The English Romance in Time

Transforming motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the death of Shakespeare

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Introduction: 'Enter, pursued with a bear'

Early in the 1590s, the Queen's Men required a bearsuit. They were about to stage a dramatized version of *Valentine and Orson*, a romance about an empress falsely accused of adultery who gives birth to twins in a forest, only to have one of them snatched away by a bear.[1] The text does not survive, but it would have been a big disappointment to the spectators if the bear had not put in an appearance: they knew the story already, and would have been waiting for it. Some of them would have read the source of the play, in the form of one of the reprints of a translation made most of a century earlier from a French prose version. That version was itself a reworking of a fourteenth-century verse original, which had in turn been compiled out of materials recycled from other romances, and which was to work its way across the languages of Europe as far as Sweden. Those playgoers who had not read the actual text still knew the story of its main characters, the hairy wild man, Orson, and his chivalric brother, Valentine. For centuries, they were as familiar as Cinderella is now, and by similar means: through oral retellings, through illustrations, by simply being around in the culture. They had figured in a street pageant for the coronation of Edward VI in 1549;[2] they were to get a mention—'play the Valentine with our wilder brothers, and bring them back with brotherly care to civilisation and happiness'—by John Forster in his *Life of Charles Dickens*, alongside Cinderella, with all the casualness that comes from the safe assumption of shared knowledge.[3] The omission of the bear on stage would have been sorely felt.

It would not have been difficult to acquire the materials to make the suit, if the company did not already have one in the property cupboard. Bearbaiting pits often doubled as venues for early plays, and several of the public theatres were clustered around the Beargarden on Bankside; a bearskin, even if somewhat damaged, could have been acquired and recycled for stage purposes as easily as the elements of earlier romances were recycled to make the original story. It must have been a bulky item to store, all the same, and once acquired, was crying out for good uses. More

bears accordingly began to appear on the Elizabethan stage to occupy the empty suit. An anonymous romance play entitled *Mucedorus* gets its action off to a swinging start by having its heroine 'Enter . . . pursued with a bear'.[4] Other bears figured in an opening dumbshow, or in spectral form to terrify a murderer into suicide.[5] Some twenty years later, when Shakespeare wanted to call to his audience's minds the resonances and assumptions of romance, he combines a story of a queen falsely accused of adultery with a bear that chases (and, offstage, eats) the guardian of her baby at the moment when he abandons it in the wilds. The bearsuit, if it was the same one, was coming towards the end of its days by that time: motheaten, no doubt; the fur worn away, especially around the scars from its first occupant's life in the bearpit; and probably going mouldy too. *The Winter's Tale* was its last new appearance, as if to outface the developing estimate of romances as 'mouldy tales'.[6] It is appropriate that the stage direction for its bear should be not an entrance, but an exit.

'Exit, pursued by a bear' is notorious because to modern theatregoers it seems so random and meaningless: it is not prepared for by the previous action of the play. The preparation for it lies rather in the coding and resonances that the motif brought with it, still familiar to Jacobean spectators, but long lost to modern readers or audiences. An understanding of much of what is going on in Renaissance plays has disappeared along with a comprehension of the codes of romance and a sense of their resonance. The bear is the most famous example only because it is the most extreme, and therefore the one of which we are the most aware. The object of this book is to bring that extensive level of allusions, the context of understanding, back to the surface: to restore to modern readers the 'literary competence', in Jonathan Culler's phrase, that Renaissance and medieval readers brought as a matter of course to their reading or watching of romances.[7] Romance was itself the major genre of secular fiction for the five hundred years covered by this book: a time span that makes the novel appear the youngster that it is. Without such an understanding of romance, it is impossible to make sense of that half millennium of literature in which men and women of the Middle Ages and Renaissance fashioned themselves, their culture, and their ideals. The bear will serve as an emblem for the book: a motif that owes its birth and longevity to the fact that it is an enthralling story element, but which was used to tell a story about providence, the disruption and restoration of order and lineal succession, innocence accused and vindicated; and which, once invented, like the empty bearsuit waiting backstage, needed new meanings, new justifications, to fill it out and give it continued life.

REPLICATION ACROSS CULTURES: THE MEME

The abduction of a child by a bear or some other wild animal is an example of a romance motif: a unit within literature that proves so useful, so infectious, that it begins to take on a life of its own. There is a word for such things now: a 'meme', an idea that behaves like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures.[8] These motifs and conventions grew up with the genre of which they formed a part and which they helped to define. They were first developed in the twelfth century in romances written in French and the gradually diverging form of French spoken in England, Anglo-Norman; they moved across the language barrier into English in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, acquired a new and vibrant popularity when prints of medieval romances became the pulp fiction of the Tudor age, and underwent remarkable metamorphoses in the works of the great Elizabethan writers.[9] Their quality as memes, with their generous capacity to latch onto the mind and replicate, is wonderfully caught by one of the last authors to use medieval texts in an unbroken line of transmission, John Bunyan, in the later seventeenth century. He misspent his youth reading cheap prints of romances, not least the perennial favourite *Bevis of Hamtoun*: a work that owed much of its popularity to its density of the simplest and most colourful of such motifs, dragons and giants and grim prisons and healing balms. Such items came into their own when he realized how they could be used in the service of God, in the work that became *The Pilgrim's Progress*. His mind 'suddenly' became crowded with

> more than twenty things, which I set down;
> This done, I twenty more had in my crown,
> And they again began to multiply,
> Like sparks that from the coals of fire do flie.

Their powers of exponential multiplication were matched by their insistent memorability:

> Art thou forgetful? wouldest thou remember
> From New-years-day to the last of December?
> Then read my fancies, they will stick like burs.[10]

And his Giant Despair and soporific Enchanted Ground did indeed stick in readers' minds, for almost as many centuries after he wrote as the

monsters of *Bevis* had lodged since its own composition.[11] Modernist and post-modern literature for adults is marked by a distrust of both story and traditional story elements. Bunyan realized that a good story composed of motifs that are already familiar is the most mind-engaging form that there is, and that romances are the very best such stories. It is no coincidence that the authors who kick-started the modern equivalent of the romance, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, were two of the leading medieval scholars of the mid-twentieth century.

This book is a study of the memes of romance. Its broad argument is that whilst romance motifs remain superficially the same, sometimes even down to verbal detail, the usage and understanding of them changes over time, rather in the way that a word may change meaning: the book traces an analogous historical semantics of the language of romance conventions. It therefore sets itself a very different task from Vladimir Propp's classic formalist analysis of folktales, or, more recently, Susan Wittig's linguistics-based study of romances, both of which seek to identify motifs in tales or romances independent of either the broad culture or the specific circumstances that produced them and in which they were read;[12] or from comparable synchronic surveys of variants on a single motif, such as Margaret Schlauch's study of accused queens.[13] Other fine studies of a single motif—the king in disguise on the Elizabethan stage, the Renaissance boat of adventures—do not aim for chronological or historical depth.[14] 'New readers make new texts'; every generation brings different cultural expectations to works of the past and so finds new meanings and new things to respond to.[15] Even successive recopyings of a single text record a process of shifting interpretations and significances, and those shifts become more marked as traditional elements are re-used in new stories and new contexts. Such differences are intensified as stories and motifs move across authors, periods, readership groups, and changing political and linguistic conditions.

The 'far away and long ago' that is almost a defining feature of the genre, the freeing of romances from familiar place or chronology, makes it especially easy for them to be appropriated for interpretations that fit the immediate historical or cultural moment of subsequent new readers. The half millennium during which romances were the dominant form of secular literature was a period of massive change. When they first began to be composed, England was a multilingual culture, and part of a composite realm that extended over much of the territory of modern-day France; by the time of Elizabeth, England was a fiercely nationalist entity, proudly distinct in language, which regarded the English Channel as its

providential bulwark against foreign encroachment. Manuscript culture, with its primary appeal to a rich and leisured or educated élite and to the upwardly mobile, gave way to print, with its potential for mass circulation. Roman Catholic ideology, which emphasized the public outward expressions of ideals and beliefs (from miracles and pilgrimages to virginity), was replaced by the Protestant stress on the inward and individual. It is no accident that the great age of romance was also the great age of faith. The doctrine of salvation, in which the terrible events of the Passion and Crucifixion were made the means by which fallen mankind was restored and the bliss of Heaven once more became possible, received its full theological formulation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Romance, with its typical pattern of an opening disruption of a state of order, followed by a period of trial and suffering, even an encounter with death, yet with a final symbolic resurrection and better restoration, offers a secular equivalent to that divine order: a 'secular scripture', in Northrop Frye's phrase.[16] Yet by the late sixteenth century, that providential model of human and divine action existed in uneasy truce, on one side with a sharp awareness that human affairs did not always show evidence of either a benign or a just providence, and on the other with the Calvinist theology of an unappeasable God who predestined every human being to salvation or damnation. Both those were hurdles that romance had to negotiate if it were to survive.

Despite those changes, the continuities between medieval and Renaissance culture in England are exceptionally strong by comparison with France and Italy, but they have been remarkably little studied. Until a few decades ago, scholars of Renaissance literature concentrated almost entirely on humanism and the rediscovery of the Classics; now, the period has been renamed 'early modern', and the emphasis of research has followed suit, to stress the forward-looking, the things that anticipate the modern or the post-modern—an emphasis entrenched by the periodization of both literature and history in universities. Both approaches require 'the medieval' to be dismissed as a category in order for the neo-Classical or proto-modern model to be constructed. Romance, and medieval romance in particular, has accordingly been belittled, as being neither classical epic nor modern novel; yet the history of the genre in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods constitutes 'one of the strangest success stories in English literature',[17] a story that is a romance in itself. Humanism was a development added on to strong and deeply embedded native cultural and literary traditions, and it was very often that embedded culture that inspired the greatest literary achievements of

Renaissance England and set the model for future change and development. Romance was one of the most strongly rooted of all those traditions. Any classical air about it was rarely more than a surface gloss, for a humanist author to show off his fashionability.[18] The abiding appeal of romance resulted partly from its familiarity and its infinite adaptability; partly also (despite the Catholic associations of the form) from its usefulness in the various nationalist agendas for the 'writing of England', since many of the romances were native stories that asserted the value and vitality of English originary legends and narrative traditions. The appendix to this book shows both how extensive was the transmission of medieval romance to the sixteenth century and beyond, and also how selective it was: Alexander and Charlemagne barely make the transition at all, whereas the stories of Arthur, Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Southampton, and an abundance of other heroes who may not have been English but whose romances had become thoroughly naturalized are ubiquitous in the culture. Gawain, Arthur's right-hand man since at least the early twelfth century, remains the favourite knight of the Round Table in the sixteenth; Lancelot, a late French import, comes a long way back in the popularity stakes.

Elizabethan romance could not have possessed its cultural centrality without those medieval roots. Medieval literature shares with earlier writing from the Hebrew Bible to *Beowulf* the function of recording the ideology of an entire community, the values by which it represents itself to itself. Romance, as the dominant secular literary genre of the period, was at the heart of such self-representation, a means by which cultural values and ideals were recorded and maintained and promulgated. The community of Tudor England similarly looked to romance as the site where its values could be questioned and tested but ultimately reaffirmed. That is why it was all but inevitable that Spenser's great poem on the state of England should take the form of romance. For all the strictures of the preachers against secular fictions, romances in the Middle Ages were widely regarded as educational. They offered models of courage and faithfulness; they doubled as courtesy books, or as advice to princes—a means of training the individual in the ethics and behaviour required in order for society, one's own immediate community or the whole body politic, to function at its best. Often they contained discursive passages of instruction: parents or guardians will expound the duties of a good knight, as the Lady of the Lake does at great length to the young Lancelot in the French prose *Lancelot*, and wise counsellors will describe what constitutes good government, as happens to Arthur in the same text

at even greater length.[19] Spenser would not have been telling Sir Walter Ralegh anything unexpected in his declaration in his letter prefacing *The Faerie Queene* that his work offered a means of fashioning a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline; and it was equally expected that this fashioning should be not in the cause of personal fulfilment but in the service of the Church and state. Romance was at the heart of the whole culture, or cultures, of the five centuries of its existence. So far as Elizabethan England was concerned, there were good reasons why romance, like the culture it served, should be English.

Our well-entrenched habits of looking for the grounding of Renaissance literature in the great classical authors (in particular Ovid and Virgil), or in contemporary European works (Ariosto, or the Italian *novelle* that were endlessly pillaged for the plots of plays), are therefore misleading: not because they are wrong, but because they are not enough. Alongside those works, which were accessible only by the intellectual élite unless or until they were printed in English translations, was a mass of stories available to everyone who could read English or hear it read to them, and which indeed were likely to have circulated in oral form as evening entertainment or, just as stories are retold now, as tales for children. These were the stories that the Elizabethans grew up with: which they did not need to learn, because they were so deep a part of their culture. It is that very familiarity, the lack of *need* of any extensive record or concern with preservation, that has made them largely disappear from sight. Yet they remained not just a field of reference but a way of thinking; and for the highly self-conscious writers of the Elizabethan age, they were a way of thinking, not just about spinning new plots for the endlessly voracious appetites of playgoers and readers, but about what it meant to be created human in an age that had abandoned the established schemes of Roman Catholic doctrine; about what England and being English meant in an age of fierce nationalism; and about the dynastic future of the country under a queen increasingly represented as a romance heroine but who had failed to fulfil the dynastic requirement of producing an heir, not so much as one carried off at birth by a bear.

RECOGNIZING ROMANCE

I have so far used the word 'romance' as if its meaning were obvious, and that is not an oversight—not because its taxonomy can be drawn up with

the precision that separates biological genera, six-legged insects from eight-legged spiders, but because a shared understanding between author and reader is the crucial feature of generic definition: what Hans-Robert Jauss called a 'horizon of expectation'.[20] Such an understanding—a common perception of a horizon—does, I believe, exist, now as in the Middle Ages, so long as its narrow modern association with Mills and Boon is broadened to include magic realism, a good many historical novels, and much fantasy and science fiction. Those last two are not terms that can easily be extended backwards: early romance insisted on its social relevance, and it was always rooted in a recognizable this-worldly society, even if voyages to exotic lands or the Otherworld were allowed. The memes of romance are none the less largely the same ones as have been made familiar through works such as the Narnia series and *The Lord of the Rings*, and their many derivatives, including Harry Potter and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (a serious treatment of adult love being the main absentee; but Pullman does include bears who make their own armoured bearsuits). The clash of good against evil, quests, protagonists of mysterious birth, monsters, the supernatural are more extensive a part of culture now than they have been since the seventeenth century. This has happened despite, rather than because of, the numerous theoretical attempts to draw up defining parameters for romance.[21] There is very little theoretical discussion of vernacular genres in the Middle Ages, as scholastic theoreticians confined themselves to writing about classical forms. The word *romanz* itself initially meant the vernacular languages (especially French) as distinct from Latin: a meaning that effectively removed the whole topic outside latinate scholarly discourse. What discussion of romance there is comes in the form of comments from vernacular authors within their own works, and those make it clear that they, as both readers of earlier romances and writers of new ones, were fully aware of the tradition in which they were writing.[22] The romance genre—any genre, indeed—is best thought of as a lineage or a family of texts rather than as a series of incarnations or clones of a single Platonic Idea. A family changes over time as its individual members change,[23] but equally, those individuals can be recognized through their 'family resemblance': a resemblance such as might lie in a certain shape of nose or mouth, or colour of hair, or laughing in a particular way at a particular kind of joke, or manner of twitching one's eyebrows, even though no one of those is essential for the resemblance to register, and even though individual features (hair colour, eyebrow habits) may contradict the model.[24] The principle of selective resemblance was recognized in the Middle Ages, as in a quatrain defining the set of qualities required to recognize *gentilesse*, the virtues taken to define high social class:

> In whom is trauthe, pettee, fredome, and hardynesse,
> He is a man inheryte to gentylmene.
> Off thisse virtues four who lakketh three,
> He aught never gentylmane called to be[25]

[Any man who possesses integrity, compassion, generosity, and courage carries a title to gentility. Whoever lacks three of these four virtues ought never to be called a gentleman]

or, to put it another way, any two of the defining virtues would just about be enough, regardless of which two were missing. Similarly with romance, *any* of the features that might be taken as definitive for the genre may be absent in any particular case without damaging that sense of family resemblance, though the dissimilarity increases, ultimately beyond the point of recognition, in proportion as the various elements are missing—or, alternatively, as an atypical element is given prominence. Even the characteristic most widely considered definitive for the genre, the happy ending, can be absent without destroying the sense that one is dealing with a romance.[26] The *Tristan* remains a romance despite the tragic deaths of the lovers, and so, more surprisingly, does the prose *Valentine and Orson*, in the teeth of the unprecedented disaster near its close when Valentine unintentionally kills his father. Intensify the unhappy ending still further, however, as in the case of the terrible final scene and the build-up to it that Shakespeare invented for *King Lear*, and the work moves out of the romance orbit, for all its love-tests and virtuous youngest daughter of three, elements familiar from its earlier romance treatments and from happily ending folktales.

Drawing up a list of the common features that cumulatively indicate family resemblance, generic identity, for romances presents few problems so long as one bears that caveat in mind: that no single one is essential for definition or recognition taken individually. Equally, related genres will share some features even though other unshared elements signal generic difference. Various observers may come to varying conclusions with regard to texts that keep the characteristics of different genres in balance, but that is as inevitable as differences of opinion as to whether someone more resembles a cousin on their mother's side or their father's side. The outward form of romances—that they are predominantly fictional narratives of some amplitude about particular individuals (whether those individuals are named or not)—is one that they share

with many other genres, though spelling it out is necessary in order to register the difference between romance and (non-fictional) history, or romance and (the more concise) ballad, or romance and allegory (which replaces the particular with the generalizing), though the borders between romance and all three other genres are highly permeable. The *Faerie Queene* manages to be both full-scale romance and full-scale allegory. Other Elizabethan romances transgress even the boundary of narrative, to take the form of drama, though the playwrights themselves, Shakespeare included, never use 'romance' as a generic term to describe their own writings.[27] Romances are further characterized by exotic settings, distant in time or place, or both; subject-matter concerning love or chivalry, or both; and high-ranking characters—all qualities that separate the dramatic romance from the earlier more quotidian emphases of classical comedy, and the narrative romance from the later more quotidian emphases of the novel. Equally important elements in recognizability are a series of features that serve to distinguish romance from the Old French epic, the *chanson de geste*. These include the shaking loose of the narrative from precise time and space; quests; magic and the supernatural; a concern less with the communal good than with the individual hero's inward thoughts, feelings, and aspirations, and, frequently, those of the heroine too; and a happy ending as normative, that ending often incorporating a return from an encounter with death—a symbolic resurrection. Typical of the treatment of all these elements in romance is a concern with ideals, especially secular ideals, and with human perfectibility within a social context: characteristics that further distinguish romances from another contiguous genre, the saint's life, where the ideals and the perfectibility function in almost complete separation from the practicalities of life in this world.[28] Even if perfection is not achieved, even if the hero in some way fails or the ending is not happy, the ideals themselves are not therefore treated with cynicism.

Those defining features might seem as if they would operate independently of the derivation of the term 'romance' mentioned earlier, as meaning simply a work in the (French) vernacular as against Latin. The two do, however, belong closely together. Latin was the academic and clerical language, the language of ecclesiastical, theological, and philosophical discourse; a language and a series of discourses that were the prerogative of that small percentage of the male population who possessed full Latin literacy. The number of women readers of Latin was tiny, and women writers in Latin need to be individually named rather than thought of as any kind of group. The massive dominance of surviving medieval Latin

over vernacular writings is in inverse proportion to those who could understand them: a fact that implies a far greater dissemination for vernacular texts than is suggested by the rates of their survival, unprotected as they were by monastic or cathedral libraries. The vernaculars were equally available to lay and clerical, women and men, and indeed children. They were the languages of the secular world: of the family and its perpetuation through marriage, reproduction, and the transfer of power and property, and therefore also of practical politics up to the highest levels of imperial rule; the languages of entertainment, not least after sundown when most work became impossible, or in any context where leisure-reading, or television, or a trip to the cinema might now be appropriate. The shift from one meaning of *romanz* to the other, from vernacular to story type, is particularly well illustrated around 1190 in the Anglo-Norman *Ipomedon* of 'Hue de Rotelande', Hugh (or perhaps Huw) of Rhuddlan, in North Wales. At the opening he welcomes his readers or listeners with an assurance that he is translating from Latin (a common claim, and by no means necessarily true), since no one will understand the story unless he puts it 'en romanz'; by the end, the phrase 'en cest romanz' carries a full generic significance:

> Ipomedon a tuz amanz
> Mande saluz en cest romanz
> Par cest Hue de Rotelande.[29]

[Ipomedon sends greetings to all lovers in this romance through Hugh of Rhuddlan.]

The audience Hue constructs here is a courtly one, since such a self-conscious concern with loving was strongly associated with the secular and the high-born.[30] When writers in English make comparable remarks about the need to translate from French into English, there is more explicit marking of social class about the statements: the first translator of the French prose *Merlin*, for instance, writing around 1300, notes that English is the universal language across all classes, whereas French is confined to the gentry:

> Freynsche use this gentil man
> Ac euerich Inglische Inglische can.[31]

[The gentry may speak French, but every English person knows English.]

A shift from Latin to French may extend the readership from those with formal education to potentially everyone in France, but to a much more

restricted group in England; what is known of the ownership of French romances in England throughout the Middle Ages indicates a strong bias towards the aristocracy.[32] The further shift into English made possible a much wider dissemination for the stories, and ultimately the explosion of readership when cheap prints became available.

The use of the vernacular separated romances from academic discourse. They did not require the strenuous exercise of the intellect; they were immediately accessible by virtue of their exciting narratives as much as by their choice of language, and were therefore ideally suited to being heard rather than read on the page. Most often this would mean that one person in a group (sometimes no doubt the only one with adequate reading skills) would read them to the rest, as a form of communal entertainment in an age before silent reading or cheap multiple copies. The romances were composed in written form and largely disseminated through manuscripts, but some degree of oral transmission, at least of the shorter romances, is also likely.[33] This does not mean that they were designed for the unintelligent. It is easy to assume, in a culture of universal education, that those who cannot read or write are stupid; but stupidity no more follows than it does for the managing director who dictates a letter rather than writing it himself, or for the mathematician who has never mastered the mechanical art of touch-typing. Romances, like novels, can appeal to readers of every level of intelligence, although (unlike the most intellectually demanding, and therefore élitist, novels) they always do their audience the kindness of placing a primacy on telling good stories. Their appeal is not however limited to that basic attraction of narrative excitement. Chrétien de Troyes, one of the earliest and best of the French writers of romance, insists that his romances are different from the mere tales of those who tell stories for a living; in addition to their subject-matter, their *matière*, they have an inner meaning, a *sens*. The terminology was commonplace enough for Chaucer to use the English equivalents, *matter* and *sentence*, without feeling any need to explain them.[34] This emphasis on meaning alongside story, the invitation to readers to think beyond the story, allowed many romances to be designed not just for reading but for discussion. There was a long fashion for debating formal love-questions, *demandes d'amour*, which often took a romance-type story as their point of departure, and free-standing romances sometimes explicitly invite such debate. Chaucer's Knight invites his audience to consider which is the better off, the lover exiled from the sight of his lady or the lover in prison who can see her; but the question is directed less by the Knight to the fictional pilgrims than by

Chaucer to his own real-life audience.[35] It is likely that romances that do not make such an explicit appeal for discussion were still used as material for conversation and argument. It is indeed hard to imagine that the author of a work such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* would not have sought, and elicited, such a response. Debate lay at the heart of much medieval culture, across most of the civil institutions invented in the Middle Ages: in the law courts, in the king's council, in Parliament, in the universities.[36] Romances could provide a secular forum analogous to academic debate. Their audiences expected to respond actively to them, and the writers encouraged such a response.

It is this kind of engaged reception of romances—by audiences who could and did *think* about what they were reading, and who could recognize the resonances of the story across the whole genre—that helped to make plot motifs become memes, with their ability to replicate and adapt. The organisms through which genes replicate require a particular ecological niche in which their life-form can operate; and the texts that contain these gene-like ideas similarly have their particular generic niche specified at the start, to establish the conditions in which their memes can generate. Readers' expectations are typically set in the opening lines, and recognizability can be enforced by direct repetition from one text to another. No fewer than three romances insist in the course of their first stanza in almost identical words that there is a chivalric story to follow, which

will telle you of a Knight
that was both hardye and wight

—that particular spelling of the lines being from the version of *Sir Eglamour* recorded *c.*1648, though they go back to its original composition around 1350.[37] Most romances similarly signal their generic allegiance within the first verse, or even, like *The Faerie Queene*, the first line:

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine . . .

And it could be done not only in narrative but in the new Renaissance extension of romance into drama, and not only with reference to chivalry but to the whole history of courtly storytelling and its alternative popular contexts. Shakespeare's *Pericles*, the most faithful to its romance source of any play that he wrote (and indeed the most faithful to its source of any outside his Plutarch-derived plays), opens with Gower as Chorus promising 'to sing a song that old was sung', one that

hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves and holy-ales,
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.[38]

The difference of the lines from those just quoted from the metrical romances and Spenser is, however, instructive. By this date (*c.*1608), to write a romance can be, not a natural act within a living tradition, but an act of conscious medievalism, a revival of the past. The high courtly past of the romance, the 'lords and ladies', recedes ever further into the distance, with folk-style oral retellings moving to the fore. *Pericles* insists on that quality of telling a story not only by what it says but by how it says it: the lines are spoken by the storyteller Gower himself, and the play enacts his retelling. By the time the play was written, the primary context for the continuing life of medieval romances was through the chapbooks and ballads sold by peddlers and at fairs—and through playwrights hungry for material for the popular theatres.[39] It is not surprising therefore that this most romance-like of Shakespeare's plays was also one of his most popular in its time.[40] His works can be more or less divided into those that make their generic affiliation clear from the start, and therefore invoke a set of audience expectations, and those that keep the audience uncertain, sometimes to the very end. For all the absence of the term 'romance' from Shakespeare, he was thoroughly familiar with the family resemblances and expectations of the form, and it is his most traditional romance that announces its genre most explicitly.

It is the generic awareness shared by author and audience, their common knowledge of how romances work and what they can do, that makes possible the subtlety with which writers can handle the building-blocks of the form, its motifs and conventions. 'Conventional' has become a pejorative word; yet etymologically it derives from the idea of coming together, agreement, a shared understanding. The criticism of modern forms of fiction, more downmarket than medieval romances, that similarly rely heavily on conventions or formulas—adventure stories, the Mills and Boon type of romances—has developed a considerable respect for the power of the formulaic, and in particular for the skill of individual writers in giving 'new vitality to stereotypes' to the point where a new archetype, a new model for imitation, can be created and in turn generate its own posterity. Furthermore, whereas the quality of *universality* has been widely regarded, ever since Aristotle, as what marks out great literature, what distinguishes the best within formulaic literature is the unique: the ability to give the sharpness of the individual to a variation on a known and recognized theme.[41]

EXPLOITING THE FAMILIAR

This ability to vary the pattern, to make a conventional, shared motif new and surprising, pervades early romance. The very familiarity of the pattern of the motif, the meme, alerts the reader to certain kinds of shaping and significance, and sets up expectations that the author can fulfil or frustrate. The same motif will not always mean the same thing, or in the same ways: on the contrary, what matters most is the variations on the ways it is used. Familiarity with the model is used precisely to highlight difference. The infinite adaptation of narrative material becomes a kind of shorthand for meaning, since it draws on what an audience already knows but reconfigures it in different ways. Conventions of this kind are the opposite of clichés, which replicate the familiar without change and are therefore inert. Conventions are what make literature work: they initiate active participation from the audience in the creation of meaning, through resonances with what is currently known and therefore living. Moreover, they only become conventional if they are in some way true to experience.

One of the most familiar conventions, the beautiful heroine, will illustrate how the process works. It makes a good preliminary example because the range of its uses stays largely stable over time, without the complicating factors incurred by cultural change. Its truth to experience comes from the principles of sexual selection: men find beautiful women more attractive, for biological as well as aesthetic reasons. Literature and art in all media have followed suit, throughout the centuries: perhaps the first requirement for any woman appearing in a visual medium now (film, television, advertisements) is a certain Helen of Troy quality, even if it is irrelevant to the job in hand. Works that claim a greater realism by insisting that their heroine is plain—*Jane Eyre*, for instance—will still insist that she has beautiful eyes: there is a minimum of beauty below which a heroine cannot fall. It is similarly the first requirement for romance heroines, and generally, as for film stars, without qualification. It can still, however, take many forms—perhaps more in the Middle Ages and Renaissance than now, since the recognition of the requirement was so overt; there was never any pretence that the beautiful was the norm. The plain fact of beauty, however, is uninteresting; it is the many things that can be done with it that give it power.

An insistence on the fact of beauty is none the less the first and basic form of the convention. Herodis, for instance, the heroine of *Sir Orfeo*, is introduced as 'the fairest leuedi for the nones',

> Ful of love and godenisse,
> Ac no man may telle hir fairnisse.[42] [but

This is a bare statement of her qualifications for her role as the leading lady: virtue and beauty—and interestingly (not least by contrast with modern culture), in that order. Also interesting, however, is the fact that the phrasing actually avoids description, by leaving almost everything to the imagination: 'no man may tell' precisely puts her beyond what can be said. Those romances (especially French ones) that spell out the heroine's beauty over dozens of lines run greater risks. One risk—which is indeed sometimes incurred deliberately—is that the account invites an intrusive or voyeuristic male gaze, of a kind blocked by the formulation for Herodis.[43] Another, hard to avoid in longer descriptions, is bathos: the heroine's nose will be neither too long nor too short, her chin the model of perfection, and so on for some time. A further danger run by descriptions of any length is a collapse into the inertia of cliché. This is not so common as one might expect from the familiarity of the topos, since beauty is so important: exceptional beauty is precisely what distinguishes the heroine, so the audience is required to be alert to it. There are, however, a few romances where every lady who appears is of outstanding beauty, and the effect, not least as regards the heroine herself, begins to pall. The challenge for an author is to make the beauty of his lady resonant: to bring in to his readers' minds every other beautiful heroine, and every response they have invoked, so as to make the effect of this particular instance of beauty stronger than if it were in actual fact unique. Chaucer offers a remarkable example of such resonance in his description of Emily in the *Knight's Tale*. Over the space of twenty lines, we are told almost nothing factual about her looks except that she has yellow hair; all the rest works by association, simile and suggestion.

> It fil ones, in a morwe of May,
> That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
> Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
> And fressher than the May with floures newe—
> For with the rose colour stroof hire hewe,
> I noot which was the fyner of hem two— [do not know
> Er it were day, as was hir wone to do, [custom

> She was arisen and al redy dight, [dressed
> For May wole have no slogardie anyght . . .
> Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
> Bihynde hire bak, a yerde long, I gesse.
> And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste, [sunrise
> She walketh up and doun, and as hire liste
> She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
> To make a subtil gerland for hire hede;
> And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.
>
> *CT*, I.1034–42, 1049–55

The male gaze here is literal: this is what the knights see as they look through their prison window, as mediated through the narrator's own focus. What they see, however, goes far beyond (or falls far short of) the voyeuristic. Emily is mentioned alternately throughout the passage with May, the month most deeply associated with love, not least in that great allegory of the psychology of falling in love, the *Romance of the Rose*, the action of which is similarly set in a garden. The rose and lily to which she is compared are, respectively, the flowers of eroticism, for the passion she inspires, and of purity, for the chastity she possesses—but chastity itself is a condition that immediately invites male attention. She is not, however, accessible: not only are the two men who are looking at her locked away in prison, but the imagery surrounding her puts her almost on a different plane from them. She and the sun rise together;[44] she sings like an angel. She is described, moreover, entirely in terms of the most spiritual senses, sight and hearing. The knights' instant love for her carries an unmistakable sexual element, but it also suggests an infinity of desire for the unattainable: she is their equivalent of the holy grail, to borrow an image from a different area of romance. Her function in the narrative is to be the undesiring object of male desire, and her introduction is designed to show how fully she justifies such desire by making every reader recognize that response.

Such a straight use of the description of beauty, to identify and define the heroine, is much the most widespread, and it is generically central to the family resemblance between romance heroines; but it is not the only way to handle the convention. Closely related to it is its use for emphasis, to point up a contrast, as for instance when the heroine is surrounded by the less than beautiful. This is commonly the situation of dispossessed heiresses who find themselves among country bumpkins: Spenser's Pastorella, for instance, or Shakespeare's Perdita. The comparative plainness of the other

shepherdesses may only be implied, but it is implied by a stress on the heroine's own beauty. Polixenes, cast at this point of *The Winter's Tale* as Perdita's enemy, moves within four lines from noting that she is 'the prettiest low-born lass' to the suggestion that she is 'too noble for this place';[45] and he is, of course, right.

A third use is for poignancy, most apparent when beauty is lost, through hardship or age or grief. There is a particularly moving example of the last of those in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, when the heroine has heard that she is to be traded to the Greeks in exchange for a captured knight, and so be separated from her lover. Chaucer accordingly describes her not as looking positively ugly or unattractive but in terms of the beauty and vibrancy she has lost:

> Hire face, lik of Paradys the ymage,
> Was al ychaunged in another kynde;
> The pleye, the laughter, men was wont to fynde
> In hire, and eek hire joyes everichone
> Ben fled, and thus lith now Criseyde allone.
>
> *Troilus*, IV.864–8

Again, the description is very unspecific: it works by association and resonance (the joy of Paradise) more than by statement, appealing to the readers' imagination more than to their list-making faculties. Her abandonment, that she is left 'allone', even if in the syntax only by those scarcely personified joys, stirs pity for her state both now in her desolation and proleptically for the future in her isolation in the Greek camp.

Descriptions of beauty are usually positive, designed to enhance the reader's response to the lady's attractiveness; but not always. The virtue that the author of *Sir Orfeo* mentions before his heroine's good looks is the conventional, expected, accompaniment to beauty: inward virtue is what outward beauty should represent. When that inner beauty is missing, the shock to one's expectations is all the greater. Beauty can function as a rather sinister kind of dramatic irony, to set up assumptions about the matching of inward and outward form in the minds of other characters or indeed of the readers, and then to betray them. There is a whole spectrum of beautiful villainesses in romances, from the diabolic (Perceval's lovely temptress on the Grail Quest is Lucifer himself in drag), through wicked enchantresses (such as Duessa in the *Faerie Queene*), to women who may or not be wicked or enchantresses (most famously, the lady in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), and finally to the women who turn out not to be romance heroines after all but rather the cheap and

sexually available female leads of a fabliau (such as May in the *Merchant's Tale*—'fresshe May', a parody of the beautiful Emily, but one who will go to great lengths to ensure male access to her garden). An altogether gentler kind of inappropriateness is found in Chaucer's description of the Prioress, with her unaffected ('simple') smile, soft red mouth, and fashionable grey eyes. That she is attractive is not in question; the question rather is whether she should be displaying it so generously to an almost-all-male company, or whether attractiveness ought to be the most striking attribute of a religious woman.

Beauty is generally thought of, now as in the Middle Ages, as an attribute of women, but another variation on the description of attractiveness is to reverse the gender roles. Not only is the hero handsome: very often, he will be seen as handsome through the eyes of a lady. Criseyde looks out of her window at Troilus and implicitly acknowledges his physical perfection, the glamour of the warrior—'so fressh, so yong, so weldy semed he' (*Troilus*, II.636). More striking still is *Ipomedon*, where Hue describes how first the disdainful heroine, and then a sequence of other women, *look* at the hero, then what they see (his handsomeness and fine body), then how they are attracted to him. Women are not cast merely as sex objects in romances, and especially not in those composed in England. They are frequently given their own thoughts and responses, expressed in soliloquies of self-analysis as they awaken to love, which endow them with the kind of subjective, interior, life that has often been claimed to be exclusively both a male and a modern phenomenon. If it is recognized as pre-modern, it is usually in terms of Petrarchism; but a 'Petrarchan' process of gazing at the object of desire, of falling irremediably in love, and responding in affective monologue, is first developed for the heroines of the very earliest generation of romance as they first see the men on whom they set their hearts, and it remains a forceful convention within Anglo-Norman and English romance through to Britomart and Juliet.[46]

A further variation on the theme of beauty is comic parody. For parody to work, its serious origins must be familiar; so it is interesting that Chaucer parodies the blazon of male beauty in *Sir Thopas*, his mock-romance in which the hero is the object of all-too-many female gazes ('ful many a mayde' sighs for him when they would do better to be asleep). Chaucer's literary self-consciousness and his readiness to encompass every possible variation on convention make him a master in this field: they show again in his description of the hen Pertelote, the favourite of Chauntecleer's seven wives (or more properly his 'paramours': they have

not been through any wedding ceremony), which does its best to set up the Nun's Priest's tale as a courtly romance. The language describing Pertelote is Anglo-French, and therefore courtly: she is a 'damoysele', courteous, 'debonaire', and 'compaignable'. Also, rather like Emily, she is 'the faireste hewed', though the colours turn out to be those of her throat feathers. The warning implicit in that mention of her throat, that she may not be everything the reader expects from a courtly heroine, acquires full force only when Chauntecleer thanks God for her beauty three hundred lines later, when her full henliness emerges.

> For whan I se the beautee of youre face,
> Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,   [eyes
> It maketh al my drede for to dyen.[47]   [allays all my fear

The shape of the formulation is indistinguishable from courtly romance or lyric, but we are not allowed to forget that this all takes place, after all, not in a court but in a chicken-run.

That example also serves to illustrate another way in which the topos of female beauty can be exploited: by verbal variation, by substituting the wrong phrase or detail in a description that would otherwise appear to be set up seriously. Pertelote has red rings around her eyes; Alison, in the *Miller's Tale*, sings not like an angel but like a swallow (high-pitched and unmusical); Sir Thopas's complexion is as white not as a lily but as bread. Sometimes items can be interchanged: Hoccleve rearranges all his lady's attributes to draw a portrait of a freak, just as Sir Philip Sidney later writes a poem in which his mistress's eyes, not teeth, are like pearl, and her skin, not her hair, like gold. Donne similarly describes the 'anagram of a good face' in which all the desirable similes are misapplied.[48] All these examples are parodic and comic; but the idea can also be used with a serious point, as it is most famously by Shakespeare in his sonnet on the less than Petrarchan looks of his mistress, 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun' (Sonnet 130), where he insists that a less than perfect reality is better than 'false compare', inaccurate or impossible comparisons. If a woman's looks are to be a measure of her sexual attractiveness, there is far more *phwoor* quality in a gypsy than in an alabaster statue.

One could map all the other conventions of the romance in similar ways: they can be used straight, for emphasis, poignantly, and in all kinds of variations, including absence. Some of these variations may finally become so anarchic or disruptive as to break the bounds of the genre altogether. Those disruptions need not be comic: some indeed are intensely serious and powerful, especially the denial of the expected

happy ending. Some can be pure fun, as in *Sir Thopas*, or, for a modern example, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, a film that is a useful reminder of how many medieval romance conventions are still current: how else would one recognize the ludicrousness of its being a young man, not a damsel, who is in distress? Perceval, in Chrétien's famous *Conte du Graal*, fails on his quest by neglecting to ask a question; the Monty Python knights have to answer one, whether the dangerously innocuous 'What is your favourite colour?' or the altogether more demanding, but no less inappropriate, 'What is the capital of Abyssinia?' Some romances work in a single mode, of taking all their conventions straight: those written earliest, when the conventions were still being established, are most likely to do so, since there was as yet no set of expectations on which the authors could play variations. A few late ones, whether fourteenth- or twentieth-century, take all their conventions as parody. Most, however, will mix modes, operate enough conventions straight to lull their audiences into a sense of familiarity, then shock them, for amusement or for disaster, by withholding or perverting what is expected. *Star Wars* has its quest, its princess, its Jedi knights, and its giant hairy monster, but he has to have his hand held when the going gets tough. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* uses social comedy to disguise a serious, and potentially fatal, test of chivalric perfection, in which Gawain fails. *As You Like It*, a play with an impeccable romance ancestry, laughs at all the ideals it ultimately supports: love and desire; the preference for an ethically good rather than a luxurious life; idealism itself. Chaucer's *Troilus* is set up as a love story—aristocratic, far away, and long ago, centrally concerned with ideals despite, or because of, its warrior hero's prostration by love—but the failure of its ideals, and the painfulness of its ending, finally take it over the boundaries of what most readers would regard as romance.

All those qualities and responses are made possible, and made powerful, by means of convention: by audience recognition. The familiarity of the memes of romance, its standard episodes and motifs and phrasing, make possible a much greater and more concise subtlety of response than could be achieved by invention from scratch. The originality lies in an author's handling of his materials, his (on very rare occasions, her) ability to disrupt, to startle, to shock. The shock may come from upset expectations, but it may also come from the recognition of something long known but in circumstances that defamiliarize it, that make you recognize it as if for the first time. Such defamiliarization can come even from an unchanged text if it is read in new conditions: an out-of-time romance can intersect with the historical moment of its reading or rereading in

new and unexpected ways. The colonels who overthrew democracy in Greece banned a performance of Sophocles' *Electra* in the 1960s for precisely those reasons: its story of principled resistance to tyrannical power in the hope of its overthrow was not a message they wanted to have declared, just as the group that planned to perform the play was well aware that a text over two thousand years old contained an explosive contemporary message. Romances and their motifs had a similar capacity for acquiring new meanings. That is why the fairy queen, bestower of favour and riches, the ultimate mistress both sexually and in terms of power, can become so potent a figure for Elizabeth I; or why Arthur can acquire a second meaning alongside his identity as the greatest British hero, as the embodiment of personal and political misrule that destroys his own kingdom, and so step outside the bounds of romance altogether.[49] Variations on conventions happen not only synchronically, within time, as authors choose the particular angle on a motif that suits them, but diachronically, across time, as cultural, historical, and political change alter beliefs and expectations.

Romance writers developed a remarkable refinement and precision of use of their language of motifs. The rest of this book is concerned with how that language worked, in order to transmit to a new generation of readers the literary competence that Chrétien or the *Gawain*-poet, or Chaucer, or Spenser, or Shakespeare, or dozens of anonymous writers could take for granted in their own audiences.

ROMANCE IN ENGLAND: A SUMMARY HISTORY

This book is concerned specifically with romance written or current in England. The genre developed there in distinctive ways that make its history unique in Europe. In the mid-twelfth century, when the expectations and conventions of romance were being established, England and France largely formed a single cultural unit: they were linked both linguistically (through the aristocratic language of Anglo-Norman, gradually beginning to separate itself from the western dialects of French) and politically (through Henry II's holding of both England and large areas of modern-day France in a single Angevin empire). By the end of the twelfth century, however, French romance was developing a trajectory distinct from Anglo-Norman and its English-language descendants in the genre. Many of the motifs still current in Elizabethan romance have their origins in these earliest Angevin texts; the memes, and indeed a number of the

texts themselves, showed remarkable adaptative powers and survival mechanisms over many centuries.[50] The opening date for this book, 1138, is the likely year of composition of the work that set many of the stories of romance on their way: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. The early seventeenth century forms the logical stopping-point, since the generation into which Spenser and Shakespeare were born was the last to be brought up on an extended range of medieval romances in more or less their original forms, and which therefore had access to the full range of their generic codings and intertextualities. A number of the stories continued to be widely disseminated into the nineteenth century through the medium of broadside ballads and chapbooks, but they largely ceased to fertilize the active production of new imaginative literature. Their modern incarnations, from Victorian Arthuriana forward, are more a matter of revival than survival. Romance itself remained important for a few more decades after Shakespeare's death, but in forms that had largely lost touch with the roots of the genre, not least its roots in England. His own last plays are almost the final works to profit from the power of those endlessly transforming traditions.

As a context for the rest of the book, and to demonstrate the continuity of the subject-matter of romance through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, a short summary of the history of the genre in England may be helpful, with a wider glance out at its interrelations with continental romance of various kinds. Much of this will be familiar to readers with particular specialities; but the periodization of literary studies means that not everyone will be aware of (for instance) the dozen centuries that separate Greek romance from Spanish romance, or the sheer longevity of many of the English traditions. A preliminary history will also rescue the stories of individual memes told in the rest of the book from being overwhelmed by too much on-the-spot contextualization. It is necessary too because the history of medieval romance is customarily written from a French perspective, and that is misleading in some crucial respects when it is applied to insular traditions.[51] The two traditions none the less remained interlinked; the examples taken from French romance later in the book are largely from works known to have circulated in England, and which therefore had the capacity for influencing the insular development of the genre.

The larger story of romance begins with Geoffrey of Monmouth, and never quite leaves him behind. *The History of the Kings of Britain* is not itself a romance. It was written in Latin, not vernacular 'romanz'; its scope is that of epic history, covering almost two millennia. Geoffrey's

endlessly inventive spawning of legends, however, provided the kind of quasi-historical material that allowed for constant reinvention in alternative, more overtly fictionalized forms down through the sixteenth century and beyond. His account of the foundation of Britain by Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, formed a powerful myth of origin that was rapidly given romance treatment in French and Anglo-Norman, and which four centuries later acquired a new force from the nationalist agendas of the Elizabethans.[52] Holinshed still repeats it as fact in his great *History of England*; Londoners were proud to promote the legend of their city as Troynovaunt, New Troy; and Elizabeth's own reign, attended by none of the disasters of Priam's, could be given mythopoeic treatment by direct contrast with its famous, but doomed, predecessor. Brutus accordingly reappears in the chronicles of the history of Britain, 'Briton moniments', in the *Faerie Queene*, along with another of Geoffrey's protagonists destined for future fame, King Leir.[53] Leir's story as given by Geoffrey, and indeed in all versions except Shakespeare's own, has a happy ending, with his restoration to his throne. It was retold in this form not just in every chronicle history, but in the influential French romance of *Perceforest*, and presumably also in an Anglo-Norman romance of King Leir of Leicester recorded in the thirteenth century, the text of which no longer survives.[54] Geoffrey's most famous and successful invention, however, was the rescuing of a shadowy Celtic hero named Arthur from the hinterlands of oral legend to the full light of a biography of conquest carried to the very walls of Rome, so establishing a legendary imperial past for Britain that reversed the direction of Brutus's westward retreat. Some seventeen years after Geoffrey, his translator Wace, writing his *Brut* in the *romanz* language of Anglo-Norman, added to the story of Arthur an account of the Round Table and its fellowship of knights; and in doing so he created the narrative space for the infinite generation of further stories—further romances—from Geoffrey's time-bound and linear model of conquest and downfall.[55] From these beginnings there eventually emerged such works as Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, with all its derivative Arthuriana in the modern world (including a fast-food restaurant in Tintagel called Excaliburgers), and the *Faerie Queene* itself.

The earliest works that are recognizable as romances—the first texts, that is, to use consistently and purposefully the motifs that became the accepted conventions of the new genre—were probably written, like the *Brut*, in the 1150s, within a couple of decades of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*, and look back either to classical epic or to Geoffrey's own additions to Trojan legend. Their difference from their epic antecedents lies partly in their choice of language—*romanz*, this time French, rather than the Latin of their originals—and partly in their shift of emphasis, from the founding of nations to the thoughts and feelings and aspirations of their protagonists. The inwardness of many romances itself reflects a larger cultural movement, from a shame culture, the belief that honour and shame and the acts that incur them constitute virtue and vice, to a guilt culture, the belief that virtue is finally a matter between yourself and the judgement of God.[56] Romance embraces both, sometimes without contradiction, but sometimes in a tension that makes any satisfying ending impossible. There is no such problem with works that are primarily the products of a shame culture, epics and *chansons de geste* such as *The Battle of Maldon* and *The Song of Roland*, where what impels heroism of action is the knowledge that it will be spoken of. Honour remains crucially important in romance, but it can strain other value systems beyond breaking-point. Love, and especially illicit love, was problematic from the earliest development of romance, in the Tristan legend. The hermits of the thirteenth-century *Quest of the Holy Grail* define the problem out of existence by classifying all desire for earthly glory as pride, the worst of the seven deadly sins, and all sexual love as lust, but it was not a solution that could satisfy a genre that founded itself on the principles important to secular society but denied by the Church's downgrading of the world and all its values. The earliest generation of romances bypassed the issue by locating their action outside Christian society altogether, in the classical pagan world. The clash between the rival cultures came later, as romance struggled to incorporate Christianity, and the Church attempted to colonize or suppress the new genre.

These classicizing romances, known generically as *romans antiques*, were therefore free to concentrate on the gap between inward and outward behaviour rather than on the gap between ethical systems. They set in tension the gender-inclusive intensity of private emotion and the male public world of military ambition and engagement. There are three major early romances of this kind: the *Roman de Thèbes*, which tells the story of the 'seven against Thebes' best known from Statius; the *Roman de Troie*, by Benoit de Saint-Maure, a retelling of the story of the siege of Troy that first introduces the love affair of Troilus and Cressida into literature; and the *Roman d'Eneas*, a version of Virgil's *Aeneid* in which Lavinia, the woman whom Aeneas eventually marries, moves centre stage. But however much their narratives may have been concerned with private passion, the texts themselves had higher political concerns. All three were associated with the Angevin court of Henry II and Eleanor of

Aquitaine, and are likely to have circulated on both sides of the Channel. In conjunction with Wace's *Brut*, the last two in particular may have been intended, or regarded, as offering an ancestral history of Angevin sovereignty. The western European kingdoms, France as well as Britain, were believed to have been founded by the progressive journeyings of Aeneas and his descendants, fugitives from Troy, in the movement designated the *translatio imperii*, the westward shift of imperial power that included not only Aeneas' founding of a new Trojan empire in Italy but ultimately the establishment of the papacy at Rome. Once Aeneas was incorporated into the ancestral history of Britain and the Angevins, then the rest of Trojan history followed too.

The chivalric elements of romance figure in the *romans antiques*, but they received their greatest boost from the entry of the Round Table into literature in Wace. Geoffrey's Arthur had been a great conqueror, but the Round Table allowed for the creation of new stories of individual knights, and therefore of the quest romance, of the knight who rides out from court to seek adventure. The great figure here is Chrétien de Troyes, who wrote between the 1160s and 1180s for a number of aristocratic patrons, including Marie de Champagne, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Chrétien is generally regarded, and with good reason, as the greatest of the romance writers, and his works dominate the criticism of French romance. They were at least partially known in England (*Ywain and Gawain* is a translation of his *Yvain*; *Percyvell of Galles* takes his *Conte du Graal* as its starting-point), but his influence was not paramount for the development of English romance to the degree that it was for French. By far his most influential work, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, 'The Knight of the Cart', did for Lancelot and Guinevere what Geoffrey had done for Arthur, that is, invent an enduring story from negligible antecedents, and, in the eyes of many cultural historians, invent courtly love as well;[57] but the story is rarely mentioned in English before Malory in the late fifteenth century, and most definitions of courtly love are simply irrelevant to insular romance. Chrétien's Arthur was, however, taken as part of that great ancestral schema stretching back to Troy: three of the six surviving manuscripts that contain his romances locate them in a chronological sequence that includes a selection of the *romans antiques* and Wace's *Brut*.[58]

The direction of influence in romance is often taken as being westwards, like the *translatio imperii* and its intellectual equivalent the *translatio studii*, in this case from France to Britain; but it was by no means all a one-way movement, as the French adoption of Arthur from Geoffrey of

Monmouth indicates. Geoffrey was probably living in Oxford when he wrote his *History*, and his own origins lie further west still, in the borders of Wales. He and Chrétien both show abundant signs of using Celtic material, from the outer fringes of Britain and mainland Europe—Ireland, Wales, and, for writers in French, Brittany. Legends about Arthur had been circulating in the Celtic areas of Britain for some time before Geoffrey developed them into a full biography; and some of the tales in the Welsh *Mabinogion* show close links with Chrétien, not all necessarily or entirely by derivation from him.

There is one variety of romance that is defined by the pride with which it proclaims its Celtic origins: the Breton lai, as practised by Marie de France and her imitators from the 1170s forwards. The Breton lais are shorter than most full-scale romances; they generally emphasize emotions more than actions; and they announce in their prologues their origins in the stories and songs circulating through Breton minstrels—so making the works that comprise the genre immediately recognizable while leaving the question of formal definition largely opaque. Despite her cognomen, Marie has strong connections with England: she probably lived and wrote there, and she knew its language and at least some of its literary traditions.[59] English developed its own tradition of Breton lais in the fourteenth century, including one by Chaucer (the *Franklin's Tale*), whose claim of Breton antecedents for the work is distinctly cheeky; the few English Breton lais that reached print, however, were assimilated back into the broader genre of romance.

Celtic material was associated not only with particular varieties of romance, or particular heroes, but with certain areas of subject-matter, especially magic and the supernatural. The story of Tristan combines a Celtic hero and setting (Cornwall, Ireland, Brittany) with a magic love-potion as the engine of its plot. The earliest *romanz* version, whether continental French or Anglo-Norman, is lost, but it gave rise to a rush of derivative texts from around 1170 onwards. Chrétien wrote a romance on the subject, also now lost; but it was an Anglo-Norman poet named Thomas who turned Tristan into one of the central figures of the whole romance genre in almost every European language. His own text survives only in fragments, but those can be supplemented by early translations and adaptations into Old Norse, Middle High German (in the famous version by Gottfried von Strassburg), Middle English, and various other languages too.[60] His skill is evident in the subtlety of his treatment of the magic, in which what it *means* is much more important than its quality as mere marvel, what it *does*. The story's power came from its central

theme of a love so strong as to override all social and political taboos, since it linked a man with the wife of his uncle and overlord in a love at once adulterous and traitorous. Adultery no more became the norm of later romance than did treason—almost all romances are narratives either of courtship leading to marriage, or of the trials that part a loving married couple;[61] but it was Thomas's handling of the Tristan story that made the revolutionary move of presenting a fully sexual love independent of marriage as both overwhelming and self-justifying. The influence of that move made itself felt almost immediately, in Chrétien's shaping of the similarly traitorous love of Lancelot and Guinevere in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. Even as penitential manuals were warning that all sexual desire, even within marriage, was in some degree sinful, and the papacy was concluding its fight to impose celibacy on all priests as a non-negotiable standard of perfection (and as a prophylactic against inheritance claims), the *Tristan* offered a model in which sexual love offers its own challenging, and equally non-negotiable, standard of a secular absolute, irresistible even when it opposes all moral and feudal norms. The consequences of that move have affected attitudes down to the present day. Thomas did not, of course, invent lifelong heterosexual love single-handed, but he gave it a visibility and a language to describe it that it had never had before. That language is still evident in the many love-romances that reject the illicit elements in his formulation of love (England was particularly resistant to those, despite Thomas's Anglo-Norman origins); but erotic rhetoric and the illicit exuberantly ran side by side in many of the mainland European romances, not least those bestselling blockbusters of the early sixteenth century, *Orlando Furioso* and *Amadis de Gaule*.

Love is a feature of both the classical and the Breton material, but the first vernacular European work to ground its whole plot and motivation solely in love, *Floire et Blancheflor*, probably came from a different cultural source, Arabic Spain: the same culture that may have inspired some elements in the Provençal tradition of love-poetry.[62] Its even-handed treatment of its Christian and Saracen characters, even the Emir of Babylon (from whose harem the young Floris has to recover his beloved Blancheflour), may be grounded in such origins, in contrast to the near-universal casting of Saracens as the opponents of Christendom elsewhere in romance. *Floire* was first composed around 1160 in French; it spread rapidly across Europe, with versions appearing in languages from Old Norse to Yiddish and Spanish. As *Floris and Blancheflour*, it was one of the very first romances to be composed in Middle English, in the mid-thirteenth century.[63]

As the instance of Thomas of England demonstrates, it was Anglo-Norman as much as French that set the pace for the twelfth-century development of romance. Not all of this activity was focused on the Angevin court; the genre could flourish wherever there were Anglo-Norman-speaking gentry and patrons, including, for instance, the Welsh Marches that were the adult home of Hue de Rotelande, Hugh of Rhuddlan, the author of *Ipomedon*. The influence of insular material showed itself not only in the dissemination of such works in France and beyond, nor in the French use of British and Celtic legends, but in the retelling of English legends (that is, legends about England after the Anglo-Saxon invasions that gave the country its modern name, and therefore after the end-point of Geoffrey's *History*) in the new form of romance, and the new languages of *romanz*. This 'matter of England'—a new subject-area to set beside the traditional 'matters' of Rome (Troy), Britain (Arthur), and France (Charlemagne)[64]—was especially likely to remain current in England in the sixteenth century, though its origins are sometimes well disguised. Its earliest texts were most often composed in Anglo-Norman, though some of those may have English-language antecedents. The earliest extant version of the romance of Horn, for instance, is Anglo-Norman, but since the story requires some punning on the name 'Horn', which fails to work properly in any language other than English, that Anglo-Norman form is likely to have been based on a story already current in English. What that may have been like may be indicated by the later Middle English *King Horn*, recorded around the mid-thirteenth century. The story has a long history, with a second Middle English redaction in the fourteenth century that itself gave rise to a traditional ballad;[65] the Anglo-Norman was freely rewritten in French prose in the fourteenth century, losing its English connections in the process, and that version was in turn translated into English (twice) under the title of *King Ponthus and the Fair Sidone*, and went through several printed editions under the Tudors.[66] Another 'matter of England' legend, that of Havelok, first appears in Anglo-Norman in the continuation to Geoffrey's *History* written by Gaimar; in due course that too was rewritten as an autonomous romance, both in Anglo-Norman and Middle English.[67] This story also makes a late reappearance, in William Warner's *Albions England* of 1586, from where it jumps into the work of Lodge and Shakespeare. Warner himself turns it into a prefiguration of the story of Elizabeth.[68]

English-language romances did not become common until the fourteenth century. There was a flurry of them, all with French or

Anglo-Norman antecedents, composed around 1300, and the numbers steadily increased over the next three hundred years. Many now survive as part of larger manuscript anthologies, though that format may indicate not so much that they were most often copied in collections as that individual copies were much more likely to disintegrate or be thrown away. Most of these anthologies date from the fifteenth century. The earliest to survive, which in its present damaged form contains sixteen romances along with pious and other works, dates from not long after 1330: the famous Auchinleck manuscript.[69] The latest, yet more imperfect since a number of its leaves were used for firelighting in the eighteenth century but which still contains twelve romances in more or less their original medieval form, is the Percy Folio manuscript, an assemblage of verse narratives, ballads, and lyrics composed at various dates from the early fourteenth century to the time of their collection in the 1640s.[70] Although many of these romances have French antecedents, they take a characteristically different angle on their material. They are generally more compatible with orthodox Christian morality (adultery is out; pre-marital sex is just that, pre-marital, and even that is rare); quite a number are overtly pious, stressing the Job-like endurance of God-given trials before restoration and a Providence-assisted happy ending. They tend to indicate emotion more by action or statement than by soliloquy or formal analysis. They avoid the more extreme flights of fantasy of continental European romance. They tend, in fact, to show many of the qualities often described as being associated with the rise of the bourgeois novel: a parallel that may be connected with their choice of the English language, and therefore with their downward social penetration from the French-reading aristocracy to the gentry and to townsmen.

Once composed, romances showed a remarkable longevity. The great majority of the English romances written before 1350 survive in multiple copies, most of them made in the fifteenth century, and at least eight were put into print by early Tudor publishers, notably Wynkyn de Worde and Copeland. Those eight are *Bevis of Hamtoun*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Cœur de Lyon*, *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Degaré*, *Sir Eglamour*, and *Octavian*. Translations made after 1350 of a number of other earlier Anglo-Norman romances also reached print, among them being Marie's *Lanval* and Hue's *Ipomedon*.[71] Texts from this corpus still figure prominently three hundred years after their composition in the Percy Folio manuscript.[72] Fifteenth-century romances provided abundantly more printing copy. Most of the printed English romances were written in tetrameter couplets; the other widespread early form,

tail-rhyme, had passed its peak of popularity by the end of the fourteenth century, though tail-rhyme romances continued to be composed for a further hundred years. A few of the later romances used more elaborate verse forms, such as the Chaucerian invention of rhyme royal. There were just a few composed in alliterative verse, sometimes with rhyme added, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but these did not have the wide geographical appeal of the metrical romances, and none reached print.

Both the popularity and the longevity of metrical romance are exemplified by two 'matter of England' romances that were universally known throughout the sixteenth century: *Bevis of Hamtoun*; and *Guy of Warwick*. They were first composed in Anglo-Norman in the thirteenth century, probably to celebrate, or to create, founding English heroes for two of the great medieval aristocratic dynasties, those of the Albini family of Arundel and of the earls of Warwick.[73] They were first translated into English around 1300, and in various versions enjoyed a wide popularity, massively increased when they were put into print by Wynkyn de Worde and a succession of later publishers. In contrast to the many medieval romance texts that ceased to be printed after the earlier decades of the Tudor age, these went through numerous new editions throughout the sixteenth century, and in the case of *Bevis* into the eighteenth.[74] Bevis's dragon-fight is replicated in Redcrosse's fight with his own dragon in Book I of the *Faerie Queene*, with a detail that indicates that Spenser's readers were intended to recognize and to respond to its echoes of the previous work;[75] and the hero of Spenser's Book II, Guyon, takes his name, his association with the palmer, and his political resonance from *Guy of Warwick*, whose hero is regularly named as Guyon whenever the metre or rhyme requires it.[76] The stories get a handful of mentions each in the broad corpus of Shakespeare's work, with a casualness that again shows how universal a knowledge of the works could be assumed at every social level of his characters and his audience.[77] The most interesting of these is the quotation that Edgar offers in his disguise as Poor Tom, where the couplet on Bevis's hardships in prison,

> Rattes and myse and suche small dere [animals
> Was his meate that seven yere

becomes Tom's

> Mice and rats and such small deer
> Hath been Tom's food for seven long year.[78]

Shakespeare seems to be right on the mark here in positing both a noble Edgar who knows his *Bevis*, and an association of such knowledge with the commonest of commoners. This universality, however, implied a populism that led to increasing scorn from the educated, a scorn partly justified in the case of *Bevis* by the desperation of the attempts to preserve rhyme while making the antiquated Middle English comprehensible.[79] Despite that, it still offered enough of a grip on the imagination for John Bunyan to rework his youthful reading of it as the giants and monsters of *The Pilgrim's Progress*; and even after it had ceased to be printed in its medieval shape, it continued a lively existence as a prose chapbook.

Guy of Warwick enjoyed a similar longevity in various forms. Much of its power came from its being the prime story of the chivalric knight who finds that chivalry is not enough. Guy renounces his hard-won wife, Felice (the name is cognate with 'felicity'; Renaissance classicizing habits turned her into the commonplace Phillis), to seek a greater felicity, becoming a palmer and eventually a hermit. The story was sufficiently compelling to be disseminated not only in England but in continental Europe too: literature composed in England was by no means just a receiver of literary influence. The original Anglo-Norman text was rewritten in French prose in the fifteenth century, and had an extensive influence on the Spanish *Tirant lo Blanc* of Joanot Martorell and Martì Joan de Galba. The English text of *Guy* made a final appearance in its medieval shape in the Percy Folio manuscript, but from around 1600 the story was disseminated in a variety of rewritten versions. It was dramatized at least twice for the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage, possibly as many as four times, and one of these plays was put into print after the Restoration.[80] From the 1590s onwards, the story of Guy was a favourite broadside ballad, though the legend moved upmarket as well as down. John Lane, a friend of Milton's father and keen nationalist where literature was concerned (he wrote a twelve-canto completion of the *Squire's Tale*), turned the Guy legend into a poem of even more epic proportions, though it never found a publisher. Samuel Rowlands was much more successful with his markedly Spenserian twelve-canto version of 1607. With the shift of literary fashion towards prose, this was revised to remove the line endings and most of the rhymes, leaving it as a kind of historical novel with the skeleton of the iambic pentameters sticking through the prose, and it was still being published in this form until the late nineteenth century.[81] This, or perhaps one of the many smaller and cheaper chapbooks on Guy, would have been the source by which Samuel Richardson and his readers knew of Guy's greatest exploit, his defeat of

Colbrand, the giant champion of the pagan Danes: an episode still familiar enough in 1740 for the same name to be given to the villain of *Pamela*, 'a giant of a man' whose foot was 'near as long' as his heroine's arm.[82] Both *Guy* and *Bevis* were as familiar as the legends of Robin Hood or King Arthur (or indeed of Valentine and Orson) until the start of the twentieth century.

Prose romance reached England late. The first shift of the genre into prose had taken place in France in the early years of the thirteenth century, with the composition of the huge *Lancelot-Grail*, the 'Vulgate cycle' of Arthurian romances. Its authors are unknown, though it claims to have been written by Walter Map, the clerical satirist and collector of unconsidered trifles who lived in the reign of Henry II. The claim is not sustainable, but it is interesting as demonstrating the dominance of Anglo-Norman in early romance: if you wanted to advertise the glories of your romance, you did so by claiming English authorship for it—or, to be more precise, since Walter was even more Welsh than the Norman-Welsh Geoffrey of Monmouth, British authorship, though it is not clear whether early French readers would have registered the difference in his case. For well over a century, the new form of prose remained limited even in France to works that modelled themselves directly on the *Lancelot-Grail*: the only slightly less huge prose redaction of the *Tristan*, a free imitation of the *Lancelot* that intertwined the stories of the two heroes; and the mammoth early fourteenth-century *Perceforest*, which linked the prehistory of Arthur to Alexander the Great (and which was one of the influences behind the founding of the Order of the Garter).[83] It was not until the very end of the fourteenth century that prose became the medium of choice for French romance. The innovations of the *Lancelot-Grail* did not have an immediate effect on romance in England, though the scanty records of book ownership indicate that copies of the individual romances it comprised were widely disseminated in aristocratic families in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[84] The first English translation from Vulgate material, *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, selects from the French *Merlin* primarily the quasi-historical material already covered by Geoffrey of Monmouth. It also translates it into verse. Verse remained the medium for romance in England until the full *Merlin* was translated into prose in the mid-fifteenth century, and the equation of the genre with verse was decisively broken only by Sir Thomas Malory at the end of the 1460s. The most surprising thing about the Vulgate material, however, is how separate it remained from English-language romances of Arthur. Occasional writers, notably the *Gawain*-poet, show

signs of knowing it; but its decisive differences from Geoffrey's account of Arthur get only obscure mention in English before 1400, and very little before Malory. These are, first, the pre-eminence of Lancelot, a character who postdates Geoffrey's *History*, and his affair with Guinevere; and second, that Mordred was not simply Arthur's nephew, who rebelled against him while he was away on his career of conquest, but that Mordred was also his incestuous son, whose treachery was made possible by the king's war against Lancelot over his queen.[85] In the English tradition, Gawain remains the top knight of the Round Table; Lancelot is a peripheral French invention, and his affair with Guinevere, if it registered at all, seems to have been dismissed as a French slander on the great British hero.

The greatest influence of the French Arthurian prose romances on later romance was in terms of structure more than of material. The earlier verse romances had traced the adventures of a single hero (or at most two protagonists, or a hero and heroine); the prose romances decisively broke with that model. The *Lancelot-Grail* cycle, the Prose *Tristan*, and the *Perceforest* substituted a structure in which a large number of stories could be pursued in parallel. The model has come down to us in the form of Dickens's advancing a series of plot lines in a sequence of instalments for serial publication, or, in a visual rather than textual medium, in television soap operas. Interlacing enabled expansion, the potentially endless extension of the pleasure of story. The Vulgate romances themselves became especially popular in southern Europe (Dante's Paolo and Francesca famously start their affair through reading the Prose *Lancelot* together), and further prose versions of them were produced in both Italy and Spain.[86] Their interlaced structure was inherited by Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso, and in due course by Spenser for the *Faerie Queene*. Sidney's format in his revised *Arcadia* of flashback and digression is a parallel development from the structural experimentation of the *Lancelot-Grail*, mediated in his case more through Spanish romance than Italian.

The second round of French fashion for prose romance, in the fifteenth century, was at its height when Caxton set up his press at Westminster. He had spent much of his career in Burgundy, where some of the most famous of these romances had been composed, and, although he avoided the traditional English metrical romances, he translated and printed a number of these fashionable and wildly successful continental works.[87] His successors in the printing business added more, including *Valentine and Orson* some time in the first decade of the sixteenth century. Their continuing fashionability is indicated by the translations of *Huon of Bordeaux* and *Arthur of Little Britain* made in the reign of Henry VIII by John Bourchier, Lord Berners, both of which remained popular to the end of the century. The prose romances flourished alongside the metrical in the first half of the sixteenth century, but largely outlasted them: a much higher proportion were still going through new editions in the 1590s and later. Spenser made an unusual choice at this date in following Chaucer and Ariosto in his selection of a long stanza rather than prose for his near-epic romance: prose was to be the preferred choice of future generations of serious readers. Verse narrative was increasingly associated with the broadside ballad, or with tales for children; a measure of its separation from narrative fiction is indicated by the difficulty of imagining a rhyming novel.

The rise of prose helped to speed the demise of the metrical romances. The fashionable fiction of the later decades of the sixteenth century consisted of collections of *novelle*, largely Italian in origin; translations of the huge Spanish prose romances, such as *Amadis de Gaule* and *Primaleon* for chivalric romance and Montemayor's *Diana* for the more self-consciously humanist variety; and the occasional Greek romance, the perfervid form of adventure and sexual fantasy that had flourished under the Roman Empire, such as Heliodorus's *Ethiopica* in Underdowne's translation, or Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* as reworked by Angel Day. One other Greek romance, *Apollonius of Tyre*, had already been translated into English four times before becoming newly fashionable in the Elizabethan era.[88] This long history, and its rather more restrained subject-matter, had naturalized it as English: it is as an old native story, told by Gower, that Shakespeare dramatized it in *Pericles*, and its earlier English versions drop out of sight in the seventeenth century along with many other of the native romances. What is known of the printing history of the metrical romances suggests that new editions were becoming fitful from the time that Henry VIII imposed increasingly draconian state control over publication as the Reformation took hold, and, after a recrudescence in the 1550s under Mary, they became increasingly sparse after Elizabeth came to the throne. It is hard to be sure just how sparse, since almost the entire corpus of printed metrical romance has disappeared: abundant contemporary references to the end of the century indicate that the texts were still widely known, but the younger generation may have read them largely in increasingly tattered copies acquired by parents or even grandparents. Although it is possible to trace a continuous printing history of a medieval metrical text into the seventeenth

century and beyond only for *Bevis of Hamtoun*, it is unlikely to have been the only one to be reprinted across the 1600 divide. There is, for instance, a record (but no copy) of a 1577 print of *Eger and Grime*, mentioned as popular in the fifteenth century, but surviving only in the Percy Folio manuscript and later prints from 1669 to 1711;[89] and a comparable printing history is likely for *Roswall and Lillian*, a romance whose form, phraseology, and language show it to have been composed in the fifteenth century, yet which survives only in a series of northern and Scottish prints running from 1663 to 1786 (Sir Walter Scott noted that it was still being sung on the streets of Edinburgh at the end of the eighteenth century).[90] Many other stories survived, but, like *Guy of Warwick*, only in different incarnations. A few were rewritten in prose, at various levels of respectability: Lodge wrote prose versions of both *Gamelyn* and *Robert the Devil*; and the seventeenth-century prose *Guy* based on Rowlands's poem continued a healthy life well into the nineteenth century. It was equalled in the popularity stakes by the prose *Valentine and Orson*, which appeared in prints of every length from chapbooks of single folded sheets to substantial quarto volumes, and inspired a Victorian pantomime or two along the way.

What is abundantly clear is that the native romances retained a popularity out of all proportion to the evidence of the printed record alone. It is as misleading to see the absence of new editions as indicating a lack of knowledge of them as it is to measure their popularity earlier in the century by the number of copies surviving. The evidence lies both in later survivals, and in the vituperation of moralists throughout the sixteenth century about their continued universal popularity: you don't waste your breath, or your ink, condemning a decades-old corpse. The Percy Folio manuscript is a rare witness to this continuing unofficial life: it attests to a massive survival of native romance into the seventeenth century such as has left almost no traces elsewhere in the written record. It preserves a mixture of romances that had appeared in print, either copied direct or quite possibly orally transmitted; romances not known to have been printed, though entire editions may have been lost; and others in the newly fashionable form of the broadside ballad. Further north, in the country of the traditional ballad, other romances were passing into oral form, apparently bypassing the medium of print: *Horn*, *Sir Orfeo*, the romance section of *Thomas of Erceldoune* that tells of the protagonist's sojourn in elfland.

Further evidence from contemporary preachers, moralists, and cultural commentators throughout the half millennium of the dominance

of romance gives us not only lists of the most popular romances, but also an indication of how the genre veered from disapproval to approval and back again, as historical, and in particular religious, circumstances changed. Secular fiction had been condemned by Christian writers ever since Augustine deplored his greater readiness to weep over Dido's sufferings than over Christ's.[91] Comparable castigations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance provide a useful index to fashions in romance. Fourteenth-century moralists cited Guy of Warwick's lion, killed defending its master, as a tear-jerker equivalent to Dido; they condemned Bevis, Guy, Octavian, and Isumbras, despite the exemplary Christian penitence shown by most of them; or they set out to replace with Biblical stories a long list of romances including those of Alexander, Troy, Brutus, Arthur and his knights, Charlemagne and Roland, and Tristan and Isolt—all of which were still flourishing, in their original versions or later retellings, in the sixteenth century.[92] The start of the fifteenth century saw a sharp reversal in approved reading-matter, however, as the new Wycliffite translation of the Bible into English suddenly put Holy Scripture, and with it heresy, within reach of those without clerical training. Romances, with their promotion of traditional stable ideologies including the defence of the Church, suddenly appeared a much more desirable area of reading-matter than the English Scriptures, with their innovatory revolutionary potential. Hoccleve accordingly urged knights, in the exemplary figure of the heretic Sir John Oldcastle, to stick with the chivalric reading proper to their station:

> Bewar, Oldcastel, and for Crystes sake
> Clymbe no more in holy writ so hie.
> Rede the storie of Lancelot de lake,
> Or Vegece of the aart of Chivalrie,
> The seege of Troie, or Thebes; thee applie
> To thyng that may to th'ordre of knyght longe![93]

By 1529, when Richard Hyrd was translating Vives' *Instruction of a Christen Woman* for Katherine of Aragon, the conventional moral line had reasserted itself: condemning the usual reading of 'idel men and women', he provides a list of popular English romances alongside the titles already listed by Vives:

> those ungratious bokes, suche as be in my countre in Spayne: Amadise, Florisande, Tirante, Tristane, and Celestina the baude mother of naughtynes. In Fraunce: Lancelot du Lake, Paris and Vienna, Ponthus and Sidonia, and Melucyne. In Flaunders: Flory and White flowre, Leonell and Canamour, Curias

and Floret, Pyramus and Thisbe. In England: Parthenope, Genarides, Hippomadon, Wyllyam and Miliour, Libius, and Arthur, Guye, Bevis, and many other.[94]

Many of the texts cited here as popular on the continent already also existed in English versions, or were translated later in the century: *Amadis de Gaule*, *Tristan* (in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, along with *Lancelot*), *Celestina*, *Paris and Vienne*, *King Ponthus*, *Melusine*. *Floris and Blancheflour* is less likely to have been known by this date, though the existence of a distantly-related ballad may argue for a continuing oral life.[95] Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe was available in various vernacular versions. And the English titles give a cross-section of the range of romance-reading of the period: fourteenth-century metrical romances now available in print, in *Ipomydon*, *Libius Desconus*, *Guy* and *Bevis*; fifteenth-century verse redactions of earlier French romances, in *Partonope of Blois* and *Generides*; a prose version of a romance already translated once into Middle English verse (in this case, alliterative verse), in *William of Palerne* (the *William and Melior* of the list);[96] and Arthur, by which Hyrd may have meant Malory, or possibly any and every romance that contained Arthurian material.

The Reformation added a new danger to the reading of the traditional romances, for they had been written, as Ascham noted, 'when Papistrie, as a standyng poole, covered and overflowed all England'.[97] Hoccleve, by this interpretation, was right: the texts promoted a Catholic ideology, but that in turn had now become socially dangerous. The romances were condemned for not conforming to the new theology, to the new requirements for pious and Protestant reading, or (in the eyes of cultural critics such as Thomas Nashe, perhaps their worst failure) to the new humanist standards of rhetorical excellence. It became fashionable to sneer at them: they were condemned as having been written by those all-purpose Reformation villains, monks ('abbey-lubbers', in Nashe's contemptuous phrase).[98] But none of this stopped their being read, and, despite the cessation of the printing of many of the texts, remaining thoroughly familiar. There is some evidence that they may have held a particular attraction for recusants—one known enthusiast with strongly Catholic sympathies, Edward Banyster, went so far as to copy out five printed romances to convert them back into manuscript form, complete with illustrations—but such evidence needs to be read against their universal appeal.[99] It is perhaps not so surprising that Captain Cox's library, as recorded in 1575, should have included eight of the medieval metrical

romances in addition to an abundance of prose romances, ballads, jest-books, plays, and other works;[100] it is more surprising to find people born in that same decade still growing up to be familiar with a comparable range of stories, as if a whole generation of parents kept a Captain-Cox-style collection of old stories for their children to read. Schoolmasters had to compete for their pupils' interest against quartos of *Bevis*, *Guy*, *Valentine and Orson*, *The Four Sons of Aymon*, King Arthur, and assorted stories of monsters, all damned together as the product of lazy monks.[101] The dangerous papistry of such works was, however, offset by a compensating virtue: these were home-grown romances, any continental origins long forgotten. In the great Elizabethan creation of a distinctively national culture and literature, and even a national religion, the native romances could play a central part that Virgil and Ariosto and Heliodorus could not.

It was not humanism nor Protestantism that finally drove such works out of high cultural visibility, but satire. A number of mass-market potboilers of the 1590s, which piled on the native romance memes at a rate of several per page, seem poised to invite very different reactions from sophisticated and from less-educated readers—works such as Richard Johnson's *Seven Champions of Christendom*, which provides a full romance set of adventures including lady-loves and children for seven leading saints, and *Tom a Lincoln*, the life story of an illegitimate son of King Arthur that incorporates an affair with a self-styled fairy queen; or Christopher Middleton's *Chinon of England*, in which Sir Lancelot pursues and marries a lady with the impeccably Petrarchan name of Laura.[102] The enthusiasm for translations of the long and fantastic Spanish romances, including Cervantes's favourite *Amadis de Gaule*, put English readers in a good position to appreciate *Don Quixote* when it was first translated into English, by Thomas Shelton in 1612–20; and, at the same time, Samuel Rowlands was composing his *Melancholie Knight*, which did for the native tradition of romance what *Don Quixote* had done for the Spanish. His knight is melancholy because he is poor, but he is not in the least virtuous. He has read all the right stories, of Sir Lancelot, Sir Triamour, Sir Bevis, Sir Guy, *The Four Sons of Aymon*, King Arthur, 'the Monster slayers, and the Gyant killers'; and he is himself quite prepared to fight dragons, so long as they are tied up. To demonstrate his learning in 'worthy workes', he tells a sample romance, of the perennial favourite Sir Eglamour, its tetrameters now intensified into nursery rhyme.

Sir Eglamour, that worthy knight,
He tooke his sword and went to fight.
And as he rode both hill and dale
Armed upon his shirt of male,
A Dragon came out of his den
Had slaine, God knowes how many men.

The dragon-fight of *Bevis of Hamtoun* had supplied Spenser with his model for the Redcrosse Knight's long-drawn-out combat against a dragon at once apocalyptic and papal, and Chinon of England first tests his chivalry against a fire-breathing monster; Rowlands, despite, or because of, his fondness for traditional romance, deals with Eglamour's dragon-fight more briskly.

The Dragon had a plaguy hide,
And could the sharpest steele abide,
No sword will enter him with cuts
Which vext the Knight unto the guts;
But as in choller he did burne
He watch'd the Dragon a good turne,
And as a yawning he did fall,
He thrust his sword in, hilts and all.[103]

Unfortunately, he loses his sword in the process, but decides it is not worth the trouble of recovering: a decision with which his melancholy narrator fully concurs.

A knight without a sword has lost his chivalric function in life as in literature. A few decades later, Sir Hudibras made the happy discovery that the questing knight needs only one spur, since if one side of his horse goes faster the other is likely to keep up:[104] the effort of winning your spurs can be halved in economic terms without operational penalty. The halving of expense does, however, incur a total loss of cultural capital. Romance had ceased to have a living meaning, its powering ideas rendered obsolete by social change, market economics, and the scepticism towards ideals and towards wonder attendant on the growth of experimental science and literary realism. From being the reading-matter of kings, the stories became the amusement of the semi-literate, the provincial, and children: they were re-absorbed into the popular culture from which the early romance writers had been so keen to distinguish themselves.

CODA: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE KNIGHT

Throughout the first four centuries of romance, until the mid-sixteenth century, romance is inseparable from ideas of chivalry, and from the primary exponent of chivalry, the knight. If the protagonist is not already a knight when his story opens, it will be concerned with his education in prowess, love, and just action that constitute his winning of his spurs. The nature of those chivalric ideals was set out in the ceremonies of knighthood, and in the treatises on chivalry composed down into the seventeenth century. The historical record bears sad witness to how far the ideal was from being normative; but that was, in a sense, the point. The chivalric virtues were not easy of attainment, and the aspiration towards achieving them in itself constituted an ethical quest. The adventures of the hero, his striving towards something beyond him, show the chivalric virtues in action, and show them as difficult—but all the more necessary to strive for on account of that difficulty. The processes of history complicated matters further, as the traditional ideals of knighthood became increasingly anachronistic. By the time Spenser was writing the *Faerie Queene*, the squaring of those ideal simplicities with the complexities of his own political and economic world adds an extra layer of difficulty, beyond the struggle for personal or personified achievement. He was writing, moreover, in a society where knighthood was no longer synonymous with physical and moral excellence, either in aspiration or in practice, and the idea that it might be was beginning to seem quaintly old-fashioned.

In the tripartite division of society devised in the early Middle Ages into those who fight, those who pray, and those who labour, it was the knight who represented the fighting man: that was his function in the Christian community. Aggression, however, is inherently anti-social, and chivalry and the whole chivalric romance ethic were aimed at channelling such aggression into socially useful roles: the support of the weak, the support of the king, the support of God and the Church. As with speed limits, the rules were not always observed, but they none the less influenced behaviour. In the twelfth century, the desire to fight and to acquire an income through fighting, felt especially by landless younger sons, was catered for by tournaments; these offered an outlet for aggression and a way of exercising the physical prowess required of the fighting man, as well as providing economic rewards for the successful.[105] The abundance of tournaments in early romance reflects social fact, and they became embedded as part of the expectations of the genre even after the

violent mass *melée* had given way to the more decorous display of the individual joust (the *Arcadia* and *Pericles* are unusual in the degree to which they update their tournaments into the emblem-heavy aristocratic showpieces of the Renaissance).[106] Authors found mass tournaments useful since they provided a locus where their protagonists, even if engaged on a solitary quest, could meet and compete with other knights, demonstrating the superiority appropriate to the story's hero in the process. Tournaments in practice offered substantial economic rewards to the successful, and romances do not altogether overlook those; but they represent fighting more as an ideal of prowess, and extend that from the physical to the social and ethical. Bodily strength divorced from social responsibility is always reprehended. Fighting in accordance with the ideals of chivalry requires that a tournament must be fought without a desire to injure, and real combat demands a cause for which the knight will justly risk his life.

The origins of knighthood are obscure. The term found in historical documents, *miles*, only gradually distinguishes itself from its basic meaning of 'soldier', though the shift from a professional to a social usage seems to have been under way by 1100. The knight's distinctive method of fighting, the horseback charge with a heavy lance supported under the right arm, develops around the same time.[107] It is also in this period that the ceremonial of creating a knight first appears: ceremonies that distinguish knighthood from warrior cavalry in their widespread requirement for a night's vigil, and in their injunctions or vows to protect the Church and the weak (especially women), to keep faith and uphold justice. (Sir William Segar, writing a magisterial account of chivalry around 1600, substitutes the uncontentious loving of God for the defence of the Church.)[108] Symbolic meanings for the various items of the knight's armour and weaponry—that the two edges of the sword represent loyalty and justice, the spurs diligence, or that the hauberk signifies his defence of Holy Church—follow by the thirteenth century. One of the most comprehensive of these symbolic series appears in the course of a manual of chivalry written by the great Spanish ecclesiastic Ramón Lull, in a book eventually translated into both English and Scots; one of the most solidly religious sets appeared, oddly enough, in the Prose *Lancelot*.[109] The First Crusade helped to integrate emerging ideas of knighthood with piety and the defence of the Church. The cult of that most martial of Christian saints, St George, was given a sharp boost in western Europe as a consequence of his reported appearance to the crusaders at Antioch and Jerusalem in 1098. Fighting was compatible with the highest religious devotion, whether in pitched battle against the enemies of God or in single combat against a monster.

The emphasis on knighthood that characterizes the early quest romances, notably those of Chrétien de Troyes, therefore celebrates a comparatively recent phenomenon, though one to which the Arthurian settings of his stories ascribe a long and authoritative pedigree. The *romans antiques* and his own narratives between them write the ancestral romance of chivalry itself. Later writers were equally anxious to locate the origin of knighthood in the distant past: Segar places its roots first in the Roman 'order' of *equites*, cavalry, and then further back still in Aristotle's advice to Alexander to give chains and other badges to warriors of 'notable merit'.[110] He describes virtue as being the primary requirement of a knight, but there is an assumption throughout his work, and increasingly as he moves towards the present, that the knight will be a 'person of honour' in the social rather than just the ethical sense (p. 60). Knighthood was in practice expensive to maintain, and although some medieval lords were prepared to endow less-wealthy men with lands along with knighthood to enable them to fulfil their new role, wealth remained, despite the high ideals, the leading qualification for dubbing after social rank (none of the fair unknowns who seek knighthood in the romances is other than nobly born, even if illegitimately so). Chivalric prowess in practice came a very poor third, though Sir Philip Sidney could still bitterly regret that he received his knighthood at court for diplomatic reasons rather than on the field of battle, and his regret was still fully comprehensible within Elizabethan culture—Gloriana's culture. The images and traditions of knight-errantry preserved in chivalric romances still, as Arthur Ferguson has noted, carried a mystique that elicited 'a special and deeply felt emotional response', but a gentleman who wished to serve the common weal would do so through public or government service, not through the pursuit of private honour.[111] And the person who took such a route, who held such principles of behaviour, now identified himself as a gentleman rather than a knight. Birth was still of key importance, but the dubbing ceremony and its accompanying vows received far less emphasis. The change is epitomized in the titles of Olivier de La Marche's fifteenth-century allegorical quest romance *Le Chevalier deliberé*, translated into Spanish as *El Caballero determinado*, but from Spanish into English in 1594 by Lewes Lewkenor as *The Resolved Gentleman*. Segar himself brings his work up to date by giving advice on ideal behaviour to 'every Knight and Gentleman' without distinction.[112] When James I required everyone worth £40 a year or more to become a

knight, the chivalric ideal of knighthood received its deathblow.[113] The 'Fayry Champion' of a parody romance of 1613 is thrilled to discover that 'there were more wayes than one to attaine to a knightship . . . for in the Fayry land they only have it by desert'.[114] Spenser achieved the magnificent feat of harnessing the idealism of romance knight-errantry to practical public service, but his work was becoming outdated even while it was being written. By the time Shakespeare died, to behave like a knight was an anachronism, a reversion to romance rather than a living ideal.

CHAPTER ONE

Quest and pilgrimage: 'The adventure that God shall send me'

> I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary.[1]

Milton was moved to write that account of how the 'true wayfaring Christian' strives after the good life through reading Book II of the *Faerie Queene*, the book of Guyon, the hero who shares his name with Guy, or Guyon, of Warwick.[2] It is thus also an account of the practice of the good life conceived, as Spenser conceived it, as romance quest. At one stage, Milton was considering Arthur as the subject of the great epic poem he wished to write, and this passage from the *Areopagitica* gives an insight into what it might have been like, what appeal he might have found in chivalric romance. The surface imagery of the quotation may be that of a Classical athlete competing in a race, but chivalric quest forms its underlying metaphor, a substructure that seems almost instinctive rather than learned. Milton's 'adversaries' are not fellow competitors, but enemies. It is knights errant, not athletes, who win through the exercise of virtue, and who are purified by trial against their own or their adversaries' impurity. 'Unbreathed', lacking physical fitness, is the negative form of the romance term for the stamina of the combatant: Malory uses 'well breathed' as a complimentary phrase for the physical prowess of his best knights.[3] By the time the second sentence ends, the ancient Olympic setting has been forgotten, to be replaced by the postlapsarian world and its

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. 'An enterlude of Valentyne and Orsson, plaid by hir maiesties Players' was licensed in 1595 to Thomas Gosson and Raffe Hancock; licensing for publication commonly occurred some years after the initial composition of a play, so the dramatization may itself date from some years earlier. The licence was transferred to William White in 1600 (*SR*, iii.159). A second dramatization was made by Richard Hathwaye and Anthony Munday for Henslowe in 1598. Some of the playbooks of the Queen's Men (and conceivably the bearsuit too) passed to the Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's company. See also Helen Cooper, 'The Strange History of *Valentine and Orson*', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. Rosalind Field (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 153–68, especially pp. 163–4; and, for a sample bear-suit, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 2002), p. 319.
2. Arthur Dickson, *Valentine and Orson: A Study in Late Medieval Romance* (New York, 1929), p. 286.
3. John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (first published 1872–4), ed. A. J. Hoppé, rev. edn. (London, 1969), i.301. The reference is not, as might be thought, to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.
4. *A Contextual Study and Modern-spelling Edition of Mucedorus*, ed. Arvin H. Jupin (New York and London, 1987), I.i, opening stage direction in the original version (first printed in 1598; the additions made to the third quarto of 1610 included an explanatory opening scene before the bear, and some further stage business involving it; these are printed by Jupin in an appendix). The episode is derived from Sidney's *Arcadia*, and gives the hero an opportunity of exercising his prowess. By the time of the 1610 publication, the play belonged to the King's Men. It was probably written *c*.1590, but the order of composition of the plays containing bears is uncertain, as there are no reliable dates for either this, the anonymous *Valentine and Orson* licensed in 1595, or *Locrine* (see note 5 below). The anonymous play of *Valentine* may not be the earliest, though its justification for including a bear is rather stronger than for most of them.
5. *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine*, ed. Jane Lytton Gooch (New York and London, 1981), composed between 1585 and 1595, specifies a 'Bear or any other beast' (plus a lion) in its opening emblematic dumbshow; the mention of a bear may have been an acknowledgement of an existing bearsuit. The spectral bear figures in John Day and William Haughton's lost *Cox of Collumpton* (1599), the plot of which is known through a summary by Simon Forman: see the account in John Pitcher, '"Fronted with the Sight of a Bear": *Cox of Collumpton* and *The Winter's Tale*', *Notes and Queries* 239 (1994), 47–53.
6. The phrase 'mouldy tale' (referring specifically to *Pericles*) is Ben Jonson's, from the 'Ode to Himself' written after the failure of *The New Inn* in 1629—*Pericles* being

another example of the long popularity of romance drama, still in the repertory twenty years after its composition (*Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (Harmondsworth, 1975), No. XXXIII; and cf. Leah Scragg, *Shakespeare's Mouldy Tales* (London and New York, 1992, p. 1). The literary ancestry of the bear of the *Winter's Tale* has been much debated: Pitcher, '"Fronted with the sight of a bear"', gives a summary. He favours its function as an avenging sprite, on the model of the bear in *Cox of Collumpton*. The need for a bearsuit would remain unaffected by the particular symbolic use made of the bear itself. The arguments that real bears were used after 1609 remains tenuous: see, for instance, Barbara Ravelhofer, '"Beasts of Recreation": Henslowe's White Bears', *ELR* 32 (2002), 287–323, especially pp. 298–9, 304.

7. 'A poetics describing literary competence would focus on the conventions that make possible literary structure and meaning: what are the codes or systems of convention that enable readers to identify literary genres, recognize plots . . . and pursue the kind of symbolic interpretation that allows us to gauge the significance of poems and stories?' (Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 1997), p. 62).
8. The idea of the meme was put forward by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 206–7, and has been extensively developed by Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford, 1999). Romance motifs fulfil precisely her criteria of replication with fidelity, fecundity, and longevity. The romance itself would be the meme vehicle or 'memeplex' (see pp. 63–6).
9. The transmission of medieval English romance into the Tudor age was first extensively studied by Ronald S. Crane, *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance during the English Renaissance* (1919; repr. Norwood, Pa, 1977). Later studies include Jean Wilson, *Spenser's Treatment of Romance Themes in the Faerie Queene* (Ph.D., Cambridge, 1974); Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Popularity of Middle English Romance* (Bowling Green, OH, 1975); Andrew King, *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford, 2000), esp. pp. 29–42; and Michael L. Hays, *Shakespearean Tragedy as Chivalric Romance* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. pp. 27–65. Hays estimates that there were some 85,800 copies of romances printed before 1560, and 185,600 printed 1561–1610 (though most of the latter were new works influenced by the fashion for Spanish romances, not the medieval corpus).
10. *John Bunyan: Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (London, 1966), Author's Apology, pp. 139, 144. For his youthful reading, see *A Few Sighs from Hell*, in *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, Vol. 1, ed. T. L. Underwood and Roger Sharrock (Oxford, 1980), p. 333.
11. To give two examples: after the Bible, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was the book most likely to be taken to the trenches by soldiers in the First World War; and it forms the ethical backbone of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, a level of explicit allusion that she could assume would be understood by her readers. The work had been popular in New England from the moment of its publication, as Bunyan notes in his introductory poem to the 'Second Part' (ed. Sharrock, l. 275). His disappearance from modern culture is comparably measured by the work's excision from film and television adaptations of her novel.
12. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, 2nd edn., rev. Louis A. Wagner (Austin and London, 1968); Susan Wittig, *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romances* (Austin and London, 1978). Propp identifies the recurrent characters and their functions within folktale; Wittig's aim is to identify and analyse the various levels of motif—the syntagm and syntagmeme, motifeme and allomotif, type-scene, and type-episode—in terms of their homologousness and the degree of substitutability within each class, on a model drawn from tagmemic linguistics, 'based on the concept of selection from a paradigm of choices and substitution within an established matrix' (p. 6). Her concern is thus to parse the language of motifs rather than to consider their meanings within particular texts or their change over time. The present book by contrast is concerned to demonstrate the *non-substitutability* of motifs.

13. Margaret Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* (New York, 1927). Other studies concentrating on continuity more than change include Charles Ross's *The Custom of the Castle from Malory to Macbeth* (Berkeley, 1997); and, largely outside romance, John Kerrigan's anthology *The Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and the 'Female Complaint'* (Oxford, 1991), and Götz Schmitz's more historically nuanced *The Fall of Women in Early English Narrative Verse* (Cambridge, 1990).
14. Anne Barton's 'The King Disguised: Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the Comical History', reprinted in her *Essays: Mainly Shakespearean* (Cambridge, 1994), takes the motif back to the Robin Hood ballads, but the romances that provide the fullest narrative comparisons remain unexplored (for details, see Appendix, s.v. *John de Reeve, Rauf Coilyear*). On boats, see David Quint, 'The Boat of Romance and Renaissance Epic', in *Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes* ed. Kevin Brownlee and Maria Scordilis Brownlee, (Hanover and London, 1985), pp. 178–202, and pp. 133–5 below.
15. D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1999), p. 29. A similar point is forcefully made in connection with romance by Jean Radford, in her introduction to *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction* (London and New York, 1986), pp. 8–9, and by Stephen Knight in his study of the changing ideological uses of Arthurian material, *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London, 1983).
16. Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976).
17. Northrop Frye, in the Foreword to *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance*, ed. George M. Logan and Gordon Teskey (Ithaca and London, 1989), p. ix.
18. Gordon Teskey, in his Introduction to Logan's and his *Unfolded Tales*, has noted that works such as the *Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare's late plays are not classical with romance elements, but 'whole romances in which some classical elements have managed to survive by adapting themselves, like parasites, to the larger organism in which they are enclosed' (p. 9): a formulation that provokes the thought that those 'classical elements' have become memes in the minds of later critics.
19. The advice to Arthur on good kingship was translated in the late fifteenth century in the northern *Lancelot of the Laik* (ed. Alan Lupack (Kalamazoo, 1994), ll. 1314–542). There is no Middle English translation of the Lady of the Lake's instruction, though copies of the prose *Lancelot* are known to have been owned in England (see note 84 below). Malory omits Lancelot's youth, but he substitutes a

comparable summary of the duties of knighthood in the oath taken by the Knights of the Round Table, which is apparently modelled on the oath of the dubbing ceremony for Knights of the Bath (*The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, 3rd edn., rev. by P. J. C. Field, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1990), i. 120 (Book III, chapter 15 in Caxton's edition)); for the oath of the Order of the Bath, see Viscount Dillon, 'A Manuscript Collection of Ordinances of Chivalry of the Fifteenth Century', *Archaeologia* 57:1 (1900), 27–70 (text on pp. 67–8). For a discussion of how the *Lancelot* in particular was used in the fashioning of real-life knights, see Elspeth Kennedy, 'The Knight as Reader of Arthurian Romance', *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of Arthurian Legend*, ed. Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley (Albany, 1994), pp. 70–90.

20. Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Brighton, 1982), pp. 22–5, 79, 88–9. Fredric Jameson reaches a similar conclusion through a consideration of the social mechanism by which such a 'horizon' is established, in his 'Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre', *New Literary History* 7 (1975–6), 135–63: 'Genres are essentially contracts between a writer and his readers; or rather . . . they are literary *institutions*, which like other institutions of social life are based on tacit agreements or contracts' (p. 135).

21. Among the most powerful, though making transhistorical assumptions that this book does not altogether share, are those of Northrop Frye, outlined in *An Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, 1957), 'The Mythos of Summer: Romance', pp. 186–206, and elaborated in *The Secular Scripture*; Jameson offers a critique and development, 'Magical Narratives'. A more pragmatic approach to specifically medieval romance, also closely followed here, is that offered by Ad Putter in his 'Historical Introduction' to *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (Harlow, 2000), pp. 1–2: 'The resemblances shared by the overwhelming majority of romances are very broad . . . We can spare ourselves the trouble of agonizing needlessly about problems of definition if we accept that we have inherited the word "romance", with all its vagueness, from those who talked before us . . . "romaunce" never was a precise generic marker.' The Brownlees' introduction to *Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes*, pp. 1–12, makes the further important point that no genres, romance high among them, remain static across time and historical change, as the essays of the book cumulatively demonstrate. Attempts to produce rigorous definitions (such as that of John Finlayson, who argues in his 'Definitions of Middle English Romance' (*Chaucer Review* 15 (1980–1), 44–62, 168–81), that the term should be restricted to stories of knights achieving great feats of arms in a series of adventures for no reason other than an increase in their renown, go against those inherited expectations, and appear correspondingly restrictive. More satisfying, because grounded in medieval evidence, are two articles by Paul Strohm, '*Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie*: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narrative', *Speculum* 46 (1971), 348–59, and 'The Origin and Meaning of Middle English *Romaunce*', *Genre* 10 (1977), 1–20. A more detailed analysis of the varieties of Middle English romance is given by Kathryn Hume, 'The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance', *Philological Quarterly* 53 (1974), 158–80.

22. Many romance writers include some kind of comment on how their works are to be read such as indicates just this kind of generic self-consciousness; the prologues of Chrétien de Troyes are among the most famous examples, but a very high proportion of romances, in English as well as French, include some kind of horizon-setting as part of their introductory material, often by reference to other earlier works or heroes such as place the new work in a context of existing literature on which it can build. Michel Zink stresses the element of self-consciousness: 'Le roman est définissable précisement parce qu'il est tard venu et parce qu'il est le fruit d'une activité deliberé' ('Chrétien et ses contemporains', in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. (Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby (Amsterdam, 1987), i.5–32 (p. 6)). More broadly, the links to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* often provide some kind of generic commentary on the tale just told, and form perhaps the most extended series of definitions of vernacular genres. The genre that most insistently identifies itself is the Breton lai, a kind of mini-romance, where an opening statement of genre is its primary defining feature.

23. The point is made by Alastair Fowler, that genres should be regarded 'not as permanent classes but as families subject to change' (*Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford, 1982), p. v.

24. The concept is developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1953), pp. 31–2 (a passage that includes the invaluable advice: 'Don't think, but look!'). The idea has been taken up by a number of genre critics, including Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, pp. 40–3; and, with reference to romance, by Putter, *Spirit*, p. 2.

25. *Reliquiae Antiquae*, ed. Thomas Wright and J. O. Halliwell, 2 vols. (London, 1841), i.252.

26. The point is forcefully argued by Hays, *Shakespearean Tragedy as Chivalric Romance*; and see the last chapter of this book.

27. Stanley Wells, 'Shakespeare and Romance', in *Later Shakespeare*, ed. J. R. Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 8 (1966), 49–79 (p. 49).

28. The classic work on the relationships and differences between epic and romance is W. P. Ker's *Epic and Romance*, first published in 1897; Zink, 'Chrétien' p. 7, argues that the romance is in fact closer to the saint's life than to the *chanson de geste*.

29. *Ipomedon: Poème de Hue de Rotelande*, ed. A. J. Holden (Paris, 1979), ll. 28–30 ('Si le Latin n'est translatez, | Gaires n'ie erent entendanz; | Por ceo voil [jeo] dire en romanz'), and ll. 10,557–9 (quoted).

30. He also indicates that his imagined audience, and presumably his real one, is gender-inclusive, since he adds a rather mischievous invitation to the ladies to drop in on him.

31. *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, ed. O. D. Macrae-Gibson, Early English Text Society 268, 279 (1973, 1979), Auchinleck version, ll. 23–4.

32. See S. H. Cavanaugh, *A Study of Books Privately Owned in England* 1300–1450, PhD. thesis, University of Pennsylvania (1980). For women's ownership of French romances, see Carol M. Meale, '. . . alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch and frensch: Laywomen and their books in late medieval England', in *Women and Literature in Britain* 1150–1500, ed. Meale, (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 128–58, esp. pp. 139–41.

33. For a recent summary of the debate, see Putter's Introduction to *Spirit*, pp. 7–15, where he adduces evidence that points unequivocally to both manuscript transmission as the norm and memorial transmission as a genuine, and by

no means uncommon, phenomenon. There is evidence that a number of the seventeenth-century Percy Folio romances were recorded from memorized recitations of printed versions: see S. G. St Clair-Kendall, *Narrative Form and Mediaeval Continuity in the Percy Folio Manuscript: A Study of Selected Poems*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Sydney (1988), pp. 14, 24. The stories that were taken up by romance-writers may sometimes have had an earlier existence in oral form; and oral versions were sometimes developed out of romances, as seems to have happened in the case of some traditional ballads (e.g., 'Hind Horn', from a version of *Horn and Rimenhild* similar to that found in the Auchinleck manuscript, and 'King Orfeo', deriving probably from the version of *Sir Orfeo* recorded in a Scottish manuscript of *c.*1583 (*The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child, 5 vols. (1882–98, repr. New York, 1965), i. nos. 17, 19; Marion Stewart, '"King Orphius"', *Scottish Studies* 17 (1973), 1–16).

34. Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris, 1981), ll. 1–22; *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris, 1978), l. 26; Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, I.798, VII.946–58 (hereafter *CT*; *The Riverside Chaucer*, general ed., Larry D. Benson (Boston, 1987)).
35. *Knight's Tale*, *CT*, I.1347–53; cf. also the ending of the *Franklin's Tale*, V.1621–4. The fictional audience of pilgrims never takes up the question.
36. For the broad cultural background to medieval debate literature, see Thomas L. Reed, jr, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution* (Columbia, Mo., and London, 1990).
37. As recorded in the Percy Folio manuscript (*Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances*, ed. John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall, 3 vols. (London, 1868), ii.338–89, ll. 7–8; hereafter *Percy*). The text probably derives from one of the sixteenth-century printed editions, surviving from *c.*1500 to 1565 and possibly continuing later (see *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, ed. Frances E. Richardson, EETS 256 (1965), pp. xiii–xiv). The other romances to use an almost identical couplet are *Sir Degrevant* (9–10) (no prints known) and *Sir Isumbras* (7–8) (printed editions surviving from *c.*1530 to *c.*1565). See the appendix to this book for details of all the Middle English romances still current after 1500.
38. Prologue 5–8, *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, general eds., Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford, 1986).
39. Telling or reading older romances (specifically *Guy of Warwick* and *The Four Sons of Aymon*) is marked as a country rather than a courtly pastime as early as 1579, in the anonymous *Cyuile and Vnciuile Life* (sig. Hivr); but both were still being acted on the London stage in the seventeenth century, and although chapbooks were increasingly regarded as country reading, that seems to have been more because there was less competing élite reading in the countryside than because there was any shortage of them in the towns. On seventeenth- and eighteenth-century chapbook reading, see Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (London, 1981); and John Simons, 'Romance in the eighteenth-century Chapbook', in Simons (ed.), *From Medieval to Medievalism* (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 122–43.
40. See *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, ed. Doreen DelVecchio and Antony Hammond (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 16–18, and on its qualities of storytelling, pp. 27–34. In contrast to most earlier critics and editors, they urge the evident 'single creative imagination' behind the play.

41. John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago, 1976), pp. 10–12.
42. *Sir Orfeo* ll. 51, 53–4, in *Middle English Metrical Romances*, ed. Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale (New York, 1964).
43. An example of both unhelpful detail and voyeurism occurs in the Anglo-Norman *Ipomedon*, where the blazon of the beauty of La Fière continues beyond the parts of her anatomy visible to an onlooker (*Ipomedon*, ed. Holden, ll. 2211–70). The stanzaic Middle English version, which usually follows the original closely, cuts the whole passage.
44. Even more explicitly later in the poem: 'Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye', I.2273.
45. *Winter's Tale* 4.4.156–9.
46. See further Chapter 5 below, 'Desirable desire'.
47. *CT*, VII.2869–72, 3160–2 (quoted).
48. Thomas Hoccleve, 'Of my lady, wel me rejoise I may', in *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz, rev. Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle, EETS E.S. 61, 73, rev. repr. (1970), pp. 311–12; Sidney, 'What length of verse can serve': it appears in different contexts in the *Old* and *New Arcadia*. William A. Ringler, jr, discusses the history of such poems in his edition, *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 12, 384. Donne, 'The Anagram', in *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith, corr. edn. (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 96–7.
49. As happens in Thomas Hughes's *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, a play contemporary with the writing of the *Faerie Queene*: see further pp. 404–5 below.
50. Almost every Anglo-Norman romance (some twenty in all) had a Middle English descendant. Two probably had English versions that are now lost (*Waldef* and *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*); so far as is known, two were not given English versions (*Amadas et Ydoine*, though it was widely known and cited; and the *Protheselaus* of Hue de Rotelande). See Susan Crane, *Insular Romance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986), p. 6.
51. I use 'insular' in the sense, not of being written in Britain, but of being written in any language within England. The Scottish romance tradition does not get under way until the fifteenth century, in keeping with the country's separation from Angevin domination; the Welsh tradition has a still more distinct history, though there are strong connections, of a kind still not fully understood, between the romances of Chrétien de Troyes and some of the stories of the *Mabinogion*.
52. The *Historia* has a pro-British and anti-English agenda that may itself have served as a kind of legitimation for the Norman Conquest, most particularly for the Breton knights who followed William the Conqueror to England and who were given lands on the Welsh Marches: see Stephen Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London and Basingstoke, 1983), pp. 38–67.
53. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd edn. (London, 2001), II. x. 9, 13 (Brutus), II. x. 27–32 (Leir); hereafter *FQ*. A more extended account of the Trojan ancestry of Britain is given at III. ix. 38–51.
54. *Perceforest*, a prose romance probably composed *c.*1330–40 under Hainault patronage and possibly brought to England by Edward III's queen Philippa of Hainault, was twice printed complete in the sixteenth century in France, and an excerpted story printed four times; it provided the plot for some early Elizabethan

plays, most particularly *Clyomon and Clamydes*. The Lear section is edited by Jane H. M. Taylor, *Le Roman de Perceforest*, Part I (Geneva, 1979), ch. 8, ll. 1075–1283. The Anglo-Norman *Leir* is mentioned in a list of titles of lays and romances in Shrewsbury School MS 7: see Elizabeth Archibald, 'The Breton Lay in Middle English', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows, and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 55–70.

55. See Ad Putter, 'Finding Time for Arthurian Romance: Mediaeval Arthurian Literary History', *Medium Ævum* 63 (1994), 1–16, on how these individual romances were given a chronological placing within the linear history of Geoffrey's model of Arthur.
56. See further *Honour and Shame*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (London, 1965).
57. Like Geoffrey, Chrétien may have been greatly elaborating on a pre-existing story. The term 'courtly love', or rather the French '*amour courtois*', was coined by Gaston Paris in 1883 to describe the kind of love found in the *Chevalier de la Charrette* ('Etudes sur les romans de la table ronde. Lancelot du Lac II: *Le Conte de la Charrette*', *Romania* 12 (1883), p. 523); it has proved one of the most burr-like of all memes, part of its faithful replication including the false notion that it is itself a medieval idea. For further discussion, see pp. 307–10 below.
58. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr 794 (the Guiot MS); fr 375; and fr 1450, which contains the *Roman de Troie*, the *Roman d'Eneas*, and Wace's *Brut* with Chrétien's Arthurian romances inserted into it (with the prologues removed to smooth the transitions). See Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca and London, 1987), pp. 21–8.
59. She informs us that her *Fables* are based on an English original. There would of course have been little point in designating her as being 'of France' if she still lived there.
60. Thomas was writing some time between 1150 and 1200, most likely in the 1170s. For a parallel text and translation (by Stewart Gregory and Ian Short) of what survives of his *Tristan*, including the most recently discovered fragment, see *Early French Tristan Poems*, Vol. 2, ed. Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 3–183. The missing parts of his text can be extensively reconstructed from the Norse version composed in 1226 by one Friar Robert, *Tristrams Saga ok Ísöndar*, which is more concise than Thomas's original but otherwise appears to follow it very closely (text and trans. by Peter Jorgensen in *Norse Romance*, Vol. 1: *The Tristan Legend*, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke (Cambridge, 1999)); and also from Gottfried von Strassburg's more elaborate *Tristan* (*c.*1210; editions include that by Gottfried Weber, *Gottfried von Strassburg: Tristan* (Darmstadt, 1967). There is a translation by A. T. Hatto, together with most of the surviving fragments of Thomas, for Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, 1960)). There is also a Middle English adaptation of the late thirteenth century, though it is more useful as supporting rather than direct evidence as to Thomas's text: *Sir Tristrem*, in *Lancelot of the Laik and Sir Tristrem*, ed. Alan Lupack (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1994). The differences of Thomas from the archetype of the *Tristan* story can partly be gauged through other early retellings not mediated through him, in particular those of Béroul, in Anglo-Norman, and Eilhart von Oberge, in German (both writing 1170–90).
61. The point should not need any references, since a glance at any range of romance texts provides the evidence; the conviction to the contrary, still widely held, goes back to C. S. Lewis's seductive, and profoundly misguided, *The Allegory of Love*, first published in 1936 and frequently reprinted. The combined dominance of the model of Tristan and Isolde and its calque of Lancelot and Guinevere has tended to overshadow the more socially acceptable forms of romance love narratives. See also pp. 307–14 below.

62. See Bernard O'Donoghue, *The Courtly Love Tradition* (Manchester, and Totowa, NJ, 1982).
63. For the complicated textual history of the French romance and its derivatives, see pp. 155–6 below. The English *Floris* is not known to have been printed in the Renaissance, but it is now one of the most widely anthologized of the medieval romances (including French and Hale, pp. 823–55; and *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. Donald B. Sands (New York, 1966), pp. 279–309).
64. The idea of there being three 'materes' of romance, 'de France et de Bretaigne et de Rome la grant', originates with Jehan Bodel's *La Chanson des Saisnes* (ed. Annette Brasseur (Geneva, 1989), lines 6–7). Bodel is dismissive of the matter of Britain by comparison with that of France; English romance largely inverted the comparison. There were a good number of adaptations of Charlemagne romances into Middle English, but those known in the sixteenth century (*Huon of Bordeaux*, *The Four Sons of Aymon*) were recent translations, besides being among the most hostile to Charlemagne himself.
65. The relationships between the lost prototype story, the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*, the Middle English *King Horn* and *Horn Childe*, and the later ballads of 'Hind Horn' do not allow for easy untangling: for a summary, see Maldwyn Mills's Introduction to his edition of *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild* (Heidelberg, 1988), pp. 44–50. T. B. W. Reid urges the priority of an English version in his Introduction to *The Romance of Horn by Thomas*, ed. by Mildred K. Pope, ANTS 9–10, 12–13 (Oxford, 1955, 1964), 2.19–20. The most detailed edition of *King Horn* is that by Joseph Hall (Oxford, 1901); more accessible are the various recent anthologies of romance that include it (e.g., Sands, from which citations here are taken; *Of Love and Chivalry: An Anthology of Middle English Romance*, ed. Jennifer Fellows (London, 1993)). The ballad 'Hind Horn' appears in Child, *Ballads*, i. no. 17.
66. See Paul A. Scanlon, 'A Checklist of Prose Romances in English 1474–1603', *The Library*, 5th s. 32 (1978), 143–52, and, on the manuscript version, Carol M. Meale, 'The Politics of Book Ownership: The Hopton Family and Bodleian Library Digby MS 185', in *Prestige, Authority and Power in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. Felicity Riddy (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 103–22. The manuscript version of the Middle English (which may have been known to the Tudor redactor) is ed. F. J. Mather, jr, '*King Ponthus and the Faire Sidone*', *PMLA* 12 (1897), pp. i–150. Three printed editions are known, from *c.*1509 to 1511 (*STC* 20107, 20107.5, 20108); an entry in the *Stationers' Register* for 15 January 1548 (ii.405) suggests that there may have been one or more later editions, now lost. The French prose *Ponthus*, tentatively ascribed to Geoffroi de la Tour Landry, probably dates from the late fourteenth century; it appears as one of the items included in the manuscript presented by the earl of Shrewsbury to Margaret of Anjou on her marriage to Henry VI, British Library MS Royal 15 E VI.
67. For editions, see *Le Lai d'Haveloc and Gaimar's Haveloc Episode*, ed. Alexander Bell (Manchester, 1925); and for the Middle English, *Havelok*, ed. G. V. Smithers

(Oxford, 1987), and various anthologies of romance including those edited by D. B. Sands and by W. H. French and C. B. Hale.

68. See p. 354 below.
69. Facsimile with Introduction by Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham, *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 19.2.1*, Intro. (London, 1979). It was still finding scholarly or antiquarian readers in the later six-teenth century, as evidenced by marginal annotations.
70. The Percy Folio manuscript is London, British Library, Add. MS 27879; for an edi-tion, see n. 37. There are 99 surviving manuscripts containing romances, but half the traditional canon of romance can be found in just ten of those, usually in anthologies that also contain historical and/or religious material: see Gisela Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (Munich, 1976), pp. 18–54.
71. *Lanval* was printed in the version known most often as *Landevall* (ed. by George Lyman Kittredge, '*Launfal*', *American Journal of Philology* 10 (1889), 1–33; see *STC Lamwell*, 15187–15187.5, of 1548 and 1560). This derives from the earliest of the Middle English translations, and is the closest to Marie. It appears in the Percy Folio under the name *Sir Lambewell*. Thomas Chestre adapted it in the later four-teenth century for his *Sir Launfal*, an expanded version put into tail-rhyme rather than couplets. Hue's *Ipomedon* was translated into English three times, in tail-rhyme, couplets, and prose; it was the couplet version that was printed, the first edition perhaps dating from 1505 (ed. Tadahiro Ikegami as the second volume of his edition of *The Lyfe of Ipomydon*, Seijo English Monographs 21, 22 (Tokyo, 1983, 1985)). On the setting-copy, see Carol M. Meale, 'Wynkyn de Worde's Setting-Copy for *Ipomydon*', *Studies in Bibliography* 35 (1982), 156–71. All three English texts are edited by Eugen Kölbing, *Ipomedon in drei englischen Bearbeitungen* (Breslau, 1889).
72. *Guy and Amarant / Guy and Colbrande*, a medieval version of the Guy legend; *Merline*; *Eglamore*; *Sir Degree*; *Sir Lambewell* (*Landevale*). The manuscript con-tains one further fourteenth-century romance, *Libius Desconus*, 'Le Beau Desconus', the Fair Unknown; it was almost certainly printed, though no copies survive. Other of the Percy romances are fifteenth-century in origin, including a tail-rhyme retelling of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* entitled *The Grene Knight*, and a Gawain romance that uses some of the same motifs, *The Turke and Gowin*.
73. Susan Crane points out, however, that neither romance praises a patron, or men-tions the family currently holding the title (*Insular Romance*, p. 16). *Guy* in par-ticular was none the less treated later as if it were an ancestral romance: it became one, even if it were not written as such. On the Albinis, see M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 156–61, and Judith Weiss, 'The Date of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*', *Medium Ævum* 55 (1986), 237–41.
74. On the later history of *Bevis*, see Jennifer Fellows, '*Bevis redivivus*: The Printed Editions of *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', in *Romance Reading on the Book*, ed. Jennifer Fellows, Rosalind Field *et al.* (Cardiff, 1996), pp. 250–68. For a full account of the dissemination of the legend of Guy, see Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York and London, 1996).
75. *FQ*, I. xi. 29–53: see also King, *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance*, pp. 129–45.

76. The connection between Guy and Spenser's Guyon was noted as evident by John Lane, in 1617 (Richmond, *Legend of Guy*, p. 219), and there is no reason not to take him as typical. See further King, *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance*, pp. 161–2, and pp. 95–6 below. Guy's ancestry of the earls of Warwick was taken up by Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, younger brother of the Elizabethan earl of Warwick (see Richmond, *Legend*, pp. 189–90). The *Golden Legend* also defines 'Guyon' as 'holy wrestler': see Hamilton's note to *FQ*, I. x. 65–6.
77. An early allusion to *Bevis* occurs in the dispute between Peter and Horner in the first quarto of *Henry VI* Part 2 (*The First Part of the Contention*, sig. D2r, in *Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto: A Facsimile Edition*, ed. Michael J. B. Allen and Kenneth Muir (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1981), p. 56): 'with down-right blowes, as Beuys of South-hampton fell upon Askapart'. The simile is cut in the Folio text and modern editions: it would follow 2.3.96. Besides the cou-plet discussed below, there is a further allusion in *Henry VIII* (originally entitled *All is True*) 1.1.36–8, when the Duke of Norfolk notes of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, 'Former fabulous story | Being now seen possible enough, got credit | That *Bevis* was believed.' Allusions to *Guy* are made by the Bastard Faulconbridge in *King John* 1.1.225 (to Guy's opponent 'Colbrand the Giant') and by the porter's man in *Henry VIII* 5.3.22 (to Sir Guy and Colbrand)).
78. William Copland's edition of *c.*1565, sig. Gir; and both texts of *Lear*, Quarto 11.126–7, Folio 3.4.131–2. By the time of Thomas East's 1585 edition, 'dere' was modernized into 'chere' (sig. Diir). See also *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, ed. Eugen Kölbing, EETS E.S. 46 (1885), p. 74, ll. 85–6. There was no need, as has been suggested, for Shakespeare to have used a 1503 edition (see Hays, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 28).
79. Nashe was particularly scathing: 'Who is it, that reading Bevis of Hampton, can forbeare laughing, if he marke what scambling shyft he makes to ende his verses a like? I will propound three or foure payre by the way for the Readers recreation. *The Porter said, by my snout, | It was Sir Bevis that I let out*' ('The Anatomie of Absvrditie', in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. R. B. McKerrow, corr. by F. P. Wilson, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1958), i. 26).
80. The surviving text is entitled *The Tragical History, Admirable Atchievments and various events of Guy earl of Warwick*; it was printed in 1661, but dates from the very early 1590s, perhaps 1593. See Helen Cooper, 'Guy of Warwick, Upstart Crows and Mounting Sparrows', in *Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Takashi Kazuka (Aldershot, 2004). Details are also given there of the other possible dramatizations (one entered in the Stationers' Registers in 1620 as being by John Day and Thomas Dekker; one, probably different, performed at an Islington inn in 1618; and possibly one current around 1580, if the details of Stephen Gosson's account of the kind of drama that he despised can be trusted).
81. *The Complete Works of Samuel Rowlands*, intro. Edmund W. Gosse (Glasgow, 1880), Vol. 3; the latest printing of the prosification appears to have been in the Carisbrooke Library volume of 1889.
82. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, ed. Peter Sabor (Harmonds-worth, 1980), p. 206. Pamela's own name comes from Sidney's *Arcadia*.
83. The connection is important for the dating of the romance (probably completed 1330–40); see *Perceforest* Part I, ed. Taylor, pp. 22–7, and Part IV, ed. Gilles Roussineau, I. xii–xiii.

84. Known owners include the earl of Warwick, who gave a substantial number of books to the abbey of Bordesley in 1305; Isabella, wife of Edward II, whose copies may have been those recorded as still being in the royal library at the end of the fourteenth century; Thomas of Woodstock, earl of Gloucester; and Elizabeth Woodville (or possibly her brother) and her daughters (see Madeleine Blaess, 'L'Abbaye de Bordesley et les livres de Guy de Beauchamp', *Romania* 78 (1957), 511–18; Susan H. Cavanaugh, 'Royal Books: King John to Richard II', *The Library*, 6th ser. 10 (1988), 304–16; Carol M. Meale, 'Manuscripts, Readers and Patrons in Fifteenth-century England: Sir Thomas Malory and Arthurian Romance', *Arthurian Literature* 4 (1985), 93–126); and Roger Middleton, 'Manuscripts of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* in England and Wales: Some Books and their Owners', in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. Carol Dover (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 219–35).
85. The first Middle English work to incorporate the affair and the incest is the metrical *Morte Arthur* of *c.*1400, based on the Vulgate *Mort Artu*, though it manages to give both a very low profile by comparison with the French (Mordred's own incestuous pursuit of his uncle's/father's wife receives much more stress). The Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, of around the same date, follows Geoffrey. The earliest implied reference to the affair in English appears to be a legend of origin for the caves of Nottingham Castle, found in a unique interpolation in the Auchinleck manuscript text of a metrical chronicle, which describes Lancelot as having them excavated to hide Guinevere from Arthur: an account that presupposes a knowledge of his rescue and abduction of her, and which can be dated *c.*1331 (*An Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*, ed. Ewald Zettl, EETS OS 196 (1935), Auchinleck additions 1071–90 (pp. 70–1); Helen Cooper, 'Lancelot, Roger Mortimer, and the Date of the Auchinleck Manuscript', in *The Key of All Remembrance*, ed. A. J. Fletcher (forthcoming); Elizabeth Archibald, 'Lancelot as Lover in the English Tradition before Malory', in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. J. C. Field*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 199–216.
86. For the circulation of the French Arthurian prose romances in Italy, see Daniela Delcorno Branca, *Tristano e Lancillotto in Italia* (Ravenna, 1998); and for their influence on Ariosto, her *Orlando Furioso e il Romanzo cavalleresco medievale* (Florence, 1973).
87. Richard Cooper provides an analysis and bibliography of printed French romances in '"Nostre Histoire renouvelée": The Reception of Romances of Chivalry in the Renaissance', in *Chivalry in the Renaissance*, ed. Sydney Anglo (Woodbridge, 1990) pp. 175–238; their progression from manuscript to print can be followed in Brian Woledge's *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose français antérieures à* 1500 and its *Supplement* (Geneva, 1954, 1975). Rabelais made them a subject of satire in the 1530s, casting Lancelot as a horse-flayer and Valentine and Orson as bath attendants (Cooper, Nostre Histoire' p. 189), but their popularity continued for centuries in shortened versions in the *Bibliothèque bleue*.
88. It is generally assumed to be Greek in origin, though its earliest extant text is in Latin. It is the only romance to appear in Old English; versions appear in Gower's *Confessio amantis* and in the course of the *Gesta Romanorum* (in a translation that itself went through numerous printed editions); and a further translation, *King Apollyn*, was printed *c.*1510. For the later sixteenth-century versions, see Vol. 6 of Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (London and New York, 1957–75). For a history and edition of the story, see Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (Cambridge, 1991).
89. Its history is discussed in the parallel-text edition of the manuscript and prints by James Ralston Caldwell, *Eger and Grime* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), pp. 6–42, esp. p. 10.
90. O. Lengert, 'Die schottische Romanze "Roswall and Lillian"', *Englische Studien* (1892), 16.321–56 (an account of the prints and an edition of the text), and 17.341–77 (annotation). The five known prints include just one from south of the border, from Newcastle, undated. The romance borrows a number of motifs from *Ipomedon*, probably from one of its Middle English translations rather than from Hue's Anglo-Norman; the printed text might be too late as a source.
91. *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, 1961), i.13 (pp. 33–4).
92. On Guy's lion, see Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights*, pp. 74–5, citing a sermon in British Library MS Harley 7322, f. 49 (it was none the less too good a story to pass over, and Spenser borrows from it for the fatal wounding of Una's lion, *FQ*, I. iii. 41–4). Religious texts that offered themselves as a substitute for the wickedness of reading romances included the *South English Legendary*, William of Nassington's translation of the *Speculum vitae*, the sermon collection known as the *Mirror*, and the *Cursor mundi*, which gives the fullest listing of the stories of which it disapproves (ed. Richard Morris, Vol. 1, EETS O.S. 57 (1874), prologue 1–26).
93. *Hoccleve: Minor Poems*, ed. Furnivall and Gollancz, p. 14, ll. 193–8. 'Vegece of the aart of Chivalrie' is the popular military handbook by Vegetius, *De re militari*.
94. *A very frvteful and pleasant boke callyd the Instrvction of a Christen woman*, cap. 5; there were numerous editions in the sixteenth century. For Vives' original, see *De institutione foeminae Christianae* (Antwerp, 1524), sig. Ciiiv.
95. The ballad version tells only a fraction of the story, and is not evidently descended from Middle English: see Child, *Ballads*, v. 175, no. 300, 'Blancheflour and Jellyflorice'.
96. The prose redaction of the original alliterative romance, printed *c.*1515, is now known only from one double leaf (ed. G. H. V. Bunt in *William of Palerne*, pp. 328–31).
97. From *The Scholemaster* (published in 1570, six years after his death), in *Roger Ascham: English Works*, ed. William Aldis Wright (Cambridge, 1904, repr. 1970), p. 230. His animus is particularly directed against the *Morte Darthur*.
98. 'Anatomie of Absvrditie', *Works of Nashe*, ed. McKerrow, i.11; Henry Crosse (1603) accuses 'lazie monkes, and fat-headed friers, in whom was noght but sloath and idlenes' of acting as agents of Satan in so occupying 'Christian wits in Heathens foolery' (*Vertue's Commonwealth*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (Manchester, 1878), p. 99). For a conspectus of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century condemnations (and, just occasionally, defences) of chivalric romance, see Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 7–19.
99. M. C. Seymour, 'MSS Douce 261 and Egerton 3132A and Edward Banyster', *Bodleian Library Record* 10 (1980), 162–5; the Douce manuscript contains *Isumbras, Degaré, The Jest of Sir Gawain*, and *Eglamour*; the Egerton contains *Robert the Devil*.

100. *Robert Langham: A Letter*, ed. R. J. P. Kuin (Leiden, 1983), p. 53. The author was in fact probably not Robert Langham (or Laneham), but William Patten; Langham indeed seems to have tried to have the work suppressed (see Brian O'Kill, 'The Printed Works of William Patten (*c*.1510–c.1600)', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 7 (1977), 28–45; and David Scott, 'William Patten and the Authorship of Robert Laneham's *Letter* (1575)', *ELR* 7 (1977), 297–306). The element of fictionality about the authorship in turn raises the question of the fictionality of Captain Cox, but the list of his books must have been recognizably plausible whether it were true or invented. The eight early romances from the list are *Bevis, Sir Eglamour, Sir Tryamour, Sir Lamwell* (i.e., *Launfal*), *Sir Isumbras, Sir Gawain* (which could be one of several texts), and two texts of *c*.1500, *The Squire of Low Degree* and *The Knight of Courtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell*. The prose romances are 'King Arthur's book' (presumably Malory), *Huon of Bourdeaux, The Four Sons of Aymon, Oliver of Castile*, and also *The Seven Wise Masters* (otherwise known as *The Seven Sages of Rome*). Ben Jonson makes a reference to his library as late as his 1624 *Masque of Owls* (l. 27; in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols., corr. edn. (Oxford, 1954), vii 781–6).
101. So Robert Ashley (born in 1565, writing in 1614): 'Memini me dum puer essem . . . magistri me in officio continerent, si forte in manus meas incideret libellus aliquis qui fictas et futiles fabellas contineret qualia de Bevisio Hamtonensi Guidone Warwicensi historia Valentini et Orsoni vita Arthuri Regis Britaniae et equitum orbicularis mensae circumferuntur, ac huiusmodi portentis ac monstris qualia aut nunquam extiterunt, aut certe supra omnem fidem futilia ac vana per otiosos monachos de eis addita (ad irretiendam plebeculam et voluptate inescandam conficta in superiore seculo) . . .' (Ronald S. Crane, 'The Reading of an Elizabethan Youth', *Modern Philology* 11 (1913–14), 1–3 (p.3): 'I remember how when I was a boy and my masters kept me hard at work, if by chance some book fell into my hands that contained some fabulous and useless fictions such as were told about Bevis of Hamtoun or Guy of Warwick, or the history of Valentine and Orson, or the life of Arthur king of Britain and his knights of the Round Table, or portents and monsters of a kind that never existed, or else indeed were useless and vain things surpassing all belief added in by monks with nothing better to do (made up in an earlier age to entrap the ignorant common man and ensnare him with pleasures)', he would abandon play, sleep, and work to read them. (The Latin word order allows for a scornful pun: tales 'such as were circulating about the Round Table . . .'.)
102. They were taken sufficiently seriously at the popular level for the *Seven Champions* to be dramatized in the seventeenth century (the surviving text dates from 1635), to remain a chapbook favourite through the nineteenth, and to appear in boys' versions in the twentieth; for the first five editions of *Tom a Lincoln* to be comprehensively read to pieces; and for *Chinon* to be dramatized in 1595, assuming that the story was the same as that of the prose romance first entered for publication in 1599. The sense they give of deliberately going over the top may be illusory: as with some modern paperback fiction (such as the novels entered for the Bad Sex Awards), a certain level of sophistication in the reader can incur a reaction presumably unintended by the author. *Tom* and its 1607 sequel look much the most deliberate: see pp. 389–91 below.

103. *The Melancholie Knight* (1615), in *Works of Rowlands*, ed. Gosse, ii.27–9 (double-numbered as pp. 33–5).
104. Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders (Oxford, 1967), i.447–50; the work was first published in 1663, with a note on the title page that it was 'written in the time of the late Wars' (probably in fact in the late 1650s, p. xlvi).
105. See Larry D. Benson, 'The Tournament in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes and *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*', in *Chivalric Literature*, ed. Larry D. Benson and John Leyerle (Kalamazoo, 1980), pp. 1–24.
106. The nude gymnastic exercises of the Latin *Apollonius* mystified later writers; Gower represents them as a 'game' played naked (*Confessio amantis*, 8682–94), Twine's *Pattern of Painefull Adventures* (1576) has its hero play tennis (Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, vi. 387, 435). Conversion into a tournament emphasizes the assimilation of *Pericles* into the model of chivalric quest.
107. Extensive discussions of these issues can be found in Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven and London, 1984), pp. 18–82, and Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, rev. edn. (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 3–46.
108. *Sir William Segar: The Book of Honor and Armes* (1590) *and Honor Military and Civil* (1602), facsimile intro. Diane Bornstein (Delmar, NY, 1975); *Honor Military*, p. 60. The second work is in effect an expanded edition of the first. Segar was promoted through the various posts of herald, becoming Garter King of Arms in 1603, so had a professional interest in the rituals of chivalry.
109. Lull's *Libre del ordre de cavayleria* became a pan-European bestseller; its Scots version was made by Gilbert Hay; its English by Caxton (as *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*; ed. by Alfred T. P. Byles, EETS OS 168 (1926)). The Lady of the Lake, instructing the young Lancelot before he departs for King Arthur's court, concentrates solely on the symbolism of armour as the defence of the Church (*Lancelot*, ed. Alexandre Micha, 9 vols. (Geneva, 1978–83), vii.xxia; trans. S. Rosenberg, in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1992–7), ii. 59–60). A further widely disseminated set of interpretations is given in the anonymous *Ordene de chevalerie* (before 1250), which purported to describe how Saladin had asked the captive Hugh, count of Tiberias, for a demonstration of how a knight was created. See further Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 6–11.
110. Segar, *Honor Military*, pp. 51–2. A comparable process of backdating, this time between the 1590 and 1602 versions of his work, occurs when the description of the ceremony for creating knights is redated from 1020 to 'about the yeere of Christ 500, neere which time King Arthur reigned in England' (p. 53; compare *Book of Honor*, V. 4 (pp. 8–9 of new pagination)).
111. Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (Cranbury, NJ, and London, 1986) pp. 13, 17, 25–6, 107–25.
112. Segar, *Honor Military*, heading to II. 7 (p. 60).
113. Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* 1558–1641 (Oxford, 1965), pp. 71–9.
114. Robert Anton, *Moriomachia* (London: Simon Stafford, 1613), sig. B1v; the 'fayry champion' is in fact a transformed cow. Alex Davis calls attention to the passage, *Chivalry and Romance*, p. 44, in a discussion of the crisis of knighthood.