighteenth century, the relation

between frame and tale is not one of simple repetition, but rather one of simultaneous incorporation and differentiation, the historical finding its place in the present, but partly so that the present can measure its own difference from its past.

Stuart Curran has recently spoken to the tremendous impact of the new historicism of the eighteenth century, and particularly of its recovery of the romance, on Romanticism:

As we conceive of the characteristic interests of Renaissance literature as stemming from the revival of Roman and especially Greek classics, so Romanticism was deeply influenced, and in a very real sense instigated, by one of the great scholarly achievements of the Enlightenment, the recovery of medieval literature as embodied in its romances. The ballad revival was actually a side event in the larger cultural resuscitation....The Reliques, coming on the heels of Thomas Warton's Observations on the Fairy Queen (1754; revised 1762) and Richard Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), indelibly altered Britain's sense of its literary heritage....The revival of romance led inevitably to its rewriting, in the subterfuges of Macpherson and Chatterton, and eventually to its recreation, in the decades upon which the century turned, as a central genre of British poetry. Indeed, it might be argued that the term by which we

retrospectively define the period simply honors the primacy of the romance in British poetry during this epoch. (129)<sup>3</sup>

Clearly attuned to this scholarly and critical reclamation of the romance were the actual romances of the eighteenth century, Spenserian, balladic, and everything in between. Incorporating the sense of history that increasingly attached to the genre, these romances uncovered new, progressive possibilities for the form. As I'm sure Curran would agree, the structural strategies the Romantics adopted in their romances derived not so much from the intellectual foment surrounding the form (though certainly the new literary-historical view helped to instigate and authorize the renewal of the genre in poetic practice) as from the continued adaptation of the genre in many particular examples through eighteenth century. The Romantics did not pick up the verse romance where Spenser left it, but rather received, along with Spenser recanonized and an ample stock of primary romances, a number of modern transformations of both the primary and secondary kinds by poets like Thomson, Beattie, and Percy. Less famous perhaps than his assertion that the Reliques "absolutely redeemed English poetry," but

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<sup>3</sup>For more on the rise of literary history, see Wellek, particularly 133-201; for a concise review of the ballad revival, see Jacobus 209-32; for a full account of Spenser and Spenserianism through the eighteenth century, see Kucich 11-64; for more on eighteenth-century romance poetics, see Chapter 1 of my unpublished master's thesis, "'Thy power to declare': Coleridge and the Revitalization of Romance."

perhaps equally telling, are Wordsworth's comments in the same "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" (1815) about Thomson's and Percy's romance efforts. Wordsworth prefers the "more harmonious" and "more pure" Castle of Indolence above the more popular Seasons, and, while regretting the diction of Percy's original romances, he nevertheless esteems "the genius of Dr. Percy in this kind of writing superior to that of any other man by whom, in modern times, it has been cultivated," "even Burger" (The Oxford Authors 652-3). As Wordsworth will be my chief example of the tertiary romance poet, I would like to consider, briefly, at least those eighteenth-century romances he himself singled out for attention in an essay written explicitly to "create the taste by which he is to be enjoyed"; I will likewise consider Beattie's The Minstrel, which Wordsworth surely knew.<sup>4</sup> More than all of the many discourses about romance that Wordsworth and the other Romantics inherited, it was actual romances such as these that bequeathed to them the rudiments of the structural logic and thematic orientation that would become characteristic of the tertiary romance.

Predating Warton's, Hurd's, and Percy's critical efforts, James Thomson's Castle of Indolence (1748) seems no less aware of the status and generic implications of romance

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<sup>4</sup>The "Essay, Supplementary" does not, as Wordsworth puts it, "bring down this retrospect to [his] own times"; Beattie is thus omitted. Everard King (107-12) discusses Wordsworth's knowledge of The Minstrel and his debt to it in The Prelude.



as a historical object: Thomson here recreates the Spenserian romance from a historical viewpoint and makes it serve, against its prior imaginative commitments, the progressive ends of civilization. In addition to the stanza, much of the imagery, and the main character types, Thomson takes from Spenser his metaphorical structure, but he disposes all of these along a historical axis. This is not to say that The Faerie Queene is without historical content, but only that its structure is not so thoroughly and vitally informed by the concept of history as is that of The Castle of Indolence. This new historical emphasis imbues the episodic metaphor, stated here for the most part antonymically, with a new revisionary power and significance. The historical and moral commitments of the poem, as even its most recent commentator cannot help repeating (Kucich 56-62), are all too clear: in the contest of the Knight of Arts and Industry against the Enchanter Indolence, nothing less than the progress of cultural history is at stake. Though we may find it a bit heavy-handed, Thomson's strategy is ultimately to adopt the romance to the new values and projects of contemporary culture, and so to recreate it as an enlightened form.

It is commonplace, perhaps, to see the two cantos of The Castle of Indolence as simple opposites, but that is to miss the real action of the poem. True, Canto I luxuriates in fanciful imagery, and Canto II forces the moral; in this

Thomson may divide what the eighteenth century took to be the two chief elements of Spenser's style, but he does not also thereby bifurcate his tale into a romantic introduction on the one hand, and an antiromantic conclusion on the other (pace Kucich and Parker). Indeed, considering the nearly total lack of action in Canto I, which consequently develops in catalogues and extended descriptions, and the centrality of decisive action to Canto II, which therefore feels, despite the duration of the opening retrospection and the Bard's song, considerably more narrative, we should say that, generically speaking, Canto II is the particularly romantic one. In Canto I, the wizard Indolence's opening song leads at once to the utter suspension of temporal progression and episodically developed action; the ensuing poetry, rendering a series of fanciful but static landscapes and scenes, seems structurally to owe more to the loco-descriptive than to the romance tradition. Compared to any of Spenser's enthralling bowers, Thomson's thus feels substantially more diffuse, enervated, actionless, and indolent. Aside from the antagonist, there are no main characters and, following the initial and unlocated choice of entering the castle, no animating conflicts, just shadowy presences reposing in fantastic opulence, where nothing happens, and history, needless to say, never intrudes.

Canto II reverses things immediately, and we find ourselves finally on the narrative ground that was

anticipated in Canto I but never enacted. We are introduced at last to the poem's protagonist (this is a remarkable deferral, and again suggests just how "indolent" Canto I actually is) and, significantly, given full account of his history, his parentage and upbringing "in every Science, and in every Art" (II.ix). Master of all chivalric sports, of the natural sciences, of agriculture, industry, and the fine arts, the Knight of Arts and Industry clearly represents the ideal of progressive civilization. His quest to "civilize" a "barbarous World" leads him finally to Britain, where, not surprisingly, he "crown[s] his Toils" (II.xvi) by framing that "matchless Form of glorious Government" (II.xxiv), the parliamentary monarchy. While all of this is explicitly allegorical, it nonetheless recasts the amorphous and as yet unactivated narrative donnée of Canto I squarely in the stream of historical time, at the Restoration or just after. With hero and villain thus placed, and the terms of the conflict established, the Knight of Arts and Industry--and with him the romance he moves in--comes to life in a clearly-realized and finally active narrative present:

"I will, (he cry'd) so help me, God! destroy  
That Villain Archimage!"--His Page then strait  
He to him call'd, a fiery-footed Boy,  
Benempt Dispatch. "My Steed be at the Gate;  
My Bard attend; quick, bring the Net of Fate."

(II.xxxii)

The clipped speech is thoroughly dramatic, suggesting both the vigor and determination of the speaker and the bustle of the scene around him, page and minstrel hurrying to do his bidding. For the first time, a truly episodic action is underway, and to underscore this fact, Thomson conducts his Knight to the very point at which the action originally stalled early in Canto I, the gate of the Castle of Indolence. Here again, the details feel newly focused, purposeful in a narrative sense and accurate in a dramatic one:

But when [the wizard] saw, in goodly Gear array'd,  
The grave majestic Knight approaching nigh,  
And by his Side the Bard so sage and staid,  
His Countenance fell; yet oft his anxious Eye  
Mark'd them, like wily Fox who roosted Cock doth spy.

(II.xl)

If we are disappointed that, with the action just getting wound up, the denouement comes so quickly, in this instance it is perfectly logical for it to do so: with the onset of determined action, Indolence is in effect already defeated, and history and the work of civilization already resumed. Like these, romance too is released from an indolent and corrupting stasis, and set to the work of endorsing new cultural values.

Though Indolence is quickly bound up in the Net of Fate and the inmates of his castle pour forth, as to their

judgment, the story is not over. There follow a series of metaphorical transformations of Canto I, each of which antonymically rights what the ethos, and poetics, of indolence had set awry. The first of these transformations is the Bard's song, a paean to activity and ambition, to

...eternal never-resting Soul,  
 Almighty Power, and all-directing Day;  
 By whom each Atom stirs, the Planets roll;  
 Who fills, surrounds, informs, and agitates the  
 Whole[.] (II.xlvii)

Sung at the very gate where Indolence first sang, this song metaphorically replaces, and revises the errors of, its original. Indolence had sung, in distinctly low rhetoric, against labor:

No Cocks, with me, to rustic Labour call,  
 From Village or to Village sounding clear;  
 To tardy Swain no shrill-voic'd Matrons squall;  
 No Dogs, no Babes, no Wives, to stun your Ear;  
 No Hammers thump; no horrid Blacksmith sear,  
 Ne noisy Tradesman your sweet Slumbers start,  
 With Sounds that are a Misery to hear:

But all is calm, as would delight the Heart

Of Sybarite of old, all Nature, and all Art. (I.xiv)

Transposing and formally heightening this rhetoric, the Bard now urges the liberated souls to "follow this good Knight" in the paths of noble action:

"Some he will lead to Courts, and Some to Camps;  
 To Senates Some, and public sage Debates,  
 Where, by the solemn Gleam of Midnight-Lamps,  
 The World is pois'd, and manag'd mighty States;  
 To high Discovery Some, that new-creates  
 The Face of Earth; Some to the thriving Mart;  
 Some to the Rural Reign, and softer Fates;  
 To the sweet Muses Some, who raise the Heart:  
 All Glory shall be yours, all Nature, and all Art!"

(II.lx)

The final hemistich of the two alexandrines is the sole point of similarity between the Bard's stanza and Indolence's; the metaphoric relation is expressed emphatically in terms of difference, as we see again when we compare the effects of the two songs: the moony streaming of converts into the castle in Canto I (xx) versus the sunny outpouring of those "Rous'd into Action" at the close of Canto II (lxiv).

The next revisionary gesture is the Knight's: he waves an "anti-magic" wand, all the enchanting "Landskip" dissolves into stagnant mires, and a "Lazar-House" stands in place of the castle (II.lxvii-lxviii). Having exposed the true nature of Indolence's kingdom, the Knight again waves his wand and "a goodly Hospital ascends" (II.lxxiv), a medicinal and metaphoric counterpart to the pathological scene upon which Canto I had concluded (lxxiv-lxxvii).

Civilization is thus restored to its forward march and the promise of a healthy, progressive future, and in the process, so is the romance, as these anti-magic marvels well show. Thomson defers throughout Canto I the conventional features of the romance, its focus on the protagonist and on heroic and marvellous action and its development through episodic metaphors, and then he activates them in Canto II in the service of an Enlightenment ideology. In so doing, he cues the romance to its actual moment in history, disposes it to new and culturally significant engagements. The Spenserian form, whose archaisms of style and subject were themselves potentially an invitation to an ahistorical imaginative indolence, was thus rehabilitated in The Castle of Indolence, refitted, much like the captives whose liberation it tells, to the progressive ends of civilization. If it lost something in imaginative power through this displacement, the romance gained a good deal in relevance. Newly historicized, it proved to be, once again, a viable medium for cultural self-definition, and was thus already entering its tertiary phase.

What was yet lacking for the full tertiary expression of the romance was a specifically personal and lyrical impulse, but this was supplied in some measure a quarter of a century later by James Beattie's further displacement of the Spenserian (and Thomsonian) romance, The Minstrel (1773-4). Beattie essentially reprises Thomson's thematics, only

in a metonymic rather than a metaphoric structure, and with an individual rather than a cultural focus. Thus, the poem begins with the introduction of the protagonist, Edwin, not an allegorical icon but a more or less particular individual, born of humble stock and raised in a rural home, in ruder times. He is not archetypal, but extraordinary, apprehensive and introspective beyond his peers, devoted to nature and to deeply romantic flights of the imagination (cf. I.15-18, 32-4). Through Book I, we follow Edwin's isolated ramblings and growth into young adulthood, and yet, though Beattie carefully marks the chronological progress, the episode as a structural unit remains submerged, much as it is in Canto I of The Castle of Indolence. Again, the loco-descriptive mode predominates, and we find, rather than elaborated episodic actions, stanzaic portraits of generalized moments, clustered together in something akin to an extended reflective catalog. The hero's "quest" is described rather than enacted, a fact that suggests more than anything else the Thomsonsian indolence of his imagination.

Like Thomson's second Canto, Beattie's Book II begins with an explicit change of direction, one that honors "Truth" in the developmental terms of history:

So I, obsequious to Truth's dread command,  
 Shall here without reluctance change my lay,  
 And smite the Gothic lyre with harsher hand;



Now when I leave that flowery path, for aye,  
 Of childhood, where I sported many a day,  
 Warbling and sauntering carelessly along;  
 Where every face was innocent and gay,  
 Each vale romantic, tuneful every tongue,  
 Sweet, wild, and artless all, as Edwin's infant song.

(II.3)

But in two important ways, Beattie diverges from, or rather for his purposes improves upon, Thomson's example. First, instead of a generalized allegory of cultural history, we have the personal and psychologically more compelling terms of "childhood" and, by implication, "adulthood." Cultural history and the history of romance are invested in the individual's history: when Edwin subsequently accepts the tutelage of the Sage and matures in the truthful ways of science and philosophy and polity, he enacts on an individual level the Thomsonian commitment to a distinctly Enlightenment ideology. Clearly, too, insofar as it foregoes "careless" imaginative "sauntering" to depict this process of maturation and cultural dedication, Beattie's romance adopts something of the historical perspective and progressive thematics that Thompson developed in The Castle of Indolence; yet it is just here that we see Beattie's second divergence and "improvement." The poet gives over Edwin's "infant song" just in time to narrate Edwin's own giving over of the very same song: nowhere does Thomson

identify himself so closely with his hero or even, as would be more natural, with his Bard, Philomelus.<sup>5</sup> Though Beattie does not metaphorically revise the contents of his first Book, in the manner of Thomson, preferring instead a relatively continuous and chronological exposition of his hero's life, he does suggest the metaphorical congruity between the dynamics of his own poetic enterprise and those of the life it records. In Book II, Edwin learns of the Sage Thomson's moral, "'What cannot Art and Industry perform,/ Where Science plans the progress of their toil?'" (II.54); the result is a reformation of his aesthetic standards and strategies. In the end, Edwin's "Fancy now no more/ Wantons on fickle pinion through the skies,"

...but Nature now

To his experienced eye a modest grace  
Presents, where ornament the second place  
Holds, to intrinsic worth and just design  
Subservient still. Simplicity apace  
Tempers his rage: he owns her charms divine,  
And clears the ambiguous phrase, and lops the unwieldy  
line. (II.56, 59)

Edwin's enlightenment is signalled above all by his acceptance of the neoclassical dictum of fidelity to nature; in a prospection to the planned but never executed Book III,

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<sup>5</sup>In fact, Thomson's narrator locates himself, somewhat incongruously given his otherwise omniscient point of view, within the castle of Indolence (cf. I.xxxi).

Beattie tells us that Edwin would next proceed to the study and imitation of classical literary models (cf. II.61-2), presumably to the further improvement of his poetic sensibility. Likewise, in affirming Edwin's absorption of the Sage's Enlightenment values and neoclassical poetics, Beattie's romance is itself accommodated to those values and that poetics: it matures, in other words, along precisely the same lines as its hero does, and the "Progress of Genius," as the poem is subtitled, figures simultaneously the progress of genre.

This metaphorical kinship of poet and protagonist, romance as act and as object, animates Kucich's reading of The Minstrel (71-8):

What made The Minstrel so attractive was its elaborate drama about the maturing poet's division between imaginative beauty and intellectual truth. Thomson had grappled with that conflict in his allegory, but no one before Beattie had treated the subject so extensively and with such directness....Beattie's single greatest innovation...is to bring this personal drama into prominent relief..." (71)

If The Minstrel showed how the Spenserian romance could be adapted as a "personal drama," Thomas Percy's The Hermit of Warkworth (1771) showed how the balladic romance might be similarly transformed. In some respects, Percy's romance is more conventional, less displaced, than either Thomson's or

Beattie's: a tale of knights and ladies and a Hermit, of woes in love and ancient dynastic complications, most of its stylistic resources--the better part of its diction, its stanza, its swift-moving interchange of narrative action and dramatic dialogue--are drawn from the primary romances that Percy knew so well. Its structure, however, is historicized and personalized more radically than either The Castle of Indolence's or The Minstrel's, and in a way that directly anticipates the characteristic tertiary strategy. In Percy's romance, there is no explicit endorsement of Enlightenment cultural or neoclassical aesthetic values, and so no overt historical investment like Thomson's or Beattie's.<sup>6</sup> Instead, Percy fabricates the historical axis by embedding a past-tense romance narrative in a temporally disjunct narrative present which dramatizes the narration of that romance. In the metaphoric and metonymic interrelations between the past episodes and the present one, Percy illustrates the progressive and lyrical possibilities of the romance without resort to doctrinal importations. Here, such possibilities are rendered in fully structural, and therefore for the first time truly symbolic and tertiary, terms.

The poem opens with a threat of action and an

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<sup>6</sup>This is not to suggest that Percy's poem (or anyone else's, for that matter) is not amenable to Marxist or historicist analysis in terms of cultural ideology. As Orwell suggested long ago, even the dismissal of politics is a political gesture, or may be understood as such.

undramatic resolution: parted in a wood on a stormy night, the young lovers Henry Percy and Eleanor Neville are discovered and reunited by the Hermit of Warkworth. Henceforth, the narrative present has very little action indeed--except tale-telling, which it has in abundance. The centerpiece, occupying over 500 of the poem's 850-odd lines, is "The Hermit's Tale," a multi-episode romance set fifty years in the past, and starring the Hermit himself in the lead role as the young lover Bertram. The Hermit artfully delays the discovery of his identity with his protagonist until the climax of his tale, where, as the dramatic present intrudes upon the temporal line of the narrative past, we feel most forcefully the episodic discontinuity of Percy's structure:

"O stop," she cried, "O stop thy arm!"

Thou dost thy brother slay!"--

And here the Hermit paus'd and wept:

His tongue no more could say.

At length he cried, "Ye lovely pair,

How shall I tell the rest?

Ere I could stop my piercing sword,

It fell, and stabb'd her breast." (693-700)

Starkly presented here, the temporal disjunction of past and present is elsewhere downplayed, in a conceptual rather than a structural way, by the obvious genetic and causal links

between the characters and actions of the two tales (Henry's grandfather also appears in the Hermit's Tale, and the effects of the border conflicts it details are still being felt by the three characters who occupy the narrative present).

The real impact of this metonymically derived and yet disjunctive history, however, and of the romance itself, obtains in implied metaphoric relations between past and present that the Hermit's Tale simultaneously suggests and subverts. The Bertram and Isabel of the past are clearly metaphorical types of the present's Henry and Eleanor: where in the past romance we find a love frustrated by the heroine's "studied fond delays" (345), her capture by a "Scottish carl" (569), and a fatal reunion in the woods, in the present one we have a love frustrated by the heroine's family's "princely... pride" (196), her capture by a band of "rugged Scots" (173), and a harmless disunion in the woods. As this last item suggests, the relationship of the two romances is not simply one of repetition. Parted in the wood at the opening of the poem, Henry and Eleanor are metaphorically threatened with the tragic end of their prototypes, Bertram and Isabel. Bertram himself, however, now a hermit to atone for his murderous past, intervenes and forestalls such fate, both directly (by finding and uniting them) and symbolically (by telling them his Tale). The interpolation of the Hermit's Tale at the crucial moment in

Henry and Eleanor's elopement seems to work like a positive charm, staving off for them the tragedy it narrates and guiding them instead directly to the political reconciliations and marriage that finally make the present in the most important respects different from the past. What we have, in short, is historical progress, a new and distinct set of characters redeeming the errors of a previous set, to whom they are related not only through lineal, filial, geographical, political--or metonymic--ties, but also through metaphorical ties that resolve themselves antonymically. "Reft and lost" for years, the "Percy name" and "honours" are at last "raise[d] again.../ More glorious than before" (105-8, 825-8). Between the initial agon and its final resolution, there is only one event, only one significant action, and that is the telling of a tale. Clearly received and figured as a historical artifact, romance itself performs this work of redemption, symbolically shaping a present and future that are "more glorious than before."

Just as history is implicated in the framed romance, so too is the poet, whose symbolic presence tilts the genre simultaneously toward the personal and self-reflexive. Thomas Percy sings a minstrel romance about the Percys, in which a hermit, whose feudal ties to the clan are explicit,

sings a minstrel romance about himself.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, the Hermit appears as a minstrel within his own romance, when he adopts "minstrel garb" to search Scotland for the abducted Isabel (581ff.). But where the Hermit's relation to his hero is genetic and therefore metonymic, Percy's relation to his hero (not after all the young Percy, but the hermit-minstrel who is that ballad-celebrated<sup>8</sup> family's truest friend) is metaphoric. The Hermit's primary and past-tense romance alters the course of the narrative present, "restores" what was "lost": Percy's tertiary romance, reviving an antiquated form through structural innovation, and likewise renovating the Percy name, makes a comparable generic restoration. The structural metaphor, focused in this case on similarity rather than difference, asserts both Percy's historicized reception of the romance and the genre's continued viability.

Though Percy did not probe any further than this the symbolic potential of what Curran calls "the romancer within the romance" (241,n.16), a new generation of poets soon did. His structure or something very like it reappears in

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<sup>7</sup>Indeed, early in the Hermit's Tale, Bertram attends a feast held by the eldest Percy, at which minstrels sing, for nine stanzas (361-96), the legendary history and exploits of--the Percys! For the moment here, a third and more distant time frame emerges, complementing the now tripled image of the poet.

<sup>8</sup>A number of border ballads collected in the Reliques feature the Percys. See, for example, "The Ancient Ballad of Chevy-Chase," "The Rising in the North," and "Northumberland Betrayed by Douglas."



Wordsworth and Coleridge's early ballad and romance experiments--The Rime, "The Ballad of the Dark Ladie" (taken together with its "Introduction," later reworked as "Love"), "Kubla Khan," "The Three Graves," "Peter Bell," "Hart-Leap Well," etc.--and insistently thereafter in the romances of the first two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> In the tertiary phase, "the romance...is seldom seen without a frame, and generally that frame is both more contemporary than the contents of the poem itself, enforcing multiple temporal vantages, and pointed in its self-reflexiveness" (Curran 145). With the structural outline of the tertiary romance thus sketched out, its historicizing and lyricizing frame and its progressive thematics, we may turn now to Wordsworth to explore in more detail the episodic structure of the Romantic romance.

## II

In the dedicatory stanzas to his most conventional romance effort, The White Doe of Rylstone (written 1807, published 1815), Wordsworth suggests the metaphorical kinship of his "moral Strain" with "Spenser's Lay" of Una, which equally "speaks/ Of female patience winning firm

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<sup>9</sup>In his excellent chapter on the Romantic romance (128-57), Curran discusses the various framing tactics of Scott's The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Wordsworth's The White Doe of Rylstone, Moore's Lalla Rookh, Shelley's Alastor, Keats's Endymion, and Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, among many others.

repose;/ And of the recompense which conscience seeks/ A bright, encouraging example shows" ("In trellis'd shed," 5, 49-52, 62). Though the figure of Emily Norton attended by the milk-white doe obviously owes something to that of Una attended by the "milk-white Lamb" and "brave Lion" (14-6), Wordsworth's romance, it turns out, is in little else Spenserian. Its more direct obligations, as his own notes to the poem make clear, are to a History of the Deanery of Craven, from which he gleaned the local legend of the doe, and the Reliques, whose ballad "The Rising of the North" supplied not only the setting and details of the Northern Insurrection, but more importantly the outline of the Norton tragedy and the symbolism of their banner. In keeping with such sources, the structure of The White Doe of Rylstone is principally metonymic, deriving less from Spenser than from Percy's stock of primary romances and the Chaucerian variety of secondary romance.<sup>10</sup> Here, the basic primary strategy, most obvious in the temporal ordering of the episodes that constitute the past-tense narrative of Emily and Francis

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<sup>10</sup>Curran sees The White Doe as directly imitating Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel (140-1), but this is to say, essentially, the same thing. Scott's poem is deeply informed by his own antiquarian researches and those of others like Percy; its resources are those of the primary romance. Kathleen Coburn long ago argued that Wordsworth's direct source was Coleridge's Christabel, and Scott himself acknowledged his own debt to that poem in his 1830 Introduction to The Lay of the Last Minstrel, but here again the evidence points to the recovered primary romance. Anyone who has read the whole of The Reliques will see immediately how completely Coleridge has absorbed the idiom, imagery, and structure of its poems.

Norton, is supplemented by a secondary one that governs the presentation of the doe within that narrative, its progressive foregrounding as it moves from image to actor and gradually usurps the structural and symbolic place of the banner. Both of these strategies are conditioned by a third and tertiary one, whereby the tale of the white doe is embedded as a minstrel narration in a dramatized narrative present, related to the past by palpable metonymic association (the presence of the doe, the scene of the ruined priory) and subtle metaphoric transformation (the doe emerging finally as the personified, even apotheosized, symbol of the restored imagination).

Once again, in other words, the romance appears as a historicized object, and its telling as the sole significant action of the narrative present, the time frame in which the poem opens (Canto First). A rustic crowd gathers at "Bolton's mouldering Priory" (16) and proceeds into its chapel, but the narrator lingers outside and sees approach, in an exquisite passage featuring Wordsworth's characteristic grammatical delay of the subject, "A solitary Doe!" (49-66). Given the similes that cluster about her here--"soft and silent as a dream," "beauteous as the silver moon...alone in heaven," "Or like...a glittering ship, that hath the plain/ Of ocean for her domain"--readers familiar with Wordsworth's other verse will sense already that the doe somehow represents the human and poetic imagination.

The description of her movements about the ruins reinforces this notion:

The presence of this wandering Doe  
Fills many a damp obscure recess  
With lustre of a saintly show;  
And, reappearing, she no less  
Sheds on the flowers that round her blow  
A more than sunny liveliness. (100-5)<sup>11</sup>

As with the following series of rhetorical questions asking after the doe's purposes at the priory, the narrator clearly means to pique our interest with these symbolic suggestions, even when he appears to undercut them:

She sees a warrior carved in stone,  
Among the thick weeds, stretched alone;  
A warrior, with his shield of pride  
Cleaving humbly to his side,  
And hands in resignation prest,  
Palm to palm, on his tranquil breast;  
As little she regards the sight  
As common creature might... (126-33)

The doe's indifference to this knightly relic will later be brought to account in the romance tale of the past, but for the time being the details merely increase the indeterminacy of her image (just a "common creature" after all?) and our need for a tale (surely this "warrior" once acted). The

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<sup>11</sup>Compare, for example, The Prelude II.387-95.

crowd now emerges from the service and beholds the doe lying on a "solitary mound" apart from all the other graves, a preference which sparks renewed speculation as to her motives even as it indicates to us another actor whose tale lies somewhere in the past (170-77).

As Curran puts it, "the genesis of the poem is thus a multi-faceted symbol demanding interpretation" (141), and that interpretation comes, significantly, in the form of historicized metonymic romance. This tertiary structure is anticipated in the catalog of mini-tales the narrator ascribes to various figures in the crowd (an old man, a dame of "haughty air," a "a scholar pale,/ From Oxford") who would thus discover, each in his or her own way yet equally erroneously,

Substantial motive, reason clear,  
Why thus the milk-white Doe is found  
Couchant beside that lonely mound;  
And why she duly loves to pace

The circuit of this hallowed place. (201-5)

If we are reminded of the "Diverse folk diversely... dem[ing]" in Chaucer's Squire's Tale (V.202), the association will lead at once to important distinctions. What we have in the doe, the knight's tomb, and the solitary mound are the equivalents of the strange knight's steed, mirror, ring, and sword, only here the objects are not magical importations, but metonymic features of a physical

scene, and their significance lies, not in the unfolding romance of the present, but in the temporally disjunct romance of the past. Like the authorial one which will replace and correct them, all of the villagers' tales are traditional legends attaching to Bolton priory and the Nortons, as Wordsworth's notes again explain. While the relation of such tales one to another is thus implicitly metaphoric, their individual relation to the ruined scene is almost wholly associative, or metonymic. More importantly, it is a historicized and historicizing relation, with romance itself, figured simultaneously as received past object and present interpretive act, as the mediating term.

That the mediating act of romance is to be a revisionary act as well is signaled by the narrator's minstrel address to his harp in the concluding lines of Canto First. After the villagers and at last the doe herself have gone, the narrator engages to put by "vague thoughts" and "fancies wild" and "chant, in strains of heavenly glory,/ A tale of tears, a mortal story!" (324-36). In the past-tense romance that occupies Cantos Second through Seventh, Wordsworth means to create a new type of romance,

a lyrical romance, whose central concern is not action but the functioning of symbols, both ironically as in the case of Emily's banner, which she embroiders with reluctance and which leads her entire family to

destruction, and positively, in the force of the white doe, whose innocent affection serves to restore her from despair to a saving naturalness. (Curran 142)

Indeed, the structure of this romance may be described as a contest of these two symbols<sup>12</sup> for dominance, with the Norton banner representing the old romance and an ethos of martial action (as exemplified in "The Rising of the North," the romance from which it derives), and the white doe representing the new romance and an ethos of imaginative restoration (as exemplified in the poem that bears her name, which historicizes and revises its original). Midway through The White Doe of Rylstone, the Nortons' "sacred Standard falls" (1157), to be replaced finally by a new standard whose meaning and goal is "not a victory in battle or the stabilizing of a dynasty but rather inner fulfillment" (Curran, 142). The white doe is the emblem of this new and distinctly Romantic theme, and thus of the new (or displaced) romance, a genre, as Wordsworth has it, with a tragically heroic past and a gloriously different, because more natural and internal, future.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Lodge's definition of symbol is the relevant one here: a "kind of metaphorical metonymy" (100). The cross, for instance, is a symbol for Christianity because of its original association with Christ's death; it is a metonymy, which through time has come to signify the whole of Christianity, or even religion itself. This broadened semantic potential is the "metaphorical," or metaphor-like, aspect of the symbol.

<sup>13</sup>Wordsworth's revisionary intentions in The White Doe of Rylstone are thoroughly searched by Kristine Dugas in her

As we move in the past-tense romance from episode to episode, Canto to Canto, we watch the Banner progressively deteriorate in value until it is reft away altogether, while the doe continuously gains in prominence and significance, until the past romance is at last fully focused on her and we return to the narrative present. Apart from the metaphoric details that link Emily and the doe,<sup>14</sup> Wordsworth's structure in this past sequence is similar to Chaucer's and primarily metonymic. Thus, the episode that comprises Canto II moves from an initial and fully elaborated focus on the banner (346ff.) to a closing and apparently incidental reference to "a lovely Doe." Having failed to convince his father not to take up the banner against his own "good name.../ A just and gracious Queen.../ A pure religion, and the claim/ Of peace on our humanity" (385-88), Francis prophetically counsels Emily to "hope nothing," but to accept the utter desolation of their family, and "Weep, if that aid thee; but depend/ Upon no help of outward friend" (530, 542-3). Then, to illustrate his meaning, he gestures to a white doe straying by, and suggests that it is fundamentally different from Emily and

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Introduction to the Cornell edition of the poem, to which I am generally indebted.

<sup>14</sup>Most notably, Emily's introduction in Canto Second as "a solitary Maid" (339), which parallels the doe's introduction in Canto First ("A solitary Doe" [58]) not only lexically and grammatically, but also metrically, these lines being two very rare instances of trimeter in a poem which otherwise sticks to tetrameters.



indifferent to her:

'The blast will sweep us all away--  
 One desolation, one decay!  
 And even this Creature!' which words saying,  
 He pointed to a lovely Doe,  
 A few steps distant, feeding, straying;  
 Fair creature, and more white than snow!  
 'Even she will to her peaceful woods  
 Return, and to her murmuring floods,  
 And be in heart and soul the same  
 She was before she hither came;  
 Ere she had learned to love us all,  
 Herself beloved in Rylstone-hall.  
 --But thou, my Sister, doomed to be  
 The last leaf on a blasted tree...' (554-67)

Francis's gesture marks the first appearance of the doe in this past romance, and is without, for the moment, further issue. The doe's status as narrative image at this point would be roughly equivalent to that of the gods in Part I of The Knight's Tale, a metonymic feature of a recreated romance landscape and little more, except that Wordsworth's tertiary structure has already given us a privileged view of the doe in a discontinuous narrative present. We have seen her already, mysteriously haunting at a date years distant the very same landscape, have been enticed with her possible meanings and motives, then cued to

find them in this previous narrative world. Francis's off-hand notice of the doe is therefore the antithesis of our notice of her, so trained by the framing present that we will sense on a first reading and be unable to miss on a second reading the irony of his words. Recalling that in the narrative present the doe passes indifferently by the warrior's tomb but faithfully seeks out the lonely mound where (as we later learn) Francis lies buried, we understand that she is indeed not a "common" but a sentient creature. Just as Francis is literally opposed to martial action, so the doe is symbolically opposed to it. She thus remains true over time not only to Emily, but also to Francis, even though he had dismissed outright the humanizing possibilities of the love that bound her to Rylstone Hall.<sup>15</sup> Because we are overdetermined by Canto First to uncover retrospectively her significance, and because it is here possible, for the first time, to do so, the doe's otherwise passing reintroduction at the end of Canto Second suffices to establish the structural opposition of doe and banner that organizes the entire tale.

Canto Third follows Norton and his sons to the scene of the coming battle and depicts the first stage of the banner's symbolic collapse. Structurally, the banner dominates the episode, but its proud opening display is

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<sup>15</sup>Such possibilities are emphatically stated in the tale's epigraph from Lord Bacon.

countered by a closing intimation that those associated with it will win only the suffering it archetypally depicts. Thus, early in the Canto as the Northern troops muster, Norton

...took the Banner, and unfurled  
 The precious folds--'behold,' said he,  
 'The ransom of a sinful world;  
 Let this your preservation be;  
 The wounds of hands and feet and side,  
 And the sacred Cross on which Jesus died.'  
 . . . . .  
 'Uplift the Standard!' was the cry  
 From all the listeners that stood round,  
 'Plant it,--by this we live or die.' (658-72)

Their bravado evaporates, however, before the rumour of a staggering opposing force already marching "to quell the Rising of the North" (768). Though his allies desert the field, Norton valiantly vows to defend it, then lifts his eye to the previously inspiring banner:

So speaking, he his reverend head  
 Raised toward that Imagery once more:  
 But the familiar prospect shed  
 Despondency unfelt before:  
 A shock of intimations vain,  
 Dismay, and superstitious pain,  
 Fell on him, with the sudden thought

Of her by whom the work was wrought..." (862-69)

Significantly, the thought of Emily leads him by association to the thought of "that mute Animal,/ The White Doe" (876-7); though neither appears in propria persona in this episode, both surface in old Norton's "superstitious" but nonetheless perceptive thoughts, conceptually allied now (as they were not in Francis's earlier view) in opposition to the banner. Again, taking the past-tense romance alone, we should call Wordsworth's structure secondary, a gradual metonymic development of a central narrative image toward full realization. Because of the tertiary frame, however, which gives us at the outset, if not the fully realized, then at least the fully presented image of the doe, Norton's merely speculative focus has significance it otherwise would not. The structural opposition suggested in Canto Second, we will sense, is reiterated here again, and in a way that explicitly points its thematic value.

Canto Fourth opens later that same night with a moon's-eye view of "Rylstone's old sequestered Hall" (946) and grounds, serenely stilled. As though in direct response to Norton's thoughts in the last Canto, the episode's opening lines depict the white doe and Emily in proximate and subtly metaphoric relation. The doe appears once again as a metonymic feature of a more or less natural landscape; she is as yet (in the terms of the past romance) no symbol, but "the same fair Creature" (981) that Francis off-handedly

distinguished in Canto Second, only slightly more prominently displayed:

In open moonlight she doth lie;  
Happy as others of her kind,  
That, far from human neighbourhood,  
Range unrestricted as the wind,  
Through park, or chase, or savage wood. (994-8)

Even as they associate her with "her kind," these lines discover her essential difference, for the doe, as we immediately see, enjoys "human neighbourhood":

But see the consecrated Maid  
Emerging from a cedar shade  
To open moonshine, where the Doe  
Beneath the cypress-spire is laid... (999-1002)

Though Emily is "heart-sick" and consequently does not yet respond to the doe's gentle approaches and encouragements (1010-19), the two figures are linked here in ways that should be inescapable from our tertiary view. Underscoring their contiguous (or metonymic) relation within the landscape and the description, for example, the repetition "open moonlight"/"open moonshine" suggests a further metaphoric relation of which Emily, confined to the past-tense point of view, is as yet unaware. This structural compatibility, coupled with doe's explicit regard of Emily, already belies Francis's earlier prophecy, which is, ironically enough, precisely what is distracting Emily just

now. Revolving Francis's "self-reliance of despair" and his Miltonic injunction to her "to stand and wait;/ In resignation to abide/ The shock, and finally secure/ O'er pain and grief a triumph pure" (1056, 1069-72), Emily discounts the doe as he had; ours, however, is a different point of view. When the episode soon closes with a moon's-eye glance to the field of battle and the "sacred Standard['s]" fall (1118-1162), we should see without difficulty that it thereby reverses the basic structure of the previous two episodes. Moving from the opening and increasingly clarified image of the doe to the closing and substantially diminished image of the banner, the episode literally transposes the doe to the banner's primary position in former episodes, indicating that she will be its replacement. Still more or less naturalized, the image of the doe here assumes, in a structural sense at the very least, symbolic proportions.

The next two episodes detail the destruction of the Nortons and the final demise of the banner. In Canto Fifth, an old retainer of the Norton estate tells Emily of the events just passed in York: her family's imprisonment, Francis's filial vow to bear the banner back to Bolton Priory, his noble recovery of it as his father and brothers are being marched to their deaths. Canto Sixth, switching the focus directly to Francis, then records his desperate flight from York and standoff against Sussex's men, his

fatal wounding, and the second and final fall of the "sacred Standard." Stabbed in the back, Francis drops with "the banner clenched" in his hand:

...till, from out the Band,  
 One, the most eager for the prize,  
 Rushed in; and  
 . . . . .  
 Seized it, as hunters seize their prey;  
 But not before the warm life blood  
 Had tinged more deeply, as it flowed,  
 The wounds the broidered Banner showed,  
 Thy fatal work, O Maiden, innocent as good!  
 Proudly the Horsemen bore away  
 The standard.... (1489-1500)

As indexical blood dyes iconic banner, and the Nortons are literally bound to the "standard" of suffering, that symbol is borne away, out of the poem. Its fatal effects, to be sure, will be registered in Canto Seventh, but they will be compensated, structurally as well as thematically, by the full emergence of the doe as the now-unrivalled symbolic center of the episode. Though the romance of action, carried forward under the banner, has collapsed in tragedy, it does not leave the vacuum Francis thought it would, where hope and restoration are not possible, but only a posture of suffering endurance. Dynastic and terrestrial hopes are indeed set at naught, but history will conduct the Norton

maid to a new type of action, and a kinship and restoration unimaginable in the old romance.

The episode of Canto Seventh actually occupies a third and medial time frame between the past and present, some years after the Insurrection and some years before the time of the narration. Moving forward through the "deep recess of years," we find that everywhere "despoil and desolation/ O'er Rylstone's fair domain have blown" (1567-9); Emily has "wandered, long and far," but now at last returned to "her native wilds of Craven" (1567-9, 1611, 1618). In mind, she appears to have embraced the duty Francis enjoined upon her:

The mighty sorrow hath been borne,  
And she is thoroughly forlorn:  
Her soul doth in itself stand fast,  
Sustained by memory of the past  
And strength of Reason; held above  
The infirmities of mortal love;  
Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,  
And awfully impenetrable. (1611-28)

Isolated like the "self-surviving leafless oak" she sits under<sup>16</sup> and the "stately flower" ("separated from its kind,/ To live and die in a shady bower,/ Single on the gladsome earth") to which she is compared (1629-38), Emily may be austere of spirit, but she is also "forlorn," loveless,

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<sup>16</sup>An image that recalls Francis's metaphor that Emily was "doomed to be/ The last leaf on a blasted tree" (567): she has here apparently dropped from branch to ground.



"impenetrable." But then, a "wonder" transpires: from out of a "troop of deer...sweeping by," one emerges, a "Doe most beautiful, clear-white," and approaching Emily,

...laid its head upon her knee,  
 And looked into the Lady's face,  
 A look of pure benignity,  
 And fond unclouded memory.  
 It is, thought Emily, the same,  
 The very Doe of other years!--  
 The pleading look the Lady viewed,  
 And, by her gushing thoughts subdued,  
 She melted into tears--

A flood of tears that flowed apace  
 Upon the happy Creature's face. (1639-64)

With her "flood of tears," Emily relaxes back into humanity, revives in sympathy and love. This "moment ever blest," "the first of a re-union/ Which was to teem with high communion" (1665, 1680-1), restores her from impenetrable isolation to a new and humanizing relationship; in this, as the narrator puts it, "her Brother's words have failed" (1785). Instigating and cultivating this saving relationship, the metonymic "very Doe of other years" (both past and future) comes at last into complete and fully significant focus as the "faithful Partner" and "living Friend" of Emily (1788, 1796). Displaced from the historicized romance of the past into this medial future,

Emily has wandered in abstracted isolation among romantic ruins, but now she is reclaimed by the white doe of Rylstone, who conducts her to "a strengthening amity/ That calmed..., cheered, and fortified," to "a very gladness" and "a deeper peace," to an unforeseen new life, in short, of natural sympathies and human contentment (1712-3, 1747-9). Even as it "naturally" redeems the heroine, so Wordsworth's White Doe symbolically revives the genre in which she moves, bringing it to a similarly new life and focus. The martial or chivalric romance having declined and left a generic vacancy, Wordsworth adopts its episodic structure to create a distinctly Romantic romance whose action illustrates the loving interdependence of nature and humanity.

Geoffrey Hartman thus concludes that in The White Doe "Wordsworth was seeking to develop a new kind of romance" based on the notion of a "Sympathetic Nature"; accordingly, the doe's "powers of sympathy are due to natural not supernatural causes" (296-300). This correlation of narrative image and revisionary idea is rendered symbolic through the historicizing frame that structures the poem. When the present scene of Bolton's mouldering Priory re-emerges in the minstrel's self-reflexive conclusion (1832ff.), the past scenes and actions resolve into a romance, historically and metonymically attaching to the doe. No less textual than natural, the doe is now to us, as she was to Emily, a "lovely chronicler of things/ Long

past," a body in which "to read/ Of time, and place, and thought, and deed--/ Endless history..." (1674, 1714-5). She is the living symbol of the new romance, a historicized genre now progressively disposed, in The White Doe of Rylstone and throughout the Romantic era, to "nobler" pleasures and ends:

...left in solitude, erewhile  
 We stood before this ruined Pile,  
 And, quitting unsubstantial dreams,  
 Sang in this Presence kindred themes;  
 Distress and desolation spread  
 Through human hearts, and pleasure dead,--  
 Dead--but to live again on earth,  
 A second and yet a nobler birth.... (1838-45)

### III

Like The White Doe of Rylstone, Guilt and Sorrow (written 1791-99, revised and published 1841-2) addresses itself to themes of human "distress and desolation" and, if not pleasure's, then at least sympathy's "second and yet nobler birth." But where The White Doe develops such "kindred" themes in a predominantly metonymic structure, Guilt and Sorrow, true to its Spenserianism, adopts a metaphorical structure, relating past to present in terms of synonymity and antonymity. Wordsworth's Fenwick note to the poem, apologizing for this structure, is to the point:

It may be worth while to remark that tho' the incidents of this attempt do only in a small degree produce each other, & it deviates accordingly from the general rule by which narrative pieces ought to be governed, it is not therefore wanting in continuous hold upon the mind or in unity which is effected by the identity of moral interest that places the two personages upon the same footing in the reader's sympathies. (rpt. Guilt and Sorrow 221)

In The White Doe of Rylstone, even the temporally disjunct episodes of minstrel present and romance past are in some sense rationally bound by the enduring "kindred Presences" of the doe and Bolton Priory, with which all of the poem's actions are historically associated; clearly, the "incidents" do in substantial measure "produce each other" and so satisfy this "general rule" of narration. Though Guilt and Sorrow does locally adopt similar strategies--most notably in the relation of the Female Vagrant to her own tale<sup>17</sup>--the overarching and more significant structure operates on a principle of metaphoric, rather than actual, "identity" or "sameness." The "moral interest" and "sympathy" that we are to feel for the guilty Sailor and the sorrowing Female Vagrant, very much like the interest and

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<sup>17</sup>Thus, the Female Vagrant's identity and significance in the narrative present are discovered in a narrative past of distress and desolation; as with the white doe, this historicized relation is principally a genetic or metonymic one.

sympathy they themselves come to share, are conditioned by structural metaphors that make their disjunctive individual pasts bear upon their shared present, ultimately forging a redemptive community of human relationship.

A fine example of this metaphoric action is the relation between the figure of the Sailor, as he is depicted in the narrative present, and that of the Female Vagrant's father, as he is depicted in the narrative past of her tale. In the poem's opening stanzas, the Sailor appears wandering on Salisbury Plain, with a storm approaching and human habitation long past:

A Traveller on the skirt of Sarum's Plain[,]  
Pursued his vagrant way, with feet half bare;  
Stooping his gait, but not as if to gain  
Help from the staff he bore....

. . . . .

...the distant spire,  
Which oft as he looked back had fixed his eye,  
Was lost, though still he looked, in the blank sky.

(I, III)

In precisely these terms, the Female Vagrant later recollects her father and the "miserable hour" in which he left forever "his old hereditary nook":

The staff I well remember which upbore  
The bending body of my active sire;

. . . . .

...from the last hill-top, my sire surveyed,  
 Peering above the trees, the steeple tower  
 That on his marriage day sweet music made!

(XXV, XXVII)

Though it measures some differences--the "sire" stoops from age, the Sailor from vagrant poverty and a suffering conscience--this structural parallel suggests a more fundamental similarity between the two characters. The Sailor's staff and backward-looking eye are recreated in the past image of Emily's father, and as a result, something of the father's paternal affections are transferred to the Sailor.<sup>18</sup> The metaphor, in other words, anticipates the central action and theme of the entire romance, the restorative relationship of mutual concern and compassion that binds the poem's protagonists, Sailor and Female Vagrant, as something like father and daughter, or doe and maid. Like this minor one, the larger episodic metaphors of

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<sup>18</sup>In the tertiary romance, succession is a matter of perspective. In Spenser's secondary romance, I argued, the semantic influence of the episodic metaphor is typically directed forward along the structural axis that constitutes the narrative; we are thus more likely to define Amoret in terms of Florimell and Hellenore than either Hellenore or Florimell in terms of Amoret. In the tertiary structure, however, this axis is enriched and complicated by the historical one it invariably fabricates; metaphoric relations between past and present are almost invariably directed forward on this historical axis, even when, as here, the past image succeeds the present one in order of presentation. This is only logical, the semantic influence of the present on the past being a dubious matter indeed.

The Sailor's paternal character is rendered directly at LX.

Guilt and Sorrow show a disjunctive past repeating itself and simultaneously being redeemed in the narrative present.

Perhaps the most obvious metaphorical pattern in the poem is the one that structures the sailor's experience, and features the retrospective history of his conscription and crime (VI-VIII), the spectacle of the gibbet (IX-XI), the legend of the murdered man at the Spital (XIX-XXI), the episode of the beaten boy (LII-LVII), and the Sailor's confession (LXXIII-LXXIV). When we first meet him, the Sailor is an unknown and mysteriously oppressed "traveller," but the narrator, turning briefly from the narrative present, soon tells us an identifying tale of his past. Although this embedded tale is not explicitly figured as a romance nor its narrator as a minstrel, the structure is nonetheless similar to that of The White Doe: the imagery and action of the present are interpretable only by recourse to those of the past. Thus, the Sailor's past actions appear now as the true index to his present state. Having suffered an institutional inhumanity, being "forced away" to war and then defrauded upon his return of "all that he earned,"<sup>19</sup> the Sailor, empty-handed and desperate, has himself acted against humanity:

His home approaching, but in such a mood

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<sup>19</sup>"Hurried off, a helpless prey," to war (VI), the Sailor has some metaphorical affinity with the Female Vagrant's husband as well as her father. A helpless prey to the war-time economy, he too had hurried off to "to join those miserable men" in the Colonial war (XXXI).

That from his sight his children might have run,  
 He met a traveller, robbed him, shed his blood;  
 And when the miserable work was done  
 He fled, a vagrant since, the murderer's fate to shun.

(VI-VIII)

The retrospect not only uncovers the Sailor's guilt and the motive for his vagrancy, but also indicates, through the repetition that makes the murdered "traveller" the image of the murdering one, the psychological death that he thus personally incurred. Like the Female Vagrant, he has his "inner self abused,/ Foregone the home delight of constant truth,/ And clear and open soul..." (XLIX). It is the business of Guilt and Sorrow to repair such past abuse and to restore its heroes' present hearts and minds to something of their original integrity.

As the episode of the narrative present resumes, the Sailor instantly encounters what we would now call the objective correlative of his "inward misery":

Now, as he plodded on, with sullen clang  
 A sound of chains along the desert rang;  
 He looked, and saw upon a gibbet high  
 A human body that in irons swang,  
 Uplifted by the tempest whirling by;

And, hovering, round it often did a raven fly. (IX)

Though the gibbeted body is a literal and metonymic feature of the landscape, the Sailor (and we too, given the



foregoing glimpse of his crime and flight) cannot help but read it metaphorically, as the image of the similar fate he himself is trying to shun. The sight not only "renew[s]/ All he had feared from man, but rouse[s] a train/ Of the mind's phantoms," a visionary dreariness, if you will, that transforms the literal image into a metaphorically "dire phantasma" (X-XI). Fainting away in a Mariner-like trance, then waking soon in "Profounder quiet" of mind, the Sailor makes his way through the storm, past Stonehenge, until he discovers a "lonely Spital," "the 'Dead House' of the plain" (XVII), in which to shelter. Here again, the present action is momentarily suffused with and determined by the significance of a past one, only now it is the Female Vagrant who senses the dreadful repetition. The Sailor, discovering her asleep within the Spital, tries gently to wake her,

...but ill he sped,  
For of that ruin she had heard a tale  
Which now with freezing thoughts did all her powers  
assail;

Had heard of one who, forced from storms to shroud,  
Felt the loose walls of this decayed Retreat  
Rock to incessant neighings shrill and loud,  
While his horse pawed the floor with furious heat;  
Till on a stone, that sparkled to his feet,

Struck, and still struck again, the troubled horse:  
 The man half raised the stone with pain and sweat,  
 Half raised, for well his arm might lose its force  
 Disclosing the grim head of a late-murdered corse.

(XIX-XX)

Informed by the tale, she reacts with terror, taking the Sailor to be the murderer returned, or perhaps the "late-murdered corse" risen again. To us, however, the tale works less by associative transposition than by a metaphoric one: this murderer (perhaps the body now swinging on the gibbet some distance away) and grim corpse stand in analogical relationship to the Sailor and the corpse lying buried in his own past. Thus, the Female Vagrant's metonymic madness has its metaphoric method: though she presently "recover[s] heart," she is, in fact, in company of a murderer.

The metaphoric implications of the tale attaching to the Spital are pointed in the narrator's remark, "well it was that, of the corse there found,/...she nothing spake;/ She knew not what dire pangs in him such tale would wake" (XXI). He, in other words, would read the tale as we do, on the basis of its similarities to his own; this is precisely how he reads the "tale" of the beaten boy the following day.<sup>20</sup> Drawing for the first time near human habitation, the Sailor and the Female Vagrant hear a "scream," a

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<sup>20</sup>I will return below to the night in the Spital and the Female Vagrant's tale-telling.

"blasphemous" curse, and "female cries": they come at once upon a man and woman, and "a little child...stretched upon the ground." The woman, this child's mother, tells a "piteous tale" of domestic violence, "How in a simple freak of thoughtless play/ He had provoked his father, who straightaway,/ As if each blow were deadlier than the last,/ Struck the poor innocent" (LIII). The Sailor reproves the father "in manhood's name," and he in turn replies with passionate "insult[s] and revilings," taunting, "the gallows would one day of him be glad" (LIV). This provocation strikes home, awakening for the Sailor--and the reader--the "dire pangs" of his murderous past and his vision of the gibbet the previous night. As the Sailor bends to comfort the child, the episode's structure of "strange repetition" comes perfectly clear:

Softly he stroked the child, who lay outstretched  
 With face to earth; and, as the boy turned round  
 His battered head, a groan the Sailor fetched  
 As if he saw--there and upon that ground--  
 Strange repetition of the deadly wound  
 He had himself inflicted....(LV)

The image of the child's "battered head," filtering back through the "grim head" of the Spital's "late-murdered corse," evokes the similarly battered head of the Sailor's victim. The father's crime is thus figured as the domestic

equivalent of the Sailor's public one,<sup>21</sup> and both men are threatened, Wordsworth's metaphoric structure implies, with the fate emblemized by the "gibbet high."

Such fate is in both their cases averted, which is to say that Wordsworth's tertiary structure is once again progressively disposed. History repeats itself in the episode of the beaten boy (and throughout the narrative present), but only so that it can be revised and redeemed. As the Sailor contemplates this strange repetition of his own past, his very "looks and tears" seem to work a charm, "beguiling" the father with "relenting thoughts": "He kissed his son--so all was reconciled" (LVI). Their emblematic reconciliation is immediately thematized by the Sailor, who here draws "the appropriate lesson" of the entire poem:

"Bad is the world, and hard is the world's law  
Even for the man who wears the warmest fleece;  
Much need have ye that time more closely draw  
The bond of nature, all unkindness cease,  
And that among so few there still be peace:  
Else can ye hope but with such numerous foes  
Your pains shall ever with your years increase?"

(LVII)

The themes of domestic peace, the bonds of human nature, and

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<sup>21</sup>The Sailor is accordingly described just before he kills the traveller as being "in such a mood/ That from his sight his children might have run" (VIII). This past detail attains its full significance here in the present, by virtue of the tertiary episodic metaphor.

the ethos of kindness--all are pointed in the resolution of the poem's episodic metaphors into relations of antonymity rather than synonymity. While the Sailor cannot kiss his own victim and restore him to the bond of nature, his historicized presence can and does bring the father to do so (even though the father, in fact, learns nothing of that history). In and through the person of the Sailor, the past intervenes in the present, is reflected there briefly, then revised: the structure, forestalling and correcting the errors of the past, humanizes the present.

This humanizing strategy is writ large in the poem's conclusion, where the Sailor finally "declares" his guilt and submits to the gibbet that has been metaphorically haunting him since the outset of the poem. Significantly, he escapes to some more lenient end:

His fate was pitied. Him in iron case  
 (Reader, forgive the intolerable thought)  
 They hung not:--no one on his form or face  
 Could gaze, as on a show by idlers sought;  
 No kindred-sufferer, to his death-place brought  
 By lawless curiosity or chance,  
 When into storm the evening sky is wrought,  
 Upon his swinging corse an eye can glance,  
 And drop, as he once dropped, in miserable trance.

(LXXIV)

As here, all of the poem's metaphoric revisions chart a

progress from isolation to "kindred suffering," from misery to pity, from inhuman crime and punishment to human relation and redemption. In an earlier version of the poem, known as "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" (c. 1795-6), the Sailor is in fact gibbeted at the end; Paul Magnuson therefore concludes that "there is no progress, but only repetition" (43). Yet, as Mary Jacobus observes, the poem in any case should still convince us of the Sailor's "fundamental redeemability and his value as a human being" (155), and Wordsworth's revision for Guilt and Sorrow simply extends that conviction to human society at large. The point is not merely that history and institutions can be redeemed, but that such redemption will arise in consequence of the rehabilitation of individuals, families, and communities. The Sailor does not wind up a "swinging corse," Wordsworth's final structure implies, because he and others like him have taken the "appropriate lesson" of history and thus "more closely draw[n]/ The bond of nature" and "all unkindness cease[d]."

The reformatory, redemptive structure of the poem is seen as well in the progress from torrential night to clear dawn, with its "rays of promise" (XXXV). By separate but equally miserable ways, the Sailor and the Female Vagrant traverse Salisbury Plain, "dark and void as ocean's watery realm/ Roaring with storms beneath night's starless gloom" (XVI), and find one another in the lonely Spital. "Words of

kind intent" awaken a "mutual interest" and "natural sympathy," prompting the Female Vagrant to "retrace...her own untoward fate" (XXII). Midway through her tale, "with excess of grief o'erborne," she pauses, and the Sailor calls her to see the morning dawn:

"O come," he cried, "come, after weary night  
Of such storm, this happy change to view."  
So forth she came, and eastward looked; the sight  
Over her brow like dawn of gladness threw;  
Upon her cheek, to which its youthful hue  
Seemed to return, dried the last lingering tear,  
And from her grateful heart a fresh one drew:  
The whilst her comrade to her pensive cheer  
Tempered fit words of hope; and the lark warbled near.

(XXXVI)

If they remind us somewhat of Milton's Adam and Eve, they are yet explicitly poised, not for a Fall, but a recovery, a "happy change" of "gladness" and "hope." Together, they take their no longer solitary ways toward the nearest sign of human life, "a lonely cot/ A long mile hence," and the Female Vagrant resumes her "mournful tale," but she begins in terms that once again acknowledge the promise of the new day:

"Peaceful as this immeasurable plain  
Is now, by beams of dawning light imprest,  
In calm sunshine slept the glittering main...."

## (XXXVII-XXXVIII)

Her simile revises the narrator's earlier one (the plain "dark and void as ocean's watery realm), reversing tenor and vehicle and impressing both with the "dawning light" that marks the center-point of the poem and its turn toward human reconciliation. Although she is describing a past moment whose "rest," "blessing," and "joy" turned out to be but a "dream" (XLI), the structure of her words, like that of the episode that contains them, portends a coming time when such contentments will truly be possessed.

The Sailor's response to her tale of dispossession and alienation is clearly a step in the right direction. Though he has had "little cause to love the abode/ Of man, or covet sight of mortal face," the Sailor listens to the tale of a woman so desolate she herself has wanted only "to shun the spot where man might come," and he reacts with "True sympathy" (XVII, XL, LI). Despite their miserable intentions, both are drawn back to their humanity and human relation by a past tale whose meaning to the present (that is, to the Sailor and us) is the fundamental kinship of those who do and those who suffer ill (cf. LVI). Though the Sailor cannot speak yet

Of social Order's care for wretchedness,  
 Of Time's sure help to calm and reconcile,  
 Joy's second spring and Hope's long-treasured smile[,]

(LI)



the narrator can and does, cueing us to the meaning of the actions that follow. We have already observed the reconciliation of the beaten boy episode, in which the Sailor metaphorically redeems his guilt and an emblematic family reunites. The protagonists proceed to a "rustic inn," where they are warmly welcomed and "in comfort fed"; the Female Vagrant then parts, and we follow her into a new episode in which she experiences a recovery comparable to the Sailor's. Encountering a "pale-faced Woman, in disease far gone," the Female Vagrant asks and receives the woman's tale (deferred for us till the next episode<sup>22</sup>), to which she responds "with honest pain/ And homefelt force of sympathy sincere" (LXII). Her reaction parallels the Sailor's to her own tale, and it further intimates her return to that "home delight of constant truth,/ And clear and open soul," the loss of which, as she puts it, is the "keenest" affliction of her past (XLIX).

"Wordsworth's method" in Guilt and Sorrow thus "consist[s] of a series of encounters [read "episodes"]--with the Female Vagrant, with a quarrelling family, with a dying woman--each providing the same step-by-step illustration of the poem's message...[of] mutual compassion" (Jacobus 145). This message is now embodied fully as the

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<sup>22</sup>Where we learn not only of her actual kinship with the Sailor, but also of her metaphoric kinship with the Female Vagrant. Like the heroine, she is a "sailor's wife" who, because of the war, "knew a widow's cares" (LXVII).

Female Vagrant in "pure compassion" conducts the woman back to the rustic inn and her "friends," who are "fervent" enough in their concern and comfortings that "nature revive[s]" for a moment in the dying woman and she tells again the identifying tale of her past (LXII-LXIV). This leads to the recognition scene, the wife's "sudden joy surprising expiring thought," her unstated forgiveness and death in "fulness of content" (LXX); this in turn, as we've seen, leads to the Sailor's confession and the concluding illustration of "social Order's [new] care for wretchedness." As the Sailor takes his leave of the company at the inn, his gratitude measures the depth of the ties, the shared humanity, that bind them all as the realized image of redemptive community:

The Soldier's Widow lingered in the cot;  
And, when he rose, he thanked her pious care  
Through which his Wife, to that kind shelter brought,  
Died in his arms; and with those thanks a prayer  
He breathed for her, and for that merciful pair.

(LXXII)

Piety, care, kindness, and mercy: here truly the desolating past has been redeemed in the kindred sufferings and sympathies of the present.

So too the Spenserian romance, which in Guilt and Sorrow becomes a fully tertiary and distinctly Romantic form. By writing in Spenserians, Wordsworth aligns his poem

not only with The Faerie Queene, but also with its eighteenth-century imitations. In effect, he takes up the Spenserian romance where poets like Thomson and Beattie left it, and explores the darker results (increasingly evident as the century closed) of culture's progress through history, and the continuing possibility in the face of such results for human redemption. In its successive revisions over a period of fifty years, the poem comes increasingly to focus on the latter theme, and to suggest that the tertiary romance quest can persist beyond the collapse of the Enlightenment ideal of civilization, in the moral conscience of the individual and in the reconstruction of fundamental human relationships.<sup>23</sup> As Guilt and Sorrow shows, the seat of that conscience and the agent of that reconstruction, psychologically, is memory; structurally, it is the metaphorically recollected and redeemed episode of the past. These, of course, are two of the principles that motivate and structure The Prelude, the "greatest" and most

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<sup>23</sup>Magnuson makes something of this point in discussing the revisions that led to 1795-6's "Adventures on Salisbury Plain": "the poem shifts its emphasis from the criticism of social conditions to the study of the effects of war, guilt, and sorrow upon the two wanderers" (37). Stephen Gill puts the matter thus: "the presentation of human feelings through fully realized dramatic situations in this poem demonstrated early in Wordsworth's career that his theme was indeed the mind of man..." (Guilt and Sorrow 13). Jacobus draws a similar conclusion from comparisons to Goldsmith's Deserted Village: Wordsworth's subject here "is human--not a village, not a place, but individual men and women....Both poets are concerned with uprooted families, but where Goldsmith depicts a tableau, Wordsworth takes one inside the minds" of his characters (146-7).

characteristic "internalized quest romance" of the Romantic period (Bloom 5, 8).

#### IV

If The Prelude incorporates the psychology of memory and the structure of metaphor of Guilt and Sorrow, it fuses these with the implicit psychology of imagination and the explicit metonymic structure of The White Doe of Rylstone. Here, too, in other words, a framing present discovers its significance through the imaginative recreation of the historical past, but now the relation of past to present is not merely symbolic or metaphorical, but actual and personal. The remembered romance of the past is composed of discontinuous episodes, "spots of time" as Wordsworth calls them, from the poet's own earlier life; the narrative present which they genetically produce and structurally intersect is nothing less than the narrating poet's self. The purpose of the historicized retrospect is once again progressive, but the narrative agon is no longer the contest of indolence and cultural history, or of the old romance and the new, or of social ills and kindred restorations, but rather the poetic identity and future of the narrator, Wordsworth himself. Of all the spots of time, Wordsworth could say what he says, early in Book I, of the recollected image of Grasmere and Dove cottage:

No picture of mere memory ever looked

So fair; and while upon the fancied scene  
 I gazed with growing love, a higher power  
 Than Fancy gave assurance of some work  
 Of glory there forthwith to be begun,  
 Perhaps too there performed. (ll. 75-80)

The tertiary romance quest, with its characteristically historicized structure of "fancied scenes" from the past, is in The Prelude completely internalized and wholly focused on the Romantic concept of the "higher power" of imagination.

As Bloom puts it,

the internalization of the quest-romance made the poet-hero a seeker not after nature but after his own mature powers, and so the Romantic poet turned away, not from society to nature, but from nature to what was more integral than nature, within himself. (15)<sup>24</sup>

There has been a good deal of commentary on the form of The Prelude, but it seems to me that the most useful generic paradigm, at least when it is the poem's narrative element that we mean to describe, is that of the romance, with its discontinuous episodes (of whatever description). Paul Magnuson, discriminating the generic or "textual" dimension of Wordsworth's poem, rightly defines its total structure as an ordering of disjunctive fragments:

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<sup>24</sup>In this he is following Hartman: "Nature, for Wordsworth, is not an 'object' but a presence and a power; a motion and a spirit; not something to be worshipped and consumed, but always a guide leading beyond itself" (290).

It is not entirely clear whether [Wordsworth] intended to ground the poem of his life on an organic form with its basis in nature, or on a "vital spirit" of his own consciousness, or in the ordering of fragments in "outline and substance" that are the properties of the text. Where does the substance of his poem lie?

Ideally, of course, it would be in a unity of nature, consciousness, and poem, but the fragmentary state of recollection, its arbitrary nature, and the collaborative efforts in its production [i.e.

Coleridge's] imply that perhaps Wordsworth thought the ground may be the text itself. (227)

Wordsworth himself foregrounds his compositional dilemmas in many places throughout The Prelude, most obviously perhaps in the catalog of themes and matters (I.166-237) that he has considered for his prospective "work of glory," so far without issue. The second to last of these narrative possibilities, and the one that best describes the major poem he in fact achieved, is "A tale from my own heart...Some variegated story," but he has found as yet that the "unsubstantial structure" of such a tale invariably eludes him, "melts" away (I.222-5). Structure is precisely the issue here: how to give substance to his own "variegated story," to "a song that winds," like the romances of the past, "Through ever changing scenes of votive quest" (I.180-1). As this structural "need...becomes manifest in the

narrator," Don Bialostosky observes, we see that

the problem of The Prelude is...to give these striking encounters with nature and with man that he has repeatedly experienced a place in a larger structure of thought which he can make known to himself. What is crucial to the work of The Prelude is not just the internal workings of the memorable episodes and "spots of time"...but the efforts at arranging and interpreting them as the experiences of one character whose life has but one story. (183-4)

The "larger structure of thought" in the poem itself is the framing narrative present in which the narrator recollects and interprets the "variegated" and "ever changing" episodes of his past. Binding these episodes and training them to the purposes of "but one story" are his romance-derived "efforts at arranging," the metonymic foregrounding and metaphorical patterning, achieved in the present, that draw the spots of time into meaningful and progressive relations.

Herbert Lindenberger some time ago identified three separate "organizing principles" in The Prelude, and Jonathan Arac has recently summarized them in the terms we are using here:

[the principle] of facts in order (a metonymic reading Lindenberger ascribed to the nineteenth century); the principle of which "Wordsworth himself was most aware...the threefold pattern of early vision, loss,

and restoration," modeled on the "traditional cycle of paradise, fall, and redemption" (Abram's synecdochic...reading); and a third principle that "stands at odds with other two, for...it recognizes no beginning, middle, or end"...This third principle, metaphoric in its eclipse of mediation, Lindenberger calls "repetition"... (Arac 241, quoting Lindenberger 191-2)

The metonymic chronology, as Lindenberger and Arac are quite aware, only loosely structures the poem as a whole, and, after 1799, is positively dispensed with insofar as the spots of time are concerned. The "synecdochic" or archetypal reading, though obviously more focused on theme than structure, nevertheless recognizes that the movement from episode to episode is fundamentally progressive and ultimately restorative, no matter its disruptions of actual chronology. In opposition to this reading, Lindenberger advances his metaphorical one, suggesting that "each spot of time...[is] a repetition of the last" and the poem thus says "essentially the same thing again and again"; "there is no real progress..., but only restatements of the poet's effort to transcend the confines of temporal order" (188). Though real enough, the structural similarities he emphasizes are nonetheless disposed so as to measure change and difference, most explicitly from the vantage of the historicizing frame:

...so wide appears



The vacancy between me and those days  
 Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,  
 That musing on them, often do I seem  
 Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself  
 And of some other Being. (II.28-33)

Jonathan Wordsworth accordingly understands the metaphorical patterning of the spots in terms which nevertheless admit of evolutionary growth and present difference. For him, as for Lindenberger, the spots of time equally "have the power to strengthen and reassure because they stand in the poet's mind for the ability of the individual to transcend the limits of ordinary experience." Both the narrative sequencing of these spots, however, and the narrator's increasingly complex response to them in the present indicate an instrumental change over time, located precisely in consciousness:

As a child he himself had been a borderer, approaching unknowingly the verge of the sublime: as an adult he derives from this early experience a strength that enables him consciously to aspire toward sublimity.

(31)

As the poet matures in consciousness and imaginative power, so the historicized episodes that chart this growth gradually modulate, focusing first on "the ways of Nature," then on "the works of man and the face of human life," and finally on "the sustaining thought/ Of human Being,

Eternity, and God" (XIV.188-205).<sup>25</sup>

The controlling episodic metaphors, in other words, are conditioned by metonymic developments and antonymic revisions. The foundational spots of Book I (woodcock snaring, plundering the raven's nest, boat stealing, and skating [301-463]) all share a basic structural pattern, illustrating, as the narrator reflectively grasps, how the "Presences of Nature" "haunted" his early boyhood and

Impressed upon all forms the characters  
Of danger and desire; and thus did make  
The surface of the universal earth  
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,  
Work like a sea. (464-75)

Jonathan Wordsworth discusses the parallels that link the first three of these episodes, noting particularly the boy's "superficial confidence and underlying guilt," "treated first with adult indulgence, then with unexpected seriousness," and the resolution not in "supernatural events," but in an "undetermined sense" of agency and "possible sublimity" (41-47). The skating episode adopts this pattern too, but substitutes for the initial proposition of "confidence and...guilt" a new terminal one that anticipates the focus of the spots of Book II,

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<sup>25</sup>Space will not permit treatment of this entire progress, but the ensuing discussion of Books I to V, the movement from the "ways of Nature" to the "face of human life," sufficiently illustrates Wordsworth's structural method.

"solitude." Thus, the "low breathings" and "strange utterance" of the previous episodes reappear here as an "alien sound/ Of melancholy," the motion of "cloud" and "huge peak" as "solitary cliffs/ Wheel[ing] by" (I.323, 337-9, 378, 443-4, 458-9). But here the sounds and motions--the presences--of nature are felt to be, not fearful and dangerous, but delightful and desirable. Where the last episode (boat-stealing) had concluded in a waking "solitude" of "blank desertion" and dreams full of "troubling movement," this one concludes with the boy standing entranced by the "visible motion" of the earth "Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep" (I.390-400, 460-3). Such antonymic revisions of the previous images and structure denote a subtle progress: the boy, earlier apprehended by nature and awakened to "unknown modes of being" (I.393), now begins to apprehend nature, to seek out and relish its still-externalized but more consciously known "modes of being."

Like the skating episode that prepares their way, the spots of Book II move from "vivid images of immediate life to an absolute calm" (Hartman 290), one that teaches the youth "to feel, perhaps too much,/ The self-sufficing power of Solitude" (II.76-77). Again, the structural similarities that link episode to episode are fairly obvious, but now new metonymic features are introduced that figure solitude as a distinctly poetic and internal "mode of being."

Recollecting the spot of renting horses (II.94-144), for example, the narrator first dwells on the "inland peace," "sequestration," "deep shelter," "repose and quietness" of the natural scene and ruined abbey through which he and his companions had ridden in "wantonness of heart," but then focuses the episode emphatically on the image of

...that single wren

Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave  
Of the old church...

. . . . .

So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird  
Sang to herself, that there I could have made  
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there  
To hear such music. (II.118-130)

The repetitions that transform the concrete and specific "single wren" into an abstract and generalized "invisible bird" open the image to a metaphorical reading as a figure of the poet, singing to himself. Such a reading is supported by the following episode (II.138-74), which again moves from boyish sports to a poetic and now internalized image of solitude:

When in our pinnace we returned at leisure  
Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach  
Of some small island steered our course with one,  
The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,  
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute

Alone upon the rock--oh, then, the calm  
 And dead still water lay upon my mind  
 Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,  
 Never before so beautiful, sank down

Into my heart, and held me like a dream! (II.165-74)

The outward solitude of nature directs the growing consciousness inward, and the visible scene begins to appear as "something in myself, a dream,/ A prospect in the mind" (II.350-2). Through the agency of nature and the growth of consciousness in the past, or perhaps more accurately through structural alterations to the prevailing episodic pattern in the present, the troubled dreams of early boyhood have become the dream-like reveries of solitude that indicate, at least retrospectively, a soul of "visionary power" and "growing faculties" that "yet/ Have something to pursue" (II.311-22).

What Wordsworth's structure immediately pursues, naturally enough, is the image of humanity already augured by the increasingly internalized focus of the past episode. The retrospective moves first into the "populous plain" of Cambridge, the antonymic opposite of the secluded natural and internal "eminences" described in Books I and II (III.170-97). The narrator calls his time at Cambridge "an approach/ Towards human business," a "just gradation" in preparation for the coming "conflicts of substantial life" (III.522-3, 529-30), and his description of it is rife with

human characters and scenes. Compared to the previous two Books, however, Book III is short on fully developed individual episodes, and the reason is not far to seek. Disjoined from nature, the narrator reflects, he experienced at Cambridge a minor "fall," such that "the inner pulse/ Of contemplation almost failed to beat" (III.333-4, 495); eight months were accordingly spent in "mixed" and indifferent sort, memorable mostly for the absence of intensely troubling or pleasurable emotion or of profound natural solitude. Lacking these, the evocative actions of the past become little more than items in a reflective catalog:

...[we] went forth

To gallop through the country in blind zeal  
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast  
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars  
Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought. (254-8)

The "dwarf proportions" (III.583) of Book III's human images are effectively amplified in Book IV, which returns the poet to the earlier eminence of nature (cf. IV.1-11) and to the structure of significant episodes. Here, both the image of solitude and the discontinuous episode of the past are gradually "impressed," principally through metonymic foregrounding, with what Wordsworth terms their "appropriate human center" (IV.353-69). Restored to his rural home, the young Wordsworth assumes at the outset of Book IV the role metaphorically prepared for him by the bird and the

"Minstrel of the Troop" in Book II. "Kindled with the stir,/ The fermentation, and the vernal heat/ Of poesy," he appears sauntering "at evening on the public way/ ...like a river murmuring/ And talking to itself when all things else/ Are still" (IV.102-4, 118-21). Though on the "public way," he is attended only by a terrier and otherwise quite alone; the poetic solitude is yet private, and the self-conscious youth hushes his voice whenever another "passenger" approaches (IV.122-30). As though cued by this incidental reference to other humans, the narrator then asserts that he discovered (episodic evidence notwithstanding) a "freshness...at this time/ In human Life" and a "human-heartedness about my love/ For objects hitherto the absolute wealth/ Of my own private being and no more" (IV.191-2, 233-5). In illustration of the point, the next spot, known as the Dawn Dedication (IV.297-338), moves like a number of the previous ones from "vivid images of immediate life to an absolute calm," but the vision of solitude now quietly resolves itself on the human form within nature. Following a long night of "transient pleasures" at a country dance, the young poet walks "homeward" alone at dawn:

Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp,  
Glorious as e'er I had beheld--in front,  
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near  
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,

Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;  
 And in the meadows and the lower grounds  
 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn--  
 Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,  
 And labourers going forth to till the fields.

(IV.323-32)

This passage leads almost directly to the reflective passage on the potency, graciousness, and benignity of "a mere image" of solitude's "sway," "Most potent when impressed upon the mind/ With an appropriate human center."

Metonymically occupying the position of emphasis in the Dawn Dedication episode, Wordsworth's rural "labourers" are metaphorically comparable to the "hermit," "votary," or "watchman" he now itemizes illustratively, and they are directly preparatory for the fully humanized image of "that great Power," as it is "met/ ...embodied on a public road" (IV.359-69).

In the episode of the Discharged Soldier (IV.369-468), we metaphorically return to the "public way" of the beginning of the Book, only here, as in the Dawn Dedication, the young poet is heading "homeward" after another late night of social "past-time" (see Bialostosky 181). Once again, the appearance of a human other serves as an "admonishment" (cf. IV.125), prompting, after an initial withdrawal of "specious cowardice" (IV.409) similar to his earlier one, an important revelation about human suffering



and sympathy. As Bialostosky argues, the "uncouth" figure draws the young poet "out of self-absorbed reverie, however pleasurable and restorative, and into a situation in which the acknowledgement and execution of charitable duty is called for"; more importantly for our purposes, "the soldier himself [becomes] the human center of the image the narrator relates" (176-7, 181). "Stiff, lank, and upright," "pallid" and "ghastly in the moonlight," the figure of the Soldier metaphorically supplants that of the young poet attended by his terrier, as well as the "figure" of nature that has previously dominated the episode of the past:

...Companionless,  
 No dog attending, by no staff sustained,  
 He stood, and in his very dress appeared  
 A desolation, a simplicity,  
 To which the trappings of a gaudy world  
 Make a strange background. (IV.392-403)

In this reconstructed foreground, the significant actions--tale-telling and sympathetic response, charity and gratitude, mild "reproof" and countering "trust," "reviving interests" and a "quiet heart" seeking its "distant home" (IV.456-68)--are distinctly human rather than natural or individual. The narrator will ask rhetorically much later in the poem, "Who doth not love to follow with his eye/ The windings of a public way?," and then assert that such windings, even in his childhood, seemed "like an invitation

into space/ Boundless, or guide into eternity" (XIII.142-50). In the structural "windings" of the episodic pattern through Book IV, the "public way" guides the youth from self-consciousness to consciousness of another, inviting him, if not yet into eternity, then at least fully into humanity.

Book V then takes up the matter of books, the palpable though not "deathless" "element" that bears the image of the timeless human mind (V.45-7). Jonathan Bishop has argued how the Book's first episode, the dream of the Arab, "incorporates the vocabulary of the other 'spots,' with its wide waste of sand, its movement, its grim shape in the form of a strange Arab, who rides a dromedary instead of a horse" (152). It will suffice for us to note simply that its imaginary action is inspired by romance ("The famous history" of Cervantes' "errant knight") and shows the "consecrated works of Bard and Sage"--metonymically the mind itself--threatened by "the fleet waters of a drowning world" (V.42, 60, 137). The next spot, the Boy of Winander (V.364-406), recreates Book II's episode of solitude as a third-person narrative about another, one whose structure significantly conflates the image of the human mind with that of water and then resolves itself immediately in an image of death. Alone in an active and "responsive" nature, hooting with the owls, the boy's energies are "baffled" by a sudden quiet and calm:

...in that silence while he hung  
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise  
 Has carried far into his heart the voice  
 Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene  
 Would enter unawares into his mind,  
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received  
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died  
 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.  
 Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale  
 Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs  
 Upon a slope above the village school,  
 And through that churchyard when my way has led  
 On summer evenings, I believe that there  
 A long half hour together I have stood  
 Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies!  
 Even now appears before the mind's clear eye  
 That self-same village church.... (V.376-99)

The boy's impressionable mind reflects the "steady lake,"  
 which itself reflects the "uncertain heaven" to which he is  
 prematurely "taken." Allegorically threatened with a watery  
 death in the dream of the Arab, the human image is  
 metaphorically suffused here and then instantly wrenched out  
 of the "visible scene" and into its future "grave." The

effect of this temporal leap is not only pointed--we'll recall that the narrative progress is to lead ultimately from a medial focus on the "face of human life" to a final one on "human Being, Eternity, and God"--but it is also obviously constructed from the point of view of the present for precisely this purpose.

The internal temporal disjunctions of the episode are matched by what might be called its disjunctive heterogeneity of matter: the boy of Winander is not the young Wordsworth, was likely not even known to him ("This boy was taken from his mates"), and his interior experience is therefore in one sense as irrelevant as it is, in realistic terms, patently unknowable. In the narrator's "larger structure of thought," however, such interpolations mark the advent of the present imagination as a manifest force in the reconstructed past. As Bishop suggests (138-9), the narrator renders the boy in his own image, incorporating not only his past one ("the calm/ And dead still water lay upon my mind..." [II.170-1]), but also the analogical one with which he described himself in the narrative present, "incumbent o'er the surface of past time"

[a]s one who hangs down-bending from the side  
Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast  
Of a still water, solacing himself  
With such discoveries as his eye can make  
Beneath him in the bottom of the deep,

. . . . .

Yet often is perplexed and cannot part  
 The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,  
 Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth  
 Of the clear flood, from the things which there abide  
 In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam  
 Of his own image.... (IV.256-68)

Though clearly "shadow" to the narrator's "substance," the boy of Winander is not simply a metaphorical double: the narrator recasts his "own image" only so that he can metonymically locate it in its "true" and final "dwelling," the emblematic "grassy churchyard" that "hangs/...above the village school" and "even now appears before the mind's clear eye." So revised, the structure of the past episode points Book V's two new thematic interests: human mortality, and the disposing imagination of the present, whose compensating eternal character is beginning to emerge.

From the self-reflexive and disjunctive tale of another, the narrator proceeds to the Drowned Man episode (V.426-59), a spot of time which paradoxically returns to his early youth and yet is fully informed with the imaginative revisions that have just transpired. The opening action brings the boy Wordsworth, alone at dusk, to an "open field" beside "Esthwaite's Lake" and a landscape mysteriously lacking its human center:

...through the gloom

Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore  
 A heap of garments, as if left by one  
 Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched,  
 But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake  
 Grew dark with shadows on its breast,  
 And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped  
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day,  
 Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale  
 Drew to the spot an anxious crowd; some looked  
 In passive expectation from the shore,  
 While from a boat others hung o'er the deep,  
 Sounding with grappling irons and long poles.  
 At last, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene  
 Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright  
 Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape  
 Of terror.... (V.433-51)

Just as the "fish up-leaping" in "breathless stillness" metaphorically anticipates the corpse that rises "bolt upright" so too the narrator's larger structural patternings infuse this moment with "passive expectations" that are deftly and surprisingly redirected. Clustered in this brief spot are the "calm lake" with "shadows on its breast" from the Boy of Winander and Minstrel of the Troop episodes, the "ghastly" human "shape" of the Discharged Soldier and Dream of the Arab episodes, and the "hanging o'er the deep" figure that represents the imaginative

activity of the present. The entire repertoire of structural features is called into play here, but now disposed in accordance with the thematic emphases of the intervening Boy of Winander episode. Thrusting the "beauteous scene/ Of trees and hills and water" completely into the background, the structure of the past episode now foregrounds, and with tremendous impact, the replete image of human mortality.

Given the structural progress through which the episode achieves its resonance and significance, our response to its "terror" will likely be profound aesthetic pleasure, much like that the narrator imputes to himself in the historical moment, and for very similar reasons:

...yet no soul-debasing fear,  
 Young as I was, a child not nine years old,  
 Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen  
 Such sights before, among the shining streams  
 Of faery land, the forests of romance.  
 Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle  
 With decoration of ideal grace;  
 A dignity, a smoothness, like the works  
 Of Grecian art, and purest poesy. (V.451-9)

The romance structures that informed the child's vision have been redeployed by the narrator to organize the episodic tale of his own life and growth, to give it, for himself and for the reader, the same "ideal grace" of "purest poesy."

Through a long series of metaphorical and metonymic transformations, Wordsworth's discontinuous spot of time has developed an entirely new focus, pointing beyond nature and the confines of the temporal world, beyond even the corpse itself, to the literary imagination which "hallows" the "sad spectacle" of human mortality. Like the Boy of Winander episode, the Drowned Man episode intimates the eternal character of humanity, not only in the "borderer" figure at its center (Jonathan Wordsworth 53), but in the romance-inspired imaginative acts, past and present, which determine his significance.

Jonathan Wordsworth objects to the anachronism of this episode (by Book V, we have followed Wordsworth to his eighteenth year) and to its generic definition of how "experience is intensified within the mind, becomes a link in the chain of development, a portion of the child's, and of the adult's, consciousness" (51-3). Yet such revisions, underscoring the mediations of romance and the narrator's present impositions upon the past, only highlight the "independent life" of the imagination that Jonathan Wordsworth himself finds so compelling in the subsequent spots of "visionary dreariness" (54-65). Wordsworth here too points the transformative and transcendent action of the adult's imagination, the "Visionary power" through which

...forms and substances are circumfused

By that transparent veil with light divine,



And, through the turnings intricate of verse,  
Present themselves as objects recognized,

In flashes, and with glory not their own. (V.595-605)

The "glory" of the "forms and substances" of the past belongs to the revising present, the "turnings intricate of verse" and mind that redispense them "in various contexts, mov[e] them from theme to theme, claim to claim, as our grasp of their possible relevancies grows" (Bialostosky 179). This reconstructive act of the present is the enduring image of imagination, reclaiming past experience in the episodic structure of the very romances "In which its youth did first extravagate" (V.503) Wordsworth thus makes good the claim that "something in the shape/ Of these will live till man shall be no more" (V.504-5). The Prelude is itself "something in the shape" of romance, but of romance internalized and historicized like the episodes it now structures, romance that has attained, in other words, its exemplary tertiary form.

## Conclusion

What became of the English verse romance after Wordsworth and the Romantics? Looking forward from The Prelude to what he terms the post-Romantic long poem, Herbert Lindenberger advances some relevant claims. He argues that The Prelude demonstrated that "the epic strain could no longer be sustained in poetry," but that "the less lofty demands of romance could at least provide a form for the long poem" (118). Both Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Morris's The Earthly Paradise demonstrated the same thing, but by comparison they are nostalgic where The Prelude, insofar as it "seeks to imitate the structure of experience," seems instead "a distinctly modern work, one that stands more at the head than the tail-end of a tradition" (201). This new tradition, extending to the present day,

view[s] personal experience as a kind of donnée from which the writer starts, as at an earlier time he had started not from experience, but from a plot he was adapting, or from a conventional conception of the particular genre--with its given rules and forms--which he had chosen to work. (199-200)

The recent history of the long poem in English is thus for Lindenberger not so much one of "the death of the form" but rather one of "its gradual fragmentation":

It is symptomatic of the modern tendency to fragmentize poetic structures that we speak of the individual image--the ideogram in Pound, or the epiphany in Joyce--as the central unit of meaning instead of the larger structure of which it is part; indeed, Wordsworth's idea of the "spot of time"..., though he did not allow it to replace or distort his conception of a total poem, can be viewed as one step on the way to the autonomous image which has been the goal of the Symbolist poet. (124, 126-7)

Lindenberger cites as examples of the Symbolist approach Eliot's The Waste Land, Crane's The Bridge, Pound's Cantos, Stevens's Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction, Perse's Anabasis, and MacLeish's Conquistador. By way of conclusion, I would like to take Lindenberger's lead and comment briefly on the one poem of all of these which most obviously qualifies as a verse romance, The Waste Land.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lindenberger himself, it should be noted, has taken Frye's lead in The Anatomy of Criticism: "The paradoxical technique of the poetry which is encyclopaedic and yet discontinuous, the technique of The Waste Land and of Ezra Pound's Cantos, is, like its direct opposite in Wordsworth, a technical innovation heralding a new mode" (61). Wordsworth's Prelude is the direct opposite, Frye suggests a page earlier, because it is episodic and continuous; it incorporates the lyrical episodes of the spots of time in the encompassing framework of a "continuous" reflective narration. (Frye's sense of the episodic and the continuous differ somewhat, though not drastically, from my own.) Eliot's and Pound's poems, by contrast, have the encyclopaedic aim of charting the "course of a whole civilization," but they fulfill this aim discontinuously by fusing without explicit connection "tiny flashes of significant moments" (61).

Given the title, the recurrent allusions to Grail literature (the thunder, the fisher king, the ruined chapel), and the notes to Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance, we can readily conclude that the Grail quest is the archetypal narrative pattern upon which Eliot builds in The Waste Land. Yet if The Waste Land is thus in one sense a modern Grail romance, its narrative line nevertheless remains submerged, unrealized. The episodes are but fragments, the links between them merely suggestive; the Grail quest is more a foil, for the quester/narrator is mad and his quest/narrative therefore unfulfilled. The old structures, including episodic ones, still have their appeal, much like the aestheticized nightingale, whose "inviolable voice/ ...the world [still] pursues." But in the narrator's decadent present such structures are manifest only as "withered stumps of time" (II.100-04), no longer organizing experience but, on the contrary, pointing up its irredeemable disorganization. With Eliot, it appears, the romance's structure of discontinuous episodes is itself exploded or displaced, even as the romance's traditional content of knight errancy had been exploded or displaced by earlier romancers like Cervantes and Wordsworth.

Eliot's fragmentation of episodic structure is evident from the outset. The opening verse paragraph adopts the tertiary structure, but in a way that conceals and confuses the relation between narrative present and recollected past:

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
 Memory and desire, stirring  
 Dull roots with spring rain.  
 Winter kept us warm, covering  
 Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
 A little life with dried tubers.  
 Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee  
 With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,  
 And went on in the sunlight, into the Hofgarten,  
 And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.  
 Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt  
 deutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,  
 My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,  
 And I was frightened. He said, Marie,  
 Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.  
 In the mountains, there you feel free.  
 I read, much of the night, and go south in winter.

(I.1-18)

Everything here--season, place, meter, voice, even  
 language--appears indeterminate, in flux. We begin with the  
 spring stirring memory and desire in a mind that had been  
 comfortably forgetful. At line 8, the meter alters and  
 expands, and this surprising rhythmical discontinuity is  
 mirrored by an even more surprising episodic one: time and

place shift as the narrator records, apparently, one of his stirred-up memories, of a summer storm on a lake in Munich. The German of line 12, we may assume, is the recollected speech of another, probably the person accompanying the narrator in the Hofgarten, likely "Marie." Her speech then appears to continue (to the end of the paragraph?), and it records another memory, another episode, taking place in another season (winter) and introducing yet another voice (the arch-duke's). The passage gives us a series of compressed and thoroughly disjunctive episodes, arranged on a backward-pointing temporal axis. Though the logic is thus tertiary, the episodes are unelaborated and their relations tenuous and elliptical. The spring, summer, and winter here are not the contiguous seasons of a natural cycle; they are utterly disconnected in time, and the winter scene is further dislocated in that it was probably not perceptually experienced by the narrator. We infer with difficulty a single narrative consciousness and a present moment of reflection in which these fragmentary episodes and snatches of voice mix. Flouting the basic continuities of narrative perspective and temporal or rational progression, the passage establishes at once the unsettling procedure of the entire poem. The disintegration of The Waste Land is both psychic and aesthetic, or absolute.

Eliot structures his romance, in other words, precisely as "a heap of broken images" (I.22). Like the recollected

episodes of the past, bits of the narrator's literary heritage surface as well, but again their connection and relevance are abstruse at best. One senses any number of links, suggestive both of metonymic anticipation and metaphorical patterning, but they are hardly episodic and in no way reveal a developing narrative line. The German quotation from Wagner's Tristan and Isolde, for example, which translates "waste and empty the sea" (I.42), seems somehow to prompt the narrator's recollection of Madame Sosostri's Tarot reading, in which the narrator's card is "the drowned Phoenecian sailor"; this detail in turn prompts the recollection of Ariel's song from The Tempest ("Those are pearls that were his eyes"), which itself anticipates Madame Sosostri's warning, "Fear death by water" (I.43-59). Likewise, her incongruous comment at the end of the reading, "I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring," seems to prompt the narrator's Dante-like description of "a crowd [that] flowed over London Bridge," in which the metaphor "flowed" suggests that this "crowd" may be the human sea in which the narrator should fear drowning (I.62-5). But all of this is associative rather than narrative, and Eliot's note for the passage, pointing out further details that belong to the complex of water/drowning images, does not clarify episodic relations so much as complicate them.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Indeed, the notes confirm that many of these links are private and arbitrary, rather than episodic or structural. For instance, "The Hanged Man, a member of the traditional

The lavishly-evoked set piece that begins section II, "A Game of Chess," is suffused with words that imply its metaphorical connection to the first section--for example, "drowned," "stirred," and "stirring" (II.89, 93)--but here again the result in terms of narrative organization is, as the poem puts it, "troubled, confused" (II.88). Here and throughout, The Waste Land is governed not by structural impositions like metonymic foregrounding or the repetition and revision of patterned actions, but by something akin to free-association. The links between remembered events and literary allusions, as well as between the poem's five discrete sections, are phrasal and imagistic rather than episodic. The larger structural unit of the episode is at once compressed and fragmented, as the external narrative of events in time gives way to a mimesis of the narrator's internal life. Wordsworth, as Lindenberger argues, made a step in this direction, but his internalization of the quest romance nevertheless maintained, comparatively though not rigidly, the structure of episodes and temporal development.

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[Tarot] pack, fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in Part V....The Man with Three Staves...I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself" (I.46n., my emphasis). Or again, the note to II.218 points out links that are otherwise virtually indiscernible: "Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias."



We have here as well a present narrator reflecting on past episodes, but Eliot's "spots of time" are much more briefly rendered and much less integrated than Wordsworth's. The thematic point is that the internal life for Eliot is "troubled" and "confused," not the hieratic quest of natural election and poetic glory Wordsworth constructed, but the more perilous quest for a historically postulated but, in this poem at least, unattainable Grail. Failing to achieve personal, cultural, or spiritual illumination, the narrator can only shore episodic "fragments" against his imagination's "ruins" (V.431).

The innovation of Eliot's structural method can be gathered from the early reviews of The Waste Land, virtually all of which address themselves to its challenging fragmentation. Louis Untermeyer, for example, speaks disapprovingly of its "severed narratives--tales [read "episodes"] from which the connecting tissue has been carefully cut--and familiar quotations with their necks twisted, all imbedded in [a] formless plasma..." (qtd. in Grant, 152). More positively, Conrad Aiken argues that

The relations between Tiresias...and the Waste Land, or Mr. Eugenides, or Hyacinth, or any other fragment, is [sic] a dim and tonal one, not exact. It will not bear analysis, it is not always operating, nor can one with assurance, at any given point, say how much it is operating....We reach the conclusion that the poem

succeeds--as it brilliantly does--by virtue of its incoherence, not of its plan; by virtue of its ambiguities, not of its explanations. Its incoherence is a virtue because its 'donnée' is incoherence. (qtd. in Grant, 161).

Later scholarship has of course sided with Aiken in valuing the poem, even when it is interpreted as an extension of the English romance tradition. In their recent book on Arthurian romance since 1800, for example, Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer praise The Waste Land for giving "a new direction to Arthurian literature, a movement away from the dominant themes of the nineteenth century, romantic love and, to a lesser extent, patriotic feeling" (235).<sup>3</sup> Certainly, if internalization and a historicized

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<sup>3</sup>Taylor and Brewer have in mind, among other nineteenth-century romancers, Morris and Swinburne ("romantic love") and Tennyson ("patriotic feeling"). Romances like Idylls of the King and The Earthly Paradise, I would argue, seem secondary rather than tertiary because they minimize the historical frame--it is there, though not prominently--and because they adopt a comparatively undisplaced subject matter. True, the Idylls involve many retrospections that make them like the Romantic romances, with their emphasis on tale-telling and the relation of past to present. In "The Holy Grail," for instance, the present action is nothing more than Percivale's recounting to the monk Ambrosius the past adventure of the Grail. Yet both time frames are legendary, conventional. After Wordsworth's example of making both time frames personal and contemporary, and even Tennyson's own fully tertiary romance "The Epic," with its contemporary frame and its explicit theme of "remodelling the model" of Arthurian romance, the structure and content of the Idylls seem something of a throwback. Much the same might be said of The Earthly Paradise, where the comparatively miniature framing episodes serve as little more than a means of access to the remote and much-enlarged upon episodic legends of the past.

consciousness of the present characterize the tertiary romance, then after The Prelude the next major verse romance to adopt and extend the tertiary structure is Eliot's. Even as his themes of personal experience, poetic heritage, and cultural exhaustion represent a "new direction" for the Arthurian poem, so his structure of radical disjunction and free-association indicates a new direction for the post-Romantic verse romance.

In effect, the structural value of the episode is diminished in The Waste Land and other twentieth-century romances, and narrative organization gives way to an essentially meditative one. This is true even of a fully episodic, third-person narrative like Stevens's The Comedian as the Letter C (which is not, after all, as characteristic of Stevens's approach to the long poem as An Ordinary Evening in New Haven or Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction). Crispin's adventure of liberation from and inescapable return to the "distortions of romance" is structured in discontinuous episodes that are temporally successive (the sea voyage of part I, residence in the Yucatan in part II, journeying to the Carolinas in part III, etc.). But these episodes record not so much the hero's actions as his contemplations; scene, character, and event are thinly drawn and subsist only as a subject-matter to inspire Crispin's ruminations about the proper object of the modern imagination and its poetry. As in Eliot's structure, we may

discern some metonymic foregrounding and metaphoric patterning from section to section, as well as some degree of historicization and internalization, but these are displaced from the episode as such to the word or phrase, from action and character to imagery and idea. Episodic development and integration are downplayed or suppressed to create a truer narrative of the internal quest, more troubled and confused, and so structurally more free-form and disjointed, than ever before.

With the advent of such symbolist or modernist methods, it may seem that the English verse romance passes out of itself and becomes, generically, something else entirely. Maybe so. But I am intrigued by Frye's notion of the historical progress of modes, and particularly the idea that the ironic phase of literature, which includes both Eliot and Stevens, ultimately heralds a return to the mythic one (Anatomy 49-52). In the body of this study, I have examined romances ranging from the earliest phase of Frye's mode of romance (the anonymous primary poems) to the latest phase of his low mimetic mode (Wordsworth's tertiary poems). All of these share an explicit structure of discontinuous episodes, bound together in distinct and, for their respective periods, characteristic ways. The temporally organized primary romance treats the development of its knight-hero toward a chivalric and courtly ideal; its often structurally redundant episodes tend to function in isolation as

metonymic illustrations of the hero's progress in his quest. The secondary romances of Chaucer and Spenser refine upon their prototypes by developing metonymic and metaphoric relations among episodes, leading to a greater sense of integration and aesthetic order. While the content of the secondary romance remains largely undisplaced, its tendency to address problematic human issues, such as the nature of chastity, and to incorporate tragic realities, such as the arbitrariness of fate, suggests its movement toward Frye's high mimetic mode. In the Romantic or tertiary phase, and particularly with Wordsworth, the romance enters the low mimetic mode. The content becomes increasingly realistic and contemporary, and the episodic structure alters, principally through framing strategies, to signal both the newly historicized view of the genre and the new themes of cultural and personal progress. Finally, the romances of Frye's ironic phase typically forego the clear narrative and episodic exposition of earlier romances, and pursue instead a meditative or associative exposition that is thoroughly internalized and at best ambiguous about the individual's or the culture's quest. Like Eliot, ironic romancers "penetrate beneath the surface narrative level of their [romance] source material" to expose and adapt its underlying "myth" (Taylor 235). Born of the low mimetic impulse towards "realism" and "dispassionate observation," the ironic mode, Frye claims, "moves steadily towards myth,

and dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it" (Anatomy 42). The ironic romance, it may be, therefore marks not so much a shedding of what Fowler would call the "structural carapace" of romance as a return to its mythological antecedents. If that is so, the verse narrative of discontinuous episodes, with all their metonymic, metaphoric, and historicized relations, may soon see a renaissance in English literature.

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