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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 attentiveness 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 251–62, 385–94, 496–98, 801–2; HD 915–16, 54, 945–54). In LH he never initiates aggression or34 men­ters 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." 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-

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, 1:11).
dures convey images of noble life that give their "riot of romantic fancy" a meaning worthy of the success they enjoyed. This chapter treats the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes, their English descendants, and some later fourteenth-century romances as well. Sir Beves of Hamtoun* and Guy of Warwick (both ca. 1300) are so closely related to Anglo-Norman versions that some critics have treated them as translations. But textual studies demonstrate that no English manuscript translates an extant Anglo-Norman manuscript, so that their differences cannot be considered evidence of direct poetic reworking. Instead, the various versions of each story, like the versions of Horn and Havelok, are related works whose differences may be more accurately understood in terms of insular generic and historical developments than in terms of textual revision. The longer romances of English heroes usually connect exile and return to feudal dispossessio and reinstatement, and double the hero's winning of land with his winning a bride to continue the lineage. As for Horn and Havelok, the law and the courts are important sources of justification for Bevis, Guy, and Fulk—though this confidence in law breaks down in the later Athelstan and Gamelyn. In addition, the diffuse longer works incorporate new sources of validation for noble heroes. Motifs from epic, saints' legends, and courtly poetry demonstrate heroic worth by other standards than winning a heritage. Where these standards conflict, uneasy accommodations reestablish the heritage as the dominant value for adventuring heroes.

Des Aventures e Prusses Nos Auncestres

Central to all these works is the English hero's status as fictional forebear and defender of his nation. The opening lines of Feuille le Fitz Waryn (ca. 1280) illustrate this emphasis by revising the topos that spring's renewal stimulates human activity. Rather than inspir­ing love as in much lyric poetry, or warfare as epitomized in Bevis or Har­mony, the hero's winning of land with his winning a bride to continue the lineage as for Horn and Havelok, the law and the courts are important sources of justification for Bevis, Guy, and Fulk—though this confidence in law breaks down in the later Athelstan and Gamelyn. In addition, the diffuse longer works incorporate new sources of validation for noble heroes. Motifs from epic, saints' legends, and courtly poetry demonstrate heroic worth by other standards than winning a heritage. Where these standards conflict, uneasy accommodations reestablish the heritage as the dominant value for adventuring heroes.

5. *Feuille le Fitz Waryn*, ed. Mathew et al., p. 3, lines 1-8. The editors summarize research on the relationship between the extant prose version (ca. 1300) and its lost verse source (ca. 1280), pp. xxxv-xxxvi.


7. During Bevis's first period of exile from his patrimony in England he is wounded by Jocast, the daughter of the foreign king he serves, and in consequence suffers a long imprisonment in Damscus. A second exile from England (after his hero Amundel killef King Edgar's son to death) follows Bevis's marriage to Jocast and a temporary renunciation of his lands and titles. This exile repeats the pattern of foreign success and wounding by a foreign prince found in Bevis's first exile, with many added adventures of separation and reunion. Finally, Bevis's love is tested in the acquisition of three kingdoms, those of Jocast's father, Jocast's pagan husband Ver, and England.
secured, and makes plans to avenge his father's death and rewin his
own rights. His subsequent confrontations with King Edgar im-
spire the most politically cogent section of the work. Unique to the
insular versions of the story are Boeve's refusal to pay the inheri-
tance fee because of Edgar's failure to protect his rights, his request
for permission to build Arundel Castle, and his warning to Edgar
not to interfere with his land while he is again in exile.
Boeve's second exile develops insular concerns in the more emo-
tive sphere of family feeling. The hero's line of descent and that of
his old tutor Sabaoth become intermixed in one extended family
that shares Boeve's exile, conquests, and return to power in En-
land. Boeve and his companion Tierri, Sabaoth's son, value their
wives primarily as mothers and take great delight in their chil-
dren. Boeve's two sons obediently play up to their father's pride in
their emerging likeness to himself:

Dist l'un a l'autre: 'le champ traversez,
si pensom de joster! Contre moi venez;
ke ne savon, kant serrom esprovez.
Kant mui va mu per se aloes
non armes porter, si serra muit loz.'
Ore purrez vere cuys de chevaliers,
'Par mon chef!' dist Boove, 'il erent bachelers,
s'il vivent longes, il stunderunt hur per. . . .
Sainte Marie, dame!' dist Boove le aloes,
'dame, merci! les enlens me gardez.'

(3346–53, 3357–58)

One said to the other: 'Cross the field, and let's think on jousting! Come at
me, for we don't know when we will be tried. When our renowned father
sees us bearing our arms, he will be very happy.' Then you could see the
blows of knights! 'By my head!' said Bevis, 'these are fine aspirants to
knighthood: if they live long, they'll catch up to their father. . . . Holy
Mary, Lady!' said worthy Bevis, 'Lady, your grace! Guard these children
for me.'

"Middle English Romances," pp. 55–67, believes that different poets com-
posed the first 165 laisses and the remainder of the poem. Errors and illogicalities do
trouble the later stages of narration, e.g., the designation "François" for Boeve's sup-
ported line (3146–53, 3346–53), and other barons to land.

9. The central crisis occurs when, upon the death of Fulk's father,
King John denies Fulk's inherited right to Whittington in favor of
another's claim. Fulk turns outlaw with a resounding denunciation
of John's failure to provide just administration:

'Sire roy, vous estes mon lige seigneur, e a vous su je lié par fealté tant
come je su en vostre service, e tan corne je ti enke terres de vous; e vous me
dussez meyntenir en resoun, e vous me faylez de resoun e commune ley, e
ke ne savom, kant serrom esprovez.
Kant mui va mu per se aloes
non armes porter, si serra muit loz.'
Ore purrez vere cuys de chevaliers,
'Par mon chef!' dist Boove, 'il erent bachelers,
s'il vivent longes, il stunderunt hur per. . . .
Sainte Marie, dame!' dist Boove le aloes,
'dame, merci! les enlens me gardez.'

(3346–53, 3357–58)

10. In addition, a few events in the second half of the work reinforce or echo
Boeve's political claim in England: he defends the claim of the Dame de Civile
(2824–47) and of Sabaoth's son (3702–5); he returns to England, as he warned Edgar
would, when Edgar dispossesses Robant, who holds Boeve's lands for him
(2851–22).
insults, while he shows energetic pique at her advances, walks out on her show of indignation, and, when she follows him to his room, snores in a futile attempt to get rid of her (AN 670–772, ME A 1193–1199). After their betrothal, this freedom from the conventions of fine amor allows Josian to become an active helper to the hero, very like his wonderful horse Arundel, with whom she is in fact sometimes equated. Bevis's wife and horse both assist him in his dynastic victory and, despite their servile status, achieve a measure of dignity and repute as the appanage of Bevis's great merit."

Sir Beues of Hamtoun undertakes an important development, whose beginnings are barely discernible in Beve, from the perception of the baronial family as a political unit owing personal allegiance to rulers on the basis of reciprocal support, to a wider perception of national identity and the importance of national interests. The adventures of Horn and Havelok as they lose and gradually regain power correspond directly with the loss and the need of their people. This is a simple and effective means of heroic justification: what is good for Horn and Havelok turns out to be good for everyone. Fouke le Fitz Waryn shares this confident assessment. In the romances of Bevis and Guy, the needs and desires of the whole nation do not constantly coincide with those of the noble hero. But in compensation, patriotic sentiment reinforces the value of the hero's actions. Whatever his private baronial goals, he nonetheless represents his nation by occupying England's fictional history as an ancestral figure of diverse and superlative accomplishments.

The process is just beginning in Beve de Haumtone, where a marginal sense of the hero's Englishness may be suggested by echoes of the legend of St. George, whose feast day became a national holiday in 1222. Beve's crusading fervor against pagans and his imprisonment in Damascus, as they recall St. George's exploits, reflect the gradual development of England's national identity through the impact of the Crusades, the loss of Normandy in 1204 and of the Angevin territories by 1243, and the increasing centralization of rule: "By the thirteenth century the fully developed medieval state [of England] had reached a momentary equilibrium, and if it was

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14. Arundel is her gift to Bevis; both she and the horse are one-man creatures who retain appropriation by others (e.g., Yvonne's attempts, AN 491–107), ME A 1497–1534, 1591, 53. In two AE warning dreams losing Arundel represents losing Josian (1727–45) and harm to Beve indicates the loss of one or the other helper (1490–95).

still "feudal," it was also, in its way, a national state. "To sustain the national state, a sense of pride in and commitment to it developed, expressed during the thirteenth century in antiforeign sentiment and more positively in the country's mobilization against the crises of the 1290s. Maurice Powicke concludes from Edward I's handling of these crises that "it was in Edward's reign that nationalism was born." 17

A powerful sense of national commitment renders obsolete and even subversive the older feudal belief that lord and vassal have mutual duties and that vassals can maintain some spheres of autonomous action. Fulk's resistance to John goes unquestioned, but the Middle English Beues recognizes and adjusts to the challenge of nationalism by adding references to England and Bevis's Englishness to the one hand while supporting and even strengthening Bevis's feudal claims on the other. 18 Introducing an interpolated combat with a dragon, the poet ranks Bevis's achievement with similar vic­tories by the English Wade and Guy of Warwick (1299–68). Told in the manner of a saint's legend, the dragon-killing extends the correspondences suggested in Anglo-Norman between the hero and St. George, patron saint of the English army from the earliest Crusades. 19 By these associations the Middle English version implies that Bevis's merit is national, even while extending references to his personal claims.

The conclusion of Beues also recognizes that the more dominant national ideology becomes, the more questionable a baron's commitment to his family and resistance to royal authority will become. Beues de Hambhouette reaches its resolution when Beovis, in response to Edgar's dispossessing of Sancho's son, returns to England to bring the king into line. Edgar sweats with fear at the news of Beovis's arrival and, deferentially greeting the hero as "sire roi" (3767), settles Beovis's claim by arranging with his parliament to offer his daughter in marriage to Beovis's son (3758–49). The tensions in the feudal hierarchy that provide the terms of Beovis's conclusion are obfuscated in the conclusion of Beues. The vassal no longer intimidates the king; even though Edgar had wrongly denied Bevis's rights he simply returns the heritage "bleibelche" (A 4313). But the irascible tension between them erupts in a street battle instigated by the king's steward, who recalls Bevis's role in the death of Edgar's son during the son's attempted theft of Arundel:

\[
\text{Hear} \quad \text{Truly} \\
\text{Setses, hit is be-falle sa.} \quad \text{slow} \\
\text{In your cite hit help a fou.} \quad \text{lament} \\
\text{Beues, pat slouz he kinges none.} \quad \text{Right away} \\
\text{Pat treason je nege to more.} \quad \text{Bevis ake.} \\
\text{I commande, for he kinges sake.} \quad \text{Whan he selle hede hast,} \\
\text{Swiwe amon pat he be takit.} \quad \text{pai gome hem armes hastet.} \\
\text{Whan he selle hede hast,} \quad \text{A 4312–40}
\]

It may seem surprising that a hero would be memorialized in British literature for slaughtering so many citizens of London "bat al Temse was bloed red" (A 4350). 20 The carnage does resolve the charge that Bevis had betrayed the king: "thus men schel teche fili golotzous [vile rascals] / but wilie misait speak evil of gode barouns," 21 the hero concludes self-righteously as he delivers the coup de grace to King Edgar's steward (A 3877–88). In terms of the poem's professed national feeling, the best we can do is to read this episode non-mimetically as a "good baron" triumphing over slander. 22 But it is important that, however Bevis's Englishness or his relations with Edgar may be described, his actions still defend his heritage, defy the king, and maintain his autonomy. Deprived of direct confrontation with Edgar, he exercises indirect opposition with relish; during this battle his sons' devoted support is crucial (A 4415–20). That the steward's chiefly ally is a Lombard, or in later versions crowds of Lombards (A 4407–35; MO 4102, 4233), gives the episode a more conventionally nationalist coloring, yet in all versions squarely most of the thirty thousand or more citizens whom Bevis slays must be Englishmen. On antiforeign sentiment in the thirteenth century, see H. W. C. Davis, England under the Normans, pp. 415–16, 421–22, 433–34; Rickard, Britains in Medieval French Literature, p. 40.

20. Mehl recognizes the problem but assumes it would not be recognized by an audience of "less refined tastes" (Middle English Romances, p. 268). Weiss seeks national feeling in the street fight's analogies to certain oppositions between barons and London merchants during the reform period ("Sir Beues of Hamtoun," pp. 73–76).
The romance denies its own assertions with respect to nationhood whenever those assertions interfere with Bevis's access to rights and rank. The underlying impetus of Beues of Hamtoun remains baronial, and any conflicting elements of national ideology are resisted.

The latest of the paired romances of English heroes, Gui de Warewic (ca. 1230) and its closely related Middle English versions, supple­ment the underlying baronial impetus with further criteria of merit. Guy's story is based on the doubled expulsion and return pattern, extended into a brief parallel section on his son Reinbrun. But this typical pattern is modified by ideals from courtly literature, hagiographic values, and (as in Beues) respect for nationalism.

Guy's first exile from England is voluntary, inspired by his love for Felice, the proud daughter of his lord. Having fulfilled her demand that he become among knights "'del mund tut le meillur'" (1.1.1076) ["'best doinde / In armes pat animan mai finde'"] (A 1.1557-60), Guy marries her. Soon, however, he repents of so many victories in the name of love and undertakes a second voluntary exile to seek similar victories for God. As a humble pilgrim he revisits the Near East, the continent, and England, the three scenes of his youthful victories, and takes on three single combats of national importance; he then retires to a hermitage on his own property and dies a pious death.

Although many elements new to the romances of English heroes appear in the story of Guy, they are subordinate to the older issues of baronial rights. Early episodes portray a squire beset by conventional lovesickness who looks to Amor, a personified force, as his source of strength. But although the Guy poems say far more about the nature of love and its effects than do the other insular romances of English heroes, Guy's love is no more than the initial stimulus for the thousands of lines of adventure that follow. Guy hardly gives Felice a thought during the adventures she sends him on, and she never suffers reciprocal pains for love of him. Guy even curses his passion at times:

Guy's lament recalls the plea of his parents and of his lord that he put duty to them before his quest to win Felice (AN 1.166, ME A 1.159-246). In valuing the claim of lord and family over that of love, his lament anticipates the practical arrangements surrounding the lovers' eventual marriage, which Felice's father proposes to Guy with emphasis on the lands and titles involved (AN 1.744-50, ME A 1.159-246). As in the Romance of Horn, fine amor merely orna­ments and serves dynastic ends.

Religious feeling is hardly more salient in the second half of the romance than love in the first. Ostensibly, Guy now avoids recogni­tion as carefully as he previously sought it, but he does reveal his identity after each of his combats; and he is in any case so firmly established as the greatest knight by the time of his pilgrimages that the skepticism with which the oppressed accept this anony­mous pilgrim as their champion in place of Guy of Warwick, whom they have been seeking desperately, simply emphasizes his stature as a living legend. Piety often enhances heroic merit in the ro­mances of this group: Fulk goes into holy retirement like Guy be­fore his death, Bevis converts his wife and the giant Ascopart, and

22. Gui de Warewic, ed. F. Ewert, is based on twelve AN MSS; two fourteenth- century English MSS are edited by Zupitza, Guy of Warwick: The First or 14th-century Version. Quotations are designated A (Auchinleck) or C (Caius); MSS described in Zupitza, Guy of Warwick: The Second or 15th-century Version. Several fragmentary AN and ME MSS have been separately published. The relationships among MSS are dis­cussed by Weyrauch, "Mittelenglischen Fassungen"; and by L. H. Loomis, "Auchin­leck Manuscript," pp. 607-8, 612.


these heroes undertake numerous battles for Christianity. Yet in every case, piety is a praiseworthy quality that sustains public renown rather than transcending it.

Renown is a worldly value, as are other values Guy follows in the combats he undertakes as a pilgrim. He defends the right of his companion Terri to his heritage and the right of the English over the Danes to hold England. In both cases Guy’s impetus is double: he hopes primarily to avenge Terri but does express faith in God’s assistance (AN 9709-10, ME A 159.10-12, 165.4, 179.1-3, 248.4-6; C 9587-99, 10697-95, 10725-26). Guy’s attitude is more pious than in his youth, but his causes have not really changed. His parting speech to Terri after winning back his lands typifies the work’s infusion of faith into baronial substance:

‘Votre seigneur loyalement servez,
Gardez que orgueil n’en aiez,
Absoye ben le socurez,
De home desheriter ja ne pensez,
Car si a tort nul desheriter,
Ben voil que vus le saurez,
D’en regne Deu desherite servez.’

(10744-50)

Here Guy justifies rights to land, the oldest of Anglo-Norman themes, by appealing to feudal custom and piety together. His ser-


26. In addition to driving off the Danes, Guy kills a dragon that endangers the whole land of King Athelstan (1240-90) and its Middle English descendants express baronial concerns more fully than any of their group except the Romance of Horn. In his youth Guy’s three major achievements defend the right of lesser nobles to their land against the claim of great lords, and even as a pilgrim knight his causes defend property and land from unjust seizure. Like Bevis’s sons, Guy’s son Reinbrun imitates his father, undertaking adventures that parallel those of his father’s chivalric youth and even thinking of his father for inspiration in combat (AN 1240-90, ME A 93.1-94.7). In his culminating adventure Reinbrun rescues Guy’s old squire Amis by using a magical sword to defeat a fairy knight, while Guy simultaneously rescues Amis’s heritage through his battle against disseisin in Germany. In the Middle English versions Reinbrun brings us the first hero to defend all England against its enemies. In Anglo-Norman, though, the terms of Guy’s defense are still baronial rather than national. Athelstan’s plea for a champion against the Danes enumerates the central concerns of England’s barons in narrow class terms:

Francs chevalers, ore vus purveez!
Voz sunt les chastels e les citez,
Les larges terres e les maneres
E les forestz de bestes pleneres;

Nor / heaven’s

27. In addition to driving off the Danes, Guy kills a dragon that endangers the whole land of King Athelstan (1240-90).
Noble knights, now prepare yourselves! Yours are the castles and the walled towns, the broad lands and the manors, and the forests full of beasts. Remember your great possessions, your wives, your children; if by your weakness you lose them, you will be shamed forever.'

Gui's combat with the Danes' champion is similarly formulated: Athelstan sends word that he has found a knight who "Le dreit sun seignur défendra" [will defend the right of his lord] (11018), and Gui prays that he may successfully "de servage défendre la tere" [defend the land from servitude] (11064). The king argues that each baron's manor, wife, and forest bear witness to the Danish threat: here as throughout the romances of English heroes, individual fiefs and families stand for the barony's class interest and even for wider national interest. Yet Gui's courageous vassalage and the avoided threat of servitude do not really refer to the status of peasants or even that of the clerical first estate.

The Middle English versions of this episode formulate Guy's action in more fully national terms, usually omitting Athelstan's exhortation to the barons entirely and expressing the purpose of Guy's combat differently: he will fight not as Athelstan's vassal but "for Inglond" (A 248.12); he prays that he may "To-day saue In- glondes ri3t" (A 252.11). The shift from baronial to national allegiance is accomplished more easily than in Bevis's story, where the king challenged his vassal's own heritage. Here the need of the baronial class coincides more fully with the desire of a national community to enjoy England in peace.

In the later romances of English heroes, the pressure of ideologies not fully compatible with baronial concerns gradually increases. Religious issues become important in Guy's story, and their role will be treated more fully in Chapter 3. Courtly convention, too, affects the structure of Gui de Warewic and its descendants. 28 Most of all, nationalism challenges the local and lineal preoccupations of baronial heroes. Answering the challenge, poets assign national significance to the careers of these heroes by giving them specific combats in defense of England, by presenting them as fictive ancestors in Englishness, and by associating their excellence in adventure to the merit of the English as a whole. Yet in action these heroes seem to withdraw from national identification, Fulk in his outlawry as Bevis in his street carnage and Gui in his solitary wanderings. The tendency is even greater in the later Gamelyn and Sir Dégrevant, 29 whose English heroes are engaged in a purely self-interested defense of inheritance rights with no national overtones. Yet even when nationalism is an important force in romances of English heroes, a strong underlying allegiance to the political ideals of the barony remains.

Justice

One measure of this allegiance is that like the earlier romances of English heroes, the stories of Bevis, Guy, and Fulk express faith in the capacity of judicial procedures to establish both the hero's claim and all subsidiary claims he defends during his adventures. So deeply do insular heroes believe in law as the proper instrument of baronial justice that they often welcome its substitution for open armed conflict and urge its application to kings. Although capricious kings may attempt to act unjustly, the institutions of justice are themselves sound and can successfully resolve the problems submitted to them.

Misuse of power by the mighty presents difficulties to all the insular heroes. When Arundel kills King Edgar's son, the king swears that Bevis will hang without trial, but the assembled barons constrain the king's wrath by reminding him of traditional law concerning homicide:*

Dunt a militar, 'Vus nos volez escharnier, nus li veyum devant vus server, o vostre coupe aler e revener; ceo n'est pas dreit ke tu le facis occier. Cil refuse le bon cheval de pris, nus i veum qu'il deyt estre garis.'

28. Pp. 196-97; courtly motives also influence Dégrevant, whose plot begins with a challenge to land but continues with a doubled courtship.

29. Gamelyn, ed. Skeat; Dégrevant (ca. 1400), ed. Casson.

30. Medieval law exhibits cases both of executing animals that had killed and of fining the animals' owners. Domestic animals were sometimes tried for homicide, on the principle that they were as responsible for their actions as humans; see R. H. Bloch, Literature and Law, pp. 32-33.
The barons' adherence to law and the English king's eventual submission to it contrasts with the pagan king Bradmund's perverse Bevis (ME A 1713-20). Edgar's submission foreshadows his response to Bevis's second return to England, when king and council agree to restore Bevis's heritage (AN 3738-72, ME C 4249-65).

E commune ley, e unqe ne fust bon rey qe deneya a ces franke tenant ley en sa court'” ['"you fail me in justice and common law; you wronged me by inheritance. Fulk protests that "vouz me faylez de resoun' (49.36-38). But Fulk's threat is only educative; having made his point about the way you would judge me, if you had taken me'] (49.36-38). But Fulk's threat is only educative; having made his point about the way you would judge me, if you had taken me' (49.36-38). But Fulk's threat is only educative; having made his point about the way you would judge me, if you had taken me' (49.36-38). But Fulk's threat is only educative; having made his point about the way you would judge me, if you had taken me' (49.36-38).

In every case, then, the English heroes speak out against royal injustice—indeed, the romance has no hero in the familiar sense, since the story's dominant figure, Athelston, must overcome be both lawgiver and above the law.

Guy similarly persuades Prince Llewelyn to reconcile himself to a baron the prince had planned to attack: "Fouke fust sages e bien avysee, e savoyt bien qe le tort fust al prince; si ly dist en bele manere: 'Sire, pur Dieu, vous vodrez de moy, si vous me ussez pris'" (46.36-38). But Fulk's threat is only educative; having made his point about the way you would judge me, if you had taken me' (49.36-38).

Even Athelston, which has no Anglo-Norman antecedent, makes the latter point about royal power. "Like Edgar in the story of Bevis, King Athelston wishes to execute an assumed traitor without trial. So willful is Athelston in his wrath that when his wife pleads that a parliament be called to determine the guilt or innocence of the accussed, the king physically attacks her for disobeying his "causement," killing her unborn child (253-93). The problem of royal capriciousness is deeper here than in the main group of romances of English heroes, in that no baronial hero speaks for law in opposition to the king's injustice—indeed, the romance has no hero in the familiar sense, since the story's dominant figure, Athelston, must overcome be both lawgiver and above the law."

The heroic defense of legal procedure is particularly characteristic of Guy of Warwick and Fulk Fitz Warin. Guy's three great victories as a pilgrim knight are in judicial combats whose binding terms and formal oaths are extensively presented. In youth as well, Guy supports legal or diplomatic solutions over military ones.
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Fulk was wise and observant, and knew well that the prince was in the wrong; so he spoke eloquently to him: 'Sire, for God's sake,' he said, 'have mercy! If you do what you have planned, you will be much blamed in foreign countries by all people. And sire, if you please, do not be offended that I say this to you: everyone says that you have wronged him. And therefore, sire, for God's sake have mercy on him, and he will return to you at your pleasure, and will serve you willingly; and you do not know when you will have need of your barons.'

Fulk turns the prince's plans for war into no more than a lengthy discussion. He "talks and preaches" Llewelyn into acting fairly (34.23), just as by argument he finally convinces King John of his rights: "molt de paroles furent, mes a dreyn le roy lur pardona tot son maltalent, e lur rendi tot lur heritage" [there were many words, but at last the king pardoned them all his anger, and restored all their heritage to them] (57.26-28).

The later fourteenth-century romances *Athelston* and *Gamelyn* lose this bold confidence in institutional justice. Yet *Athelston* (ca. 1370) is deeply concerned with law. No wars, combats, or marvelous adventures supplement the central action of injustice and redress. Rather, the movement from calumny to vindication unfolds in a series of verbal gestures. Four messengers "Pat wolden yn Yngelo nd lettroy bere, / As it wes here kynde [was natural to them]" (14-15) meet at a crossroads and swear an oath of brotherhood. Later, when one has become king and the others are barons and archbishop, one baron lies under oath of secrecy that the other is a traitor. The king sends a false message to lure the accused baron and his family into royal control; then the king refuses to call a parliament of inquiry to verify the baron's guilt or innocence. The archbishop pressures Athelston with excommunication and interdict into surrendering judgment to the church. In the archbishop's ordeal the accused and his family swear their innocence and are vindicated. Athelston, sidestepping his oath of secrecy, reveals the accuser's name to the archbishop in the privileged language of confession: "Be schryf te off moupe telle I it pe." Then the archbishop's false message brings the accuser to court, where he fails the ordeal, confesses, and is executed.

The parade of diverse statements constituting this plot—oaths, lies, accusations, true and false messages, confessions—intimates that *Athelston* is concerned with the nature of communication, as well as with justice. Meaning in language, like truth in law, is far more elusive in this romance than is typical of the romances of English heroes. All characters accept all statements made to them as literally true, yet often the good characters as well as the bad make false statements or oaths that will be broken.

In all these instances two interrelated concepts of right are at work. The institutional procedures that can secure justice or peace are many—law and custom, parliament, loveday, judicial combat, inquest—and all are championed by various English heroes. But the reliability of these institutions rests on the more fundamental and, in these romances, pervasive reliability of language itself. The procedures that the English heroes demand are based in the validity of language in arguments, promises, testimony, depositions, and oaths. And since the language of good people is trustworthy and even the language of deceivers is usually transparent and read-

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[36. *Fouke* 14-6-10, 18-2-11; on lovedays, law, and literature, see Heffernan, "Poem on Lovedays."]

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amoral readiness to transmit false as well as true messages, his desire for rewards, and his very dominance in the text cumulatively convey that speech is a fallible vehicle that often obscures the speaker's intention from the listener. The importance of language to this story of justice is further signaled by the assignment of a single name to king and messenger; the latter “bar his owne name: / He was holten [named] Athelstane; / He was foundelyng” (184–86). Is the subject of this romance really the elusiveness of justice, embodied in the capricious king, or the unreliability of language, enacted by the blustering messenger? Ultimately the two problems are identical, as are the two characters' names, because justice can only be realized when language has determined and reliable meaning. In Athelston the reliability of language disintegrates to the point that justice seems unattainable. The archbishop snatches justice from the jaws of false speaking, but only by substituting an ordeal for a parliamentary inquiry. Unlike the inquest, which depends on men's understanding of verbal testimony by witnesses, the ordeal reaches beyond its institutional structures to the ear of God. Unlike the judicial duel, the ordeal is unilateral. In bilateral judicial duels, depicted in other romances of English heroes, two champions swear before God to the Tightness of their causes, and the outcome of their duel is taken as God's judgment. Theirs is a physical and social contest in which divine sanction, while it determines the outcome, is not at the center of the drama. In the unilateral ordeal private power and control are more fully surrendered to the judicial process, and God's power acts through the process more directly and immediately. In the earlier romances of English heroes, testimony and military skill and reasoned argument could contribute to putting down liars and wrongdoers. There no unilateral ordeals are to be found; but in Athelston the deviousness of good and evil people alike has corrupted even speech, and justice is recoverable only by purifying speech through a direct appeal to the primal word of God.

Gamelyn (ca. 1375) betrays a similar sense that justice is elusive. This romance, like Havelok the Dane, opens with a dying father passing on his lands to his sons, of whom Gamelyn is youngest. Gamelyn's right to his inheritance is opposed not, as in earlier romances, by enemies from without, but by the very social units that should support him: the neighbor knights who advise the dying father and draw up his will, the regional churchmen with whom Gamelyn pleads for assistance, and the older brother who repeatedly deceives the hero in youth and ruins the land that should be Gamelyn's. Soon Gamelyn's cause is judicially embattled as well, when his brother becomes sheriff, declares Gamelyn an outlaw, and bribes a royal jury of inquiry to vote against the hero's cause. Corruption runs so deep in the world of Gamelyn that to resolve his claim, Gamelyn must move beyond his unsuccessful verbal pleas and the unsupportive local institutions to a direct physical attack on the suborned royal jury. Hearing that the jury is certain to vote against him, Thanne seyde Gamelyn to the Iustise, 'Now is thy power y-don, thou most nedes arise; Thou hast gien domes that ben yuel dight, given sentences / wrongly done
Well sitte in thy sete and dressen hem aright.'

Gamelyn himself then replaces the justice on the bench, his outlaw band constitutes a new jury, and the entire court and the sheriff are condemned to be "honged hye, / To weyuen [swing] with the ropes and with the wynde drye" (879–80). This road to vindication is diametrically opposed to that of the earlier English heroes, despite suggestive similarities between Gamelyn's and their causes and adventures. Like Fulk Fitz Warin, Gamelyn resists social injustice for a time by living in the society of outlaws, whose king he becomes. This is an order of proud men who live by a code of fairness that seeks to rectify injuries (779–82). On law and violence in Gamelyn, see Kaeuper, “Historian's Reading.”
ventures. The earlier heroes' profound faith in the capacity of justice and its institutions to determine right, based in their faith in the power of language, here degenerates to the point that only force can accomplish what pleading and inquests once did.

Athelston and Gamelyn, in presenting the achievement of justice as elusive and problematic, show a favorite theme of insular romance in its later development. The sense of crisis in the late romances enacts the social and political unease of the later fourteenth century, as virtually every medieval institution faced powerful challenges from all sides. In Athelston and Gamelyn, the structures of family and feudal hierarchy, the institutions of justice, and even language itself no longer seem to promise security and success. But through the time of the Auchinleck manuscript, the insular romances of English heroes sustain a simple and direct faith in the accessibility of right and in the capacity of law, custom, and their language to regulate social action.

Style and Treatment

The romances of Bevis, Fulk, and Guy sustain the concerns of earlier works: disinheritance and repose, dynastic disruptions and continuities, and institutional justice. The salient difference in the longer works is their diversification of interests and multiplication of episodes. The long romances also discover tensions between baronial commitments and national or religious ones. Although baronial themes, and poetic treatment works to the same end. As the personal and lineal, yet whose significance is partly national. We have seen how narrative reconciliations tend to subordinate all to baronial themes, and poetic treatment works to the same end. As the

forty. The failures of law throughout Gamelyn are the more remarkable for the sound knowledge of contemporary law the romance demonstrates; the use of will and primogeniture, indictment, outlawing, marriage, and bail, trial by jury, and juries as witnesses are examined in terms of legal history by Shannon, Jr., "Middlesex Law"; Kaemmer, "Historian's Reading," pp. 38-46.

41. Studies on the upheavals of the fourteenth century are surveyed in Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, pp. 20-37; Postan, *Medieval Economy*, pp. 65-72; and Daly, *Daily Economy*, part 4, "Change and Upheaval in the XV Century" (pp. 284-337). Although these changes began before 1350 (date of Auchinleck MS), conditions were relatively stable until then, see, e.g., Dyer, *Lands and Peasants*, pp. 51-83. Cultural and literary expressions of crisis in the later fourteenth century are treated by Muscatine, *Poetry and Crisis*, and Coleman, *Middle Ages*, pp. 91-136.

The pressure of narrative in these works leaves no room for subtle or consistent stylistic effects. Still, even versification can convey a general attitude toward material. Unusual features of Gui's and Bover's verse seem to strive for the balance between modern and archaic style that also characterizes the *Romance* of *Horn*.

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42. Stimming, ed. Frappier, pp. xlvii-xlviii; Payen, in *Grundriss*, ed. Frappier et al., p. 478. Gui's lines range from six to thirteen syllables (see Everett, ed. Frappier, I, xxxv).

43. Baugh suggests that the Auchinleck *Boeve* reflects Bover's first shift in verse pattern, in its change at a corresponding point from six-line tail-rhyme stanzas to couplets ("Improvisation" in *Jr. 451*). On classification of verse versions by verse form, see Baugh, "Conventions of Individuality," p. 235. The Auchinleck *Guy* recognizes the AN romance into three-stress couplets: see Baugh, "Auchinleck Manuscript," 75.
yet compatible with a “maturing sense of Englishness,” alliterative verse supports the romances’ thematic emphasis on England’s antecedents in relation to the country’s feudal present. But this thematic emphasis is obscured by vastly increased eventfulness. Dorothy Everett notes in her characterization of English medieval romances that their action most often moves forward “under the impulse of love, religious faith, or, in many, mere desire for adventure. . . . What is certain is that medieval readers and hearers thirsted for tales of all kinds, enjoyed the mere narration of a series of events.” Everett’s observations describe the later Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes just as accurately as their Middle English descendants. Their emphasis on action extends heroism from its earlier expression in the defense of family and heritage to a range of secondary expressions involving the hero’s personal energy and capability. Poetic style grows vivid and lively, compensating for the diffused thematic energy of the later romances. Examples from the stories of Bevis and Guy will illustrate these tendencies.

The Romance of Horn and Beoe de Haumtone are so similar in design that a common source has been suggested for them. Yet even in the initial section of each poem, where they are most clearly parallel, a significant difference separates them. The purposeful seriousness of the Romance of Horn, the constant regard for baronial self-justification and political principle, are in the story of Bevis often submerged in a great variety of added events. Bevis’s expulsion from England draws on the motifs of May–December marriage, young wife’s infidelity, cruel mother’s remarriage, compassionate executioner, disguise, staged execution, and sale of the hero into slavery. This multiplicity contrasts with the relatively spare design of enemy invasion and rudderless boat in the story of Horn, and moves the usurpation of Bevis’s rights from the purely political sphere to one of sexual intrigue, deceptions and disguises, and oedipal jealousies. Only in this connection does Bevis present his plan of vengeance:

A donkes mounte li emfes en le paleis en haut,
 a l'emperur devaunt touz il parla com baud.

45. Middle English Literature, pp. 3, 12.
46. Stefan Hofer, “Horn et Rimel,” pp. 283-90; see also Matzke, “Beves Legend,” p. 44; Mehl, Middle English Romances, p. 213.

The many motifs of Bevis’s dispossession, and of his exile as well, are engaging in themselves, but they cloud the thematic significance of his departure and return. Stylistically, these two versions of Bevis’s confrontation with his stepfather demonstrate that the
English poet imitates Anglo-Norman phrasing, repetition, laisse boundaries, and laisse linking, yet the final effect is quite different from the density and elevation of the Anglo-Norman verses. Removing Anglo-Norman descriptive epithets and multiplying questions and exclamations contribute to the English version's generally less formal tone. Beues's few similes are universal or agricultural—bees about the hive, hail striking stones—while those of Borne revolve largely around hawking. But Beues's rather frequent and often humble physical details—workmen going to work, a handkerchief stopping a wound, a child pulled along by the ear—contrast with the rare and purely ornamental use of a gilded stirrup or a marble staircase in Borne. The Middle English narrator is far less afool than the Anglo-Norman counterpart, regularly cursing, lamenting, praying for, and commenting on the characters and encouraging a like emotional commitment from the audience. These stylistic changes, like the multiplication of narrative motifs, contribute to Beues's energy and accessibility—but again by broadening the narrative's appeal rather than by sustaining themes of land and lineage directly.

Emotional emphases also supplement thematic ones in Gui de Warenwec, the only Anglo-Norman romance of English heroes that anticipates the Middle English desire (first evident in Havelok the Dane) to discover opportunities for pathos in episodes of political and legal importance. When Seguin comes to the parliament that Gui has arranged to reconcile him to his lord, the poignant spectacle of his humble approach to the emperor prepares for his subsequent legal defense:

Puis ad sun bland osté,
Mant home en ad de iai pié,
Remis est en sa chemise;
Ore oet en quede guise

Thou art not worthe a mouse tote! (A 4385, C 3704). Occasionally a more forlorn tone: "Beaux duxes e cuntes od lui asez, / Par les rues en va nuz piez, / Que l'empereur requerrunt / Tant tost cum il le verrunt. / Quant el muster ont entrer, / A l'empereur chairent as piez. (2691-2702)

Then he removed his tunic (many men pitied him for this); he kept on only his shirt. Now hear how he wishes to go to the emperor: in his hand he carries an olive branch; through the streets he goes barefoot accompanied by many dukes and counts who will plead with the emperor as soon as they see him. When they entered the church, they fell at the emperor's feet.

Seguin's enactment of his longing for conciliation with the emperor culminates in his legal testimony (2703-2704) that he killed the emperor's nephew in self-defense, in the presence of a third party, and that he will defend himself in judicial combat from any charge of felony. Six witnesses testify to Seguin's good character and innocence, and the emperor accords his pardon (2725-2726). The matter of the scene is clearly judicial, the manner both descriptive and supportively emotional.

As the story of Guy develops, its pathetic content increases. The later Anglo-Norman manuscripts G and R, which date from the period of the early Middle English versions, add to the older version of Seguin's pardoning a hangman's noose (G) and a haircloth (R) worn in token of submission and repentance. The Caius Guy of Warwick adopts both these variants, in addition to the emotive details of the older Anglo-Norman version, transforming the original emotionally supported legal proceeding into a colorful and dramatic pageant centered on a figure of greatly increased pathos (C 2598-2625). Weighted with the many symbols of his penitence, the Caius Seguin is so abashed and miserable that he no longer speaks in his own defense. If his expressions of pure regret (C 2635-2636) had not been supplemented by his witnesses' pledges of his innocence (C 2647-2702), the scene would have lost the substance of a legal proceeding altogether.

Here treatment supplements content as the legal proceeding itself becomes less compelling than it was in Anglo-Norman.

Jerusalem illustrates the challenge to coherence posed by the im-
awareness of who he is and his enunciation of a distinctive scheme of values." 55 Certainly Guy's conversion to God's service demonstrates moral growth, but that interest is only one of several in the story. Episodes in which the young Bevis is reproached or in which he rejects his friends 56 may imply an immaturity corrected by his later defense of and concern for friends and family. But the story of Bevis does not attend consistently to inner growth: like Horn, Bevis is as bold and as deserving of his heritage at his first exile as at his last return.

The slender attention to heroic growth in the stories of Bevis and Guy demonstrates that to look for significance in the hero's personal development is to desire, inappropriately in these romances, the quality of romans psychologiques or even novels. We are not invited to worry about the maturation of these characters, only to admire them at every stage. Nor is any one trait, such as loyalty or pity, dominant in any hero. The alternating tensions and resolutions that power all the romances of English heroes have little to do with personality and personal development. The hero is not self-reflective but active; his life is a series of encounters through which he defines his effectiveness as conqueror, father, defender of land and nation, defender of faith, and so on.

Stylistic treatment gives force and new appeal to the many events that demonstrate the hero's capacities. Yet despite their heightened verbal energy the later romances, like the earlier ones, are heavily conventional and formulaic in phrasing. 57 Their underlying conventionality inhibits liveliness and returns us to the sense of familiarity, assurance, and stability inherent in the much earlier verse of King Horn and the Romance of Horn.

The massively eventful later romances, however their style may strain toward coherence and however their conventionality may tame their violence, give us a world of turbulent action where doing and achieving are the essential occupations of life. By mastering each event the hero reveals himself to be remarkably capable. The focus on capacity rather than cause helps to reconcile baronial ideals to new challenges, especially those of nationalism. Bevis makes peace with Edgar but kills the king's steward and masses of citizens, all the while insisting that he is a "gode baroun." In Germany Guy fights in God's name, but the substance of his cause is Terri's feudal right to his land. Such episodes are not openly contradictory when action and military success are the point, rather than precisely what principle the hero is acting on.

This orientation respects the value that England's barony placed on defending some rights from national control, while encompassing as well the value that merchants and professionals placed on aggressive achievement. Class focus softens when the later romances blur issues of heritage and law, while heroic autonomy and violence—merely the atavistic servants of landed and peaceable concerns in Horn's and Havelok's romances—come to the fore as values in themselves. Still Bevis, Guy, and Fulk continue to fulfill baronial ideals, to look to the heritage as the ultimate source of security, and to protect the interests of others as they follow their own. In addition, heroic capability in the later romances imaginatively expands the special worth of "those who fight" from the military sphere to many other areas of endeavor and domination. Whether converting a pagan or tricking a jailkeeper, winning a wife or defending a nation, the hero wields the ability to bring all his adventures to an assured, stable, and peaceful close.

Insularity and the Romances of English Heroes

The Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances of English heroes show no interest in the dominant continental themes of divided self or divided society, but their divergence cannot be understood merely as a failure to imitate or to comprehend Old French romances. Rather, as outlined in these two chapters, the insular romances of English heroes work changes on romance that allow them to transform, idealize, and respond to some of England's social and institutional conditions. In so doing these works present a different model of human existence from that of most Old French romance. Conflict between a hero and his society is not central and problematic. Rather than locating the human drama in self-discovery, the insular romances propose that the human drama is collective, a communal search for stability that takes place through the hero's search.

55. Richmond, Popularity, p. 152.
56. E.g., Bevis A 327-24, 868-81, 1370-86, 1609-28; Beues A 469-74, 1305-32.
57. See Baugh, "Middle English Romance"; Wittig, Narrative Structures; and Gradon, Form and Style, who argues that conventional imagery "irradiates" the specific with a sense of the universal or "archetypal" (pp. 212-72).
This characteristic perspective is evident in early crises from the Romance of Horn and Havelok the Dane. In the Romance of Horn and its descendant King Horn, the young hero loses his patrimony as invading pagans set him and his twelve companions adrift. Horn’s crisis is external and political, a challenge imposed on him by cruel enemies. That Horn’s companions share his fate emphasizes the social nature of this crisis and of its subsequent resolution. Havelok faces a similar challenge as the wicked regent Godard prepares to kill him. Havelok saves his life only by throwing himself on his knees, in the feudal gesture of submission, swearing fealty to Godard and promising to renounce his parentage. Thus in saving his life he must place himself and his countrymen at the mercy of a virtually merciless tyrant. Havelok’s subsequent actions continue the identification of his own fate with that of the Danish; he passes his youth anonymously in England, where a tyrannous ruler treats the people just as Godard must be treating the Danish; when Havelok returns to Denmark he regains his throne through a popular uprising and has Godard judged by a parliament drawn from all ranks of society.

The identification of heroic striving with social good is less direct in the later romances, but the connection between hero and society remains fundamental. When Bevis and Guy fight in the name of Christianity, when Fulk and Guy in exile champion barons against injustices, when Guy defends England from Danish seditious, they strive for causes that extend beyond personal advancement to affect the lives of numberless others. In correcting the injustices of kings, from whom justice should emanate, they correct the legal system itself. Fulk represents the barony as a whole when he menaces King John “par le grant damage et la desheritesoun qu’il avoit fet a ly e a meint prodhome d’Engleterre” [for the great damage and disinheriting he had done to him and to many a good lord]. Bevis, refusing to submit to Edgar’s wrath and subsequently attaining such power that his son marries Edgar’s daughter, wins for noble aspirations a more vicarious victory, through an imaginative association between the hero’s achievement and a wider ideal of baronial potential.

Why is it that the romances of English heroes perceive the good of hero and people as interdependent? The perception has profound thematic effects, dictating that crises and their resolutions be enacted in political rather than psychological terms, and that they place whole social groups in jeopardy before moving toward a harmonious realization of the interests of rulers and ruled. In part the political orientation of these romances stems from their close affiliations with insular historiography. Havelok, Waldef, and Athelstan appear in chroniclers before they become figures of romance; Guy and Havelok are found in chronicles throughout and even beyond the medieval period.6 Their histories often overlap: Havelok may well be Horn’s father Añolo; Athelstan’s attributes in chronicles prepare for his appearances in both Athelston and the story of Guy; in the Petit Brut d’Angleterre, Guy challenges the kingdoms of Havelok’s son.60 Local relics of Guy at Warwick, Havelok at Grimsby, and Bevis at Southampton, although they postulate the romances themselves, reemphasize that the works’ origins were considered to be historical.61 In romances the antecessors of the chronicles, who provided the Normans with an Anglo-Saxon past, continue to defend their people’s causes. But now the significance of these heroes is only in part genealogical; they come to champion new causes, those of the insular baronial structure.

The barony’s landed wealth in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, its restricted military power and, in contrast, its access to a functioning legal system that controlled the questions of land rights on which its strength depended— together these conditions form the ideal model of heroic resistance to royal injustice that the Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes offer. This reading of the works reinforces historians’ assessment of England’s barony as a pragmatic nobility that confronted its problems with directness and energy: “It was mainly by keeping close to the practical things which give real power over men and avoiding the paralysis that overtakes social groups which are too sharply defined and too dependent on birth that the English aristocracy acquired the dominant position it retained for centuries.”62 The theme of the Anglo-Norman Literature, pp. 94-122; Brian J. Levy, “‘Wellford’; Trouvère, ed. Arthuriana, pp. 38-50; L.H. Longtin, Medieval Romance, pp. 128-34 (on Guy); R. S. Crane, “Guy of Warwick.”

59. Langlois, Anglo-Norman Literature, pp. 94, 100; Heyman, Havelokide, p. 112.
60. See Emmons, History of Warwickshire, pp. 12-19, on Guy’s relics; John Ross, Earls of Warwick, ed. Hearne, pp. 225-27, which claims Guy as ancestor, Havelok the Dane, ed. Skeat, pp. xix-xl, on local traditions concerning Havelok; and Dunn, in Manuscript, ed. Stevens, I, 27, on stature of Bevis and Ascopart. Even King Horn, said to benefit of social or historical context, is for Mehl “the biography of a famous ancestor, a vivid portrayal of the past” [Middle English Romances, p. 41].
61. M. Bloch, Society and Culture, ii, 27 (trans. Tablet Society, II, 33); see also McKean, Nobility, and Holt, Magna Carta.
John and Bevis’s slaughter of Londoners illustrate expression through a range of structural and stylistic procedures (pp. 263-68, 271-92). A fourteenth-century example is discussed in Thomson, “Wal­(Three Orders, mulation of a secular ideology of power and social order” pp. 447-50. Watson, ed., Lillian Herlands Hornstein, in Severs, ed., Middle English Scholarship, is widely accepted in studies of ME romance, with distorting effect: e.g., Mehl, that transform and assess a complex social experience. At the broadening role of the commons in government.

But the place nationalism have historical correlatives in the barony’s acceptance to involve national questions. These accommodations to nationalism have historical correlatives in the barony’s acceptance of increasing centralization, the lessening of baronial power, and the broadening role of the commons in government. But the place of national spirit in the romances is uneasy, as Fulk’s defiance of John and Bevis’s slaughter of Londres does illustrate.

The romances of English heroes give their insular world literary expression through a range of structural and stylistic procedures that transform and assess a complex social experience. At the broadest structural level, these romances share the narrative pattern of departure and return. This pattern has the specific form of dispossession and reinstatement. The hero, through his courage and his legal knowledge, regains a rightful inheritance wrong­fully seized from him. A concern for just procedure often transforms the plot that could be occasions for warfare into lessons in legality. Horn exiles himself from Hunlaf’s kingdom over their dispute about oath-taking and judicial combat; Bevis same back his heritage from King Edgar but by pressing his legal claim and winning the support of the king’s counselors. Fulk loses his heritage in a dispute over the rights of king and barons, and he wins his lands back by arguing King John into pardoning him. Crises in which heroes and villains act as litigants abound, empha­sizing the preoccupation with law and custom that characterizes the romances of English heroes.

In the related Anglo-Norman and Middle English works, legality safely delivers justice, and justice sustains heroic defense of the heritage and later of the nation. The dream of ferocious animals and trees bowing in cowed homage to Haveloc in the Anglo-Norman Lai (401-38) expresses a purely seignorial desire for landed power, whereas the English Havelok’s dream of all Denmark clinging with love to his embracing arms (1295-1301) expresses both his own desire and a reciprocal spirit of national harmony. Even in the story of Guy, most diffuse in interests and appeals, the adventures of the hero carries to God are dedicated as well to defending Jonas’s and Terri’s seignorial claims and England’s claim to independence from Denmark. In every case, these works at­tend to issues of legality and landed identity, so that judicial ques­tions direct the plots’ critical turning points and feudal principles often inform even minor adventures in the heroes’ exile.

A further refinement of the pattern of departure and return under­lines the preoccupation in these works with rights to land. The romances of English heroes double their fundamental design, contain­ing two departures, or disinheritances, two recoveries, and two pivotal victories over oppression or injustice. This doubling has various structural manifestations—Bevis is dispossessed and exiled...
in childhood by his cruel mother, in adulthood by the king, Horn is driven from two different countries, then wins rule over both; Havelok's dispossession in Denmark is echoed by that of his wife in England. The nature of the double suits perfectly the central concern of these works, whereas the more common tripartite structure of folktales, fairy tales, and many continental romances would counteract that concern. A triplet forms a closed sequence, a whole and finished figure. Its uses in traditional narrative and in religious and magical symbolism demonstrate the completeness and inner unity attributed to the number three. But a double structure implies any number of additional victories. Doubling involves difference, but also echoing or equation. Its difference connotes extension or progression, while its sameness connotes assurance and stability. The two implications are often evident in the conclusions to these romances: almost all end with a dual summary, first of the hero's achievement of peaceful rule and then of the son's extension of that rule in a repetition of the father's victories. Such conclusions recognize overtly that doubling supports the proposition that landed stability can be threatened but will endure.

As these observations imply, the romances of English heroes are socially conservative. They respect and value the institutions of marriage and the family as well as the class system, strong rule, and strong justice. Their conception of personal potential is equally conservative. An English hero does not typically experience remarkable personal growth or enlightenment; rather, he is fully himself—fully noble and worthy of his heritage—from birth. The crises he faces are external ones: How is he to win back his heritage? Can he protect his family's honor, find a suitable wife, and ensure perpetuation of the family's line? Rimenhild's seduction of Horn, although at first appearing to be an antisocial, rebellious act, turns out to be not a physical seduction but a temptation to marriage. So strongly institutional are Rimenhild's motives and Horn's consent that, when Rimenhild's father accuses Horn of having seduced her, Horn rejects even the idea of marriage until he has achieved his heritage. Many insular romances share this view of marriage as a social institution that helps to define feudal status.

Children extend that status by carrying on their parents' achievements. The knowledge that his sons and daughter can hold his land reconciles Boeve to his own death; of Havelok's fifteen sons and daughters, all kings and queens, the poet concludes sentimentally, "Him stondes wel bat god child strenes" [he is secure who begets good children] (2983). The idea that children double their parents' lives, by stressing continuity rather than disjunction between generations, validates the principle of land inheritance. Thus the stability won by the hero through his appeals to justice will outlive the hero himself.

In structures as in themes, then, the romances of English heroes provide images of continuity, stability, and confidence. Their variously archaicizing verse and the conservative impulse of their conventional style sustain these images. The ambivalence of the later romances *Athelstan* and *Ganelon*, confronting the seignioral losses of the later fourteenth century, emphasizes by contrast the remarkable assurance of the main body of works. The future these earlier works project does not differ from the bold present of their heroes' lives: barons are and may be variously challenged, but their power to control and transcend threats to their security is absolutely certain.

The calm optimism of these works also contrasts with the profound sense of crisis that, critical studies argue, afflicted the continental aristocracy and affected Old French literature of the twelfth century. Erich Kohler's work explores social and political conditions that produced unresolved and keenly felt contradictions for the nobility in France between personal and social interests and between noble rights and royal programs. The later epics recognize these destructive contradictions; the romans d'aventure reintegrate the interests of hated knights with those of the higher nobility, attempting a unification of aristocratic purpose that was no longer possible in this divisive period. Georges Duby suggests for much continental literature a similarly beleaguered audience, those men of noble birth who because of continental inheritance patterns were only irregularly able to wield the power of nobility. In a more ex-
tended study, R. Howard Bloch argues that continental literature confronts the aristocracy with its losses of power and acts to reconcile the aristocracy to those losses: "The 'performed text' is seen less as a mechanism by which aristocracy affirmed its own solidarity and resisted change than as a forum for adaptation to the political realities of the postfeudal world."

England provided an aristocratic experience less contentious and bitter than that of France; a flexible class structure made the difference between noble birth and noble rights clearer than in France; the powerful English kingship and its highly developed court system early displaced most power struggles from the military to the judicial sphere; indeed, the barons' landed prosperity encouraged them to support the transition to a centralized national state. This more peaceful and cohesive society felt less conflict between past and present, between feudal and national systems, and between baronial ambitions and social realities. The barony's position did change from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, particularly around the time of Magna Carta when the "old-style struggle for baronial independence was virtually over; but a new kind of struggle to impose restraints upon monarchy was just beginning." But England's barons were throughout the period less isolated in their struggle, less disaffected from the interests of the commons on the one hand and of royalty on the other, than was the continental aristocracy.

The romances of English heroes convey a less anguished image of society than the troubled and profoundly reflective continental works of the twelfth century. The insular works understand the interests of barony and commons to be mutual, and baronial rights to be largely compatible with royal centralization. Both the historical record and the disharmonies of Athelstan and Gamelyn testify that the interests of commons, barons, and king did not really pivot around baronial aspirations. But until the later fourteenth century England's relative wealth and harmony could sustain the romances' vision that commitment to the noble hero's success amounted to commitment to the common good. As if in imitation of England's "unformed, almost liquid" class structure, this literature proposes that life's struggles are joyously collective. And if our desires are

69. Literature and Law, p. 326; see also Boest, "Rittertum."