In subsequent chapters I delineate three aspects of the insular romances' identity. The romances of English heroes (Chapters 1 and 2) examine the centralizing political belief that national interests must be sustained above all. These works draw on chronicle and epic for conviction, validity, and heroic scale, yet construct a world in which self-advancement is in consonance with defense of the community. In securing his lineal rights the English hero secures the nation; his strength is not simply military but rests in the strength of law, custom, and justice. Rather than functioning as "ancestral" demonstrations of a single family's merit, the romances of English heroes generate an ideal of achievement that responds broadly to the feudal situation of the insular barony.

Church reform and the rise of hagiography provide a second context for the development of romance in England (Chapter 3). Some heroes' careers imitate hagiographic patterns of dedication, sacrifice, and submission. Yet the romances' expanding moral sensitivity clashes with their growing resistance to the abnegation and transcendence modeled in saints' legends. Although the pious insular romances accept faith as a new poetic dimension that can affect heroic behavior, they subvert the deeper implications of Christian teaching. Ultimately, the pious elements in insular romance validate the subordination of faith to worldly values and preoccupations.

Finally, the cultural detachment of Anglo-Norman and Middle English writers from the continental wellsprings of courtoisie affects insular approaches to ideals of love and chivalry (Chapters 4 and 5). Courtly convention undergoes a coherent revisionary process in England that resonates with the barony's shrinking resources and loss of status. Anglo-Norman writers tend to be skeptical of courtly poetics, testing fine amor against alien conceptions of passion and rejecting the optimistic convention that love interacts fruitfully with prowess. Later insular poets accept a profoundly modified version of courtliness that revises the tradition's claims to exclusivity and high refinement. The didactic openness of the late romances offers their audience a figurative claim to status.

Across their literary interactions, the insular romances are attuned to the realities of English life. As these works draw on and distance themselves from epic, hagiography, and courtly romance, they shape their voices to England's questions. The insular romances' aesthetics are intimately connected to their ideals, and their social and literary history clarifies those interrelations.

English heroes are the subject of half the romances in Anglo-Norman dialect we know of today: the Romance of Horn, Lai d'Have loc, Boeve de Haumtone, Gui de Warezvic, Fouke le Fitz Waryn, and Waldif. Omitted from Jean Bodel's list of "trois matres . . . / De France et de Bretaigne et de Romme la grant," the "matter of England" continues strongly in Middle English: every Anglo-Norman romance of this group had an English descendant, although the Middle English Fulk and Waldif are lost. Conversely, of all the Middle English romances of English heroes, only the comparatively late Athelstan and Camelyn are not demonstrably related to Anglo-Norman sources. This large and cohesive group of romances comments on the English barony's feudal strength and vulnerability by weighing the class convictions that sustained baronial claims.

The romances of English heroes differ thematically from the medieval fictions most familiar to twentieth-century readers. The Old French romances of love and adventure emphasize love's power to transform heroic identity, and trace love's role in precipitating crises between private identity and public expectations. The romances of English heroes instead present external, political crises.
that are met by a fully worthy and capable hero who senses no problematic conflict between his own desires and those of his society. In this respect they may seem close to epic, but none of their heroes is entirely a representative of his community, bent on winning its survival even at the expense of his own life. The English hero is self-interested; his goals are personal, typically involving his protection of feudal rights and the honor of his family. This pattern, in turn, resembles that of the Old French gestes des révoltés, whose rebel barons defy their lords in defense of private rights. But in the insular works, adherence to legality and tradition always brings success and stasis, while the gestes des révoltés move inexorably toward chaos, misfortune, and disillusion—"a torn, ambiguous world, where the norms of feudal society are no longer conducive to existence." In contrast to the gestes des révoltés, the romances of English heroes have faith in traditional systems and confidence that justice will prevail.

Those romances are not concerned with the revelatory experience of love, nor with an ideal of service to the nation, nor with rebel barons' dark affairs. Rather, they explore an imaginative response to the insular barony's peculiar situation. Unusually wealthy and peaceful, England's titled landholders were in cause and consequence unusually restricted by the crown. Virtually without military recourse, barons relied on the courts and on the right of inheritance to perpetuate their control of land. The romances of English heroes picture baronial claims that rise above the merely legal to the unquestionably just, and join blood lines inextricably to property rights. Political interests become universal goods as the hero's impulse toward personal achievement supports a broader, impersonal impulse toward social stability. Beyond this wide-ranging harmony of love, nor with an ideal of service to the nation, nor with rebel barons' dark affairs. Rather, they explore an imaginative response to the insular barony's peculiar situation. Unusually wealthy and peaceful, England's titled landholders were in cause and consequence unusually restricted by the crown. Virtually without military recourse, barons relied on the courts and on the right of inheritance to perpetuate their control of land. The romances of English heroes picture baronial claims that rise above the merely legal to the unquestionably just, and join blood lines inextricably to property rights. Political interests become universal goods as the hero's impulse toward personal achievement supports a broader, impersonal impulse toward social stability. Beyond this wide-ranging harmony of

English Heroes and English History

The Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes developed in fruitful interaction with chronicles during the twelfth century. The chronicles inspired by Norman rule have so literary a cast that desings such as "historiographie littéraire" and "poetic histories" are coined for them. Both the chronicles and the Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes glorify England's past, with the direct or secondary effect of justifying Norman presence in England. The aims which these chronicles and romances share, however, should not obscure their essential differences.

William the Conqueror took the throne of England on the ground that Edward the Confessor had designated him next in the line of succession. His somewhat spurious claim, eagerly endorsed by the barons, higher churchmen, and merchants who came to settle in England, gave political impetus to works relating pre-Conquest history to Norman rule. Wace dramatized Edward's designation of his successor in the Roman de Rou; William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon included political justifications for the Conquest in their accounts of England's glorious past; Geoffrey Gaimar's Estoire des Engleis presented insular history in a continuum from the heroic past through the death of William II. The royal asseveration that the Conquest was legal, and that continuity characterized insular life despite the Conquest, encouraged chroniclers to discover English heroes and to present them as antecessors (forebears, understood as ancestors) for the Normans. By this alchemy even historical figures such as Waldeif and Hereward who opposed the very Conquest itself receive praise and generate pride in the chronicles. Although such transformations and inventions necessarily parlay of the fictional, chronicles present their material both as it were fully historical and as if it demonstrated the worth of the current heritors of a glorious past.

The Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes accomplish a different task, and in a less direct manner. Whereas the chronicles justify the power of rulers in England openly, the romances argue for the rights of vassals covertly, under the cloak of imagination and
invention. The chronicles address specific patrons and advertise openly the associations they invent or discover between Norman rulers and heroes of history; but the romances of English heroes explore more broadly the issues of insular baronial life, and offer a poetic image of that life's value.

To explain the preoccupation of these romances with legality and feudal tenure, some literary historians favor the theory of "ancestral romance" or "roman généalogique." The ancestral theory proposes that four of the six Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes—Boeve, Gui, Waldef, and Fouke— owe their genesis to a particular family's commission, which itself had been sparked by a specific crisis in the rights of the family to its lands or titles. This theory is unpersuasive. None of these romances praises a patron, specifically, or even takes careful note of the alleged patron's history and possessions. If Boeve was written for the Albinis, why is Southampton, which they never possessed, made Boeve's home; and why is the hero buried at St. Laurent rather than at Wymundham, the traditional burial abbey of the Albinon family? Only the title to Aunundel associates the family's circumstances with the romance. If Gui de Waruir was designed to celebrate the union of the lands of Margery d'Oilly (Wallingford) and Henry de Newburgh (Warwick), why does Guy alienate Wallingford from his holdings by giving it to his old tutor's family? If Fouke, any less to ensure its continuing role as a family abbey, is responsible for the composition of Gui, why is Guy's holy death set not there but in a hermitage and his burial not there but at a new abbey in Lorraine? Fouke le Fitz

8. Since patronage was so tenuous, we would expect a patronized work to address the patron; thus, the absence of dedication in the romances of English heroes is significant. Because poets held professional jobs (like Chaucer's) they were not dependent on patronage for regular income; see Rehm, "Libray Composition," pp. ix-xxv.


Waryn, in spite of its far more specific and contemporary historical setting, includes as well so many inexplicable mistakes in family history that it is unlikely the Fitz Warin family could have been associated with its composition. Indeed, the random errors in genealogy, the absence of reference to any patron, and the general vagueness of setting all suggest that these romances were designed and written for a wider audience than a single family.

The attempt to support the conjectured relationship between a specific family and an ancestral romance with evidence of a motivating crisis in family rights or titles is likewise unpersuading. Literary historians have variously related the genesis of Gui de Waruir to a union of the rival Newburgh and Oilly families (ca. 1200); the death of the last Oilly male and praece of the heiress's husband, Henry de Newburgh (1232); the claim of Thomas, the heiress's son, to his mother's lands; and the engagement of Richard, brother of Henry III and tenant of Wallingford (1242). The earldom of Warwick suffered many other depredations in the thirteenth century that could also be viewed as motivating crises: several appropriations of land by the king to reward services; various financial burdens; and perhaps most dramatic, the king's attempt to force marriage with John du Plessis on the widowed Countess Margery (1243). For Boeve de Hamwone, William of Albini II's acquisition of the title to Aunundel (1154), his son's attempt to recover Aunundel from Henry II (1189-90), and William of Albini IV's insecure position with Henry III after the baronial uprising under John (ca. 1215-21) have each been suggested as the critical moment responsible for the romance's composition. To these possibilities could be added the censure of Nigel of Albini's son for siding with King Henry the Younger
against Henry II (1173) and royal seizures of the family lands for periods of time after the deaths of William of Albiin IV (1221) and William of Albiin V (1224).  

This multiplicity of crises in baronial holdings not only reduces the likelihood that any single crisis motivated the creation of a romance but, more important, indicates that these works respond to pervasive qualities of English feudalism. The relation of these romances to their world is better understood by acknowledging their pervasive qualities of English feudalism. The relation of these romances to their world is better understood by acknowledging their pertinence to the situation of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy as a whole than by seeking, on so little evidence, to limit their expressive import to a particular crisis in a particular family. Furthermore, once we set aside the ancestral theory, we can group the Romance of Horn and the Lai d'Haveloc with the other four romances of English heroes. Horn and Haveloc seem not to conform to the ancestral model because their heroes are kings rather than barons. The distinction is specious, however. Horn and Haveloc, like the other English heroes, control only small areas of England; more important, all six romances are marked by strong similarities in narrative design, in theme, and in social values. The narrative pattern of departure and return that characterizes these works is typically incorporated in a pattern of dispossession and reinstatement, the hero regaining through his admixture of courage and legal knowledge a rightful inheritance wrongfully seized from him. By translating a basic revenge pattern into terms of feudal reinstatement and transplanting love motifs into terms of family stability and continuity, this literature accommodates fundamental Anglo-Norman baronial concerns.  

The dynamic of Anglo-Norman feudalism, that of an unusually strong royal power in tension with a smoothly running landed baronial hierarchy, was well established in England by the second half of the twelfth century. Feudal and legal systems in England differed in some ways from those on the continent. The autonomy of barons in England was comparatively slight; they had lesser rights of jurisdiction over their fiefs, no right to private war or to ownership of castles; and they were universally sworn in allegiance to the king, rather than enjoying private or partially private rights. Feudal custom already gave the king power to forbid marriages of the king's choice, outright seizure of landed property, and to levy succession duties on lands and titles. All the Angevin kings extended these powers more or less extralegally to include forced marriages of the king's choice, outright seizure of lands, and refusal of inheritances. Paradoxically, these characteristic abuses of royal power were accompanied by a series of reforms and developments aimed at regulating baronial disputes and establishing a uniform national taxation system. In the Angevin exchequer and royal courts can be found the roots of modern state bureaucracy.  

Perhaps in part because of these constraints and in part because of their considerable landed wealth, the Anglo-Norman barony experienced a relatively peaceful and productive development. Under Henry II, however, the ordered strength of this barony was challenged by the Angevin policy of increasingly careful and intrusive supervision of baronial lands, titles, marriages, and inheritance rights. Feudal custom already gave the king power to forbid marriages of his vassals, to choose husbands for orphaned and widowed women, and to levy succession duties on lands and titles. All the Angevin kings extended these powers more or less extralegally to include forced marriages of the king's choice, outright seizure of lands, and refusal of inheritances. Paradoxically, these characteristic abuses of royal power were accompanied by a series of reforms and developments aimed at regulating baronial disputes and establishing a uniform national taxation system. In the Angevin exchequer and royal courts can be found the roots of modern state bureaucracy.
Barons alike accepted the new bureaucracy as advantageous. Taxation and royal justice kept landholders under the king’s eye, but at the same time the royal courts’ new legal procedures controlling inheritance and disseisin expedited and clarified the administration of baronial rights as never before. What the barony opposed was royal abuse of law and royal refusal to submit to the law’s newly refined procedures.

England’s barons also acquiesced to Henry II’s revision of their military role. John Schlight concludes that the “driving force behind Henry II’s use of mercenaries was not disloyalty nor disunity but the disinterest of his nobles in military affairs.” This was the most striking of many developments that countered the purpose and character of a military aristocracy. But since England’s ruling class had never been a true nobility of blood nor a solely military class, the developments of the twelfth century were evolutionary rather than deleterious. The personal power of barons had long been and continued to be primarily dependent on the control and administration of their lands: on agricultural labor, roads and bridges, dowries, marriages, and above all inheritances.

The high value of inheritances in the Anglo-Norman system presented unusual difficulties. Theoretically, in any feudal system a vassal holds land from his lord only by personal oath; he cannot pass it on to heirs. In practice, especially as the personal and military quality of the feudal relationship faded, lords normally permitted the transfer of fiefs from one generation to the next upon performance of homage and payment of a relief fee. In England these transfers were at the forefront of legal dispute and reform during the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries. William Marshall’s biographer, who admired continental chivalric life, censures the displacement of England’s power struggles from the military to the judicial sphere:

Mai or nous ront mise en prison
Chvalorie li halt home:
Par pereece qui les asome,
I: par conseil de coeuvetise
Nous ront largez en prison mise,

22. Menhinick and Meunier, p. 74, lines 2686-92; on inheritance and feudal custom see Warren, Henry II, p. 342.

23. Warren, Henry II, pp. 234-35, 390-91; as in King John, Warren describes Magna Carta as “largely concerned with succession dues and wardship, with widows and fish-wrights, with forest laws and forced marriages” (p. 181).

The Anglo-Norman barony was uniquely peaceful, and its domesticity was well served by the Angevin moves toward legal systematization. Magna Carta (1215) was the greatest single expression of this peculiarity of Anglo-Norman life. Magna Carta sought not to reestablish freer relations between king and barons, but to incorporate the king into his own legal system, to restrain him, too, within the fine new net of law he had cast around his barons. Far from being a radical challenge to royal rights, Magna Carta affirms the trend toward systematic, centralized government operations.

Such was the milieu, tenaciously legalistic yet adaptable and practical, in which the romances of English heroes were written. The composition of the last Anglo-Norman romances in the group, Guillelmus de Warenne (ca. 1250) and Fouke le Fitz Waryn (ca. 1280, extant prose version ca. 1330) overlaps with that of the earliest Middle English versions, King Horn (ca. 1255) and Havelok the Dane (ca. 1280). Even the latest of the English hero romances descended from Anglo-Norman, those in the Auchinleck book (ca. 1330), give the group a fairly restricted chronological range.

The social and political situation of the later Anglo-Norman and the Middle English works remained largely the same through the early fourteenth century. Magna Carta did not reshape the central issues of concern between king and barons, nor did it permanently alter the kinds of conflict generated by those issues. Rather, Magna Carta exemplifies the nature of aristocratic conflict throughout the period: it seeks to apportion royal and baronial economic, legal, and customary rights in the context of general principles benefiting both parties. Subsequent developments extend these concerns and
counter "the curious view that king and barons were natural ene­
my."

The baronial reform movement of 1258–67 based its work in Magna Carta and attempted to improve administration of the charter's principles in the context of ever-increasing royal systema­tization. Like the revolt against King John, the revolt of 1258 "was not primarily a revolt against over-centralisation. It was essentially directed against the king's incapacity to direct this centralised sys­tem of government along the right lines."25 The reform's important legal documents, the Provisions of Westminster (1259; reconfirmed 1265, 1267) and the Statute of Marlborough (1267), provided new structures for carrying out the central ideal of Magna Carta, that uniform and consistent government based on the law of the land is the concern of king and barons alike.26 Thus, although tension be­tween the royal and baronial factions over how to apportion power was constant, their shared interest in rationalized government gen­erated a deeper complicity between them in the transition from lo­calized feudal organization to a centralized national state.

The later reforms incorporated a wider social spectrum. Al­though the right of all classes to participate in government was not yet considered, the later thirteenth-century parliaments called for local knights and burgesses to represent shires and towns, signal­ing a new awareness that national administration could not rest in the exclusive control of king and barons. Moreover, the English barony's vision of equitable, legally responsive government tended to coincide with the interests of other groups, so that the barons' reform movement won widespread support.27 Further, the sense of common cause that the movement created was sustained by the shared interest in rationalized government gener­ated in the exclusive control of king and barons alike.28 Thus, although tension be­tween the royal and baronial factions over how to apportion power was constant, their shared interest in rationalized government gen­erated a deeper complicity between them in the transition from lo­calized feudal organization to a centralized national state.

The linguistic shift from French to English enlarges the potential audience beyond those members of the nobility and clergy who ar­tificially maintained Anglo-Norman as a "language of culture." Re­lated attention to differences of rank in the Middle English ro­mances suggests that their audiences were indeed broader socially than those of their Anglo-Norman sources, although we have seen that the English barony itself was revising its already modest sense of separateness in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Also sug­gesting an expanded audience for Middle English romance
are the thematic simplifications and appeals to emotion that supplement or replace appeals to law and reason, and treat the original themes of the Anglo-Norman romances in a more subjective, less politically committed mode. Yet the Middle English works have close structural, thematic, and stylistic sympathies with their sources' depictions of dynastic aspiration, social order, and baronial rights. This chapter and the next will trace those sympathies across two centuries.

Horn's Heritage

The Romance of Horn by Thomas (ca. 1170) and King Horn (ca. 1225) are the earliest extant versions of Horn's story and probably the two earliest Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances of English heroes. In theme they integrate the heroic defense of family rights with a sense of common purpose. They affirm, in poetic fictions, that the feudal community is essentially a just order that will prosper. In method they differ considerably. The Romance of Horn is ornamental and archaising in style, yet acutely contemporary in its concerns and aristocratic in its sympathies; King Horn achieves a timeless, elemental quality through extreme narrative concision and sharply reduced social detail and class sympathy.

The doubled expulsion-and-return pattern of the Romance of Horn is identical in outline to that of King Horn. The child Horn and his followers, set adrift by the pagan conquerors of Horn's father Aälof, arrive in the country of Hunlaf (Ailmar KH), where they grow to manhood. Horn accedes to the pleas of the king's daughter Rigmel (Rimenhild KH) and they exchange vows. He wins knighthood and fights pagan invaders, but his traitorous follower Wikele (Fikenhild KH) brings about his second exile by misrepresenting the lovers' relationship and Horn's ambitions to the king. Alone this time, Horn travels to a new land disguised as a humble knight, but here he does so well against pagan invaders that he is offered the kingdom and his daughter in reward for Horn's services. Horn marries Rigmel and reclaims his birthright. Returning under the guise of a humble knight, he kills Wikele himself, in single combat and recaptures his father's throne from the pagans, and warned by a dream he returns in disguise a second time to rescue Rigmel from Wikele's stronghold. Horn kills Wikele, rewards his followers, and returns with Rigmel to rule his homeland.

The Romance of Horn is a beautifully balanced achievement that at once acknowledges and ideally resolves vital conflicts of insular baronial life. Each narrative element in the work's doubled pattern of expulsion and return echoes and expands a previous element in an even progression toward the achievement of land, power, and stability. Each stage in the story's progress marks, both in itself and in its echoing of a previous stage, the steady movement from deprivation to reacquisition and from moral wrong to right. This movement is itself double, represented both by the usurpation and rewinning of Horn's birthright and by the separation and reunion in marriage of Horn and Rigmel. These two narrative lines, two aspects of the movement toward family stability, support and echo each other throughout the romance. Horn's first service in exile, during which the king and his daughter are involved in the hero's struggle "(De purchacier mon regne") (1809), is repeated in full during Horn's second exile as the second king approves his strength and the second princess reenacts the aggressive courtship of Rigmel. Horn's first single combat and full battle with pagan invaders in Brittany, which play the double role of a first proof of love and "sa premere venjance" (1321), are paralleled in his second exile by vengeance on Aälof's murderer himself, in single combat with the help of Rigmel's ring, and by a second battle victory. The treacherous accusation that Horn threatens Hunlaf's power and his daughter's honor is repudiated in King Gudreche's offer of both his kingdom and his daughter in reward for Horn's services. Horn twice returns disguised to rescue Rigmel from competing suitors.

Finally, he balances his initial expulsion with a last battle against the pagans on his home soil, so that the usurper himself "sot ben ke par Horn la mort ert revenge / De sun pere Aäluf, ki de moint eert pleree" (1321) knew well that Horn had revenged the death of his kingdom, rescues and marries her, and pardons Wikele. He then recaptures his father's throne from the pagans, and warned by a dream he returns in disguise a second time to rescue Rigmel from Wikele's stronghold. Horn kills Wikele, rewards his followers, and returns with Rigmel to rule his homeland.

Recent studies plausibly conclude that KH's not drawn from a lost source but is a new creation drawn from contemporary material: Christmann, "Verhältnis"; Hofer, "Horn et Rimel."
father Aalof, who was lamented by many. Horn's moving reunion with his mother may even parallel his association with father Aalof, who was lamented by many (4704-5). Horn's moving lost social position is doubled in motive—revenge and love—as well as in events. On the largest scale, the whole romance forms a sequel to that of Horn's father, Aalof (1-5). What is the attraction of doubling for Thomas, an attraction so strong that it patterns his work from the broadest structural to the smallest stylistic levels? That Horn's own double is his father suggests an answer. Horn's career takes much of its value from reinforcing, by repeating, the career of his father Aalof. As a founding in Hunlaf's court, Horn recalls his father's life as a foundling in Suddene, Aalof's marriage to the king's daughter there, and his inheritance of that kingdom (250-81). When considering Horn's request to be knighted in order to fight invading pagans, Hunlaf remembers that Aalof saved his benefactor from pagan invaders (1386-89, 1425-26). Horn's favorite follower, Haderof, is the son of Aalof's best knight (362-68). Of Horn's betrayer Wikele, whose grandfather falsely accused Aalof, the poet says pointedly: "Fel traître iert cist, pur taunt iert alignez" [he was an evil traitor, thus he was true to lineage] (1835). This emphasis on the continuity from Aalof's life to Horn's suggests that a son both duplicates his father not only in romance but in romance writing. Surely this implies a promise of something more than vicarious fictional fulfillment for the audience as well. In a gesture remarkable for its artistic boldness and its social optimism, the poet suggests that the just and fruitful extension of one generation's achievements into those of the next generation is not simply a literary ideal but an attainable social reality.

King Horn is so radically condensed an account of Horn's life that it might be expected to lack much of the sense of the Anglo-Norman account. But the two works are closely allied despite great divergences in presentation. King Horn's rapid, action-centered narration still interprets the story's underlying themes of revenge and love in terms of the characteristically insular concern for regaining a rightful heritage and achieving family stability. That King Horn takes the stances of the Romance of Horn is remarkable in view of the two works' vastly different verbal resources. Thomas writes the Romance of Horn in laisses, without laisses similaire but with occasional one-line concatenation between laisses. His conservative form is in keeping with the mysterious or archaic place-names, the distant historical setting, and the frequent reference to old customs and ceremonies that pervade the work. At the same time, Thomas modernizes the laisse by using a twelve-

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33. Although the romance is set in three countries (Suddene, Brittany, Westir), the first is only a frame for the doubled development— that is, the first setting is necessary in order for there to be two elles, two returns, two periods of serendipity, and so on.

34. Rigmel's maid dreams that Horn presents Rigmel with a falcon that she holds to her breast; the disguised Horn revives himself through veiled references to a gos,

35. E.g., 4704-5. The fictional veil is pierced; the son doubles his father not only in romance but in romance writing. Surely this implies a promise of something more than vicarious fictional fulfillment for the audience as well. In a gesture remarkable for its artistic boldness and its social optimism, the poet suggests that the just and fruitful extension of one generation's achievements into those of the next generation is not simply a literary ideal but an attainable social reality.

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assonance. These modifications suggest that Thomas's lyrical laisse
was a deliberate archaism, designed to confer a sense of authenti-
city and tradition on his story, as in some English alliterative po-
etry of the fourteenth century. This modified laisse strikes a hard-
some accord between formality and narrative flexibility, between
dignity and expressiveness. The slowly-paced, elegant alexan-
drines develop both court and battle scenes with leisurely assur-
ance, taking equal pleasure in the objects of noble life and in the
skill with which Horn handles them. Horn's performance of the lai
of Batolf (2824-44), for example, is by far the most complete tech-
nical description we have of lai performance, yet its details are suf-
fused with a compelling sense of the moment's dramatic impor-
tance: Horn reveals his personal excellence for the first time in
Westir, not arrogantly but in veiled devotion to Rigmel through the
lai by her brother Batolf. Characteristically, great richness of detail
charged with a deep sense of purpose gives Thomas's verse its
intensity.

Small flashes of humor and irony occasionally lighten, but do
not subvert, the serious tone of the work. With macabre finesse
Thomas associates his inability to describe a scene of carnage with
the victims' own silence: "Taunt i vsennor morz gole bole, &
nes savet acunter nule buche letre" [there you'd have seen so
many dead lying openmouthed that no educated mouth could
reckon them] (1622-23). This gentle ironizing, particularly subtle
in its simultaneous awareness of the scene's horror and of its fic-
tionality, suggests the range of expression Thomas achieves within
a generally sober and slowly cadenced narrative.

King Horn could hardly have a more different stylistic texture.
This earliest Middle English romance, rising from a seriously weak-
ened if not interrupted English verse tradition, is in the process of
finding the very rhythms and locations fundamental to narrative
verse, through reference to Layamon, to French verse, and no
doubt to unpreserved popular verse. The most striking contrast in
verbal resources between the Romance of Horn and King Horn is in
social and physical detail. A profusion of Anglo-Norman customs,
stratagems, and word-plays; a host of uncles, cousins, and re-
tainers; a wealth of spiced wines, white greyhounds, brocades, and
jewels are swept entirely from the Middle English scene, stand-
ing each character and each encounter in apparently desolate
space.

As if to emphasize this rigorous limitation of detail, King Horn
often resorts to one formula in narrating repeated similar circum-
cstances. Couplets expressing Horn's planned reconquest of Sud-
dene may be meant to recall previous pagan threats:

Paynsh brem wolde slay
Oper al qui te.  
Or skæ slie

Alle we hem schulle slay & al quen horn flo.  
(85-86, 1369-70)

His lond we wolle wyne & sle pat jen inne.  
Wulle ye jai lond winne & sle pat jern inne?  
(693-4, 1357-58)

Repetition is unquestionably the defining quality of King Horn's
style: it marks the narration of similar episodes throughout the
story and also heightens crucial moments, emphasizes particularly
important scenes such as Horn's knighting (445-504) and his moth-
er's withdrawal from society (73-78), and conveys emotional states
as diverse as Rimenhild's silent frustration (253-60) and her imper-
ious desire (535-40).

In part, this style is a function of the romance's early date; King
Horn is not yet at the point of toning and varying formulaic locu-
tions to fit different situations. It is not clear whether the recur-
rence of formulas represents deliberate verbal echoing or simply
the application of a limited number of locutions to a relatively
larger number of situations. Whatever medieval ears heard in these

37. Pope, RH, II, 6, concludes on the contrary that Thomas's form illustrates "a
stage in the passage from epic to romance," while Legge, "Influence of Patronage,"
conjectures that the form may be a literary regression representing the changed at-
mosphere of the court after the defeat of King Henry the Younger. The first conclu-
sion assumes that AN literature is best measured in terms of continental genres and
further that Thomas had no conscious control over his form; the second depends on
the unlikely theory that RH was written in the court of Henry II—unlikely both in
view of the poem's baronial sympathies and in view of Horn's military campaigns
against the Anglorussines (lines 1737-50). For recent work on English alliterative po-
etry, see Lawton, ed., Insular Romance and Levy and Szarmach, eds., Alliterative
Tradition.

38. H. S. West, 'Alliterative Verse,' "The role of oral performance is reassessed by Quain and Hall, Jongleur."
repetitions, M. Hynes-Berry argues that for us they "actively function in the romance to create a cohesion and emotional coherence." This analysis counters the old assumption that because repetition is a necessary function of limited poetic means, it must have no aesthetic value, or even a negative one. But we can go farther, to link King Horn's repetitive style to its thematic emphases. The very insistence, the pervasiveness, of repetition in King Horn and in Middle English romance as a whole indicates that its presence is neither fortuitous nor without aesthetic purpose. In a structural study of repetition in Middle English romance, Susan Wittig concludes that "within the repeated patterns of formulaic language there is a kind of psychological comfort, an assurance that the social institutions in which the audience has invested itself are stable and secure, that the traditions have been preserved, that the future is safe." This understanding of the meaning generated by repetitive style corroborates the thematic emphases of the romances of English heroes. Their conservative faith in established social patterns is appropriately embodied in a verbal style that connotes the same conservative faith. King Horn's repetitive style achieves, through more restricted poetic means, an effect of assurance and tradition analogous to that conveyed by Thomas's calm, deliberate, archaizing alexandrines. Deprived of the thickening press of detail that in Anglo-Norman gives themes their solidity and conviction, King Horn must use other measures to validate its themes. One such measure is powerful emotion. The Anglo-Norman Rigmel's quiet pensiveness at her forced wedding and her ready acquiescence to a life of poverty with Horn (4122-28, 4284-308) are replaced by Rimenhild's vehement and tearful protests at her wedding and her dramatic suicide attempt when she believes Horn to be dead (1032-50, 1191-208). Both versions reunite the lovers after testing the lady's loyalty, but the first casts the scene in an emotionally controlled mood and gives the test a socioeconomic function, while the second is freely asocial and passionate. In many other instances in King Horn violent emotions, particularly sorrow and frustration—bitter tears, bloody tears, wringing hands, waxing wild, hot blood, burning hearts—suffuse themes with energy and conviction.

40. An interesting summary of and response to this venerable assumption is Calin and Calin, "Medieval Fiction"; see also Allen, ed., King, pp. 82-83.
42. E.g., KH 112, 253, 260, 407, 490, 807, 1406, 1531-32, O 1273, L 1400.
power, to which the pagans originally confer the execution of Horn and his followers, dominates all but Horn himself: it terrifies the children, drowns Rimenhild's messenger and casts him up at her feet, makes Fikenhild's castle impregnable—but Horn can row his followers to safety, travel over the sea just as he likes, and arrive by boat at Fikenhild's castle at precisely the crucial moment. Of the many social graces and systems in which the Anglo-Norman Horn excels, in *King Horn* only passing references to harping and hunting, to high birth, and to very simple distinctions in power among the characters survive. Horn's control over the elemental power of the sea demonstrates his superiority in the absence of an impressive set of social accomplishments for him to master.

That *King Horn* 's social context is greatly reduced does not mean that social issues are ignored. Rather, *King Horn* cuts to the base of aristocratic consciousness, moving back through the pacifications of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to uncover the aggressive sources of baronial power. Georges Duby ("La Féodalité? Une mentalité médiévale") extracts the distinguishing features of feudal consciousness from the later manifestations that consciousness could take. Feudal mentality, he proposes, begins with a conviction of difference and superiority among the military elite of a society. This awareness leads to a belief that the practice of certain virtues is incumbent upon the elite. Finally, social bonds are imagined as extensions of military bonds of association. *King Horn* respects these distinguishing features, even in the absence of contextual detail. Knighthood is presented as essentially military, worthier than non-military life, and basic to social relationships.

Despite its military expression, Horn's desire seems peaceable enough. Avenging his father is largely a means of getting his land back and securing his mother and his wife so as to continue the family. Horn is not an adventurer, an expansionist, or even an aggressor. His prowess merely signals his freedom and his right to determine the course of his life. In this respect *King Horn*, like other romances of English heroes, poetizes an ideology that sustained the insular barony's status. What Horn wants (land and autonomy) is presented as a birthright (heritable, deserved, and justly his).

Only evil opposes these rights, while the dependence of Horn's followers on their leader's fate further validates his efforts to regain what is lost. The pagans themselves acknowledge and fear the righteousness of Horn's cause, setting him and his twelve companions adrift to avoid atonement for Allof's death:

> Pe se you schal adrenche, Ne schal hit us nent ofpinche; We scholden alle die 
> Fur if pu were alize, Wip sword olger wilh knowe, & hit fader deh abche; 
> We wel hitumente, we will not regret we scholde alle die 
> Pe se you schal adrenche, hit fader deh abche;  

The crisis Horn faces is inextricably personal and public. Horn's interests are identical with those of his society; only when he regains his patrimony and wins his wife will his followers in exile and his captive countrymen at home have peace and stability. Horn voices this congruence of purposes by juxtaposing messages to his family and to the usurper in his emotionally charged words to the boat:

> 'If pu cume to Sudene, Greet pu wel of myne kenne, Greet hu wel my moder, Godhild quen be gode, & seie be paene kyng, Jesucristes wipering, But the am hot & hot, On his lond arisde her, And seie bi hert schal fonde De dent of myne honde.'  

Subsequent encounters with the pagans are only irregularly associated with Horn's plan of vengeance, but these two initial passages, in their moral weight and their appeal to the power of the sea and of time, give the theme of family continuity great natural force. Horn's dynastic purpose also informs his courtship. Here, indeed, it has been argued that *King Horn* achieves a fuller integration of the hero's purposes than did the Anglo-Norman poem, by attributing actions over long spans of time to Horn's love, in order
to emphasize the relation of love to military success. Similarly, Rimenhild gives a protective ring to Horn and another to his closest comrade, Apulf (561-78); later, Horn is concerned to rescue not just Rimenhild but Apulf as well (1081-90). When Horn replies to the false charge that he has plotted to kill his benefactor and marry Rimenhild (693-94), he emphasizes that his political and personal goals are inseparable:

"'E('iwendest bat i ro)te
tat y neure ne bo3te,
Bi Rymenhild for to ligge,
& pat i win segge.
Ne schal ihc hit biginne,
Til i suddene winne.
u kep hure a stunde,
t>e while f)at ifunde
In to min heritage
& to mi baronage.
Ischal beo king of tune
& bere kinges crune,
Pat lond ischal ofreche
& do mi fader wreche.
Ischal beo king of tune
& bere kinges crune.
Buene schal Rymenhilde
Ligge bi pe kinge.' "

The linking of the two narrative lines is completed when Horn at last brings Rimenhild to Suddene, "Among al his kenne," and makes her his queen (1517-19).

In the Anglo-Norman poem the relationship between Horn and Rigmel is similarly integrated into Horn's dynastic purpose. Despite the wakeful nights, tears, and sighs that embroider their affair, it is from the first a politically advantageous match, a second line of action in Horn's campaign to reestablish his patrimony in Suddene. In love Rigmel is the suppliant, as she will be in marriage the social dependent.

Horn will avenge himself well on his evil betrayer, who sought to undo the love between him and Rigmel: thus it should always befall a deceiver, for no one ends well who betrays his lord.

Horn's free access to his heritage is the poem's dominant measure of right. His love draws value from contemporary courtly ideals of beauty and passion, but without contradicting its vital function. As in King Horn, unity derives from the hero's determination to reestablish his patrimony, with military action and courtship as means to that end.

We have seen how the tensions of insular feudalism shape and enrich the two narrative movements—revenge and love—in the story of Horn. In addition, the character of Horn himself is made to illustrate these tensions in idealized equispose. His traits are static, present and complete in his character even as a boy, so that the story proceeds not through the gradual development of his personality but through a series of enemy actions which he progressively reverses by his own actions. A sense of providential certainty sanctions the course of the hero's life, contributing further to the tone of optimistic assurance that pervades the romances of English heroes.

In the Romance of Horn God's providence guides the pattern of events at every turn. Thomas's assurance that "ja avienge neent / A nul home del mund de sun purposement, / Si Deus n'en ad auncel-fait sun ordenement" [nothing that any man in the world plans ever happens unless God has already ordained it] (3586-88) characterizes the atmosphere of quiet inevitability in which Horn, born completely a hero, simply follows the foreordained course of events.

47. For example, in contrast to similar topics from the literature of lucan, Rigmel's maid dreams of a falcon given to Rigmel by Horn, representing not his heart but her son Hadermod (729-36); both Horn and his benefactor Herland realize that the relationship depends on the rewinning of Suddene (1081-90, 1109-18a, 1172-78).

48. The pagans do not harm Horn as a child "kar ne fud destinez" (22); God chooses Horn rather than another husband for Rigmel (412-14); God destines Horn's first defeat of the pagans, his victories in Ireland, and his final vengeance in Suddene (1570-71, 3604-12, 4622-23).

Romances of Land and Lineage
to reach his goal. Even as a child, he is "plus hardi de parler e li mielz doctrinez" [bolder of speech and the most learned], a balanced combination of courage and intelligence. The legal wisdom he demonstrates as a founding, in demanding pledges of peace and of freedom from sequestration before trusting King Hunlaf, establishes his actions throughout the romance, perhaps most strikingly in response to Wikele's false accusations in Brittany. It is not the accusations themselves but the legal method by which Horn may deny them that leads to his exile. The king, at the suggestion of Wikele, demands that Horn acquit himself "par serement" (1945a), while Horn insists that the only suitable proof for a man of his birth and country is "par bataille" (1945a). As their argument develops during fifty lines of increasingly short-tempered dialogue, it becomes clear that the king in his anger demands that Horn swear his innocence in order to humiliate him, while Horn clings doggedly to the custom of his lost homeland and the principle of his lost rank:

'Horn,' said Hunlaf, 'par la foi ki est meie Vus m'en frez serement, si voiez ke vos croez; Si feze ne voiez, si terrez vosse vose . . . .'

Dune respendi si Horn: 'Ci ad male maneie. Bien jurer le pousse, si faire le deuen. Men m' est vis en man quizer, ke faire me le deo, Ainz me larrere taire e le quere e le feie Ke serement face. La paige de mei, s' li vus plies, nel-traie. '

(1960-62, 1972-77, 1979)

'Horn,' said Hunlaf, "by my faith, you will take an oath on it if you want me to believe you; if you don't want to do that, go your own way . . . . Then Horn answered, "Here is cruel misery. Certainly I could not swear to it, if I were bound to do so, but in my heart I believe I should not do it; I'd rather let my heart and liver be torn out than take an oath . . . . My lineage, if you please, does not permit it."

That a major narrative crisis here takes the form of a dispute over law, a dispute containing more than twenty technical terms, is a testament to the depth of interest in legality that marks these romances and the insular baronial class itself. But the subject of this dispute elevates it above the level of contemporary legal procedure. Judicial combat was fast becoming a thing of the past in twelfth-century England, in favor of jury decisions based on written or sworn testimony. In particular, judicial reforms of 1179 guaranteed jury trials in questions of disputed inheritance rights and permitted the defendant to refuse outright the unpopular judicial duel as a means of proof. Like the English poet's return to military action as a sign of noble power, Horn's proud insistence on judicial combat translates Anglo-Norman respect for and reliance on the law to a higher, more archaic level of expression where fierce courage unhesitatingly enforces feudal rights.

Horn's demand for the legal proof appropriate to his rank even while in exile, like his pledge to recover his benefactor's seized lands (3760-61, 4338-42) and his battles defending the right of two kings to their land, support his principal claim to his own right of inheritance: Horn's ultimate interests always subsume the interests of the kings whom he serves "vassalement." Particularly apt is his disguise in Ireland as a vassal of his dead father and his averting of his father's death in that adopted role (3775-234). Similarly, he defends his father-in-law "vassalement" in the closing battle of the romance (5210-11). Thus the ideal of feudal service reinforces the more central ideal of protecting family rights. Horn's vasselage is so very bold, proud, and ultimately self-interested that some critics misunderstand it as a negative model; rather, in this model of vasselage, feudal service simply facilitates dynastic ambitions. Horn's vasselage, like the poem's stylistic effects and its thematic emphasis, stands as a testament to the depth of interest in legality that marks these romances and the insular baronial class itself. But the subject of this dispute elevates it above the level of contemporary legal procedure. Judicial combat was fast becoming a thing of the past in twelfth-century England, in favor of jury decisions based on written or sworn testimony. In particular, judicial reforms of 1179 guaranteed jury trials in questions of disputed inheritance rights and permitted the defendant to refuse outright the unpopular judicial duel as a means of proof. Like the English poet's return to military action as a sign of noble power, Horn's proud insistence on judicial combat translates Anglo-Norman respect for and reliance on the law to a higher, more archaic level of expression where fierce courage unhesitatingly enforces feudal rights.

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phases, presents a remarkably positive view of what baronial life can mean.

*King Horn* also sustains its dramatic development toward justice and stability with morally weighted portrayals of character. The Anglo-Norman Horn acts always in accordance with the direction and intention of God; the Middle English Horn acts charismatically as an embodiment of God's will. He stands curiously "alone, / Also / as if / he sprunge of stone" (1025-26), isolated in his ability to choose and change the future. He rows his followers to Westernesse and fights pagan invaders singlehandedly. With quiet self-containment he looks what he hears in his heart (243-44, 379-80), revealing his private plan for the course of events only at the appropriate moments, to the relief of his friends and the discomfiture of his enemies. Until his final victories, his followers confine their actions to sending one message and anxiously watching for his return (930-32, 1091-96, 1443-46). Parallels to Christ also set him apart from other men.

Fikenhild, unlike the simply spiteful and envious Wikele, is an inherently evil character, "be wurste moder child" (648); and his forced marriage with Rimenhild is a sinister inversion of Horn's brightness (14, 385-86):

```
ffikenhild or pe dai gan springe
Al ri3t he ferde to pe kinge,
After Rymenhild pe bri3te,
To wedden hire bini3te.
He ladde hure bi pe derke
In to his nywe werke;
I>e teste hi bigunne
Er pat ros pe sunne.
```

(1427-34)

In the drastically reduced social context of the Middle English romance, these alignments with ultimate good and evil do much to reinforce Horn's claim to his land and to Rimenhild.

Finally, in both Anglo-Norman and Middle English Horn is more than a fully capable and virtuous hero. He is a repository of national custom, bearing the greatness of his people closed within himself like a seed. This function is revealed in his distinctive eloquence, his ability to narrate his own and his people's history. When the shipwrecked children are discovered on the beach, "Horn spak here speche, / He spak for hem alle" (170-72). In Ireland the Anglo-Norman Horn's account of his life wins the praise "'bien est enromauncez'" (2320) the term and the context suggest storytelling power as well as simple verbal facility. In the English Horn's most important statement of his plans, he recounts his own life as if it were a romance, and prophesies his success poetically before achieving it in deed:

```
'King,' he sede, "Pr suste
A tale mid pe beste.
Ine seie hit for no blame,
Horn is mi name.
Fume to kni3te houe, you lifted me
& kni3thod haue proued.'
```

(1265-68)

The hero's self-justification is here conflated with the storyteller's conventional call for attention, plea for the audience's goodwill, and introduction of the hero's name and life story. The Anglo-Norman Horn similarly performs his own life as art when he sings the *lai* concerning his love for Rigmel, a *lai* that has made their names and excellence known far beyond the boundaries of Brittany (2782-844). In both works Horn voices and lives by his own traditions, ones the people around him in exile often seem not to follow.

That Horn carries his heritage and his story through exile adds a further dimension to the assurance and continuity he represents. Horn's followers can rely for their identity on such a hero until the homeland is regained, the nation is safely contained in his person. When Horn wins his heritage and his wife, the seed of nationhood he carries can once more flourish in the lives of his people and his descendants.

Despite their very different verbal resources, these two romances draw on baronial ideals in their exaltation of landed stability, their conservative faith in custom, and their presentation of these values as beneficial to the nation as a whole. Following the typical pattern

54. Horn has twelve followers rather than the Anglo-Norman fifteen; he is of Christ-like perfection, "fairer bi one ribbe / Pane eni Man bat libbe" (315-16; see [Crane] Dannenbaum, "Fairer"); and he identifies the usurper of his kingdom as "'Jesucristes wiireying [enemy]'" (148).

55. Wittig (Narrative Structures, pp. 54-61) analyzes the structural units typical of Middle English romance openings. The first six lines of *KH* follow the same structure as Horn's own account: address and exhortation to audience (two lines), introduction of a hero's name (two lines), synopsis of hero's life.

56. E.g., *RH* 308-16, 1939-44, 2609-10, 2735-38, 2752-55; *KH* 419-24, 543-60, 829-36.
for the romances of English heroes, Horn begins a dispossessed vassal and, after long struggles in exile, ends a lord in full control of his rights. The perfect balance of courage and wisdom in his character ensures his success, while the narrative, in its cyclical design and its constant interweaving of the double movements toward feudal reinstatement and marriage, elevates to a glorious struggle blessed by providence the fundamental economic conflicts of insular baronial life.

Havelok's Heritage

The Lai d'Haveloc and Havelok the Dane, like the Romance of Horn and King Horn, are distant from each other textually but share a close thematic harmony. Like the Horn romances, they invest legality and social order with great importance in the justification of inheritance rights. The hero again carries the destiny of his people and provides them with a sense of common purpose. Havelok the Dane, bearing these concerns further into the thirteenth century, illustrates their evolution from a relatively local and feudal understanding of rule toward a broader, less class-specific understanding.

Havelok's career so resembles Horn's that I will treat some of its features only briefly here. The Lai d'Haveloc (ca. 1200) draws from Gaimar's Anglo-Norman chronicle L'Estoire des Engleis (39-318) the story of a Danish prince dispossessed in childhood and raised in England by his guardian Grim. There he is married to a king's daughter, Argentille (Goldeboru HD), who has also been unjustly dispossessed. Havelok subsequently regains his heritage and that of his wife as well. Havelok the Dane's dependence on the Lai d'Haveloc is likely but not fully demonstrable, since the Middle English poet has "fele nihtes waked" [stayed awake many a night] (2999) to enrich the story's telling.

The Havelok poems, like the Horn romances, develop the expulsion-and-return pattern in terms of the wrongful usurpation of inheritance rights, with a supporting emphasis on legality in other situations. In the Lai d'Haveloc Grim and his family leave Denmark solely to protect the "droit eir" (92), whom they regard as "fur seignur" (109) even though he is only two years old. When Havelok is a young man Grim sends him to the court of Lincoln to learn its ways. "Kar il quidot en sun corage / Kar il quidot en sun corage / K'uncore avreit sun heritage" [because he believed in his heart that he (Haveloc) would have his heritage again] (165–66). And indeed, when he returns to Denmark, all swear fealty to him as soon as they hear that he is the true heir (915–27). Like Horn's, Havelok's final gains are land tenure and its associated social power; in the end he rules three kingdoms: his inherited Denmark, Argentille's Norfolk, and her uncle's Lincoln and Lindsey.

A sense of providential favor suffuses the story's developments with an assurance that justice will prevail. The arranged marriage of Havelok and Argentille is especially interesting in this respect. The Lai's account details the barons' insistence that Argentille's guardian Edelsi fulfill his oath to marry her "ai plus fort home" [the most powerful man] (961) and traces Edelsi's maneuvers to overrule his barons (289–316). Edelsi's attempt to subvert justice through a falsely literal interpretation of his oath is thwarted by the convergence in Havelok of physical and lineal strength; instead of obscuring Argentille's claim to her heritage, the marriage leads directly to the recovery of both spouses' rights. Havelok's return to Denmark is similarly providential, a vindication coinciding with God's: "Deus nus ad revisite. / Vezt ici nostre droit eir" ["God has returned to us: behold here our true heir"] (912–13). Besides being granted with divine sanction, Havelok also meets concrete requirements that demonstrate his lineage: his appearance, his mark of flame, and his ability to blow a horn that none but the true heir can play. These elements interlock with an assurance that justice will prevail, as if the story were a quest for the true heir.


58. On the relation of HD to LH, see HD, pp. 194–95, Heyman, Havelok, pp. 196–97, Heyman, Havelok, pp. 196–97, and Meyer-Lindenberg, "Datierung des Lai d'Haveloc," proposes an early date for HD (1237–40) and suggests that it was a source for LH rather than vice versa. But see Balme, "Date of Havelok," further argues for a date in the last decades of the thirteenth century in Stalnitzky, "Kingship," and Stalnitzky, "Havelok the Dane."

59. Waldef (ed. Holden), a work of about 1200 whose ME descendant is lost (see Intro., n. 14), corroborates the concerns and patterns of the romances of English heroes. Waldef, like Horn and Havelok, is driven from his heritage (the kingdom of Northumbria) in youth but returns to avenge his father and reclaim the patrimony when he matures. The pattern of exile and return is doubled, and Waldef's sons extend their father's conquests in England and Europe. Brian Levy remarks on the characteristic insularity of Waldef's themes "d'une famille en peril et d'un patrimoine compromis," noting relationships to the stories of Horn, Havelok, and Beowulf of Hamburk (Waldef), p. 184; see also Holden, edition, pp. 23–32. Holden opposes the material theory (pp. 32–36).

60. Havelok receives oaths of fealty from the barons of each kingdom (LH 512–13, 517–18, 519). His right by inheritance or through marriage is mentioned for each kingdom (LH 971–72, 1091–92, 1103–6).
can sound. Here as in the romances of English heroes generally, a doubled pattern of deprivation and reacquisition is made to express the convictions that lineage should guarantee landed security and that claims to inheritance will prevail through the agency of earthly and heavenly justice.

*Havelok the Dane* offers a sophisticated reworking of these convictions. The heroine's story becomes a fuller and more evocative double for that of Havelok. A series of parallel passages on the rule and death of their fathers, the trickery and later the trials of their wicked guardians, and the hardships the two children suffer give this work the most handsomely articulated double structure of all the romances of English heroes. *Havelok* confers added importance on the theme that children both duplicate and extend their parents' lives by representing the rituals through which the dying fathers seek to extend their rights to their children (184-209, 383-99). These quasi-religious, quasi-legal ceremonies dramatize the proposition that children partake to their children (184-209, 383-99). These quasi-religious, quasi-legal ceremonies dramatize the proposition that children partake of their parents in some inalienable way, so that to separate them from their inheritances would defy moral and natural law. The *Lai d'Haveloc* expresses the relation very simply through physical resemblance: when Denmark's seneschal sees the returning Haveloc, he looked closely at him and recalled his lord, King Gunther, whom he had loved so much. He sighed sorrowfully. This man resembled the king in face, stature, and build. Physical resemblance is a sign of less tangible affiliations, as illustrated by the failure of the guardians' scheme to restrict "strongest" and "highest" to their literal senses in marrying off the heroine. Even in his low station as kitchen boy, the English Havelok resembles a "king or cayser" (977). His imposing size and Goldeboru's beauty assure us that once the fated pattern of their fortune is set, their station will again reflect their inborn nature.

That characteristic features of the romances of English heroes receive emphasis and endorsement in *Havelok the Dane* is important to assessing just what social attitude is implicit in the work. Early criticism of *Havelok* took it for a minstrel composition designed to entertain the poor. No extant manuscript of Middle English romance can be labeled a minstrel's book nor a copy from a minstrel's book, supporting recent revision of the earlier judgment that *Havelok's* verse is unsophisticated hack work. This remarkable romance has attracted high praise in recent years for its verbal richness, structural subtlety, and effective manipulation of formulaic style. But despite the widely recognized quality and sophistication of its poetry, some readers still find the work a "peasant fantasy" designed to please and to express the attitudes of a "lower-class audience." This reading is not plausible.

A narrative that traces a hero's journey through the social classes to kingship may seem calculated to please the peasantry. But our only evidence of the story's transmission prior to its appearance in *Havelok the Dane* finds it in the circles of power. Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, which was written for Constance FitzGilbert, wife of a powerful baron, and the *Lai d'Haveloc*, which was accessible only to that cultured sector of the insular population who knew French, clearly did not seek to appeal to a lower-class audience. Equally, some features of the English text that seem to fit a simple audience—such as the catalogue of fish, the attention to menial occupations, the wrestling contests, the absence of love scenes, and the sensitivity to poverty and its economics—do have antecedents in *Gaimar* and in the *Lai d'Haveloc*.

It is important to remember that in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the English barony was not closed and was more domestic than military. Its openness sustained in its members a
preoccupation with achievement and a conservative attitude to law and property rights. The romances of English heroes speak to these concerns, and *Havelok the Dane* treats them with an increased economic specificity that would appeal to the deepening insecurities of an ever more porous upper class.

Discussions of medieval audience usually consider noble and common interests to be mutually exclusive, but *Havelok* attends to some interests that the barony shared with the emerging professional and mercantile class. In this period the strongest lines of class difference were not drawn between commoners and barony, but between the peasantry (whether bonded or free) and the middle class, and between the highest nobility and the broad ranks of the barony. As we have seen, considerable mobility, both upward and downward, linked the ranks of the barony to the middle class. Both groups enjoyed degrees of power and status; both were benefited by economic prosperity, sound justice, peace, and maintenance of the existing social order.

*Havelok the Dane* builds an imaginary world in which these values sustain a utopian vision of harmony and happiness. The good rule of Athelwold opens the romance; the first cause of his people’s love is that “gode lawes / He dede maken, and ful wel holden” (28-29). Strict law enforcement permits trade, travel, and social harmony (45-66). Although Athelwold is also charitable to the weak, he seems to concentrate his energies on a powerful array of wrongdoers, whom he has (according to the crime) bound, hanged, brought to sorrow, made poor, castrated, cast in fetters, in sum. “He made hem lurken, and crepen in wrons [corners]: / Yet hidden him alle, and hidden hem stilte, / And didn al his herte wille” (67-70). The protection of property, trade, and the social order that fosters them remains a constant value in the romance, most importantly in *Havelok*’s model behavior as a worker. In his youth the hero gladly tramples other laborers to win his job, then works as tirelessly as a beast, without ever complaining (879-948). He sug-

\[\text{\textsuperscript{66}}\text{See Intro., nn. 19-22, and n. 75 below; also Pearsall, "Alternative Revival."} \]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{67}}\text{Hillen, Royal Men, pp. 33-40; Millard and West, Popular Revivalism, pp. 17-22.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{68}}\text{Money and investment also figure in non-thematic measures of worth: HD, 1907-8, 1933, 1943, 1934-5, 1945-7, 1945-7, see also Mills, "Havelok’s Borrow."}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{69}}\text{See Text, p. 19.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{70}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, p. 190-91, 203.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{71}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{72}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{73}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{74}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{75}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{76}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{77}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{78}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{79}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{80}}\text{Postan, Mediaeval Economy and Society, pp. 190-91, 203-4.}\]
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[hear instructive things and learn wisdom] (163–64), as he cannot among the poor inhabitants of Grimsby. At Lincoln, Haveloc demonstrates his innate nobility of character: despite his great strength he is generous, "frans e debonere," and attentive to the needy (251–56). So restricted is the social vision of the Lai that these virtues, conventionally associated with the nobility, seem laughable in Haveloc: the kitchen boy: "Pur la franchise k'en lui ot / Le teneient entr’els a sot, / De lui feseient lur deduit" [They held him for a fool because of his high generosity; they made fun of him] (257–59).

The conviction that certain virtues have no place in lower stations serves to distinguish noble from common nature.

Class division also restricts Argenteuil’s identity. Although she shows considerable initiative and acumen in comparison to Rigmel, her potential is nonetheless circumscribed by the narrow imperatives of her social and legal roles. Her cleverness has no independent value but is purely functional in advancing Haveloc’s cause and finally “deserves” his affection (978). Her social standing is contingent on marriage (221–24, 1095–98, 1105–6) and childbearing: the barons who demand her inherited rights for her note that “ja esteit creue e granz / E ben poeit aveir enfanz” [now she was grown and matured and could well bear children] (289–90; cf. 575–76, 656–60, 681–86). Like her intelligence, her sexuality is directed only toward perpetuating the lineal rights claimed by her class.

Havelok the Dane manifests a different kind of class consciousness. Although rank is fundamental to the social structure in Havelok, no hierarchical imperative requires that the hero be defined as fundamentally different from the common man. The same holds true for women: Godberu knows that her marriage disinherits her, but apprehends her fate more vividly in terms of gender and earthly destiny: “Sho bouhte, it was Godes wille: / God, bat makes gwenen be korn, / Formede hire wimman to be born” (1166–68). Here Havelok’s behavior as a kitchen boy inspires not the scorn but the love of “Boles howy men and lowe” (958). Havelok’s strength tempered by mildness (927–98, 1066) offers a perfected lower-class version of Athelwold’s law-enforcing severity tempered by charity. Both men are strong first and mild second at the work.

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they have been assigned in life, and both are loved by all for their excellence.

This ideal of common understanding pervades the romance. The dispossessed young Havelok formulates for himself the work ethic of laborers:

Swinken ich wolde for mi mete. Work / food
It is no shame forto swinken; /e man bat may wel eten and drinken For ought not liggen at hom it is ful strong. Ought not shameful

That a royal heir can voice this ethic does not imply a radical disregard for social stratification. Havelok simply validates the form that idealized commitment to the common good takes among laborers. Similarly, when he returns to Denmark fitted out as a merchant, he wins the gratitude of burgesses for protecting his host’s property from a band of sixty thieves. Havelok’s journey through the classes, from a thrall’s family to the throne, expresses an ideology of cohesion in which all people share an understanding of good and right, and each class’s duties contribute to the common purpose of achieving and maintaining social order.

Nor does the ennobling of helpful commoners at the end of the romance (2346–53, 2856–927) diminish the validity of social stratification. On the contrary, Havelok’s gesture recognizes the power of the hierarchical structure by treating status as a valuable reward for a chosen few. At the same time, within the general restrictions of class difference, Havelok’s exceptional rewards signal the communal nature of his enterprise.

Havelok the Dane reinvigorates the characteristic structures of the romances of English heroes, and extends their appeal to the bourgeoisie by associating traditional themes of baronial concern to middle-class concerns for profit making and social stability. Havelok creates a world remarkable for its social complexity and breadth, yet unites that world in harmony with the hero’s purpose. After briefly relating these developments to ideas about kingship and the

Delany and Ishkanian, “Kingship,” pp. 299–300, give historical parallels for the exceptional rewards in HD and argue that HD represents in this respect “the social reality and realistic ambitions of the upper bourgeoisie and knighthood” (p. 300).
realm, we must ask how Havelok's poetry sustains developments so wide ranging, appeals so inclusive.

Havelok the Dane is truly a romance of the law. The familiar question of inheritance rights here expands to a comprehensive interest in legality as it affects all of society. Many passages emphasize that all ranks are bound, both theoretically and effectually, by good or evil rule. This principle extends to the functional corollary that parliaments can review and moderate the exercise of power. Noble councils handle some legal matters, but the traitors Godard and Godrich are judged by parliaments that represent their victims throughout society. In comparison to the earlier Romance of Horn and King Horn, less can now be entrusted to divine providence, but more to human justice.

This literary transformation assesses important historical changes. The baronial class acquired a broader political consciousness during the turbulent reform period that accompanied the barony's gradual losses in economic, social, and political dominance during the thirteenth century. Developing conceptions of social interdependence were sustained by a new emphasis on law as essential to rule, expressed most fully in Henry of Bracton's De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae. Ernst Kantorowicz describes the later thirteenth century as "the most critical period" in the development of English political thought: "It was then that the 'community of the realm' became conscious of the difference between the king as a personal liege lord and the king as the supra-individual administrator of a public sphere."

This development finds a poetic corollary in Havelok the Dane, where Havelok's mystical signs of flame and glowing cross preserve an older conception of theocratic lordship, while the emphasis on law and the community introduces a newer version of rule based on contractual agreements. Like the heavenly signs of flame and cross, the ability to govern fairly becomes a distinguishing mark of the true heir.

Turning back perhaps half a century to the Lai d'Haveloc, we find only nascent suggestions of these ideas. The Havelok plot is well suited to demonstrating that a community benefits through its leader's success, but the Lai does not exploit the design by emphasizing the hero's participation in many levels of social life. At scattered points, however, the good of the realm is associated with Haveloc's personal success. When Haveloc returns to Denmark and demonstrates his right to rule, De totes parz e scoireant
It riche e pove, ki l'oeceat,
De lui frent l'ur ame,
A chevaler l'unt adobe.
(935-28)

Both rich and poor who heard about it ran there from all sides, they made him their protector and dubbed him knight.

This emotional demonstration of support prefigures those in Havelok the Dane, but the Lai d'Haveloc more typically develops the right to lordship in technical and legal terms involving only the barony. The strongest demonstrations in the Lai of the hero's bond with his community are Haveloc's expressions of concern for his soldiers. In Denmark, he stakes his rights against Odlaf in single combat.
The ceremony of feudal submission and the subsequent renunciation of heritage rights (487–93) take fire and universality from the horror of Godard’s bloody murders, the religious measures of evil and good, and the pathos of childish suffering that pervade the scene.

The many-faceted appeal of this episode typifies the poem’s narrative procedure. A single idea or event receives both rational and pathetic support, both political and moral meaning. By multiplying

83. Other examples of pathos are: sorrow at the deaths of the good kings (175–93), the children’s regret for their births (363, 378–82), the murder of children (424), especially pathetic in taking advantage of their credulity (427–29, cf. 319–21), and Mehl, Middle English Romances, p. 163, notes the use of the deaths of Havelok’s sisters as ‘a concrete image of his suffering’ (107–10, 118). Examples of religious appeals complementing political developments are: attribution of good rule to piety (102–5, 214–16, 226), use of holy objects in political ceremonies (189–203, 388–97, 1507–82); God’s protection of Havelok (600, 648, 1175–80, 2226); the children’s regret for their births (461, 1129–30); the murder of children (467–69, especially pathetic in taking advantage of their credulity) (107–10, 118).
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the kinds of significance given to any episode, the poet ideally harmonizes the claims of law with those of morality and the interests of all classes with those of the hero. In presenting an ostensibly universal social reconciliation that in fact embodies the barony's concern for landed stability and the middle class's affinity for social order, Havelok the Dane boldly transforms the interests of society's middle and upper ranks into a literary vision of fulfillment in which hard work and dignity are compatible, profit and virtue coincide.

The stories of Horn and Havelok, in all their versions, join seriousness of purpose to buoyant optimism. Horn and Havelok contrast as heroes, but their differences only emphasize their stories' shared themes. Havelok is a disarmingly affectionate man who needs much encouragement to win back his heritage.82 Horn, in contrast, wields active power over his destiny with autonomous confidence. Yet both models of behavior, the loving and the leading, define the hero in terms of his relationship to his followers and identify his fate with that of his people.

The later romances of English heroes follow the direction of Havelok the Dane toward greater accessibility. Social meanings are increasingly sustained and even overshadowed by affective and religious appeals. Diminishing political and social energy coincides with a growing interest in the hero's personal success and in action and event as purely narrative phenomena. Yet the later romances' diversity, rather than countering their underlying attention to baronial issues, seeks to reformulate those issues in less class-defined, more universal terms.

82. Havelok is generous and kind, tolerant of insults, innocent of guile and sin (LH 208–9, 99–104, 168–88, 330–36, 412–88). In LH he never initiates aggression or mentions his feudal rights but is pushed along the road to kingship by his guardian Grim, Grim's daughter, his wife Argentille, and the powerful Dane Sigar Estal. The ME Havelok shows a little more initiative, but he too must on several occasions be led or encouraged to win back his heritage.

Chapter Two

Land, Lineage, and Nation

The conventional notion of what constitutes medieval English romance—much bloodshed, great length, marvels and wonders, action rather than reflection—comes close to perfect embodiment in the stories of Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton. Lord Ernie's assessment typifies modern reaction to these romances: "The austere simplicity of the older forms is overlaid with a riot of romantic fancy, their compactness of structure is lost. The romances are swollen to a prodigious length, in which incident is threaded to incident, adventure strung to adventure, and encounter piled on encounter."1 They are as long as novels, and their detractors often fault them for failing by modern fictional standards,2 while their admirers class them with popular detective novels or thrillers.3 But "novel" content, design, technique, and invention by no means characterize the aesthetic of these works, nor are they particularly strong on mystery or thrills. Rather, they develop earlier romances' interest in baronial issues of land and lineage; their design, the kinds of events and problems they treat, and their stylistic proce-

1. Ernie, Light Reading, p. 78.
2. Charles W. Dunn writes that Guy of Warwick's "incidents are unduly repetitive and prolix; the Middle English adapters show no inventiveness or critical sense ... . The extent of its appeal is presumably dependent more upon the fame of Warwick Castle than upon its literary merit" (Severs, ed., Manual, I, 33).