

The Northern Arthur: A Study of Two Alliterative Arthurian  
Romances in Their Literary and Historical Context

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The research and writing for this thesis were undertaken entirely by me. To the best of my knowledge all sources have been given full acknowledgment.

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E R R A T A

P. 104. Should read: In the battle with the giant of the mount Saint Michael, Arthur once again emerges as "champion of Christianity against Evil, epic hero and redeemer of his people, defender of ladies in distress (1200-7), and generous monarch."

P. 143. Should read: "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry."

P. 368, n. 11. Should read: "Scotland and the Earliest Arthurian Tradition."

P. 365, n. 20. Should read: "...is suggested by a passage..."

Thairin the fall of princes sall 3e find...

Invectione Against Fortun

Alexander Montgomerie

## C O N T E N T S

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgments .....	ii
I. Chronicle into Romance: The Development of the Arthurian Tradition in England and Wales to 1265 .....	1
II. The Arthurian Verse Romances in Middle English 1265 - 1400 .....	54
III. The Arthurian Tradition and Alliterative Poetry .....	119
IV. <u>The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne: The First Episode</u> .....	153
V. <u>The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne: The Second Episode</u> .....	186
VI. <u>The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane</u> .....	228
VII. The Arthurian Tradition in Scotland from the Late Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries ..	277
Appendix A . Place-Names and Geography of the <u>Awntyrs off Arthure</u> .....	313
Appendix B. Notes .....	351
Bibliography .....	386

## A B S T R A C T

It is my object to furnish a study of two Middle English and Middle Scots alliterative Arthurian verse romances, The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne and The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane, and, in so doing, to set both works into a certain literary and historical perspective. This will be accomplished through a survey of the Arthurian tradition as a whole from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries. Although the major part of this survey will be devoted to writings in Welsh, English, and Scots, relevant material in French and German will be discussed. The two alliterative poems will be used to illustrate the hypothesis that the Arthurian tradition itself evolved according to a circular pattern, having both origins and culmination in lowland Scotland. The process of transmission to which the legend was subject occurred over the course of some eight hundred years.

The Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane will be considered in relation to their sources and analogues in English, Scots, Welsh, and Continental literature of the period. I have as well attempted to define more fully the strong didactic function of these poems, in that both contain expressions of contemporary political, philosophical, and religious thought. Questions of authorship, provenance, and dating have also been dealt with.

## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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In closing, I should like once again to thank Professor MacQueen, who, upon reading over the thesis proposal I delivered to him in October 1971, must surely have echoed the words of the poet of the stanzaic Morte Arthur in reflecting that

"here now is made A comsemente  
That bethe not fynysshed many A yere."



Chapter One  
Chronicle into Romance: The Development of the  
Arthurian Tradition in Wales and England to 1265

Just how the memory of an obscure sixth-century British general - whose very existence is still a matter of debate among archaeologists and historians - came to inspire the formation of the most enduring literary cult of the Middle Ages is the sort of phenomenon which steadfastly withstands all attempts at definition or explanation. What is even more remarkable is that the effects of this phenomenon, wide-reaching as they were during the medieval period, persist in finding expression in both poetry and prose to the present day. The tradition of Arthur and his exploits, whether real or imagined, has existed as a literary theme for over thirteen hundred years, and in the future will no doubt continue to provide still more inspiration for the creative imagination. Yet despite the fame which surrounds the figure at the apex of this tradition, and the numerous attempts which have been made to couple his name with an actual historical personality, comparatively little is known of his origins. The legendary leader of the Britons remains the single most familiar, but in many respects also the most elusive, of all the heroes of Western culture.

In view of the fact that so much primary material has been lost or destroyed, it would be difficult to say just how many verse and prose narratives concerning Arthur were composed on the Continent and in Britain during the years between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries. Judging from what has survived - and we are fortunate in that so much has - the number would appear to have been considerable. Although the first of the full-length

Arthurian narratives was of early eleventh-century Welsh provenance, it was in fact at the close of the twelfth and the opening of the thirteenth centuries in France that the full potential of the Arthurian tradition as a vehicle for romance was completely realized. From that country the saga was passed in considerably embellished and sophisticated form back to the place of its origin. Consequently it was during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that the best of the insular romances dealing with Arthur came to be written. It is my purpose here to try and construct a literary and historical framework for two lesser known but nonetheless extremely interesting and important expressions of the Arthurian tradition as this tradition was preserved in northern England and in southern Scotland. These works - which, as I hope will become clear, represent something unique in cultural terms - are, respectively, The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne and The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane. In common with the greater number of contemporary romances, the second named at least had one of its most immediate sources in the Continental poetry and prose of a few centuries earlier. But it is essential to keep in mind that the French and German romances from which the English and Scottish composers took inspiration were themselves based on a tradition which evolved with the British people. And in view of this, it seems fitting to begin a study of both the Awntyrs and of Golagros and Gawane with a study of what after all constitutes the ultimate source of these works.

The body of early material connected with Arthur is so vast, yet so relatively unfamiliar to anyone but the specialist, that the reader confronted by it for the first time is inevitably reminded of the analogy concerning icebergs and their tips. Such a comparison is in this case an entirely appropriate one. There is certainly more than a suggestion in the earliest chronicles of Britain, where the first "historical" references to Arthur are given, of the almost supernatural greatness with which his name would come to be endowed by later writers. In the Historia Brittonum (c. 800)<sup>1</sup>, Nennius tells us that "Arthur the soldier" led his fellow countrymen in no less than twelve battles against the Saxons, who suffered an unbroken chain of defeats at his hands. His repeated victories over the invaders were made the more remarkable by the means through which they were achieved. Nennius attributes at least a part of Arthur's success in putting the Saxons to flight to the fact that during an engagement at Castle Guinnion he bore on his shoulders (or shield)<sup>2</sup> an image of the Virgin. The warrior's greatest triumph, however, occurred in the course of his final battle at Mount Badon, where he singlehandedly put to the sword a total of nine hundred and sixty of his opponents.

The Annales Cambriae (c. 950)<sup>3</sup> bear witness to this latter event in somewhat more laconic fashion. No reference is made to the number of men whom Arthur was alleged by Nennius to have slain. With a diffidence that lends his testimonial an air of credibility which the account in the Historia Brittonum lacks, the composer of the

Annales Cambriae records that although in 516 Arthur did indeed vanquish his enemies at Badon - where for three days and nights he bore the image of the Holy Cross upon his shoulders - he ultimately perished along with one Medraut at the battle of Camlan in 537. William of Malmesbury, writing about 1125, reports that the tide of the barbarian invasion was finally turned by the last remaining Romano-Briton, Ambrosius, whose success in repulsing the Saxon hordes was in a large measure due to the assistance of "the warlike Arthur." In his brief account of the battle of Badon, William remarks that this same individual (placing his faith in the Virgin, whose image he bore on his armor) put to death some nine hundred of the enemy.

However ready William might have been to concede the extraordinary capacity for hand-to-hand combat attributed to Arthur by Nennius, his willingness to suspend disbelief did not embrace any of the other extravagant claims made on behalf of the warrior's prowess. The fact that certain legends had already begun to grow up about the memory of "the warlike Arthur" is acknowledged by the author of De gestis regum Anglorum,<sup>4</sup> who dismisses such tales as the fabrications of credulous minds - the idle ravings of British storytellers. A scattering of the earliest of these fables suggests something of those extraordinary powers that were to be ascribed to Arthur by succeeding annalists. Included in the Mirabilia which form an appendix of sorts to the Historia Brittonum is a story of how the soldier's dog Cabal left the impress of

his paw on a rock one day while in pursuit of the giant bear Troynt, or, as the creature is called in other versions of the tale, Twrch Trwth. As a memorial to this event, Arthur built a cairn of stones and had the one bearing the footprint of the dog placed atop the mound. All attempts to remove it thereafter were thwarted by some unknown power, for even if men managed to carry the stone off, it would inevitably reappear in its proper place on the following day. From the Mirabilia also comes an even more fanciful story concerning one Amr, said to be Arthur's son. For reasons which are not given, the father killed his child and had him buried beside a fountain in the territory of Ercing. Amr's tomb evidently possessed some sort of magical property, as its shape and size were observed to be constantly changing. The burial mound was never the same length twice, the author reports, as he himself had confirmed by taking measurements of it on two different occasions.

The historicity of Arthur is, as I have mentioned before, a matter of considerable debate. There is in fact no legitimate proof that such a character ever even existed outside of the literary imagination. As Rachel Bromwich remarks, "Arthur is unknown in the early genealogies, nor is he given any patronymic in TYP (Tricoedd Ynys Prydein) or in any early source prior to Geoffrey of Monmouth." <sup>5</sup> One thing is certain, however, and that is simply that if such a person indeed lived, he bore no resemblance to the various fictional entities to whom his name and repute were attached. The popular conception

of Arthur, for which we are indebted to the composers of later medieval romance, is one of a great king and world conqueror who sits at the center of a glittering court. The putative historical Arthur might not have been any such thing, and certainly no sixth-century chieftain, no matter how powerful, could be expected to manifest much similarity to the hero either of Malory's Morte D'Arthur or of any verse narrative of Chrétien de Troyes. Nennius is fairly clear in stating that although the warrior led the Britons in their battles against the Saxons, he fought the invaders in conjunction with the kings of Britain. What the historian does not specify is whether Arthur himself was a member of this select royal band. The passage in the Historia Brittonum in which these remarks are made gives instead a quite straightforward description of the warrior as a leader of battles. Other early sources - those which acquire some authority simply by virtue of their place in the chronology of historical literature - are similarly unforthcoming on the subject of Arthur's kingship. The oldest manuscript of the Annales Cambriae, dating very probably from the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh centuries, accords no title at all to Nennius's dux bellorum<sup>6</sup> in either of the entries in which he is mentioned. That text of the Annales which appears to have been compiled in 1286 or shortly thereafter, however, refers to the warrior as Rex Arturus. What Arthur's actual status in Britain might have been, then, remains something of a mystery. He has, by some modern writers, been referred to

as a leader of cavalry. Kenneth Jackson quite rightly points out that there is no evidence at all to support such a description.<sup>7</sup> It seems safe to assume, however, that if there ever were an Arthur he held some sort of important connection with the military. Judging from the references in Nennius, this would appear to have been a position of command, possibly that of a general.

The compilers of the historical and pseudohistorical records of Dark Age Britain were not the first writers to attempt to preserve the memory of Arthur. It is highly likely that what appears to constitute the earliest literary allusion to the hero antedates even the references to him in Nennius's account by a good two hundred years. The passage in question may be found in the Gododdin,<sup>8</sup> a series of elegies composed about 600, possibly by the poet Aneirin, to whose canon tradition has admitted it. This work, which deals with the circumstances surrounding the battle of Catraeth (Catterick), is preserved in only one thirteenth-century manuscript of Welsh provenance. To the text have been appended three or four related gorchanau or lays. It has been fairly well established that both the Gododdin and these subsidiary pieces were composed somewhere in southeastern Scotland, probably in the neighborhood of Edinburgh.<sup>9</sup>

The verse in which the reference to Arthur appears (B.38 - CA.cii) recounts the exploits during battle of one Gwawrddur. At Catraeth this individual is said to have slaughtered over three hundred of the enemy with his own hands, leaving so many corpses in his wake that the



black ravens which fed on carrion were glutted. Now, it would seem even from this brief description that Gwawr-ddur was a hero of very nearly supernatural prowess. But however breathtaking his accomplishments, the poet continues, the warrior "was not Arthur." The obvious conclusion to be drawn from such a statement is that Arthur himself, even at this very early period, had attained the status of a mythic hero to whom no other could be compared. Yet behind this brief testimonial lies another significance greater than that represented just by the confirmation of Arthur's unchallenged supremacy. It should first of all be noted that vv. B.38 - CA.cii may in fact be the interpolation of a later writer. But if the passage is genuine, as seems probable, we are left with what not only constitutes the first written allusion to Arthur, but one which was composed just sixty-three years after the date of his death as given in the Annales Cambriae - at a time, as Jackson has observed, when some of the hero's contemporaries could still conceivably have been

10

alive.

It is difficult to say whether the literary tradition surrounding Arthur grew out of the historical tradition concerning him or whether the reverse in fact occurred. At any rate, apocrypha dealing with self-restoring cairns and miraculous expanding and contracting sepulchres aside, the first full-length fictional embodiment of the Arthurian story seems to have appeared sometime around 1000. In Culhwch and Olwen, the earliest of the five Arthurian romances in the collection of Welsh tales known familiarly

as the Mabinogion, we are presented with a character who bears a much closer resemblance to the hero of the Middle English and Continental verse narratives of a few hundred years later than to the rather shadowy figure whose name crops up in the Annales Cambriae and in the records of William of Malmesbury. Very briefly, Culhwch and Olwen is the story of a youth who sets out to win for his bride Olwen, the only daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant. The young man (Culhwch) is advised by his father to seek out Arthur, his first cousin, and enlist his aid in the quest. This accomplished, the men of the Arthurian court set forth to track down Ysbaddaden and present their petition to him. The giant, however, refuses to part with his daughter unless Culhwch and his associates first carry out a series of superhuman tasks, which include procuring the cup of Llwyrr son of Llwyrrion, the horn of Gwylgawd Gododdin, the cauldron of Dwirnach the Irishman, the blood of the Black Witch, and the comb and shears of Twrch Trwyth son of Taredd Wledig. Largely due to the almost superhuman skills of the Arthurian warriors, a sufficient number of these seemingly impossible demands are met in short order. Upon discovering that Culhwch has returned successfully from his mission, Ysbaddaden releases his daughter to the young man and asks to be done to death. Goreu son of Custennin carries out the execution and thereafter takes possession of the giant's domain.

There are present in Culhwch and Olwen several folk-tale motifs important enough to merit discussion here. It should first of all be noted that two boar hunts take

place in the course of the narrative. In the first of these, Arthur and his men are required to go off in pursuit of Ysgithyrwyn Chief Boar. Although the warriors manage to run the beast to earth, the dog Cafall - Arthur's mascot - is ultimately responsible for putting an end to it. Now, the culmination of this episode bears a very close resemblance to the anecdote related in the Mirabilia, in which Cabal is said to have left his paw-print on a rock while pursuing Troynt. The motif of the boar hunt was then circulating in South Wales by the beginning of the ninth century, and would have been derived from onomastic traditions current in that part of the country. <sup>12</sup> But what is even more significant is the fact that the notion appears to have been in existence even prior to the writing of the Historia Brittonum and its appendix. As I have mentioned before, one of the chores assigned to Arthur and his men in Culhwch is to procure the comb and shears of Twrch Trwyth. This latter is said by the narrator to have been a king who was transformed into a swine as retribution for his evil ways. As the story goes, Arthur's warriors do eventually track down Twrch Trwyth and, after a considerable struggle, drive the creature into the sea off the coast of Cornwall. In the Gorchan of Cynfelyn, one of the lays associated with the Gododdin and dating from the same period, reference <sup>13</sup> is made to this incident. So here we have almost definite proof that the boar hunt motif had become an integral part of the Arthurian tradition by at least the beginning of the seventh century.

The basic plot of Culhwch and Olwen is provided by a motif common to the folklore of almost all peoples- that known as Six go through the World.<sup>14</sup> In it the hero sets out to win the beautiful daughter of an exalted or supernatural father, who will only permit his child to be courted by the man who successfully accomplishes a number of seemingly impossible chores. Those suitors found wanting are repaid for their failure with death. Like Culhwch, the enterprising hero assembles a group of men possessing capabilities and resources far beyond those of ordinary mortals, and with the help of these is able to meet the fantastic demands made by the girl's father. Jackson comments that "the distinct motif, the wonderful helpers, is believed to have originated in India, since it is found in early Buddhist sources and modern oral tales from India and Western Asia, as well as China, Indonesia, Africa, and America."<sup>15</sup>

Doubtless because of the presence of all this varied folk material, the element of fantasy in Culhwch and Olwen is very strong. At any rate, the "wonderful helpers" certainly are just that - in the most literal sense of the phrase. All of Arthur's retainers are said to be in possession of at least one or another supernatural power; Cei (Kay), for example, has the ability to submerge himself in water for nine days at a stretch without once surfacing to draw breath, and to go for an equal amount of time without sleep. He is also able to grow to any height he pleases, and the body heat he gives off is so intense that on cold nights his companions gather round him to warm

themselves. Bedwyr (Bedevere), although one-handed, can do battle with the strength and efficacy of three men, for a single cut from his lance produces nine wounds. Gwrhyr possesses not only the ability to speak every language known to man, but to converse with the birds and beasts as well. Sol, somewhat in the manner of a flamingo, is capable of standing on one foot for an entire day. Gwefyl son of Gwastad is possessed of an even more unusual talent. When seized by melancholy, "one of his lips he would let down to his navel, and the other would be as a cowl on his head." <sup>16</sup> It is obvious from one glance at this catalogue of grotesqueries that the author had a unique and buoyant sense of humor. The Welsh storytellers evidently enjoyed poking fun at their heroes; in some of the saints' lives even Arthur is made to look ridiculous. The fantastic nature of the attributes given the characters in Culhwch and Olwen is of course intended not so much for comic effect as to reinforce the notion that these individuals are indeed "wonderful helpers."

Yet another motif present in the story is that of the <sup>17</sup> Oldest Animals. Like Six go through the World, this idea in one form or another provides the basis for folktales of almost all cultures. <sup>18</sup> Culhwch and Olwen abounds with references to animals that appear to have discovered the secret of eternal life, beasts incidentally more than willing to be of assistance to the warriors. While searching for Mabon son of Modron, the men come across the Stag of Rhedynfre, who directs them to the all-knowing Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd. The Owl, which confesses itself

unable to specify the whereabouts of Mabon, in turn guides the band to the Eagle of Gwernabwy. Like the Owl, the Eagle can only conduct the searchers to yet another talking beast - the Salmon of Llyn Llyw. After some discussion with the Eagle, the Salmon offers to carry Cei and Gwrhyr on its back to Caer Loyw, where Mabon is imprisoned. All these animals are marvellously helpful - as well as loquacious - and the reader gets the sense that they were depicted as such in order to be played off against the human characters.

Arthur is here described as the mightiest of men. His reputation for bravery and resourcefulness goes unchallenged even by Ysbaddaden, who informs Culhwch that the young man could never have completed the series of tasks assigned him without Arthur's help. The magnificence of the king's court and entourage are extravagantly detailed by the composer, whose admiration for his subject is always evident. Among Arthur's possessions are listed the great sword Caledfwlch, the shield Wynebgwrthucher, the spear Rhongomyniad, and Carnwennan the dagger. In Culhwch and Olwen, then, we are presented not with the original picture of a sixth-century soldier, but with that of a world conqueror and very nearly mythical hero. It is a far cry from his image as depicted in the Annales Cambriae, although as we will see this particular conception is embodied also in some early poetry concerning Arthur.

It will be recalled that as part of their tasks, Arthur, Culhwch, and the others are required to go and

fetch a number of mysterious-sounding articles, such as the cauldron of Diwrnach the Irishman. Jackson points out that this quest theme parallels yet another universal tale-type motif, that of the Magic Flight.<sup>19</sup> In this, the hero is required to search for and procure an object possessed of either magical powers or great value. The mission usually proves quite a risky one, and the seeker undergoes a number of rigorous tests before his goal is accomplished. This quest motif appears in Preideu Annwfn (The Harrowing of Hell), a poem which forms part of the collection known as the Book of Taliesin. This compilation of Welsh verse, which includes some other interesting pieces of Arthuriana, has been tentatively ascribed to a fourteenth-century hand, though the works themselves date from a much earlier period. As the title implies, the manuscript purports to contain the works of the bard Taliesin, a north British poet who as far as can be determined lived and wrote during the latter half of the sixth century. Preideu Annwfn, however, dates from a much later period, probably the eleventh century. Here, Arthur's excursions take him to the Other World, where his chief mission is to procure the cauldron of the king of hell.

It is interesting to note that in both Preideu Annwfn and Pa gur..., another Arthurian poem of very roughly the same period, the men of Arthur's court are depicted as being in possession of any one of a number of extraordinary talents. Hence we have yet two more examples of the popularity of the motif of the wonderful helpers in early Welsh literature. Pa gur... is included in the

Black Book of Carmarthen, a manuscript dating from the twelfth century. The poem itself, though, appears to have been composed at least one or two hundred years prior to this. Here, it is Cei in particular who stands out; the composer of Pa gur... tells us that his hero is able to drink as much as four men, and to fight as efficiently as a hundred. He is in fact very nearly invincible, and only God may destroy him.

Cei's primacy here brings up an interesting question. While it was he who undoubtedly held the distinction of being the chief knight of Arthur's court in most of the early Welsh versions of the legend, this position was to be taken from him by Gawain in the Middle English romances. In these Kay, far from acting as the king's first lieutenant, is in fact depicted as an incompetent bungler. His chief talent lies in insulting strangers or visitors to Arthur's court, and in the various romances of the Perceval cycle he even betrays an unpleasant penchant for physically assaulting people smaller and weaker than himself. The victims of Kay's bullying manner generally have to be pacified by the diplomatic Gawain, who by his tact and gentleness becomes the perfect foil for his rough comrade-in-arms. It is worth commenting too that in the later romances, Kay's personal courage is often called into question. He is in fact in one or two striking cases, which will be discussed in a later chapter, depicted as something of a poltroon. This latter conception of his character provides a stunning contrast to Pa gur..., where his heroism is established beyond question.



Kay's role as a rough-tongued, ill-mannered boor appears to have been thrust upon him by the late twelfth-century composers of French Arthurian romance, specifically by Chrétien de Troyes. Bromwich has, however, detected traces of an unfavorable attitude toward this character in sources as early as Culhwch and Olwen, which suggests that Chrétien and his contemporaries may only have been enlarging on a pre-existing theme.<sup>20</sup> In Culhwch, Cei balks at admitting the youthful visitor to Arthur's court, thus manifesting the same sort of intransigence for which he becomes notorious in the later romances. Later on in the narrative, reference is made to a protracted hostility between the warrior and his king. There is a strong implication too that the responsibility for stirring up this ill-feeling rests on Cei. Just why he and not another one of the Arthurian retainers should have become the focal point for so much ire constitutes something of a puzzle. But for whatever reasons, Kay's degeneration from demi-god to buffoon was accomplished more rapidly than that of any other major figure in the tradition as a whole. Gawain, for example, is never really illumined in an unflattering light until Malory, and even Arthur's image took longer to tarnish than that of Kay.

Surprising as it may at first seem, the seeds of the king's degeneration from supreme warrior and adventurer to lay figure were in fact sown by the earliest exponents of the Welsh romance tradition. One of the really interesting aspects of Arthur's portrayal in Culhwch and Olwen is the fact that the mighty reputation with which he is

endowed does not seem to be borne out by the role he plays in the narrative. True, considerable reference is made here to the king's strength and valor, and his virtues are even given grudging testimonial by his opponent. But for all this the reader only acquires a sense of Arthur's great qualities at secondhand, for Arthur, in view of the comparatively minor role he is accorded in most of the adventures related in the course of the narrative, receives little opportunity to demonstrate his alleged prowess. His merit is asserted time and time again, but few concrete proofs of it are forthcoming. It was just this tendency on the part of the author of Culhwch and Olwen to accord more space to the exploits of the king's helpers than to those of the king himself which provided the basis for the diminution of Arthur's repute in the later Continental and Middle English Arthurian romances. The manner in which this theme of degeneration was enlarged on varied considerably from poet to poet. With Chrétien, for example, it took the form of a satirical portrayal of Arthur. For the northern English and southern Scottish composers - as represented here by those of the Awntyrs and of Golagros and Gawane - it was manifested in terms of direct and often quite harsh criticism of the king and his works.

Very little reason exists to doubt that the Gwalchmei son of Gwyar who appears several times in Culhwch and Olwen is the prototype of the Gauvain(s) of the French and the Gawain of the English and Scottish romances. At any rate, there is present in the Welsh story more than

just a suggestion of the luminous reputation with which this character would come to be endowed in his later incarnations. Although the author of Culhwch and Olwen makes Cei and Bedwyr Arthur's righthand men, Gwalchmei's matchless prowess as a warrior and adventurer is nonetheless clearly established here. He is appointed by the king as one of those who will undertake to meet the various demands laid down by Ysbaddaden, because he is "the best of walkers and the best of riders," and can be depended upon never to return from a mission "without the quest he had gone to seek." But perhaps most important of all, as the composer of the Welsh romance is careful to point out, Gwalchmei enjoys the status of being "Arthur's nephew, his sister's son, and his first cousin." The emphasis placed on this latter point carries with it a great deal of significance. As Bromwich notes, "the relationship between a man and his sister's son was an important one in Celtic society...and therefore it is not surprising to find that pre-Geoffrey tradition gave Arthur a nephew among his chief warriors."<sup>21</sup> What is of considerable interest too with respect to the close kinship between Gwalchmei and the king as established in the Welsh sources is that this connection goes far toward explaining the prominence the former attained in the French, English, and Scottish romances.<sup>22</sup>

William of Malmesbury describes Walwen as being Arthur's sister's son, but does not give the warrior a patronymic. It is only in Welsh sources, such as Culhwch and Olwen, Trioedd Ynys Prydein, and the Dream of Rhona-

bwy that Gwalchmei is referred to as the son of Gwyar. There is of course the possibility that this latter may be a matronymic, since it was not unknown in either the Welsh or the Irish tradition for a character to be called by his mother's name, as in the case of Mabon son of Modron or Fergus mac Roich.<sup>23</sup> The whole issue of Gwalchmei's parentage is not clarified by the fact that in the Historia Regum Britanniae Geoffrey of Monmouth makes his Gualgvanus the son of Lot King of Lothian. Geoffrey's genealogical policy, which was that adopted by the composers of the later Continental, English, and Scottish romances, would appear to reflect some early tradition that Gawain was originally a northern hero. At any rate, his connection with the north of Britain came to have profound implications with respect to the development of the Arthurian tradition in Scotland. The reasons for this will emerge particularly clearly in connection with Golagros and Gawane and with the Awntyrs, a poem which if not of Caledonian provenance has at the very least strong Caledonian associations.

Whatever the confusion over Gawain's parentage may have been, there was certainly no corresponding ambiguity in terms of the kind of fame he acquired. The author of Culhwch and Olwen was not alone in his praise of this character's valor and resourcefulness. In Gereint Son of Erbin (the Continental analogue of which is Chrétien's Erec et Enide), Gwalchmei is described as the chief of the nine captains of the war bands. In Peredur, Arthur himself pays tribute to his nephew's reputation for courtesy and

kindness, asserting that Gwalchmei through his diplomacy accomplishes more than do either his companions or the king himself through feats of arms. The Gauvain of the French romances is characterized in similar fashion. In the earlier Grail romances, as Bromwich points out, he enjoys a position the importance of which is surpassed only by that of the hero, Perceval.<sup>24</sup> In almost all cases, it is Gauvain's courtesy which emerges as his dominant trait. This latter characteristic, coupled with his great strength and courage in battle, also becomes the identifying quality of Gawain in the English and Scottish romances.

It hardly needs to be said that the Arthurian tradition constituted a significant part of the general body of early Welsh story-telling. The evidence provided by the Gododdin and the Gorchan of Cynfelyn indicates something of the tremendous power the legend seems to have wielded over the creative imagination even in the infant stages of its development. What survives of the written literature concerning Arthur at this point certainly forms an impressive enough collection. That there was yet more material, now unfortunately no longer extant, seems undeniable. The transmission and expansion of motifs such as that of the boar hunt, as well as the presence of an increasing number of universal folktale themes in such stories as Culhwch and Olwen, implies the existence in medieval Wales of a considerable body of oral narrative related to Arthur. It was upon this source that, ultimately, all of the later romances and chronicles were

based.

Although much enhanced by the vivid imagination of its creator, the Arthurian saga in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae (c. 1137)<sup>25</sup> appears to be essentially an interpolation of the account given in Nennius<sup>26</sup> with material taken from other older Welsh sources. This work was to become the single greatest influence in determining the course which the development of the tradition would follow in the centuries to come. Geoffrey's Arthur, surrounded by the trappings of a Norman prince, emerges as the most renowned of the kings of Britain. A sovereign to whom all others pay tribute, his court is the most resplendent of any in Western Europe. His empire, too, extends far beyond the bounds of that of any other conqueror, for, after having expelled the Saxons from Britain, he directed his efforts toward subjugating all of Scotland, Ireland, Gothland, Orkney, Norway, Denmark,<sup>27</sup> and Gaul.

Geoffrey's great achievement in the Historia was to unite the floating elements of Arthurian material into one cohesive whole. It was in fact he who was responsible for introducing into the story many of those themes with which we are most familiar today. To him we owe the account of how Lucius Iberius, Procurator of Rome, sent to Arthur a demand for tribute. Arthur's response to this insult was to mobilize his army and set forth from Southampton to lay siege to Rome. During the course of their journey, the Britons encountered many wondrous sights and experienced a number of adventures. Arthur himself dreamt one night of

a great aerial battle between a flying bear and a dragon from the west, a contest from which the dragon emerged the victor. This vision was interpreted by his advisors as a premonition of a battle in which the king would overcome a giant. Arthur, however, was inclined to believe that his dream foretold the outcome of the quarrel with Lucius.

Nevertheless, the king was called upon to do battle with a giant when he arrived at Barfleur. This creature had carried off Helena, niece of Duke Hoel, and was keeping her captive on the mount St. Michael. All attempts to rescue the girl had failed, and little hope was held that she would ever be released. With the help of Bedevere and Kay, however, Arthur managed to scale the giant's stronghold, and there engaged the creature in battle. After some struggle, the king managed to overcome the monster and instructed Bedevere to cut off its head and carry the grisly trophy back to camp to be put on exhibit for sight-seers. Thus Arthur delivered the countryside from the scourge that had been plaguing it for so long. Nothing, unfortunately, could be done for Helena, since the giant had killed her shortly before the arrival of the warriors. As a memorial to his grief, Geoffrey tells us, Duke Hoel had a chapel built over the girl's grave.

The account of the war with Lucius takes up a major part of the narrative. Here we see Arthur in the role which the earlier chroniclers had assigned him - that of commander and tactician. Several decisive battles are fought, from which the Britons always emerge as victors.

Great claims are made for the courage and quick-wittedness of Arthur's men, and Gawain, the king's nephew, is said by Geoffrey to have acquitted himself particularly well. The final encounter between the two armies takes place at Soissie, where the Romans are completely routed. Immediately following the victory, Arthur gives orders for the corpses of his nobles - among them Bedevere - to be separated from the remains of the enemy. After returning the bodies of the dead knights to their families, he turns his attention toward the subjugation of the province of Burgundy. Having accomplished this, the king makes plans to march on Rome. While preparing for the journey, however, he is brought word by a courier that his other nephew Modredus has usurped the throne of Britain and entered into an adulterous liaison with Queen Guanhumara (Guenevere).

The figure of Modredus (Medraut, Medrawd, Mordred) as villain was as far as I can determine mostly the creation of Geoffrey. Certainly no character closely equivalent to him in either type or function existed in the Arthurian legend previous to this. All, in fact, that links the Modredus of the Historia with the older tradition is his name, which Geoffrey probably culled from the reference to Medraut in the Annales Cambriae and then Latinized. Medraut as he appears in this latter work is the most shadowy of figures, no more concrete information being given about him other than that both he and Arthur died at Camlan in 537. It will be recalled that the compiler of the Annales makes no allusion to the causes of



this battle, nor does he mention at whose instigation it occurred - nor, in fact, does he even specify whether Medraut and Arthur fought on the same side or against each other. Furthermore, as Bromwich points out, the earliest Welsh material does not establish either any blood relationship between the two or provide any grounds<sup>28</sup> for the assumption that they came into conflict. Now, it was Geoffrey's intent to create a character who would serve as the complete antithesis to his conception of Arthur. The relative paucity of information with regard to Medraut provided him with both the means and the opportunity of doing so, and such was his success that Modredus was eventually to become the prototypical archvillain of English literature.

There are some rather interesting references to Medrawd in Tricoedd Ynys Prydein (Triads of the Island of Britain),<sup>29</sup> a source which in its entirety reflects the influence of both the pre- and post- Geoffrey Arthurian tradition. Triad 51 gives a list of the Three Dishonoured Men who in one way or another brought great trouble and conflict to the country. The third named and most evil of these was Medrawd, to whom Arthur entrusted the regency of Britain before setting forth on his Roman campaign. Medrawd, seizing the opportunity afforded by the king's absence, usurped the throne and allied himself with the Saxons, Picts, and Scots. Arthur, learning of this unparalleled treachery, rushed back to Britain to defend his heritage. His army met with that of Medrawd at Camlan, where the king slew the usurper but was himself mortally

wounded. Shortly thereafter he died and was interred in a hall on the Island of Afallach (Avallon).

So here we have a conception of Medrawd's character closely resembling that of Mordred which appears in the romances and later chronicles. That Triad 51 does date from a fairly late period is indicated by the fact that in it Arthur is specifically stated to have slain Lucius of Rome himself. The only other work in which such a claim is made is the alliterative Morte Arthure, a lengthy and very fine poem composed in the latter half of the fourteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Whether or not the two were based on the same or at least a very similar source is of course difficult to say. But the parallel does confirm that Triad 51 represents the post- rather than the pre-Geoffrey tradition.

Triad 54 - that dealing with the Three Unrestrained Ravagings of the Island of Britain - relates two rather silly anecdotes concerning a feud between Arthur and Medrawd. The first of these describes an incident which took place when Medrawd visited the court at Celli Wig in Cornwall. During his stay, he managed to consume every bit of food and drink that Arthur had on hand, so that not one crumb was left for the other guests and retainers. By way of capping insult with injury, the gluttonous visitor then dragged Gwenhwyfar the queen from her throne and struck her. The Second Unrestrained Ravaging transpired when Arthur descended on Medrawd's court and repaid him in kind for his outrageous abuse of the hospitality provided at Celli Wig. Now, the satiric purpose of Triad 54 should be quite obvious, and as it is in any case the composition of a

post-Geoffrey annalist, the material should not be interpreted as reflecting an early tradition of hostility between Medrawd and Arthur. The notion of Medrawd as having a court of his own is, however, worth keeping in mind as it sheds light on the attitude adopted toward this character by the late medieval English and Scottish historians and poets. In MS. Peniarth 50, one of the texts of Tricedd Ynys Prydein, there appears a list of the twenty-four retainers of Arthur's circle. Medrawd is here identified as the brother of Gwalchmei and as one of the Three Royal Knights of Britain. We are told that he was accorded this distinction on the basis of his outstanding physical attractiveness, intelligence, and prowess at arms. At first glance, this would appear to embody some early heroic tradition concerning Medrawd. But as the list also includes a reference to "Galath, son of Lanslod Lak," a character invented by the French poets, the material here apparently dates from a much later period.

Geoffrey's Modredus possesses absolutely no redeeming qualities other than his prowess as a warrior. Not only does he usurp the throne and plunge the country into chaos, but he solicits the aid of Arthur's worst enemies, the Saxons, Scots, Picts, and Irish. Hearing of this, the king returns posthaste to Britain to punish the traitor and to recover his stolen crown. Modredus's troops meet with those of Arthur at Richborough haven, and in the following battle countless numbers of the king's men, including Gawain, are killed. By dint of some hard fighting, Arthur manages to disperse his nephew's army temporarily. Both sides

meet again at the Camel River, and the fighting which ensues here is more savage than any that has yet taken place. Overcome by the desire for revenge, Arthur hacks his way through the enemy troops, slaughtering everything in his path. Modredus dies in this clash, along with the Irish and Saxon chiefs, and the king himself receives a mortal injury. After the battle has ended, his associates take the king off to Avallon to be healed of his wounds. There he surrenders the crown of Britain to his heir, Constantine of Cornwall.

As well-received as Geoffrey's narrative might have been by some of the later medieval and Renaissance British historians and by the composers of Arthurian romance, it did not find much favor with certain other chroniclers. Giraldus Cambrensis, writing about 1195, dismissed the more fanciful episodes of the Historia by poking some mild fun at them. Ralph Higden took an especially dim view of Geoffrey's claim that Arthur had conquered thirty realms - although Higden himself, whose Polychronicon (c. 1327)<sup>31</sup> purported to be a history of the entire world from its inception, was hardly in a position to criticize the ambitious projects of others. At any rate, the Historia Regum Britanniae was destined to take a place in the ranks of romantic literature rather than in those of sober historical writing. Annalists would continue to refer back to it in the following years, but Geoffrey's wilder flights of fancy were seldom given the credence he no doubt felt they deserved.

The De Principis Instructione (c. 1195)<sup>32</sup> of Giraldus

Cambrensis contains an interesting epilogue to the Arthurian story. Giraldus, discarding as a fable the immortality which tradition had attributed to the king, reports that in his own time the body of Arthur was exhumed from its resting-place in a hollow oak at Glastonbury and reinterred in a marble tomb. The chronicler adds - and from what source he gleaned this particular bit of information is unclear - that the king had two wives, the second of whom, Guenevere, was buried with him. The inscription on the cross found alongside their mutual grave recorded that the two had been interred here on the Isle of Avallon - the ancient name for Glastonbury, Giraldus explains, giving a brief sketch of its derivation. A great surprise awaited those who opened the tomb, for not only was the long blonde hair of the queen perfectly preserved (though it disintegrated at the first touch of a greedy monk's hand), but the bones of her husband were discovered to be those of a giant.

Giraldus was not a stupid man, nor, as his unwillingness to credit the more exotic episodes in Geoffrey's Historia would indicate, was he a gullible one. Yet he evidently firmly believed that the grave of Arthur and Guenevere had been located and exhumed by the monks of Glastonbury. It seems probable that the discovery of the tomb and its opening were part of an elaborate hoax, conceived and engineered specifically to give credence to the historicity of Arthur. The motives of those who perpetrated the scheme are unclear, but the fact remains that a great many people were taken in by it. Edward I paid a

visit to Glastonbury in 1278, and during the course of his stay caused the bodies - or what were alleged to be the bodies - of Arthur and Guenevere to be removed to another site. His motive for doing so, Maurice Powicke remarks, was doubtless to strengthen the exceedingly tenuous association between the Plantagenet dynasty and the legendary hero - and, incidentally, to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the once and future king was dead and therefore unlikely to reappear on the scene.<sup>33</sup>

The intermediate stage of the development of Arthurian chronicle into Arthurian romance is perhaps best represented by the Roman de Brut.<sup>34</sup> Composed sometime about 1155 by an Anglo-Norman cleric called Wace, the Brut is essentially a free poetic adaptation of Geoffrey's Historia. The only information we have concerning its author is that which Wace saw fit to provide us with himself - that he had been born on the Isle of Jersey, been taken to Caen as a small child, and given an extensive education in France. Following this, he returned to Caen, where he embarked on his career as a man of letters. His work (the Wace oeuvre included some lives of saints and two lengthy historical romances) came to the attention of Henry II, who appears to have been impressed enough by these writings to have awarded their author the post of canon at Bayeux Abbey. For some reason, however, the king later lost interest in Wace and his compositions, and eventually revoked the royal patronage. As a consequence of this, the Jersey cleric seems to have lost his fascination with historical romance entirely, for he left his

second epic, the Roman de Rou, unfinished. It is likely that he died shortly thereafter, possibly from the combined effects of disillusionment and creative frustration.

The Roman de Brut is distinguished from its predecessor in several ways. Although based on chronicle material, the style of the piece is very much similar to that of a chanson-de-geste or a metrical romance. It is composed in octosyllabic couplets, which give to the narrative a fluidity which Geoffrey's prose could not, and interspersed throughout the story are long descriptive passages. Despite the fact that the subject of the poem is war, the atmosphere verges more on the social-chivalric rather than the militaristic. In fact, we see in those references to ladies who were doubly glad to see their knights safely returned from combat a glimmering of the notion of l'amour courtois. Associated as Wace was with the court of Henry II, he could hardly have escaped falling under the influence of the customs established by Henry's queen Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Judging from some of the material which he includes in his narrative, Wace seems to have had access to certain Arthurian traditions the existence of which Geoffrey was unaware of. Of these interpolations, two hold especial interest for us. In the first instance, Wace refers to the Round Table - an institution not mentioned in the Historia Regum Britanniae. According to the account given in the Brut, the custom of having the court dine at a circular table was established by the king in order to forestall any disputes over precedence among his knights. At the

end of his narrative, Wace makes reference to the expectation the Britons had of Arthur's eventual return. The notion of a rex quondam rex que futurus was also not one with which Geoffrey seems to have been entirely comfortable, although it, like the idea of the Round Table, was to become one of the enduring themes of subsequent  
35  
Arthurian literature.

As was the case with Wace, what little we know of  
36  
Lazamon, the composer of the Brut (c. 1205), is contained in the capsule biography which serves as a sort of prologue to his 32,241 - line epic. A cleric, Lazamon was the son of one Leovenath, and spent most of his life at Arley Regis on the Severn in Worcestershire. At one time, however, he had travelled extensively over the land, and in the course of his journey acquired those books which were to provide the basis for his Arthurian chronicle. Although he mentions the tracts of the Saints Bede, Alcuin, and Augustine, it is quite obvious that his work was most heavily influenced by the composition of Wace. As he himself proclaims, Lazamon was a great admirer of the Roman de Brut and its author.

The differences between the Brut and its Anglo-Norman predecessor are just as marked as are those between the Roman de Brut and the Historia. Lazamon was, in the first place, writing in early Middle English, and his style was fairly close to that of the Anglo-Saxon poets. The Brut was conceived as an illumination of the past of Britain, a sort of national epic rather than a metrical chronicle or a romance. It is aggressive and almost



chauvinistic in spirit. The narrative is replete with epic simile and heroic epithet - over and over again we encounter such references as those to Constantine the brave, Cadoc the keen, or Baldulf the fair.

As was the case with Wace, *Lazamon* incorporated into his story some material of which both his predecessors were either unaware or simply neglected to use. His version of the Round Table episode is particularly interesting. According to the *Brut*, Arthur at one point in his various peregrinations around the British Isles had some cause to visit Cornwall. While there, he was approached by a carpenter who claimed to have visited many realms. During his travels, the carpenter reported, he had heard a distressing story of a quarrel which had broken out among the king's men over who should sit where at meals. The man then offered to solve this delicate problem by constructing a Round Table that would comfortably hold sixteen hundred men, no knight ranking either above or below his neighbor. One of the great virtues of this table would be that despite its massive size, it could be easily transported from place to place.

There is a strong element of otherworldliness in the *Brut*, as the fantastic story about the Round Table would suggest. According to *Lazamon*, Arthur's birth and death were attended by fairies - beings whose presence on either occasion is not noticed by Wace or Geoffrey. (The king's sword and shield, too, were specially crafted for him by elves.) Like Wace, *Lazamon* mentions the tradition of Arthur's return, but elaborates considerably on the theme.

Here, the dying king is borne off to Avallon by two fairy women in a boat. Just before his departure, he speaks of going to dwell with Argante (Morgan le Fay) on the magic island, and promises that when he is healed of his wounds he will return to the Britons to serve as their king. This is quite different from the version of Arthur's end as given by Wace, who merely states that although all was kept in readiness for him by the faithful Constantine, the king never did fulfill his vow.

Lazamon also gives an interesting account of a prophetic dream which Arthur is said to have had just before his return to Britain from the Roman wars. In this vision, the king saw himself set astride a great hall by his men. Gawain, bearing Excalibur, sat before him. Soon afterward, Mordred appeared, brandishing an axe, and set about chopping down the pillars of the hall. Guenevere assisted in this destruction by pulling down the roof. As the building collapsed, both Arthur and Gawain fell, Gawain breaking both his arms and Arthur his right. With his good hand, the king managed to decapitate Mordred. This done, he cut Guenevere into small bits and disposed of her remains in a black pit. Suddenly, he found himself transported to a great open place, where all manner of birds and beasts roamed at will. A golden lion materialized and carried the king off to the sea. After beating about in the waves for a while, he was brought back to dry land by a great fish.

As we know, Arthur's dream correctly foreshadows the subsequent events of his career. In incorporating such a motif into his work, Laȝamon was in effect establishing yet another tradition. In the alliterative Morte Arthure, an expanded version of the chronicle accounts of the war with Lucius, Arthur has a similar sort of vision in which he sees himself cast down from the height of his glory to complete ruin. Here, the composer has managed to tie together two of the most prominent motifs in medieval romance - the dream vision and the idea of the Wheel of Fortune. Although the two notions appear in the same combination elsewhere, this particular attempt to merge them was artistically so successful that it gave rise to a host of imitations.

The motif of the dream vision occurs also in the Dream of Rhonabwy (c. 1220)<sup>37</sup>, the second of the five Arthurian tales in the Mabinogion. A prologue to the story relates how Madawg son of Mareddud, ruler of all Powys, had a brother jealous of his power. This brother, Iorwoerth, was in no respect the equal of Madawg, though he desired to attain the same status. Madawg generously offered him both a captaincy and a rank equivalent to the ruler's own, but Iorwoerth, not satisfied with this gesture, expressed his discontent by sacking Lloegyr and then fleeing with his followers. On the advice of his counselors, Madawg sent out an expedition to track the fugitives down. One of the search parties was overtaken by a storm and had to spend the night in a ramshackle dwelling presided over by an old crone. The shelter was a

poor one, but no more adequate lodging was to be had. The leader of the group, Rhonabwy, found himself unable to rest on the pile of straw that served him for a bed. When he lay down on an ox-skin, however, he immediately fell into a trance-like sleep that lasted for three days. While in this trance, he dreamt that he and his men were riding across the plain of Argyngroeg when their attention was attracted by a terrific commotion to the rear. Turning to investigate the source of all this noise, they saw a magnificently dressed youth on horseback bearing down on them. Although they fled, the rider caught up with them in a short time, and Rhonabwy asked him to identify himself. The youth explained that he was Iddawg Embroiler of Britain, a sort of agent provocateur who had deliberately created the strife between Arthur and Medrawd which had led to the battle of Camlan. For this he had done seven years penance.

The rest of the story is somewhat difficult to follow. At any rate, Rhonabwy and his men are taken off by Iddawg to be introduced to Arthur. Unfortunately, the king is distinctly unimpressed by the appearance of the strangers who have been brought into his presence. When asked by Iddawg why he is laughing, Arthur replies that he is not amused but deeply grieved that the custody of Britain has fallen into the hands of such undistinguished characters as these. <sup>38</sup> Despite this unprepossessing beginning, Rhonabwy and his men are treated to some fine spectacles. They are granted the privilege of witnessing a great clash between the ravens of Owein son of Urien and the hosts of

Arthur. While this battle rages on, the two principals sit calmly playing a game of gwyddbwyll, a sort of chess with golden pieces. Periodically a squire rushes up to Owein to ask him if he is not concerned that his winged attendants are being decimated by the king's troops. Owein then asks Arthur to call off his men, and for his pains is instructed by the king to keep quiet and continue playing.

The tide of the battle soon turns, however. Owein's beleaguered ravens suddenly throw themselves on Arthur's men and begin tearing them to bits with their sharp beaks and claws. When a rider gallops up to the king to inform him of this, Arthur turns to his opponent and asks him to call the birds off. In response to this plea, Owein gleefully enjoins the king to hold his tongue and continue with the game. After a few similar interchanges, Arthur rises and abruptly smashes the gwyddbwyll pieces into golden dust. Seeing this, Owein signals his lieutenant to lower his banner. Peace ensues. Osla Big-Knife and Arthur arrange a six-week's truce, and Cei announces that whoever wishes to follow the king should proceed with him to Cornwall.

As the summary of the narrative should indicate, the strain of fantasy in the Dream of Rhonabwy is as prevalent as that in Culhwch and Olwen. Once again, the characters are endowed with all sorts of supernatural attributes. Arthur's servitor has custody of a magic cloak, which when donned renders the wearer invisible. Another lesser property of this garment is that it will retain its color

under any circumstances. The king himself possesses the ability to read minds, a talent with which he does not seem to be credited elsewhere. And then of course there are Owein's ravens, birds with a striking number of human characteristics. I. Ll. Foster has advanced an interesting explanation for the presence of this motif in the story. Traditionally, Owein was held to be the son of Avallock's daughter Modron - the prototype of Morgain le Fay - and Urien. Now, in the Didot Perceval, the character Urbain (Urien) is attended by a flock of ravens which he claims are his mistress and her handmaidens in disguise. The Irish tradition has it that the Morrigan, a bloodthirsty creature said to be present at the site of battle, was capable of taking on the appearance of a crow. "If, therefore, the correspondence of Morrigan, Modron, and Morgain le Fee is established, then Owain's ravens in Rhonabwy's Dream can be recognized as the helpful forms of his mother Modron and her sisters (or companions)."<sup>39</sup>

The Dream of Rhonabwy is, among other things, a cleverly worked out send-up of the oral tradition of storytelling. The style in which the narrative is written is in fact a deliberate exaggeration of that used by the bards, as the author himself virtually admits when at the end of the tale he remarks that no one may recite his work without recourse to the book. And indeed, so packed is Rhonabwy with the sort of detail favored by the oral storytellers that the plot itself is almost squeezed out. The satiric intent of the author, furthermore, would seem

to account for the rather off-beat representation he has given his major characters. Thomas Parry comments that Arthur is portrayed in a less than flattering light, being made at times to look downright ineffectual.<sup>40</sup> It should be kept in mind, however, that almost all of the king's associates are depicted in an equally absurd or grotesque fashion at some point in the narrative. Rhonabwy is first and foremost a satire on bards and their methods of storytelling, and only secondarily a take-off on the Arthurian material per se.

It is worthwhile noting that of all the achievements credited to Arthur by the Welsh and English poets and chroniclers, legal paternity was not one of them. The fact that the king's marriage to Guenevere was a barren one indeed becomes one of the more crucial underlying motifs of the later romances. Earlier tradition, however, had ascribed to Arthur the fathering of at least two children. I have already discussed the reference in Nennius to the youth Amr, who was said to have been the king's son. The Historia Brittonum was not, though, the only document in which the existence of such a person was recorded. Near the end of the Dream of Rhonabwy, a rollcall of the king's chief counselors is given. Midway through this list appears a reference to one Llacheu, described as the son of Arthur. While nothing more is said of this character here, his name does appear in Trioedd Ynys Prydein, where he is referred to as one of the Three Well-Endowed Men of Britain. He is also mentioned in some of the earliest Welsh verse. Bromwich remarks that "these allusions in poetry

indicate that Llacheu was a figure of considerable importance in the early Arthurian saga, and that like Kei and Bedwyr he belonged to the oldest stratum of Arthurian tradition in Wales."<sup>41</sup> He eventually became associated with Loholt, a character appearing in the French and German romances. This latter individual, also identified as Arthur's son, was said to have been slain by Kay. Other than the somewhat dubious notoriety accorded him by his untimely end, Loholt never attained in the Continental romance cycles a position of prominence equivalent to that enjoyed by Llacheu in the early Welsh tradition. Who the mother of Arthur's son was is never really made clear, although according to Ulrich von Zatzikhofen Loholt was the child of Genover (Guenevere).<sup>42</sup> In Perlesvaus,<sup>43</sup> a similar claim is made. This is, however, contradicted by the author of the Vulgate Merlin,<sup>44</sup> who cites one Lissanor of Canparco-rentin (Quimper) as the mother of Loholt. A variant of the name of this latter female character may be preserved in Arthour and Merlin (c. 1265),<sup>45</sup> where casual mention is made of a child whom Arthur begot on the Lady Lyanor, daughter of the earl of Sweyn. Therefore Welsh literary and chronicle tradition up to this point gives Arthur two apparently illegitimate children, and the English one. The whole question of paternity was to have important consequences in the latter stages of the development of the legend, particularly with respect to Scotland.

The origins of the Merlin tradition are even more obscure than are those of the Arthurian story itself. Again it was Geoffrey who was responsible for creating the



character with whom we are familiar today - that of the Welsh prophetic prodigy who became a sort of necromancer-in-residence to a whole succession of British kings. Geoffrey, too, was the first to establish a definite literary association between Arthur and Merlin, although hints of such a connection may have been current prior to the twelfth century. There was at any rate a fairly clear-cut tradition involving a character called Myrddin in existence from a considerably earlier period. His reputation as a prophet seems to have been originally established by the ascription to a bard of his name some predictions relating to the political status of Wales. These vaticinations are recorded in a group of poems appearing respectively in the Black Book of Carmarthen and the Red Book of Hergest. From the same source also comes a fragmentary account of the career of the individual supposedly responsible for these prophecies. According to it, Myrddin had been a warrior who, under the command of Gwenddoleu, participated in the battle of Arfderydd fought outside Carlisle in 573. Although Gwenddoleu was slain during this conflict, Myrddin himself managed to escape physically unhurt. He thereafter took refuge in the Caledonian Forest, where he was pursued but never captured by the victor of Arfderydd, Rhydderch Hael. As a consequence of his grief and terror, Myrddin lost his reason, and in a crazed state roamed with wilderness for several years. It was apparently during this protracted spell of dementia that his prophetic talents emerged.

The poems from which this account has been drawn were

at one time believed to have been based on the Vita Merlini, a verse pseudobiography of the poet composed probably by Geoffrey of Monmouth during the years 1150 and 1151. Recent scholarship has however fairly well established that the works in question, the Cyvoesi, the Ymadiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin, and certain relevant sections of the Hoianeu and the Avallennau date in fact from a period prior to the twelfth century. Proof of this theory rests in part on the existence in the ninth-century Irish tale Suibhne Geilt of a very close analogue to the Myrddin story as it is preserved in the Welsh poems.<sup>46</sup> And included in the material concerning Kentigern, the patron saint of Glasgow, is the saga of one Lailoken, whose career - even to the period of insanity - resembles almost exactly that of the Welsh warrior and prophet. Just what the connection between these two traditions is has never really been determined. That some sort of relationship does exist here seems however indisputable.<sup>47</sup> What Geoffrey did in the Historia Regum Britanniae was to graft the strange little tale of madness and prophetic inspiration preserved in the earlier Welsh poems onto a reference in Nennius to one Ambrosius, a clairvoyant child who through the exercise of his talents was able to divine the cause of some bizarre architectural problems that had been plaguing Britain's incumbent monarch. Upon this hybrid the annalist proceeded to construct a legend which would become the basis for an entire sub-cycle of romance.

Geoffrey's Merlin, in keeping with virtually every other character and event in his Historia, was a marvell-

ously well-conceived invention, and one that was in fact essential to his telling of the Arthurian story. It was he who originated the notion that the wizard was responsible for setting in motion the chain of events that led to Arthur's begetting. Uther Pendragon, the king of Britain, became violently infatuated with the wife of one of his nobles, and proceeded to pay this woman lavish court. Outraged by this flagrant abuse of royal prerogative, the lady's husband Gorlois abruptly retired to his estate in Cornwall, taking his countess with him. Seething with frustrated desire, Uther enlisted the aid of his companion and advisor Merlin, who through his magic arts devised a unique solution to the problem. He transformed Uther into the shape of Gorlois, and in this guise the king was able to trick the lady, Igera, into submitting to his advances. From this union Arthur was born, and after Gorlois had been conveniently disposed of, the king and the countess were wed.

The version of the legend which appears in the 10,000 line Arthur and Merlin is a quite remarkably entertaining one, for the composer has incorporated into the standard account of the necromancer's life as given by the chroniclers some curious anecdotes taken from the Continental tradition. So unusual is his rendering of the story that even the narrative of so indefatigable a purveyor of the exotic as Geoffrey seems mundane by comparison. According to the Historia Regum Britanniae and other chronicle sources (all ultimately based on Nennius), a petty chieftain named Vortigern managed, by means of some high-pow-

ered treachery, to usurp the throne of Britain, The supporters of the late and true king Constans, naturally reluctant to see their dead leader's privileges and responsibilities assumed by a traitor, immediately mounted an insurrection. At the same time, Vortigern's erstwhile allies the Saxons began to agitate loudly and threateningly for a larger share in the spoils of victory. Thus beset on all sides, the usurper fled into Wales to build himself a stronghold. Construction of this edifice was, however, considerably impeded by the repeated and inexplicable collapse of the tower foundations. In desperation, Vortigern finally summoned a pair of local wizards to his makeshift court on Mount Snowdon and confided his difficulties to them. After some impressively esoteric consultations, the two sorcerers advised the king to sprinkle the stones of the tower with the blood of a fatherless boy. Thus anointed, the foundations would support any weight of superstructure. Delighted by this relatively simple solution to a problem which had been causing him no small anxiety, Vortigern promptly dispatched messengers to seek out the requisite fatherless child.

The object of the quest did not long remain hidden. Upon arriving at Carmarthen, Vortigern's minions were informed that the daughter of the king of South Wales had some years ago given birth to an illegitimate son, and with this boy was presently living in retirement with the nuns of nearby St. Peter's Church. Pleased with the ease with which their mission had accomplished itself, the couriers asked the reeve of the city to send the child,

whose name was Merlin, and his mother to the king without delay. The reeve of course complied with this request, and the princess and her son were duly evicted from their cloister and bundled off to the court at Mount Snowdon. There they were graciously received by Vortigern, who, being of somewhat less distinguished lineage himself, evinced a hearty respect for those of royal parentage. When questioned by her host as to the paternity of her son, Merlin's mother replied that she had been seduced by a comely youth who appeared in her chamber one night, embraced and kissed her, and then vanished. The following evening the same individual returned, and matters took their natural course. After a succession of these nocturnal visitations, the king's daughter became pregnant.

Astonished by the response his questions had evoked, Vortigern asked one of his evil geniuses if such a wild tale could possibly be true. The counselor vouched for the plausibility of the story, adding that it was his opinion that the princess had been visited by an incubus. At that moment the object of the interview, who was now a precocious child of about eight, broke into the discussion with a question of his own. When informed by Vortigern of the reasons for his summons to court, Merlin announced his intention of proving the wizards wrong. He then turned to the sorcerers and asked them why they believed an infusion of his blood would strengthen the foundations of the keep. This query was met by a stony silence, which Merlin himself shattered by revealing to Vortigern that the repeated collapse of the tower founda-

tions was in fact due to the existence of a subterranean pool. Excavations proved him to be correct, and in order to press the point home further, the boy asked the wizards to tell him what the contents of the underground pool were. This they could or would not do, and Merlin once again triumphed by informing the king of the presence in the water of two great hollow eggs, within which lived two dragons. His statement was confirmed when the pool was drained by conduit. As a sort of coup-de-grace, Merlin even provided Vortigern with the means of solving his engineering problems, the difficulty occasioned by the disposal of a pair of dragons and two giant eggs notwithstanding.

Vivid though the chronicle narrative is, it pales beside that given by the composer of Arthur and Merlin. The account here has quite naturally been expanded to accommodate the poet's interpolations, and some significant changes have been made in the basic material itself. The version of the circumstances surrounding Merlin's conception and birth is, for example, considerably different and much more involved than that offered by the chroniclers. By way of a prologue to these events, the poet relates a series of unnatural tragedies that befell a family previously enjoying only happiness and prosperity. The wife was driven mad by a demon, and in a fit of hysterical rage brought on by an argument with her only son consigned the boy to hell. The young man was consequently choked to death in his sleep by the devil, who had been lurking about the premises in anticipation of just such an oppor-

tunity of harvesting another soul. Unhinged still further by the grief and responsibility she felt for her son's death, the mother committed suicide. Her husband died shortly thereafter of the anguish engendered by this double catastrophe.

The three remaining daughters of the house were taken into custody by a religious hermit named Blaise, who had been a witness to the successive disasters that had stalked their brother and parents. Under the care of their new protector, the girls led a cloistered existence. Sheltered from the temptations of the world by the prayers and exhortations of the old man, they were left for a time at peace. The devil who had plotted the ruin of the family, however, remained constantly on the alert for any signs of weakness the girls might betray. The vulnerability of the oldest girl showed itself when she permitted herself to be seduced by the demon in human form. For this she was tried, convicted, and sentenced to be buried alive. No sooner had this dreadful punishment been carried out than the middle sister succumbed to the advances of the demon. She too was put under arrest, but managed to escape the terrible retribution of the courts by openly proclaiming herself a harlot and thus outside the jurisdiction of the law.

With the fate of her two sisters hanging before her as a horrifying warning, the youngest girl resolved to lead a life of complete chastity and religious devotion. Accordingly she sought out Blaise and asked him to arrange some sort of rigid penitential program for her. This he did, and the girl followed his instructions faithfully,

until by a careless mistake she left herself open to the incursions of the demon who had destroyed her sisters. She became pregnant as the result of her negligence, and when her condition became obvious was taken before the magistrates. Pleading that her pregnancy was the result of a diabolical attack, she was put on probation for two years. In due course the child was born, and immediately whisked away by Blaise before its soul could be claimed by its infernal father. The old hermit christened the child Merlin, and thereafter returned him to the care of his mother.

Virtually from the moment of his birth the boy showed himself to be a remarkable being. While tending him, the midwife noted that her charge was covered with a most un-babylike pelt of coarse black hair. Viewing with some trepidation this shaggy growth, she ventured to comment on the terrible fate surely awaiting the mother of such a creature. In response to these injudicious remarks, the hours-old infant raised his head and waspishly retorted that the midwife was a slandering old beldam.

Instead of proving to be the bane of his mother's existence, Merlin was in fact called upon to act on her behalf. After the probationary period was up, the woman was summoned to court to be retried for her old crime. She was found guilty as before and condemned this time to death. At this point in the proceedings, Merlin (who was not quite two years old) rose up in his mother's arms and delivered himself of a spirited defense of her innocence. The judge, not inclined to be tolerant of such interrup-



tions, refused to be swayed by the child's arguments and reconfirmed the sentence he had just passed. Unperturbed, Merlin responded by indicating that the eminent jurist himself was the offspring of an adulterous liaison and as such in no position to sit handing down pronouncements on the sexual misbehavior of others. The child followed this sensational revelation with the suggestion that for a certain consideration arrangements could be made to inhibit the circulation of the true story of the judge's origins. Needless to say, Merlin's mother was thereupon released with no more than a warning, presumably to beware of nocturnal callers.

This bizarre fairy tale, with its distinctive comic overtones, is far from being the only interpolation of any significance in the Arthurian legend as it is rendered in Arthur and Merlin. The poem is full of anecdotes and digressions which, while perhaps not quite as entertaining, hold as much interest. Particularly impressive are the lengthy genealogical discourses the poet occasionally permits himself to indulge in. Arthur's mother, Igera, is said to have been married at one stage to Hoel, by whom she had three daughters. The second of these, Belicent, was wed to King Lot, and to this couple were born five sons - Gawain, Guerehes, Agravain, Gaheriet, and Mordred. The youngest daughter, Hermesent, married King Urien and had by him Yvain. Kay is referred to as Arthur's foster brother, an exalted rank conferred on him by virtue of the fact that his mother served as the young prince's nurse. The relationship between the two, established in

the Continental romances and affirmed here, was quietly disavowed by most of the subsequent Middle English composers with the exception of Malory. Kay's unpleasant character automatically precluded him, in such romances as Ywain and Gawain, from the magic circle of Arthurian family relationships. In Arthour and Merlin, however, he is depicted in quite a flattering light, despite the fact that he does make one half-hearted attempt to defraud his foster brother of his inheritance.

The array of characters in the story is so vast as to render any effort to sort out the relationships between various individuals a pretty nearly impossible chore. There are even two Gueneveres here. Although they are both described as daughters of King Leodegans, the second of the two is in fact illegitimate. So close is the physical resemblance between the two girls that it is virtually impossible for even the sharpest eye to tell them apart. Quite naturally, Arthur is betrothed to the legitimate daughter.

A note of genuine romance is injected into the poem by the composer's treatment of the love affair between Arthur and Guenevere. Sandwiched as it is between protracted accounts of various battles, the story takes on something of the quality of an idyll. The poet's depiction of the slowly burgeoning passion between Arthur and Guenevere shows as much skill, in a different way, as do his descriptions of cavalry charges and tournaments. The king is said to be tongue-tied in the presence of his beloved, who in turn finds it impossible to confess that she has

yearned for him from afar. That the poet retained his sense of humor even when dealing with such lyric subject matter is, however, sufficiently confirmed elsewhere. Looming over the spectacle of all this intense but non-verbalized passion is the figure of Leodegans, who Pandarus-like considers the ways in which he may foster a match between his daughter and the king. Later on in the narrative, there is a scene in which Guenevere is called upon to help Arthur get into his armor. After each buckle has been fastened, the girl is enjoined to kiss her lover either as a reward for her dexterity or as a penalty for her clumsiness. This little ritualized exchange of caresses of course creates such an interminable delay in the proceedings that Merlin, who is waiting more or less impatiently without, has to remind Arthur that he is due to participate in a tournament.

Arthur and Merlin was the first in the long series of Middle English Arthurian verse romances which came to be composed during the period running from about 1260 to 1400. The scope and complexity of the poem are a direct result of that process of expansion to which the Arthurian legend itself had been subject during the course of its transmission from Britain to the Continent and back again. The late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were the heyday of romances of this type in France and Germany, and, as I have mentioned before, it is from these works that a great deal of the content of the later Middle English compositions was derived. Arthur and Merlin had its source in one of the Old French Merlins,

specifically that of Robert de Boron and his continuators. Robert, a Burgundian writing sometime about the beginning of the thirteenth century, seems to have in turn taken the bones of his account from Wace - a narrative skeleton which he then fleshed out with all the detail we see mirrored in the later English work. From this melange of traditions the composer of Arthur and Merlin extracted and paraphrased not only the fantastic story of the wizard's childhood, and his gossipy revelation that King Leodegans had two daughters, one of them illegitimate, but a new version of the story of the founding of the Round Table. According to this, Merlin himself was responsible for the idea of a great circular board at which all the men of the court could dine in perfect amity. He then proceeded to translate his inspiration into physical terms, and the result was such an unqualified success that it was copied by Uther's brother monarchs. Leodegans himself, as befit a future father-in-law of the king of Britain, was said to have had a Round Table.

The motif of the Sword in the Stone, so popular with present-day exponents of Arthuriana, was yet another development in the story transmitted by Robert and his continuator to the English poet. As the account given in Arthur and Merlin (ll. 2793ff.) goes, there was following the death of Uther Pendragon some dispute among the nobles of the kingdom over the matter of the succession to the throne. Troubled by this lack of accord, Bishop Brice (Dubricius) that Christmas Eve called upon the magnates to pray for a divine solution to their differences. The



nobles agreed to do so, and sure enough a miracle was soon vouchsafed them. Following the Christmas service which they had attended at the request of Brice, the magnates discovered standing without the entrance to the cathedral a great marble anvil into which a sword had been embedded. Correctly interpreting this as a sign from heaven, the bishop invited all the knights and barons to try their hands at removing the blade from its stone encasement. He whose efforts met with success would be declared the heir of Uther Pendragon. And as things turned out, although many grown men attempted this feat, only Arthur, the young boy of royal blood, could draw the sword from the stone.

The account of the sword in the stone is a charming one, as its enduring popularity for over seven hundred years would attest. Like it, much that is most memorable in Arthurian literature came to be perpetuated in the same circuitous fashion. To attempt to systematically define all the alterations the legend underwent at the hands of the Continental poets would require a separate volume in itself. What can be emphasized in a somewhat briefer space, however, is the importance of the role these changes played in determining the course the preservation of the Arthurian tradition would take in the Middle English romances. There was apparently a parallel development of the Perceval legend in thirteenth century France and Wales, which culminated in the Contes del Graal of Chrétien de Troyes and his continuators and, slightly later, in the Welsh Peredur. From Germany, sometime about

1210, came the greatest of all the poetic manifestations of this complex and haunting story, the Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach. The tale of Lancelot and his illicit doomed passion for Guenevere was an invention of the French. Similarly, the Tristan legend received its most enduring expression at the hands of those poets. All of these stories, and the characters who populate them, were to reappear in yet a different form in the Middle English romances. And in some cases, the new incarnation very much surpassed the old.

In our forefathers tyme, whan Papistrie, as a standynge poole, couered and ourflowed all England, fewe bookes were read in our tong, sauynge certaine bookes of Cheualrie, as they sayd, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in Monasteries, by idel Monkes, or wanton Chanons: as one for example, Morte Arthure: the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye: In which booke those be counted the noblest Knights, that do kill most men without any quarell, and commit fowlest aduoulteries by sutlest shiftes: as Sir Launcelote, with the wife of king Arthure his master: Syr Tristram with the wife of king Marke his vncke: Syr Lamerocke with the wife of king Lote, that was his own aunte. This is good stuffe, for wise men to laughe at, or honest men to take pleasure at.

The Scholemaster, Roger Ascham

Chapter Two  
The Arthurian Verse Romances in Middle English  
1265 - 1400



Such was the power of the tradition established by a storyteller the calibre of Geoffrey of Monmouth that even today the popular conception of the Arthur of medieval narrative remains one of a being endowed with ten times the virtues and none of the faults of an ordinary mortal. With respect to the manner in which the king's image is generally depicted in the earlier chronicles and in a romance such as Arthur and Merlin such a conception, if superficial, accords reasonably well. There are, however, some important exceptions to this generalization. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the image of Arthur projected in certain of the Latin lives of the Welsh saints goes far to reinforce the notion that even mythic heroes can have feet of clay. Here the great leader of the Britons is made to appear if not positively disreputable at least as something considerably less than the acme of princely dignity and power.

It is slightly ironic that the society whose bards and historians laid the foundation of the Arthurian tradition should have also produced the first writers to discredit it. There is little exaggeration in the claim that the saints' lives contain what on balance appears to be the most blatantly venomous anti-Arthurian propaganda ever penned. For undiluted hostility nothing can touch it except the tracts produced by the Scottish historians, who were in any case writing during a period when a great deal of the influence the legend itself exerted over the creative imagination had dissipated. The saints' lives, on the other hand, date from a time - the late eleventh and

early twelfth centuries - when the process of the glorification of Arthur's image had only just begun to gather momentum in Britain. By virtue of the place they occupy in the chronology of Arthurian literature, then, these writings become documents unique in all the vast body of material centered on the preservation of the memory of the British hero.

The Life of Saint Cadog is the longest of these curious and entertaining hagiographies. In it Arthur appears in what must rank as one of the most unsympathetic roles ever yet assigned a character traditionally held to be the prime exponent of the medieval chivalric code. The story begins with an account of how Gwynllyw king of Gwynlliog kidnapped Gwladus, daughter of Brychan, with the intention of making her his wife. Quite understandably enraged by the rough wooing to which his child had been subject, the girl's father retaliated by making war on the king. Although the forces of Brychan managed to inflict heavy losses on Gwynllyw's troops, the kidnapper himself escaped the general carnage unharmed and returned with Gwladus to his own domain. As the king and his captive were crossing the border between home and foreign territory, they encountered three men sitting on the side of a hill casting dice. This trio of gamblers turned out to consist of the noted champions Arthur, Cei, and Bedwyr. Arthur, the leader of the group, caught sight of Gwynllyw's prisoner and was immediately overcome by a raging desire for her - a fact with which he did not hesitate to acquaint his companions. Both Cei and Bedwyr, however, sternly reprimanded their captain

for his lecherous notions and, on the grounds that as champions they were committed to assisting those in difficulty rather than acting as accessories to rape, refused to procure the girl for him. Chastened, Arthur then asked the pair to find out exactly who the stranger and his captive were and to ascertain the nature of their business in Gwynlliog. With this not unreasonable request the two warriors complied. Gwynllyw explained his difficulties to them and, upon learning the story, Arthur resolved to place the fugitive king under his protection. Shortly afterwards he, Cei, and Bedwyr put the pursuing army of Brychan to flight.

The second of the Arthurian vignettes in the Life of Saint Cadog concerns one Ligessauc, son of Eliman, who for reasons which are not explained killed three of the soldiers under Arthur's command. The king - who is here referred to as regis illustrissimi Britannie - vowed to avenge his dead troops and immediately set off in pursuit of their slayer. Ligessauc, despairing of ever finding any sort of secure bolthole, finally took refuge with Saint Cadog. With the help of the holy man he remained hidden in Gwynlliog for seven relatively peaceful years. His whereabouts, however, eventually came to the attention of Arthur, who sent a great host to bring the fugitive to justice. Quite wisely the king refused to commit a hostile action against Cadog himself, who sent Arthur a message urging that the dispute be settled by a tribunal of nobles rather than by force of arms. The king conceded the advisability of such a course, and a panel of judges was selected to hear the case. After

a lengthy and acrimonious wrangle the most prominent of the jurists decided that Arthur be awarded nine oxen as recompense for his loss in manpower. The noble's colleagues disagreed with his conclusions, however, and resolved that Ligessauc instead give the king a hundred cows. An interesting judicial problem then arose when Arthur petulantly declined to accept any kind of cows but spotted ones, beasts apparently all but impossible to obtain. Cadog finally settled the matter by changing the skins of some ordinary heifers into the desired parti-color. When Cei and Bedwyr attempted to round the herd up, however, the cattle were transformed into sheaves of fern. Arthur, confronted by this additional evidence of Cadog's miraculous powers, asked to be forgiven for his intransigency. The saint duly obliged, and afterwards the king decreed that all strangers passing through his territory be given refuge.

In the Life of Saint Caramnog Arthur is demoted from his rank as regis illustrissimi Britannie to the position of mere co-ruler of Ceredigion. His fellow monarch is identified as one Cadwy, an individual whose name does not appear to be preserved elsewhere in the annals of Arthurian literature. The story here opens with a brief account of the misfortunes which befell the inhabitants of the territory of Carrum. A giant serpent had been roaming the countryside, causing all manner of devastation in terms of life and property. Aware that such a menace could not for long be allowed to go unchecked, Arthur set forth to track the creature down and destroy it. During the course of his travels he had occasion to visit the hermitage of

Saint Carannog. The holy man welcomed his royal guest graciously, and bestowed on him a blessing. Arthur, in turn, expressed his appreciation for this benison.

Sometime previous to the events just related, Carannog had come into possession of an altar having mysterious powers, which a divine voice had instructed him to throw into the Severn River. The saint naturally obeyed this peculiar command, with the result that the altar had been swept away in the current. Anxious to retrieve it, Carannog asked Arthur if he had, in his wanderings, heard of any such holy object being washed up onto the banks of the river. The king, who had in fact found the altar and annexed it as one of his perquisites, slyly refused to answer the saint's question until Carannog had agreed to help him destroy the serpent of Carrum. The holy man accordingly raised his voice in prayer that the creature might be brought forth from its lair and delivered to its reckoning. In response to his supplications the serpent appeared out of the woods and slithered meekly up to the waiting saint. Carannog then took the monster to Cadwy's residence, where the king's men attempted to put an end to it. The saint prevented them from doing so, however, and explained that the creature was an agent of Providence sent to punish the inhabitants of Carrum for their many grievous sins. He then released the snake, bidding it to go on its way and wreak no further havoc.

It is pleasant to relate that Carannog also eventually got his altar back from Arthur, who had endeavored to fashion a table out of it. All the king's efforts in this

direction were neatly thwarted, however, by the simple circumstance that the altar refused to hold any profane article set upon it. Perhaps out of feelings of guilt over his attempted sacrilege, Arthur granted all of Carrum in perpetuity to the saint, who set about founding a church there. Some time later Carannog received yet a second command to commit his altar to the waves. He of course did so, and after a time dispatched Arthur and Cadwy to search for it. They found the altar washed ashore at the mouth of the Guellit, and in recognition of this event, Arthur bestowed on Carannog all the land surrounding the area. The saint, as was his custom, endowed a monastery on the spot.

The Life of Saint Illtud and the Life of Saint Padarn present us with two startlingly inapposite views of Arthur. The first contains only a passing reference to the hero rather than the usual anecdote dealing with one of his encounters with a man of God. However brief, though, the favorable impression this notice conveys contrasts sharply with the attitudes toward Arthur expressed in the previous Lives. We are told that Illtud, having apparently felt no particular vocation in his youth, determined upon the completion of his education to embark on a military career. His decision was perhaps influenced by his cousin King Arthur, who as a renowned conqueror himself set a perfect example for all aspiring soldiers. At any rate, Illtud once paid a visit to his relative's court and was there, along with a number of other apprentice warriors, hospitably received and entertained. At the end of his stay he was accorded great military honors.

In comparison with the characterization of Arthur presented in the Life of Saint Carannog, this short passage takes on something of the quality of one of Geoffrey of Monmouth's more extravagant testimonials to the king's greatness. The favorable impression created by the piece is effectively cancelled, however, by the view expressed by the author of the Life of Saint Padarn. The relevant episode in this narrative revolves around the infamous doings of a character introduced bluntly as "Arthur the tyrant," a bully whose behavior on all occasions appears to be governed by a sort of pathological avarice. In most respects the so-called despot in fact bears an eerie resemblance to the Kay of the Middle English romances. At any rate, the same untrammelled aggressiveness and farcical inability to deal with a situation intelligently feature prominently in this portrayal of Arthur's character. One would almost get the impression that some sort of strange literary transference of identities had taken place.

The misadventures and lamentable personal shortcomings of the "tyrant" are so ludicrously exaggerated in this account that the reader is tempted to regard all the excess as a comic device. Arthur roars, stamps, and snorts his way through the story in the manner of one possessed. So wondrous is the commotion he stirs up that his approach, similar to that of a steam locomotive, can be detected long before his figure materializes over the horizon. In sum, it is difficult to regard the Life of Saint Padarn as a serious work of anti-Arthurian propaganda.<sup>3</sup>

The narrative opens with a reference to the fact that Arthur once paid a visit to the retreat of the holy man. While conversing with Padarn, the despot's attention was attracted by the magnificent robe of office his host wore. Immediately envious, he demanded that the saint surrender the garment to him. When informed that he was unworthy to don the robe of a bishop, Arthur stormed away in a fit of lunatic rage. Upon returning to his household, the despot announced his intention of laying siege to Padarn's cell as a means of appeasing his ire. Though his advisors attempted to dissuade him from committing so gross and sacrilegious a folly, Arthur turned a deaf ear to all appeals to good sense and reason. Unable to find anyone to accompany him, he set out alone to force Padarn to give up the robe he so coveted. As the tyrant roared up to the saint's retreat, however, the earth opened and swallowed him up to the chin. Engulfed in the mire, Arthur, finally comprehending the enormity of his actions, began to pray frantically for deliverance. Obligingly, the earth released him. Considerably humbled by his experience, the tyrant sought the forgiveness of Padarn and was willingly given it.

If we discount the fulminations contained in the Life of Saint Padarn as an example of inspired farce, and the Life of Saint Illtud as a fluke, we are still left with the problem of explaining just what the underlying purpose of the anti-Arthurian sentiments put forth in the Lives of Cadog and Carannog was. There must, after all, have been some solid reason for the hostility which even the mention



of the British hero's name seemed to evoke. In attempting to determine the cause of this, some note should probably be taken of the kind of sins of which Arthur generally stands accused of committing in these narratives. In one instance he attempts to force himself on a captive girl, and to compound the felony, makes an effort to solicit the help of his friends in carrying out his design. He tries to convert a miraculous altar into a table, to steal the robes of office of a bishop, and is at all times guilty of exhibiting the most flagrant disrespect towards members of the clergy. Lechery and, even more so, blasphemy and sacrilege are established as his vices. Contrast this with the point of view taken in some of the Middle English verse romances, where it is accepted that Arthur's downfall came about as the direct consequence of hubris. Blasphemy and sacrilege - not to speak of luxuria - might have occurred to a monkish writer as the ultimate transgressions a sovereign who had reached his exalted state through the grace of Providence could commit. An Arthur who attempted to profane the holy served as a much more satisfying foil for a saint than an Arthur merely guilty of nurturing an overweening pride in conquest.

This explains how such an uncharacteristic pair of vices came to be imputed to Arthur by the compilers of the saints' lives; it does not explain why the Welsh hagiographers developed such an antagonism towards him in the first place. I have referred briefly to the Scottish tradition concerning the British hero, which will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter. When compared with the

"tradition" embodied in the saints' lives, however, one thing emerges clearly. That is simply that the motives of the Scottish historians in attempting to discredit Arthur were of a much more complex origin and nature than those of the Welsh writers. So much is obvious from the manner in which the whole anti-Arthurian campaign is handled in the northern annals. With respect to the Scots, there was an element of deeply personal significance involved in their attitude toward the tradition - the sensitive issue of national pride and, more fundamental still, the issue of national survival. Arthur, it will be recalled, became a hero of the English as well as of the Welsh. On the other hand, the political and historical implications of the legends surrounding his name probably meant less than nothing to the authors of the saints' lives. Kenneth Jackson suggests that the Welsh hagiographers may have in fact dismissed all the stories which grew up around the memory of Arthur as mere trivial and somewhat heathenish vaporings, "but saw that to introduce such a hero in the stock part of the Recalcitrant King would give prestige to their own heroic saints."<sup>4</sup> To them, the importance of Arthur lay in his convenience as a target for criticism. The role he took in the saints' lives could otherwise have been as easily filled by Charlemagne, Roland, or any one of the other fabulous medieval heroes.<sup>5</sup> What was needed was a figure whose reputation was of such magnitude that any other character brought into his sphere would acquire lustre simply through proximity to the fountainhead of greatness. And it was the legendary king of Britain who

provided this symbol.

The curious decline of Arthur's reputation as a hero in the literature of England seems to have well and truly set in during the fourteenth century - ironically at the same time the best of the Middle English Arthurian verse romances were being composed. The figure whose name had for the writers of previous generations become almost synonymous with the words chivalry, courage, and majesty in fact seldom appears in anything more than a passive or cameo role in these narrative poems. It was the exploits of Arthur's knights rather than those of the king himself that seemed to fire the imaginations of the fourteenth century writers. Gawain, above all others, was to become the great hero of the romances composed during this period. His adventures took precedence over those of all the other knights of the Round Table, even including Lancelot, a figure so popular with Continental poets. The story of Lancelot and Guenevere never in fact seems to have had much of a vogue in the British Isles. Outside of the prose version given in the Morte d'Arthur of Malory it is preserved in only two instances, the first being a good poem of the late fourteenth century and the second a rather dreary Scottish romance composed about a hundred years later.<sup>6</sup> The Perceval and the Tristan legends were served even less well at the hands of the Middle English poets. Whether the material contained in these stories simply lacked appeal for contemporary taste or whether good romances concerning the exploits of the two heroes were composed and unfortunately not preserved is impossible to

say. However, it would seem that the interest in Gawain simply prevailed over all else.

The process of degeneration to which the figure of Arthur became subject was, if not set in motion, at least put into high gear in the French verse and prose romances of an earlier period. As I mentioned before, there is evidence to suggest that the roots of this decline may be traced well back into the older Welsh tradition, specifically as represented by Culhwch and Olwen. Arthur's magnificence is well-established here, but only at a remove, and he is not accorded the same sort of active role he enjoys in either the earlier version of Triodd Ynys Prydein or Preideu Annwfn. Although the king is technically the leader of the band of adventurers, and in theory ultimately responsible for the success of their endeavors, most of the credit for meeting the fantastic demands laid down by Ysbaddaden belongs rightfully to Arthur's followers. The warriors themselves are in fact depicted as being well aware of their prerogatives. Just prior to embarking on the search for Mabon son of Modron, they turn to Arthur as a group and rather peremptorily order him to return home, on the grounds that such a minor quest is beneath the dignity of a world-conqueror. Rather than taking offense at this not so thinly veiled insult, the king serenely agrees and deposes Gwrhyr to act in his stead.

The tendency on the part of the author of Culhwch and Olwen to underplay the role taken by Arthur is manifested to a much greater degree in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes (fl. c. 1160 - 1190). Compared to the parts given

his knights in these stories, the king is assigned only a minimal share in whatever action takes place. And on the rare occasions when Arthur is permitted to assume center stage, the prominence accorded him is effectively cancelled out by the fact that he generally ends up acting as a foil for Gauvain, Yvain (Owein, Ywain), or Lancelot. His principal function then as conceived by Chrétien is to serve as social arbiter of the court. Otherwise he remains essentially just a figurehead monarch, despite the trappings of majesty with which he is surrounded.

While Chrétien still grants Arthur the title of greatest of kings, the reader gets the impression that in doing so the composer is merely paying lip service to what he clearly regards as a rather worn-out catchphrase. This is true even of the Cliges,<sup>7</sup> where Arthur's reputation otherwise approaches something of a zenith. At any rate, no real conviction seems to stand behind the poet's repeated assertions of the king's prowess and magnificence. All the accolades strike a false note. Certainly the figure Arthur cuts emerges as a far from prepossessing one on several occasions. In two of Chrétien's romances the king finds himself caught in the midst of a variety of situations ranging from the ludicrous to the tragic - all of which, it should be noted, are the direct consequence of his own physical and spiritual inertia. The circumstances of le Chevalier de la Charrette,<sup>8</sup> to cite one such instance, demand that Arthur be presented in the role of a cuckold. Although the entire court here seems to be aware of the queen's infidelity, the king makes no effort whatsoever to defend his honor.

Nor does he attempt to put a stop to the meetings between Guenevere and her lover. The reasons for this complaisance are never really made clear, but at the root of the king's passivity seems to lie a curious kind of self-pitying apathy. In the Perceval,<sup>9</sup> the lassitude and indecisiveness which afflict Arthur have reached such a critical stage that he is unable to galvanize himself to avenge an injury done the queen's person. Thus the overall picture of the king afforded by these romances bears to say the very least little resemblance to his image as depicted in the writings of Geoffrey, Wace, or Layamon.

It is interesting to speculate on the circumstances which might have led to the sharp decline Arthur's repute suffered at the hands of the French poet. Loomis ascribes the lacklustre portrayal given the king in le Chevalier de la Charrette and in the Perceval to two causes, the first being the demands made by narrative technique and the second, and more important, being the pressure of tradition. "The writer of biographical romances early learns that if his hero is to occupy center stage, rivals, even though they may be greater men, must be pushed into the background...But it is hardly likely that this process would have gone to the extreme of depicting Arthur as a spiritless cuckold if another and more powerful tradition had not been operative, namely a traditional narrative pattern!"<sup>10</sup> In support of this contention Loomis cites the studies done by Schoepperle and Cross and Nitze of a motif common to Irish and Welsh literature, in which an arrogant stranger demands that the wife of a king whose court he is visiting

be surrendered to him. What gives this motif relevance with respect to Chrétien's romance is the fact that the ruler is constrained to submit to his opponent's wishes. True, the sovereign's powerlessness to act is the result of an unthinking vow he has made, but Loomis suggests that "a development of this tradition represented the king and the members of his court as not only helpless to prevent the departure of the queen but also unable to bring about her rescue."<sup>12</sup> Such is the case in three of the Tristan romances,<sup>13</sup> where King Mark grants a boon to an Irish baron without first stopping to consider the possible consequences of his generosity. The noble then asks that the queen be handed over to him, and Mark is constrained by the promise he has given not to refuse even this demand. Nor do any of the king's followers make a single effort to prevent the baron from leaving the court with Isolde in tow. The queen's rescue is ultimately effected not by her husband but through the machinations of Mark's nephew Tristan. Loomis remarks that "a contemptible role is fitting enough for Mark, and one may presume that the formula of the helpless and pusillanimous king, as thus elaborated, was first attached to him. So strong was the force of tradition that when the formula was transferred to Arthur, all his prestige as a gallant knight and unmatched conqueror did not save him from being degraded to the level of the poltroon and cuckold Mark."<sup>14</sup>

Although Loomis's interpretation does not appear to take fully into account the part the early Welsh writers - as exemplified by the author of Culhwch and Olwen - played

in determining the course which literary attitudes toward Arthur were to take, it nevertheless does serve to explain some of the inconsistencies manifest in Chrétien's treatment of the king. The role of cuckold is not, after all, intended to become the character forced to fill it. Loomis is, furthermore, at least partially justified in ascribing Arthur's demotion from conqueror to lay figure to the dictates of narrative technique. It was only possible to exalt Gawain, Lancelot, and Ywain at the expense of the prominence of a figure originally more glorious than they. This latter was of course the king, and in direct proportion to the rate at which the fame of the three knights increased so did his own repute dwindle. What hostility is evinced toward Arthur in Chrétien's narratives, then, probably springs more from expedience rather than from any more complex source. Such was not the case with certain of the Middle English and Scots romances, and almost never with the Scottish chronicles. Here, the unflattering portrayal given Arthur serves as an end in itself. As I shall try to emphasize, this is especially true with respect to the Awntyrs off Arthure and Golagros and Gawane.

There are a considerable number of Arthurian verse romances in Middle English, ranging in quality from the great to the uninspired. Syr Percyvelle of Galles<sup>15</sup> is neither, though it betrays somewhat more of an affinity with the latter description than with the former. Aesthetically speaking this poem has no great merit. The primary claim to distinction that can be made on its behalf is that the work is the only surviving verse treat-



ment of the Perceval legend in Middle English. Of interest too is the fact that the poem preserves the theme of the degeneration of Arthur from world conqueror to lay figure. It is not particularly surprising that in the course of the story the king should become a far less important character than the titular hero. What is significant is that the role accorded him is one much subordinate to that of his so-called followers as well. Gawain achieves an especially noteworthy prominence here, taking as he does a part almost as substantial as Perceval's in several of the adventures recounted. Arthur's presence in the narrative is necessary because, as was the case in the romances of Chretien, it is only he who can serve as overseer of the court. But in most other respects the king is virtually a supernumerary. Nor is his reputation as the mightiest conqueror in Christendom borne out by what little we do see of him. During one episode of the poem, for example, he is called upon to send aid to a besieged lady. This he refuses to do, on the peculiar and surely unjustifiable grounds that he has no knight worthy of the honor of acting as the woman's champion. Later on in the narrative, Arthur slips into a decline from the grief occasioned by one of the hero's numerous absences from court. So overwhelming is the anguish the king feels that he in fact takes to his bed. There he stays until roused from his inertia by a messenger who claims to have encountered Perceval in the course of his travels.

This uninspiring portrayal of the king is far from being the only eccentric characterization in the poem.

Perceval himself is one of the strangest and least initially prepossessing heroes in romance literature. In almost all the manifestations of the legend, he is depicted as the archetypal wild man of the wood, uncouth and quite barbarically violent in his ways. <sup>16</sup> The author of the Middle English poem has capitalized on this aspect of the tradition, making the young hero with all his gaucheries a figure of fun to be contrasted with the elegant and polished courtiers of Arthur's circle. The description of the boy's first encounter (or clash) with polite society and its values in fact becomes something of a tour-de-force of slapstick comedy. As the account runs, Perceval quite literally takes the court by storm. Having gained entry in this unorthodox fashion, he then manages to push his way past the ranks of servitors up to Arthur's very throne. At this point the boy - who prefaces all of his more grotesque solecisms with the bland announcement that he is merely acting on maternal counsel - demands that the king dub him a knight or be slain on the spot. Arthur, who recognizes the intruder as his longlost nephew, evinces an extraordinary tolerance of this outrageous behavior. Much to the astonishment of his courtiers, the king replies mildly that Perceval will have to prove himself worthy of being accorded such an honor. The goodhumored firmness and lack of condescension with which he treats the boy in fact constitute the most attractive aspect of Arthur's character as depicted in the romance. It is curious that from this rather good beginning his image should deteriorate so rapidly thereafter.

It is probable that the actual name Perceval (or Perlesvaus) is a corruption by the French poets of the Welsh Peredur.<sup>17</sup> In common with almost every other event of literary significance in this period, just when the transmission of the legend concerning Perceval took place has never been specified. For a long time it was accepted that the earliest surviving reference in Continental literature to the hero occurred in a romance composed toward the end of the twelfth century. Recent scholarship has, however, uncovered an allusion to him existing in a poem by Rigaut de Barbezieux, a work which as far as can be determined was written sometime prior to 1160.<sup>18</sup> But the tradition concerning Peredur had already evolved in Wales by a much earlier date. That this character attained heroic status almost as rapidly as did Arthur himself is at any rate confirmed in some of the oldest Welsh writings. There is moreover an allusion in the Gododdin to a warrior Peredur "of the shining spears," an individual who may have been one and the same with the Peredur mab Efrauc of the Arthurian cycle.<sup>19</sup> The patronymic of the latter was not, incidentally, preserved in either the English or the French treatments of the legend. Here, the character's given name is simply coupled with an allusion of one sort or another to his British heritage.

The historicity of Peredur is as much a bone of academic contention as is that of Arthur. The earliest material we have relating to him admits of a number of interpretations, and as such does not really serve to confirm or deny his existence in concrete terms. Further evidence

will have to be brought forth before this ambiguity can be satisfactorily resolved. On the basis of what little data we possess, however, some fascinating attempts have been made to sort the problem out. The Welsh romance Peredur<sup>20</sup> is consistent in maintaining a north British origin for its central character, in contrast to Chretien's version which simply refers to Perceval as being from Wales. It is established, furthermore, that the patronymic Efracw comes from Eboracum or York, cited by Nennius as Cair<sup>21</sup> Ebrauc. Rachel Bromwich suggests that the character referred to in the Gododdin may have been "the ruler of one of the small British kingdoms in Yorkshire, before Celtic rule in these parts was annihilated by the growing power of Anglian Deira."<sup>22</sup> Now, this is certainly an attractive identification, and one which if proven would establish the historicity of Peredur beyond question. But in view of the lack of other supporting documentation, such a proposal, though based on a careful consideration of the facts surrounding the case, remains speculative. And it should be kept in mind that the warrior mentioned in the Gododdin may bear no relation at all to the Peredur of the Arthurian tradition. On balance, though, this seems unlikely.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Perceval legend originated in Wales, it was the Continental composers who were responsible for molding it into the form by which it has become most familiar to present-day readers. The motif of the Grail Quest, which evolved entirely independently of any aspect of the Arthurian tradition, was at some stage grafted - probably by a French poet - onto the material concerning

Peredur. Why a conflation of these two previously unrelated themes should have proved so attractive is from our standpoint in time quite obviously impossible to say. What we are somewhat better equipped to appreciate is the fact that the appeal this combination of materials exerted must have been a phenomenal one, for in response to it were written some of the greatest works not only of medieval but of Western literature as a whole. The oldest extant Arthurian poem having as its theme the Grail Quest is the Contes del Graal (the Perceval)<sup>24</sup> of Chretien and his continuators. This work, which dates from 1190 or thereabouts, was to become the ultimate source for every one of the Grail narratives to be composed in any language thereafter.

The fourteenth-century Welsh romance Peredur borrows the basic plot and a great load of symbolic apparatus from the Perceval, though the notion of an actual quest for the Grail itself does not here provide the motivating factor behind the hero's various peregrinations. Furthermore, the characters in this particular piece bear a marked resemblance to those appearing in Chretien's poem, though they function on a somewhat different level. Peredur's uncle the Fisher King plays a major part in the Welsh romance, but the purpose for which he exists in the Continental versions of the story - to act as custodian of the Grail - is not ascribed to him in this instance. Syr Percyvelle on the other hand is basically just an adventure story, from which is absent any trace of the strain of rather hothouse mysticism that runs through Peredur. In view of this, the Middle English poem may then represent something

closer than anything else we know of to the form the Perceval legend took prior to its transmission to the Continent. In the earliest Welsh literature we have relating to the subject, the primary motive established for the hero's forays into the world at large seems to have been to seek redress for the slaying of his father.<sup>25</sup> This theme of vengeance has been preserved in Syr Percyvelle but not, strangely enough, in Peredur. In the latter it is merely noted that the hero's father Efracw was killed in battle along with his other six sons. No further reference is made to the subject thereafter, whereas in the Middle English poem, in which the senior Perceval is said to have been murdered by a traitor knight at Arthur's court, it becomes the duty of the youth to avenge his father's death. That he manages to do so in fact constitutes his principal accomplishment in the poem. Just how this particular aspect of the Perceval tradition came to be preserved in the Middle English romances and not in the Welsh is difficult to say. The introduction of the Grail motif had as one of its many effects that of obscuring the vengeance theme,<sup>26</sup> which does not at any rate loom large in the French and German versions of the story. In the Didot Perceval (c. ?1190 - c. ?1215), for example, the causes of the death of the hero's father are never even established. And Perceval's motive for setting forth in the world is merely to seek out Arthur and gain admittance to the Round Table fellowship.

One of the most enjoyable of all the Middle English romances was directly inspired by yet another poem of

Chrétien's. Yvain and Gawain is not, however, just a translation of le Chevalier au lion<sup>27</sup> but more of a free paraphrase bearing the impress of a totally different poetic personality and cultural environment. Although the work apparently belongs roughly to the same period as does Syr Percyvelle, no more specific date of composition may be assigned it than the mid-fourteenth century. The dialect in which the piece is written definitely argues a northern provenance. Nothing so certain can be said concerning the author other than that he was an accomplished storyteller and a poet of some considerable distinction. Much of the credit for his success in this particular instance of course belongs to Chrétien, for so felicitous was the subject matter the English composer chose to adapt to his own tongue that even a lesser talent could hardly have failed to do it some justice. The plot of the romance, which revolves around the events in the career of a young knight who in partnership with a friendly lion goes forth in the world to seek adventure, has as the ultimate source the Androcles story. There are in medieval literature however a number of offshoots of this tale far more analogous to the version told by Chrétien than is the classical original. Brodeur cites a parallel to the story in the Epistles of Petrus Damianus, a work written at least a century prior to the composition of le Chevalier au lion (the Yvain). Here, a lion saved from a dragon pays its debt of gratitude to its saviors by fetching them game from the forest. The De Naturis Rerum of Alexander Neckam, which dates from the closing years of the twelfth century, offers an even

closer analogue to the episode in le Chevalier au lion. In this the rescued beast attaches itself to its knight-deliverer as a sort of bodyguard-cum-companion. Jaufre de Vigois, writing in 1148, credits Golfier de Lastours with having performed a like service for a trapped lion. As was the case in the incident related by Neckam, the animal puts itself at the disposal of its savior. Brodeur shows that the stories told by Neckam and Jaufre and the episode in le Chevalier au lion were based on a common source, specifically an expanded romantic treatment of the theme of the rescued lion as first handled by Petrus Damianus. <sup>28</sup>

In addition to the great intrinsic charm the narrative possesses, Yvain and Gawain is distinguished by the fact that in it are represented a considerable number of the most important latter developments in the Arthurian tradition as a whole. Just how much the image of Kay had deteriorated by the time the fourteenth century verse narratives came to be composed is more than amply demonstrated here. No recognizable trace whatever remains of the shining hero of Pa gur..., who in the Middle English romance is portrayed in the most unattractive light conceivable. Right from the beginning of the story he proves himself to be jealous, petty, quarrelsome, rude, and, in jarring contrast to his original reputation as a phenomenally valiant warrior, something of a poltroon. His presence is just barely tolerated by his companions, who exercise superhuman restraint in not succumbing to the desire to silence him physically. While it is the unfortunate Colgrevice who serves as the butt of most of his carping here, several of the other



knights - including Ywain - find themselves periodically subjected to his blistering appraisals. So atrocious is Kay's conduct on one occasion that even the queen loses her temper and takes him sharply to task:

'What þe devyl es þe withyn,  
At þi tong may never blyn  
Pe felows so fowly to shende?  
Sertes, sir Kay, þou art unhende.  
By him, Pat for us sufferd pine,  
Syr, and þi tong war myne,  
I sold bical it tye of treson.  
And so might þou do by gude reson:  
Pi tong dose þe grete dishownre,  
And þefore es it þi traytoure.

11. 485 - 494

Although it is naturally to the characterization of Ywain that the poet devoted the greatest share of his attention, Gawain, as the title implies, comes in for a considerable share of favorable notice. The sort of prominence the hero is accorded here, while suggesting something of his popularity with the composers of Middle English romances in general, serves also to highlight yet another aspect of the tradition concerning him. Now, there is in the Welsh a prose analogue of le Chevalier au lion, the Lady of the Fountain.<sup>29</sup> This work dates from approximately one hundred and fifty years prior to the Middle English poem. Although the role Gawain fills in the Welsh version of the romance is a slightly smaller one than that to which he is assigned in Ywain and Gawain, this character is represented in virtually the same fashion. There is, furthermore, no important facet of his repute as established in either piece that does not correspond insofar as valor and courtesy are concerned with his image as depicted in le Chevalier au lion. But in addition to this, the composer of the French

romance saw fit to exploit a further dimension of Gawain's fame - a dimension which the Welsh and English storytellers neglected to incorporate into their own presentations of the hero's character. During the course of Chrétien's narrative, Gawain encounters and becomes the lover of the lady-in-waiting to Yvain's countess. This incident is, however, dropped from the Welsh and English versions of the story. Curious as this deliberate omission of any reference to a romantic interlude involving the knight may seem at first, it has in fact several parallels in the rest of fourteenth-century Arthurian literature. As these will be discussed in a later chapter, suffice it to say for the present that the occurrence of the phenomenon in Yvain and Gawain and the Lady of the Fountain represents the essential difference between the French conception of Gawain's character and that of the English and Welsh. In the hands of the Gallic poets the knight is pretty much consistently portrayed not only as an accomplished warrior and courtier but as a polished lover as well. So highly developed is his sophistication in all respects, for that matter, that he sometimes emerges as a rather sinister figure. The reputation for amatory prowess attributed to the hero by Chrétien and his contemporaries was, however, quietly ignored by most of the Welsh and Middle English poets, who much preferred to dwell on the martial aspects of the knight's fame. To some extent, this reticence with regard to the whole notion of Gawain as lover can be ascribed to the fact that the overall concept of l'amour courtois never became a very popular one with the composers

of Middle English Arthurian romance.

Purely in terms of literary merit, Ywain and Gawain has little in common with Syr Percyvelle of Galles. There is, however, one major point of similarity between the two romances, and that is in the manner in which the character of Arthur is presented. <sup>30</sup> In Ywain and Gawain, as in Syr Percyvelle, the king appears only in a peripheral role. He initiates few of the many adventures recounted here, and takes no really substantial part in any of the exploits carried off by his knights. The landscape of the romance is entirely dominated by the titular heroes; Arthur occasionally emerges from the background to discharge his obligations as arbiter of court ceremony. True, Ywain and Gawain does open with a reference to the king's many virtues and accomplishments:

Arthure, þe kyng of Yngland  
Pat wan al Wales with his hand  
And als Scotland, als sayes þe buke,  
And mani mo, if men will luke,  
Of al knightes he bare þe pryse;  
In world was none so war ne wise;  
Trew he was in alkyn thing,  
Als it byfel so swilk a kyng.

11. 7 - 14

Not a great deal of importance should be attached to the praise accorded the king here, as practically all the Middle English Arthurian poems are introduced by a similar sort of encomium. A prologue such as that just quoted was intended by the composer chiefly to engage the attention of the audience and to create a suitable backdrop for the narrative to follow. But outside of this the panegyric bore little relation to the story as a whole.

Though Arthur is far from being the central character  
of the stanzaic Morte Arthur <sup>31</sup> his presence obtrudes itself  
to a much greater extent here than in the two previous ro-  
mances. Composed by an anonymous Midlands poet, probably  
sometime during the last two decades of the fourteenth  
century, the Morte Arthur is the only surviving verse  
narrative in Middle English to have as its theme the ulti-  
mately catastrophic love between Lancelot and Guenevere.  
The work is based on one or another version - now no longer  
extant - of the OF Mort Artu, a thirteenth century work  
which constitutes roughly one-sixth of the massive compi-  
lation of Arthurian romances usually referred to as the  
Vulgate Cycle or Vulgate Launcelot. This latter piece  
apparently provided as well the ultimate source for Books  
XX and XXI of the Morte d'Arthur, which in turn show the  
influence of the English poem.

The Morte Arthur has always commanded the admiration  
of critics, not the least for the easy, flowing style in  
which it is composed. It is also a very well planned and  
executed piece from the standpoint that almost no extra-  
neous material has been allowed to creep into the narra-  
tive. The composer here makes his points neatly and eco-  
nomically, yet not so efficiently as to sacrifice all  
human warmth in the telling. And while the attitude he  
adopts toward his characters is one of compassion and un-  
derstanding, he successfully manages to avoid sentimental-  
ity in his treatment of them. The restraint he exercised  
in doing so shows up to particular advantage in his de-  
piction of the affair between Lancelot and Guenevere,

which so easily could have been turned into an occasion for a plunge into bathos. All things considered, if not a great poem, the Morte Arthur is at least a very good one, and deserves a more thorough study than any that has yet been accorded it.

Wells has remarked that Lancelot becomes the hero of this poem at the expense of Gawain.<sup>32</sup> Because the Morte Arthur was conceived as a vehicle for the French knight, it is quite in order that his presence should overshadow that of most of the other characters. But I think it an oversimplification of the case to ascribe his primacy here to the sacrifice of Gawain's repute or even prominence. Although the latter admittedly does not occupy center stage in this romance, his presence is a major influence on the course the story takes, and he in fact becomes the prime mover behind the action in the second half of the narrative. Remove the support his constant appearance provides and the plot collapses. Nor is Gawain depicted in as unfavorable a light as Wells's comment implies. Though he does betray one great flaw which will in the end prove the undoing both of himself and his fellows, his essential nobility of character is consistently maintained by the poet. Throughout the course of the narrative the composer furnishes us not only with assertions but with illustrations of Gawain's worth. So impressive and sympathetic is the characterization which results that at times even Lancelot is made to look inadequate by comparison. With respect to personal stature, then, there are really two heroes of the Morte Arthur. Contrary to Wells's observa-

tion, the second of these is Gawain. As such the importance he has in terms of the development of the story cannot be minimized. For the Morte Arthur is best considered in the light of a tragedy, and it is in the conflict that arises between Lancelot and Gawain that the most tragic element of the work lies.

So skilfully handled is the poet's delineation of Gawain's character that it probably constitutes his greatest single artistic achievement in the work as a whole. The many changes which the behavior and personality of the knight undergo as the story progresses have been carefully worked out to appear the direct consequences of the experiences he passes through. Hence, a clearly traceable pattern of psychological cause and effect is established, leaving no action unaccounted for in terms of motive. Gawain as he is portrayed in the opening section of the Morte Arthur stands second to none with respect to valor and chivalry. The quality by which his behavior is most consistently characterized at this point is, however, compassion, as illustrated by his adamant refusal to be present when Sir Agravaire and his associates break the news to Arthur of Guenevere's adultery with Lancelot, or when the sentence passed on the queen for her unwitting part in the death of a Scottish knight is to be carried out. Yet ironically it is a trait quite the reverse of compassion that will govern all of Gawain's thoughts and actions in the latter stages of the narrative. The radical alteration his character undergoes takes place just after the slaying of his brothers, the responsibility for which

to Gawain's way of thinking devolves ultimately on Lancelot. From this point onward in the story all his energies become concentrated on one end - the death of the French knight. The singlemindedness with which he pursues this goal has an implication more wide-reaching than merely the change it represents in his nature, however. Gawain as he is depicted here is a much stronger character than Arthur, who grows more and more dependent upon his chief knight for advice and support as the story progresses. Now ordinarily the king's choice of such a counselor would indicate at least good judgment on his part. But as Gawain's domination over Arthur increases, so does his obsession with vengeance. It is the king's failure to gauge the extent of this obsession that will in the end prove his costliest mistake. The irony of this is compounded by the fact that at one point Arthur is offered a chance to rectify his error in judgment - but does not take it. This occurs when he is ordered by the pope to arrange a truce with Lancelot on pain of having all England put under interdiction. Granted, Arthur does make an initial effort toward establishing peace, but through his own indecisiveness is prevented from concluding a truce by Gawain, whose hatred of the French knight has grown to almost maniacal proportions. Thus the king allows himself to be swept along by the other's desire for revenge, and out of a personal vendetta grows a war that will tear apart the kingdom.

The characterization of Arthur himself, while perhaps somewhat less elaborately worked out than that of Gawain,

has been handled with equal subtlety. In no other Middle English verse narrative but the alliterative Morte Arthure is the king depicted in such fully human terms as here. Gone is the world conqueror of the chronicles and, for that matter, the figurehead monarch of the French romances and of Ywain and Gawain and Syr Percyvelle of Galles. In their stead appears a tired, rapidly aging man beset on all sides by misfortunes the magnitude of which he can all too fully comprehend but with which he no longer possesses adequate strength to deal. It is just this conflict between the awareness of impending disaster and the inability to stave disaster off which represents Arthur's own personal tragedy. Yet in spite of the relentless appraisal to which he submits the king's manifold weaknesses, the poet is not without sympathy and even respect for his subject. Some of the most moving passages in the entire work are those which describe Arthur frantically but too late attempting to restore some vestige of order to a universe gone wild. And the desperation and loneliness of the position the king ultimately finds himself in have been equally well represented. In the latter half of the romance there is a scene in which Arthur encounters Lancelot on the battlefield and is moved by this chance confrontation to reflect on the past:

He thought on thingis that had bene ore  
The teres from his yzen Ranne;  
He Sayde "Allas!" with syghynge sore,  
"That euyr yit thys werre be-gan!"

11. 2202 - 2205

This passage, capturing as it does the soul-destroying



sense of helplessness that lies at the root of Arthur's tragedy, is justly regarded by most critics as something of a little masterpiece. It is an even greater measure of the poet's skill at characterization, however, that in the end he allows the king to assume a certain dignity as he faces the collapse of his world - a dignity that goes a long way toward making up for Arthur's past failures. Thus is a sort of balance between the negative and the positive struck in this portrayal of the king, making him ultimately a more sympathetic figure than could have been expected. Unlike the composers of the two previous romances, the poet of the Morte Arthur concentrated all his powers on developing an image of Arthur as man rather than as monarch. And in his effort to do so he met with remarkable success.

In a poem which enjoys the distinction of having what is undoubtedly the longest title of any of the Middle English verse narratives - The Avowynge of King Arther, Sir Gawan, Sir Kaye, and Sir Bawdewyn of Bretan - Arthur is restored to something of the status he enjoyed in the earlier stages of the development of the tradition. Although the Avowynge dates from approximately the same period as the Morte Arthur, no two romances could be more dissimilar than these with respect to style, content, and point of view expressed by the composer. While an interesting and entertaining poem, the Avowynge is essentially just a simple tale of knightly adventure, lacking both the intensity and the scope of the previous work. The story opens when a messenger brings word to the court of a giant boar which has been terrorizing the neighborhood

around Carlisle. Arthur, who is here presented as a vigorous and active man of indeterminate age, immediately resolves to hunt the creature down. Suiting action to intent, he then charges off in the direction of Inglewood Forest, his followers in tow. When the king and his men have tracked the boar to its lair, Arthur announces that he will assume all responsibility for the kill. Having made this declaration, he thereupon turns to his knights and commands them to take an "avowyngge" of a like rigorous nature. Gawain responds by promising to sit up all night by the Tarn Wadling and keep watch along the shores - for precisely what is never made clear, although from the importance with which the oath seems to be invested the reader is led to believe that something fairly dreadful might be expected to materialize from the lake.

The notion of a body of water as the abode of the supernatural was a recurrent one in medieval narrative. There are in fact several Arthurian romances which exploit this motif to a considerable degree. Of these, the most important for present purposes is the Awntyrs off Arthure, where the Tarn Wadling itself forms a very prominent feature of the poetic landscape. Here, a prophetic ghost emerges from the lake to confront two mortals, one of whom - as in the case of the Avowyngge - is Gawain. It is quite probable that the representation given the Tarn Wadling by the composer of the Avowyngge was inspired by the example of the Awntyrs. It is significant, too, that Gawain should be intimately connected in either case with all manifestations of the supernatural taking place in the area of the lake. The implication in the

Avowyngge, and, as we will see, in the Awntyrs seems to be that of all the valiant warriors belonging to Arthur's retinue he alone possesses the moral and spiritual stamina to withstand an otherworldly visitation. Then too there is a suggestion that the knight himself invites such occurrences - that the supernatural potential of a place such as the Tarn and its environs is only fully realized in his presence.<sup>34</sup>

The courageous example set by Gawain in vowing to abide by the shores of the lake is quickly followed by his two companions. Sir Kay swears to ride through the wood, engaging in a duel to the death anyone who dares challenge his freedom of movement. A more complex "avowyngge" is that made by Sir Bawdewyn, who takes oath never to deny any needy man sustenance, nor to cower at a threat to his life, nor "to be ielus of my wife." Needless to say, Gawain fulfills with dispatch and efficiency his vow to patrol the banks of the Tarn. So too does Baldwin achieve his goal, after having successfully come through the several tests of generosity, courage, and tolerance set for him by the king. Kay, however, not only fails to carry out his promise but becomes embroiled in a series of difficulties from which he has in the end to be extricated by Gawain. As is always the case in these romances, all Kay's problems arise from his own churlishness and obstinacy, which in the Avowyngge reach epic proportions. Gawain correspondingly emerges as a paragon of courtesy and valor.

There is only one fourteenth century verse romance of which it can be said that Arthur is undoubtedly the central

character. This is the alliterative Morte Arthure. In the Avowyngge, however, the king is accorded a position the prominence of which is at least equivalent to that of Gawain. Arthur serves not only as the focal point of the court here, but as the instigator of all the action which takes place in the narrative. Nor is his function merely to inspire others to the performance of glorious deeds; the king's share in the various exploits recounted here is a considerable one. In this latter respect there is a curious but strong resemblance to Arthur's image as it is depicted in Preideu Annwfn. Although there is otherwise no connection between the two works, they do coincide in their portrayal of the king as a man of action leading a small band of adventurers through a series of challenging tasks. The similarity between the Welsh tradition and the Middle English is reinforced by the fact that there may be present in the Avowyngge some faint reminiscence of the motif of Six go through the World, particularly as it is embodied in earlier literature. Gawain's mission at least has a flavor of the supernatural about it, and of course the boar hunt has a close analogue not only in Culhwch and Olwen but in the Mirabilia and the Gorchan of Cynfelyn as well.

Because so much has been written about the loveliest of all the Middle English verse romances, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,<sup>35</sup> it should hardly be necessary for me to make any more than a few brief remarks concerning the poem. On the basis of what scant evidence is provided by descriptions of costume and architecture, the work has been assign-

ed to the period extending from 1340 to 1370. In view of the enormous gaps in our knowledge of fourteenth-century dress and living accommodations - both of which were as subject to rapid change then as now - no less tentative dating can be established solely on such grounds. The matter of the composer's identity, which at one time occasioned one of the most furious disputes ever accorded a similar question in the history of literary scholarship, will probably never be resolved to the complete satisfaction of anyone.<sup>36</sup> It seems almost certain, however, that the poet responsible for Sir Gawain and the Green Knight also wrote Purity, Patience, and Pearl.<sup>37</sup> To this already impressive canon some critics have proposed that Saint Erkenwald be added, although some evidence exists to suggest that this particular attribution may be at best dubious. Because the dialect in which all five works were composed has been localized in the Northwest Midlands, it is generally agreed that whoever their author might have been, he was very likely a native of the area around Chester. The poems attributed to him are preserved in a unique manuscript, Cotton Nero A X.

The plot of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is constructed upon two motifs, the Beheading Game and the Temptation, both of which have several close analogues in earlier medieval literature. The oldest known antecedent of the first of these appears in the Middle Irish saga Fled Bricrend. Here, the narrative centers around the various tests of courage the hero Cuchulainn and his associates must submit to as a means of determining who amongst them shall be accorded the championship of Ulster. On two occa-

sions the contestants have to undertake to decapitate a superhuman challenger, who will reappear on the following day to return the blow given him. The first of these tests is held away from the court of the kings of Ulster, the second at it, and in either case the weapon employed is an axe. Although the contestants all ultimately summon up the courage to accept the first part of the challenge, only Cuchulainn fulfills that part of the vow which requires that he submit to a return blow. He is not injured by his opponent, and in recognition of his bravery is awarded the championship of Ulster. With some modifications, the motif reappears in the Continental Arthurian romances - the French Livre de Caradoc, a subsection of the First Continuation of Chrétien's Contes del Graal; the prose Perlesvaus; La Mule Sans Frein; and Hunbaut; and in the German Diu Crône.<sup>38</sup> In the latter three stories it is Gawain who accepts the challenge, as in the Middle English poem. Here, the Christmas feast Arthur and his followers are holding at Carlisle is interrupted by the appearance of a stranger on horseback. The interloper, whose clothing, hair, and features are of a uniform shade of green, delivers himself of some sardonic remarks concerning the bravery of the king and his followers before inviting one of them to decapitate him. Arthur is absolved of the necessity of accepting the challenge by Gawain, who, having first gained his uncle's permission to champion the honor of the court, steps forward and beheads the intruder with the stranger's own axe. He is thereafter instructed by his opponent - whose detached head has retained the power of speech - to present himself

at a certain Green Chapel exactly a year from the present day, at which time he will receive his return blow. Gawain accordingly does so, and escapes from the encounter with only a "nirt in þe nek" as a souvenir of his adventure. The wound the knight receives on this occasion serves as both punishment and reminder of his failure to live up to one minor but nonetheless extremely significant clause in his bargain with the challenger.

The motif of the Temptation, in which a beautiful woman endeavors but usually fails to seduce the hero, has analogues in Yder - where the knight expresses his low opinion of the lady and her blandishments by kicking the unfortunate creature in the stomach - in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's Lanzelet, and in the prose Lancelot del Lac. In Sir Gawain, where it is Gawain who submits to this rigorous test of continence, the lady turns out to be the wife of the Green Knight. It is in fact because of the woman's beguilements that the hero receives his nick on the neck. Gawain does not surrender to the lady's sexual overtures, but does eventually accept her offer of a magic girdle which will render him invulnerable in combat. He dons this garment and wears it to the encounter with the Green Knight without informing his opponent that he has such a talisman on his person. The Green Knight, who had in fact instructed his wife to tempt Gawain and is thus aware of the young man's deception, punishes the hero for his double failure in honesty and courage.

There have probably been more widely divergent explanations set forth of the various themes, motifs, and character

portrayals incorporated into the structure of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight than there have been propositions advanced regarding the identity of the author of the poem. Perhaps nowhere is the diversity of opinion with respect to such matters better represented than in the numerous interpretations which have been offered of the manner in which the figure of the king is depicted, particularly in the opening sections of the romance. In his discussion of the subject A. C. Spearing remarks that "there has been a persistent feeling among recent critics that Arthur and his court show up rather badly in this initial encounter with the Green Knight; but this seems to me an exaggerated view. The courtiers are perhaps less heroic than they might be in their response to the Green Knight's entry... But Arthur's response is surely impeccable, despite the various criticisms that have been made of it. Baughan asserts that he strikes great blows at the Green Knight but finds they are in vain; this, however, is based on a misunderstanding of the text. Benson argues that 'Arthur's failure is that when he does take up the challenge he does so in exactly the churlish manner the Green Knight had demanded. His shame and anger lead him to forget his famous courtesy entirely.' But Arthur's initial greeting of the stranger is highly courteous, and he answers him angrily only after receiving a number of unprovoked insults."<sup>39</sup> Spearing here takes the line that the king manifests not only impeccable manners in his dealings with the interloper, but an admirable courage as well in accepting the Green Knight's challenge.<sup>40</sup> He also singles out for comment the



poise and good humor - qualities remarkable indeed when displayed by one who has just passed through such a disturbing experience - with which Arthur attempts to comfort the queen and soothe the anxieties of the court after the stranger has made his exit.<sup>41</sup> Elise Van Der Ven-Ten Benschel similarly regarded the king's courtesy as established beyond doubt, but questioned the recklessness with which he takes up the challenge thrown down by the Green Knight.<sup>42</sup>

Both critics are undoubtedly justified in their appraisal of Arthur's behavior on the occasion of the Green Knight's entry. The situation here is, after all, a unique and difficult one, and at least at the onset the king handles it with a genial savoir-faire that is entirely commendable. But it would seem to me that Arthur, despite his courtesy and regal bearing in this instance, emerges ultimately from the romance as something of a lightweight. The essence of his character is perhaps best captured in a brief passage occurring near the beginning of the poem:

He watz so joly of his joyfnes, and  
sumquat childgered:  
His life liked hym lyzt, he louied  
þe lesse  
Auper to long lye or to long sitte,  
So bisied him his zonge blod and  
his brayn wilde.

11. 86 - 89

This initial impression of carefree youthful high spirits is reconfirmed by other references to Arthur's behavior at the Christmas feast; he prances about ceaselessly before the high table, demanding to hear "of sum auenturus þyng" before settling down to eat. And although his frenetic gaiety here has a certain appeal, just enough emphasis is

placed on the juvenile aspect of the king's conduct to enable the reader to detect in the poet's description of his antics a note of something close to satire. Certainly Arthur's boyish cavortings provide an absurd contrast to the commanding presence of the Green Knight, whose appearance abruptly cancels all merriment. It is furthermore made quite clear from the intruder's attitude in what low esteem he holds everyone at the court except perhaps Gawain. At any rate, he certainly takes little trouble to conceal his contempt for Arthur. And while the slurs the Green Knight casts on the king's reputation are deliberately exaggerated, the behavior of Arthur himself does not go a long way toward contradicting such statements. Contrary to what Spearing and Ven-Ten Bensel maintain, the king never really accepts the challenge offered by the stranger, despite the fact that he makes a convincing pretense of doing so by picking up the axe and swinging it back and forth (ll. 321 - 331). But what is perhaps most telling is the fact that Arthur requires very little persuasion to allow Gawain to assume the task of defending both his honor and that of the court - a responsibility which in all fairness should be discharged by the king himself. In sum, then, the portrait of Arthur afforded in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight does not differ radically from that given in either Ywain and Gawain or in Syr Percyvelle of Galles, even though it is conceived and developed with far more art and subtlety. The subject of this portrait is gracious, poised, kindly, hospitable, even majestic, but for all that still a roi fainéant.

Whatever else Arthur becomes in the course of the alliterative Morte Arthure,<sup>43</sup> it is certainly not a roi faineant. The entire landscape of the poem - and it is a large one - is dominated by the figure of the king. It is his poem in a way that none of the other romances are. This reshuffling of priorities has had certain important consequences. While no one would dispute that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is the finest of the Middle English Arthurian verse narratives, not all critics would agree with the proposition that the Morte Arthure runs a very close second. Yet to my mind at least, more than sufficient justification exists for regarding the latter as one of the great achievements of Middle English literature. And it is in the characterization of Arthur himself that much of this greatness lies.

The whole question of merit aside, the Morte Arthure has always been a controversial work. Just when and by whom the poem was composed have never been established, although certainly not for want of some extraordinarily determined scholarly effort in that direction. As was the case with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the question of authorship in this instance gave rise to a debate the reverberations of which have not died down even to the present day. George Neilson's attempts to attribute the piece to a Scottish composer have passed into legend, as have Israel Gollancz's efforts to credit it to one "Hugh le bukberc," an individual whose chief connection with the poets and poetry of the alliterative school appears to have been that he was a porter in a Cambridge University

library sometime during the same century in which the Morte Arthure was written. That this amazing hypothesis should have failed to generate much excitement or even interest in scholarly circles is hardly surprising in view of the fact that Gollancz never managed to produce any further evidence to substantiate it. Contrast this with the elaborate case George Neilson built up in support of the identification of the author of the Morte Arthure with one Hugh Eglinton, a Scottish knight, landholder, and diplomatic jack-of-all-trades who succeeded in making himself so useful about the court of Robert II that he eventually married into the royal family.<sup>44</sup> And while it is difficult to imagine any less likely contender for the honor of being recognized as the composer of one of the truly great Arthurian verse sagas than Gollancz's Cantabridgian "bukbere," the same in all fairness cannot be said of the candidate backed by Neilson.

Shaky as it is in a number of respects, the claim made on Eglinton's behalf has yet to be entirely disproved. As anyone familiar with scholarship relating to alliterative poetry is aware, there have been since the late nineteenth century numerous attempts made to invalidate once and for all Neilson's proposed identification. The whole campaign against the attribution of the Morte Arthure to a Scottish composer found its most persuasive exponent in Henry Noble MacCracken, who in 1910 set his views on the Eglinton question before the academic world.<sup>45</sup> In this piece MacCracken summarily dismissed not only any notion of a Caledonian provenance for the alliterative poem but as well all

the years of research during which Neilson had painstakingly collected the vast amount of data relating to life in fourteenth century Scotland necessary to support his case in Eglinton's favor. So lucidly and wittily articulated are MacCracken's opinions in this article that it is possible to lose sight of the very significant fact - as most readers apparently did - that their author did not in the end come up with any more viable solution to the problem of the authorship of the Morte Arthure than the one he set out to demolish. Nevertheless, MacCracken's conclusions have been largely accepted by succeeding generations of critics as the last word on the subject, much, it need hardly be added, to the detriment of Neilson's repute. This failure to appreciate the genuine contribution made by the latter to medieval studies has always struck me as more than unjust. However extravagant and misguided some of Neilson's statements may have been - and he did on more than one occasion demonstrate an unfortunate tendency to draw conclusions on the basis of insufficient (or even non-existent) evidence - we are indebted to him for having shed so much light on a very important period in the history of Anglo-Scottish cultural relations. It is also slightly ironic that MacCracken, whose own valiant efforts to attribute what seems like virtually every anonymous fifteenth century lyric to John Lydgate have made his name a byword to some bibliographers, should have taken it upon himself to criticize a fellow scholar for a weakness he himself betrayed in so great a measure.

All this controversy over authorship and provenance

only serves to indicate what a remarkably compelling work the alliterative Morte Arthure really is. John Gardner has likened the poem to a medieval warhorse: "it is slow and somewhat clumsy, sometimes inelegant, but large and powerful; and like the warhorse it holds with absolute firmness to its course."<sup>46</sup> While I would question this assessment in certain respects - the Morte Arthure has for instance always struck me as a remarkably fast-paced narrative - I am in complete agreement with Gardner's estimation of the power of the work. From the standpoint of dramatic intensity and impact, the poem is unsurpassed by any other Arthurian verse narrative in Middle English. The sequence of events here is so ordered as to make the tragic outcome of the story - the death of the hero and the collapse of his empire - completely inevitable. As Gardner points out, it is just this sense of moving inexorably toward a fore-ordained conclusion that gives the narrative the great power it possesses.

Like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Morte Arthure opens with a description of a Christmastide revel Arthur and his followers are holding at the court in Carlisle. In this instance, however, the celebrations are interrupted not by the appearance of a lone challenger on horseback but by the arrival of a party of emissaries from the Roman emperor Lucius, who have come on the instructions of their overlord to extort tribute from the Britons. The Arthur who rises to meet this demand is, moreover, no "sumquat childgered" boy-king but the very essence of majesty. Surrounded by all the trappings of a prosperity we are given no reason at this

junction to doubt that he eminently deserves, the king projects an image of imposing grandeur. Arthur's anger at the message delivered so arrogantly by Lucius's representatives is harsh, but justifiably so in view of the fact that he is reacting to an immediate threat to the continued livelihood of both himself and his subjects. Unlike his knights, however, who show overt signs of readiness to attack the interlopers then and there, Arthur remains well in control of his reactions. So complete is his mastery of the situation that he can even invite the emissaries to join himself and the members of his court in their celebrations. There is no need for him to pause to regain composure, for despite the wrath he evinces, he has never once lost his dignity. Robert Lumsdanský suggests that "such control and magnanimity are of course in accord with the exercise of Fortitude by the ruler experiencing prosperity."<sup>47</sup> It would seem that Arthur's courtesy here is intended to emphasize through contrast the great disparity in terms of personal stature existing between himself and the emissaries, who after even a brief exposure to the king's righteous indignation fall to their knees and grovel before him.

Though much stress is laid on the awe-inspiring grandeur of his presence, it is the flexibility of Arthur's nature which emerges as his most striking characteristic in the opening sections of the poem. The extraordinary tolerance he evinces toward the emissaries manifests itself to a much greater degree in the king's dealings with his own subjects. For all his regal omnipotence, Arthur is no despot. Nowhere is the sense of the democracy and fellowship

of the Round Table better communicated than in the scene in which the king asks his knights to counsel him on the proper course to take in dealing with the Roman emperor. It is here also that Arthur is portrayed to greatest advantage both as man and as ruler. The cool wisdom with which he goes about seeking the advice of those who will be most intimately involved in the outcome of what is being decided at the war conference is offset by the eagerness with which the king receives the suggestions of his men. Thus the poet achieves a sort of ideal compromise between strength and flexibility in his interpretation of Arthur's character at this point. But because the balance of these two complementary virtues is so perfectly worked out here, the reader immediately senses that the equilibrium will be severely disturbed before too long. And indeed the tragedy of the poem lies in the manner in which this expectation is fulfilled.

The first faint cracks in the Arthurian image appear after the decision has been reached to go to war against the Romans. It is at this point in the narrative that the king makes the error in judgment that will ultimately cost him not only his throne but his life, and catapult the whole country into disaster. Despite the fact that Mordred virtually begs to be allowed to join the army, Arthur overrides his nephew's pleas and orders him to remain in Britain as regent while he himself is away leading the troops. The haste with which he arrives at this decision, and the obstinacy with which he holds to it once it has been made, contrast sharply with his behavior earlier at the war



council. Although Arthur's manner remains pleasant enough throughout the brief interview with Mordred, it is possible to detect in his attitude toward his nephew an impatience that borders on outright irritation. The king has resolved the matter to his own personal satisfaction, and will brook no further discussion of the issue, as his final words to his unwilling successor make clear:

"ffor the sybredyne of me, fore-sake  
noghte this offyce,  
That thow ne wyrke my wille, thow watte  
whatte it menes."

ll. 691 -692

Arthur's disinclination to make any concession to Mordred in this instance has the net effect of casting a shadow over his previous words and actions. Up until this point, the king's determination to put a stop to the aggressions of the Roman emperor could be viewed as wholly admirable. But Arthur's summary dismissal of Mordred's petition seems to anticipate a time when the laudable determination with which he goes about achieving his stated goals will degenerate to an obsession with personal gratification and vengeance.

Yet another unexpected aspect of the king's personality is revealed in the course of a scene which occurs just prior to the departure of the British fleet for the Continent. Caught up in the midst of all the preparations for embarkation, Arthur nevertheless abandons his activities for a while in order to take a special leave of Guenevere. Previous to this the king has only appeared in his public role as sovereign and warrior. It is during this interlude,

however, that we see him in his private capacity as husband and as lover, and the contrast between the two images becomes an exceptionally moving one. Arthur betrays a very human weakness when he pleads with the queen not to mourn his departure so greatly, for as he confides to her, "thy wonrydez and thy wepynge woundez myn herte." Stoically he denies himself the luxury of indulging in a similar grief at their parting, but the unhappiness he feels is manifest in every speech and gesture. The sorrow he holds so rigidly in check at the moment, however, will only serve to compound the tragedy of Guenevere's subsequent betrayal. It is as if the queen, like Mordred, has a premonition of impending disaster - a sensation which she is moreover powerless to communicate to her husband. Nor can she prevent this disaster from taking place, for the movement toward it has already been initiated by Arthur himself. And so engrossed is the king in controlling his own private sorrow that he remains completely impervious to the ominous undertones of his exchange with Guenevere. "Ne grucche noghte my ganggyng," he instructs the queen, in an effort to be cheerful and reassuring, "It sall to gude turn." Only by the end of the poem will the full implications of the irony of this line have been realized.

The doubts concerning Arthur's true motives that were raised by his cavalier treatment of Mordred are for the time being laid to rest, both by the king's behavior in the farewell scene and by his response to a situation which arises just after the fleet puts in at Barflete. Now that he has hinted at the imperfections existing in his

hero's character, the poet seems eager to revert to his former stance in regard to the king. In the battle with the giant of the mount Saint Michael, Arthur once again emerges as "champion of Christianity, epic hero and redeemer of his people, defender of ladies in distress, and generous monarch."<sup>48</sup> Upon arriving at the French port, the king is informed by a messenger that the "grett geaunte of geen" who has been terrorizing the countryside for seven years has just carried off the duchess of Brittany. Nor has this been his only atrocity; the monster has on occasion abducted small children from their parents and carried them off to be devoured in his mountaintop lair. Arthur's first reaction to this news is one of anguished grief. The very thought of the tragedy in fact overwhelms him, and he rushes off to his tent to mourn in seclusion. This breakdown is, however, only a temporary one. With a monumental effort of will, Arthur pulls himself together and calls for Kay and Bedevere.

The responsibility Arthur feels for the welfare of the Norman people is a doubly pressing one, and the king channels all his energies toward avenging the multitude of wrongs done his subjects. In doing so he becomes the savior-figure of Finlayson's description (see n. 48 above). So seriously does Arthur take his personal commitment to the quest for vengeance that he even prevents Kay and Bedevere from accompanying him to the giant's lair, though the two knights attempt to persuade their leader of the folly of undertaking so dangerous a mission on his own. The king's refusal to accept the assistance of either of his men is the corollary of his belief that as the person upon whom the final res-

possibility for the welfare of the Normans devolves he must act alone.

Throughout this episode the poet makes constant reference to Arthur's most outstanding virtues and attributes, perhaps in order to emphasize the fiendish nature of the opponent he is up against. "The elaborate description of the giant," remarks Finlayson, "is intended to bring home to the audience the magnitude of Arthur's task, and correspondingly, to enhance his final achievement by making the encounter more than simply an 'aventure,' elevating it to a universal struggle against evil."<sup>49</sup> Arthur himself is aware of the profound moral implications behind his task. And it is not only the desire for vengeance which motivates his titanic struggle against the giant. The poet reiterates several times that the king's heart is torn with pity for the victims of the monster's bloodlust, so much so that at one point he breaks down and weeps. The deep compassion Arthur manifests when confronted by the spectacle of human misery contrasts sharply with the exaltation he will give open expression to after the destruction of Tuscany. But for the moment, the king more than sufficiently fulfills all the responsibilities incumbent on one who presents himself as a defender of the weak and suffering.

As we would expect, Arthur emerges victorious from the encounter with the giant. He modestly refuses to take credit for having vanquished his opponent, for to brag openly about his prowess would betray not only an unbecoming vanity but a lack of gratitude toward the Deity to whom he owes his success. Instead, the king gives fervent thanks to

God, and explains to his people that the outcome of his quest "was never manns dede, bot myghte of Hym selfen/ Or myracle of Hys modyre, that mylde es till alle!" Generously, he invites his knights to divide the giant's treasure amongst themselves, commanding that the surplus of the horde be doled out to the clergy and the people to compensate them for their sufferings at the monster's hands. He then determines to express his thanks to God in the traditional way of warriors by building a church on the site of the victory. He is well aware of his duty as a Christian, and discharges it in good measure.

Arthur's humility before God lasts through the battle with the Romans, for he continues to attribute his military success not to his own prowess but to the intercession of Providence. As Finlayson says, "This piety is more pronounced than in any romance and is clearly a deliberate part of the poetic pattern, not just a conventional platitude. Here it is intended to mark Arthur's victories as righteous ones." <sup>50</sup> At any rate, the king's martial spirit remains tempered by this Christian humility throughout the battle of Sessoyne. Nor has he yet lost all of the compassion he demonstrated on the occasion when he championed the inhabitants of Normandy. As terribly grieved by Kay's death at Sessoyne as he was by the death of other comrades-in-arms during the previous encounters, Arthur determines to avenge his fallen knight by personally challenging the enemy troops. Yet his actions cannot be described as those of a wanton butcher. The anger the king feels in this instance is a justifiable response to an extenuating circum-

stance, as is his desire for redress.

That Arthur is at this stage still capable of human feeling with respect to the defeated is evident from the manner in which he goes about ordering the disposal of the enemy corpses on the battlefield. With proper respect for the rank of the fallen, he has the bodies of "the Sowdane of Surry and certayne kynges" embalmed and placed reverently in linen shrouds to protect them from the fierce heat of the journey back to Rome. Furthermore, the attitude the king adopts in dealing with the two senators who come forward to plead for their lives is more gracious and merciful than might be expected of one who has just suffered through an encounter with the forces these senators represent the loss of some of his closest companions. Whatever else Arthur may or may not be in this instance, he is certainly not vindictive in his approach to his former opponents. The experience of conquest has yet to pervert either his sense of justice or his Christian compassion. Unfortunately, this state of affairs will not long continue.

It is only after the siege of Metz and the final battle with the Romans that the darker side of Arthur's nature, the existence of which was only suggested earlier on in the poem, is fully revealed. The king loses his humility, and in doing so loses as well his justification for waging war. Yet in direct proportion to the rate at which his sense of obligation to the Deity and his humanitarian instincts wane, so waxes his obsession with conquest. The defender of the faith, the chivalrous knight, and the supreme exponent of the Christian ideal becomes, ironically, the agent of

destruction and chaos. Matthews writes that Arthur "sees himself as the new Alexander, the overling of everything on earth."<sup>51</sup> His mission remains ostensibly dedicated to Christ, but will be accomplished through remarkably un-Christian means.

Arthur literally hecks his way through Tuscany to Viterbo. It is no coincidence that his behavior in this sequence bears a distinct resemblance to that of the pagans and vandals the king had in the not too distant past dedicated his career to exterminating. It is now he rather than his enemies who displays a wanton disregard for the preservation of life and property. The mercy with which the king had previously dealt with the conquered is now totally in abeyance, for, as the poet tells us, his actions make

...wedewes fulle wlonke, wrotherayle  
synges  
Ofte wery and wepe, and wryngene theire  
handis

11. 3154 - 3155

Arthur's conduct at the banquet in Viterbo further highlights the radical shift in his personality. He brags openly and callously of the lands he intends to put under his dominion, and even goes so far as to claim that his aggressions will be committed for the sake of Christ. The irony of this statement is of course lost on him, for he has been blinded by hubris to the extent of his failure to live up to the sacred trust invested in all monarchs. His pride will have terrible consequences.

The fact that he has a dream predicting his own downfall would seem to indicate that in his heart Arthur is

still capable of feeling some compunction for his excesses. Struck perhaps by a momentary awareness of his vulnerability, he anxiously seeks out a philosopher to read the vision for him. As we would expect, the counselor not only confirms the king's suspicions of impending doom but advises his overlord as well to begin now to make restitution for the many "rewthe werkes" he has committed. Arthur's response to the explanation of the dream afforded him by the philosopher is a curiously subdued one. Matthews remarks that he "is certainly not made contrite by the interpreter's spiritual advice...he stalks out of the camp in typically angry mood."<sup>52</sup> In my opinion, however, there seems to be no particular justification for this criticism of the king's behavior. All Arthur in fact does after being bidden by the philosopher to repent his "vnreasonable dedis" is arise from his throne, don his robes, and walk off in preoccupied silence. And the king certainly seems to be stricken with something very much like regret as he wanders through the meadow of Viterbo, "with breth at his herte." It would seem from his obvious discomfiture here that Arthur is beginning to find some of the trappings of the role of Alexander a bit too confining even for his liking.

The first glimmerings of what Matthews terms the penitential theme<sup>53</sup> of the poem appear in this sequence, though they quickly dissipate when Sir Cradok interrupts the king's reverie with the news of Mordred's betrayal. Once again, the king's resolve hardens, and he grimly vows to destroy his nephew for this treachery. His momentary uneasiness concerning his role as a conqueror vanishes as he returns to camp



to summon his men. "I am with tresone be-trayed for alle my trewe dedis!" he cries, once again unaware of the clanging irony behind his words. It is interesting too that Arthur should choose to blame Mordred totally for this latest disaster, in view of the fact that he himself was responsible for appointing his nephew viceroy. And it is only the king who can be blamed for not having paid heed to the wider implications of Mordred's reluctance to assume the regency. But Arthur is incapable for the present of discerning either the inconsistency of his accusations or the fact that a good deal of the responsibility for the whole situation rests on his own shoulders.

Arthur's choice of a battle standard for his fleet hardly accords with his expressed intention to annihilate the "blodhondes" who have usurped his throne. The banner that is run up over the flagship is emblazoned with a picture of the "chalke-white mayden...that chefe es of hevynne," who in the king's own words is the source of all mercy. But nowhere can it be said that Arthur's plans for his opponents include mercy - it is on the contrary his desire to inflict on Mordred and Mordred's supporters all the suffering one man alone is capable of bringing down on the heads of others. That the king still believes himself to be operating under the guidance and approval of Providence suggests something of the extent to which his obsession with retribution has cancelled out reason and perspective. In view of this, it is hardly surprising to find that all of Arthur's actions up until the very moment of his death should be governed by just this lust for total vengeance.

The battle which follows the landing in Britain is a ferocious one, so much so that even the king's self-righteous assurance of victory begins to waver. It is Gawain's death at the hands of Mordred, however, that pushes Arthur toward the realization of his imminent downfall. The storm of grief which overtakes the king on this occasion borders on madness, and he is saved from total collapse only by the rough words of Ywain and the other lords. The fact that Arthur does not perceive the disrespect and even contempt his comrades-in-arms manifest toward him furnishes a good indication of the speed at which his strength and resolve have broken down. At the zenith of his career, the king would never have countenanced such behavior from his knights - nor would anything in his own personal conduct have called such a response forth. "I am utterly undone in my own landes," Arthur cries, shaken by a premonition of the disaster that will shortly visit him.

His savage hatred of Mordred is increased by Gawain's death, and fortified by a kind of grim hysteria he renews his efforts to track down his traitorous nephew. Matthews opines that although Arthur is in some respects vastly altered by the experiences he has passed through, he has not yet been brought by them to an awareness of the many grievous sins he has committed.<sup>54</sup> Despite the king's failure to realize the magnitude of his own culpability, however, the reader is compelled to pity him. The Arthur who rides weeping to Dorset bears little resemblance to the self-confident victor of the Roman wars. His grief here weakens him, but it also has the effect of restoring him

to a more sympathetic position. The beautiful line with which Arthur eulogizes Gawain - "He es sakles supprysede for syn of myn one!" - in a strange way applies more fittingly to the speaker himself. It is indeed a sorrow and a tragedy to be surprised by a sin of one's own commission.

The full impact of his wife's and his nephew's treachery strikes Arthur most heavily when he discovers that Guenevere has given Mordred the king's sword Clarent. This far more so than her adultery constitutes the queen's ultimate betrayal of her husband. The weapon is the symbol of Arthur's royal authority, knightly prowess, and manhood, and the sight of it in his enemy's hand brings home to the king the full extent of his downfall. His ruin is nearly complete. Arthur succeeds in killing Mordred, but even this act does not wipe out the stain of Guenevere's last and worst infidelity. Nor is the failure mitigated by the fact that the king receives his own death-wound from a stroke of Clarent's blade. Surrounded by destruction, he is forced to acknowledge the fact of his own rapidly approaching dissolution. When he discovers the bodies of Ywain, Cador, Cliges, and Lionel, he "stotays for made, and all his strenghe faylez." Falling to his knees, he admits defeat.

On his deathbed, Arthur calls for a confessor and expresses forgiveness toward his enemies. But the mercy he feels in the last moments of life is not all-encompassing, for the king gives an order that Mordred's children be drowned, to stamp out the evil in their heredity. Evidently he experiences no remorse at causing the deaths of still more innocents, although Arthur of course does not regard

any spawn of his nephew as such. Nor does he realize the underlying reason for his downfall. He blames himself for the deaths of his knights, but feels no guilt either for the bloodshed of Tuscany or for his sinful pride, and it is for these that he must pay with his own life. The king's awareness of his weaknesses both as man and as monarch is incomplete, and he dies without ever attaining true self-knowledge. In a way, this final failure perhaps represents Arthur's greatest tragedy. Unlike Oedipus, he is spared by his spiritual blindness the realization of the extent of his sins, and so dies in the state of peace engendered by ignorance. "Thus endys kyng Arthure," the poet remarks at the conclusion of his story, and in the sad simplicity of his last farewell to a once-great man there is more eloquence than any longer eulogy could embody.

Mordred, the archvillain of medieval literature, has been depicted by the composer of the Morte Arthure in a much more compassionate light than we would ordinarily have expected. The malevolent plotter of the chronicles here emerges as a complex and tortured personality whose motives and actions, if they cannot be condoned, can at least be better understood. In the hands of the alliterative poet, Mordred becomes a weak man virtually forced by a combination of inauspicious circumstances and the flaws in his own character into a pattern of treachery and betrayal. Then, too, fate has a hand in determining the course his actions will take. As the author makes clear, it is Mordred's destiny to act not only as the catalyst of the tragedy which results in Arthur's fall, but to serve as well as the

agent through which Providence will mete out retribution to the king for his sins of pride and aggression.

One of the great ironies of the poem is that it is Arthur himself who invests Mordred with the power to become his nemesis. Mordred does not, after all, want the regency of his uncle's vast domain. When first offered the honor he responds with a marked lack of enthusiasm, citing as an excuse for his reluctance to assume the duties of a sovereign his total ineptitude for such a demanding job. What Mordred really wants to do is join the army and fight in the defense of Britain, a desire which perhaps arises out of some vague awareness that he will be safer in battle than if left to fight off the many temptations of life at home. As Matthews puts it, "he has a honest sense of his own inadequacy."<sup>55</sup> An inadequacy which, it may be added, only Mordred himself appears to be conscious of at this point. At any rate, Arthur, turning a deaf ear to the real note of urgency in his nephew's speech of refusal, virtually forces him to accept the regency. And so Mordred, lacking the strength of character to withstand further pressure, submits himself to his uncle's will. Thus is a misfit transformed into a criminal by the poor judgment of his king.

It has always struck me as further evidence of the poet's subtlety that the villain of the piece should demonstrate more knowledge of his personal failings than should the hero, Arthur. Mordred's peculiarly helpless brand of self-awareness does not, however, prevent him from committing any of the atrocities fate has determined he will perpetrate. What it does do is make the realization of his

guilt - when this realization finally occurs - all the more difficult to bear. From this standpoint, his personal tragedy is far greater than that of Arthur, who dies without attaining a similar self-awareness. Although cognizant of his role as a pawn of destiny, Mordred cannot shake off the heavy sense of responsibility he feels for the disasters which have befallen Britain. Faced with the destruction around him, "he remyd and repent hym of all his rewth werkes" - that very gesture Arthur is advised by his philosopher to make but never does. Mordred's anguish is most vividly expressed in the speech he makes after the death of Gawain, a lament rivalling that of the king for eulogistic splendor:

'He was makeles one molde, mane, be my  
    trowhe;  
This was Sir Gawayne the gude, the gladdeste  
    of othire,  
And the gracioseste gome, that undire God  
    lyffede,  
Mane hardyeste of hande, happyeste in armes  
And the hendeste in hewle, undire heven  
    riche;  
The lordlieste of ledynge, qwhylles he  
    lyffe myghte  
For he was lyone allosede in londes inewe:  
Had thow knawen hyn, sir kyng, in kythe  
    there he lengede,  
His konyng, his knyghthode, his kyndely  
    werkes,  
His doying, his doughtynesse, his dedis of  
    armes,  
Thow wold hafe dole for his dede the days  
    of thy lyfe.'

ll. 3875 - 3885

As the agent directly responsible for Gawain's death, Mordred is aware not only of guilt and sorrow, but of a crushing sense of having destroyed a symbol of goodness and strength. He cannot rejoice in the fall of his opponent, nor take pleasure in his victory. Stricken dumb, the great

villain can only turn away weeping from the scene of his victory and curse both Fortune and himself.

The tremendous power with which the characterizations in the Morte Arthure have been realized is probably the poem's most striking feature. The same sort of subtlety evinced in the conception of Gawain as flawed hero in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is at work here in the blurring of the distinction between hero and villain. Mordred instigates the tragedy to which Arthur falls victim, yet the reverse is equally true. This psychological realism, impressive enough in itself, forms however just part of a larger and more ambitious literary design. The Morte Arthure is a deeply philosophical poem, exploring as it does the nature of kingship, the justification of warfare, and the idea of predestination as opposed to free will. It is the product of a devoutly religious mind, but the faith which runs through the work is not one of blind acceptance. Divine motivation is as subject to as much questioning as is human. And yet for all the seriousness of the themes which the Morte Arthure embodies, the poem remains a fast-moving and well-told story of adventure. All in all, it represents a unique achievement.

The Morte Arthure, then, stands out as one of a number of truly influential works composed during the English Middle Ages. Distinct traces of this influence show up in specimens of the most important literature of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The most famous Arthurian romance of all, to cite one such instance, is heavily indebted to the alliterative work. For it has long been

recognized that had he not had access to the Morte Arthure, Malory would have been taxed to find a source as comprehensive for Book V of the Morte d'Arthur.<sup>56</sup> Nor was the influence the alliterative poem exerted felt only by the composers of Middle English Arthurian romance. The two national epics of Scotland, the Bruce<sup>57</sup> of Barbour and the Wallace<sup>58</sup> attributed to Hary or Henry the Minstrel, provide ample proof that their respective authors were not only familiar with the work but keenly appreciative of its artistry and power. In the case of the Wallace, the poet's admiration for his predecessor's accomplishment took what is the most expedient but also perhaps the most sincere form of expression. That which he liked best about the Morte Arthure, Hary in his forthright fashion simply lifted and transferred into the framework of his own narrative. Thus, for instance, does Arthur's lament for Gawain appear in the Scottish work as Wallace's lament for Graham. It is no less moving here than in its original context.

There are yet two other works which reflect to a very considerable degree the influence of the Morte Arthure. Although much less widely read than the Morte d'Arthur, these pieces nevertheless represent an extremely important phase in the latter development of the Arthurian tradition. The poems to which I am referring are, of course, the Awntyrs off Arthure and Golagros and Gawane. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the two enjoy as well a unique status with regard to medieval literature in general. In the first place, they enlarge in very much the same way on the themes embodied in the Morte Arthure. The number of stylistic fea-



tures the poems have in common, too, is unusually high. Both are products of the alliterative school, both have a northern provenance, and both are written in the same thirteen line stanza form. So close in so many important respects is the resemblance between these pieces that if it were not for the fact that the Awntyrs appears to date from the end of the fourteenth century and Golagros and Gawane from the end of the fifteenth, there would be reasonable grounds for supposing that the two had come from the hand of the same composer. On balance, there seem to be no other two Arthurian verse romances of which precisely the same kind of claim can be made. And if for no other reason, both the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane deserve to be accorded a more intensive study - and, for that matter, a wider audience - than any they have yet been given.

For the descriptioun of Heroique actis,  
Martiall and knightly faittis of armes,  
vse this kynde of verse following...

The Essayes of a Prentise  
James VI

Chapter III  
The Arthurian Tradition and Alliterative  
Poetry

What is chiefly remarkable about the proliferation of Arthurian romance in later Middle English is not the speed with which this event took place, but rather the circumstances in which it was fostered. For all the impact which the phenomenon had on contemporary culture, it seems from at least a geographic standpoint to have been a fairly limited one. Justification for this statement rests on the simple fact that of all the Arthurian romances which survive from the fourteenth century, only one-sixth are of a southern or southeastern English provenance. It is of course possible that a more extensive body of such narrative did at one time exist. But if so, it is surely remarkable that the larger share of this material should have vanished so completely. So popular were the Arthurian romances both as a form of literary expression and as entertainment that it is difficult to imagine the greater number of them as having failed to achieve some kind of preservation. In view of this, I think it safe to assume, then, that those narratives which have survived to the present day represent a very substantial proportion of those actually composed.<sup>1</sup>

Of the group of fourteenth-century Arthurian verse romances which have come down to us, just three can be definitely ascribed to a southern English composer. One of these, the Arthur,<sup>2</sup> is in any case not a romance at all but an English metrical interpolation in a Latin chronicle written sometime after 1350. Nor is this work even a particularly distinguished representative of its genre, being nothing more than a mechanical recital of the major events in the hero's career. A fair idea of the limitations of the

piece can be gathered from the fact that the composer undertook to accomplish in 642 lines the same task to which his predecessor Laȝamon devoted over 30,000. The two remaining southern poems which can legitimately be described as romances, Libiaus Desconus and Leunfel Miles,<sup>3</sup> do not deal with material central to the Arthurian legend. And if it is true that either was composed by the same author, Thomas Chestre of Kent,<sup>4</sup> the isolation of both from the mainstream of the insular tradition becomes yet more marked. The twelve other Arthurian romances which survive from the fourteenth century appear to have been composed in locales quite removed from the areas in which the Arthur and the poems attributed to Chestre were written. It is generally agreed that Ywain and Gawain, Syr Percyvelle of Galles, and Sir Tristrem<sup>5</sup> have a northern provenance. The stanzaic Mort Arthur and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight are most frequently assigned to the Northwest Midlands. So too is the alliterative Morte Arthure, though a Northeast Midlands<sup>6</sup> stage of transmission has been postulated for this work. The Avowyngge of Arther and the Awntyrs off Arthure almost certainly had a northwest provenance. Sir Degrevant, Joseph of Arimathie, Sir Gewene and the Carle of Carelyle and The Turke and Gowin<sup>7</sup> are at least North Midland compositions. The third-named has at any rate explicit Cumberland associations, and the geography of the fourth, while less sharply defined, nevertheless bears a marked resemblance to the same northern area.

Seven of the fifteenth century and later English Arthurian romances seem to have had a more southerly pro-

venance. With the exception of Carle off Carlile, these have been commonly attributed to South or East Midlands composers. Such a contingency does not, however, necessarily militate against the hypothesis that the Arthurian tradition itself was basically the preserve of the northern and western poets. The Weddyng of Syr Gawayne and Dame Ragnelle and The Marriage of Sir Gawsin<sup>9</sup> are given a Carlisle/Inglewood Forest setting, and the latter is in fact one of the Tarn Wadling-based poems. The action in The Grene Knight,<sup>10</sup> a work usually assigned to the South Midlands, takes place in the west country. This last-named poem is, as the title implies, a reworking of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. There seems no reason to doubt that the process by which the story told in one fourteenth-century Northwest Midlands romance became the basis of the plot of a later South Midlands romance could have been repeated in other cases. Thus it may be that the Weddyng and the Marriage represent debased versions of romances that had origins in the north. The evidence furnished by the Carlisle association is, in either case, too strongly manifested to be dismissed as negligible with respect to the determining of provenance.

The fifteenth century saw the movement of the Arthurian romance cycle yet further northward. Only as the impact the genre had had on Middle English verse began to fade did it commence to make its fullest impact on the poetry of Middle Scots. The material which served as the inspiration for the romances which subsequently came to be written in this dialect was, however, in at least one sense far from

unfamiliar to the composers of Lowland Scotland. This qualification is an important one in terms of the development of the insular Arthurian tradition as a whole. It is difficult to emphasize too strongly the fact that the tradition itself evolved according to a circular pattern. A sufficient body of evidence exists to support the theory that the Arthurian legend originated during the sixth century with Gwyr y Gogledd, the inhabitants of Lothian, Strathclyde, and Cumbria - kingdoms which encompassed southern Scotland and northwestern England. With the exception of Strathclyde, these kingdoms became dominated by Anglian settlers, and the traditions of "the men of the North" became relocalized in Wales. <sup>11</sup> Following the period of relocalization, the saga was passed on to the Continent. Not till the fourteenth century did the tradition once again become truly established in Britain. Such a development was only to be anticipated, if for no other reason than that the golden age of heroic and chivalric narrative in France and Germany had long since expired. The real significance behind this event lies in the fact that the Arthurian tradition, once returned to Britain, promptly became settled in the north and west - the area from which, several centuries previously, it had emerged. So much is indicated merely by the provenance of the later Middle English verse romances. In view of this pattern, it was perhaps inevitable that the last of the medieval insular Arthurian verse narratives would come to be composed in virtually the same locale as where, eight centuries before, the first reference in written literature to Arthur himself

should have been set down. At any rate, it has always struck me as fitting that a heroic tradition which began in southern Scotland with the Gododdin should have to all intents and purposes also culminated in southern Scotland with Golagros and Gawane.

As has always been appreciated, the finest of the Middle English and Scottish Arthurian verse romances are those composed in the alliterative meter. With its emphatic yet harmonious rhythms, this particular medium would appear to have been ideally suited to convey what was essentially a masculine heroic tradition. Yet there was another much more compelling and substantial factor which virtually ordained that alliterative verse would come to provide the most successful means of expression for the later insular Arthurian legend. There is in the Prologue to the Parson's Tale a famous passage in which the speaker confesses himself unable to 'geeste "rum, ram, ruf" by lettre.' The talent to which he is referring is of course that of writing in alliterative verse, and he ascribes his lack of this gift to the fact that he is a southern Englishman. Now, this passage should not be read as a sort of contemporary testimonial that the composition of alliterative verse in the fourteenth century was restricted to the writers of the north. A reasonable amount of evidence exists to show that "southren" men as well were acquainted with the art. There are in fact enough alliterative passages in the Canterbury Tales and in the Legend of Good Women alone to confirm that Chaucer himself knew how to make use of the medium to considerable effect. What the



Parson's remarks on the subject do imply very strongly is that during the fourteenth century the talent was regarded as chiefly characteristic of the northern poets. In a curious way, then, the same limitations which applied to the composition of Arthurian romance appear to have been imposed as well on the writing of alliterative verse.

Before attempting to define the sort of relationship which existed between the two, it would perhaps be best to trace a brief outline of the development of the alliterative tradition as a whole. The origins of the verse form which would come to provide the medium for some of the most distinguished Arthurian verse romances have never really been specified. From the Anglo-Saxon period there survive some 30,000 lines of poetry, all of which are written in the alliterative meter. And with the early Germanic tribes, as Frederick Norman notes, alliteration was indeed "the universal and only method of composing verse."<sup>13</sup> Yet the credit for the proliferation of the tradition lies as much with another culture. The fact that virtually all the oldest extant Irish and Welsh poetry is alliterative cannot be used to prove that the verse form evolved with the Celtic composers. The latter and the Germanic poets very probably derived their techniques of alliteration from a common source.<sup>14</sup> The Celts were however responsible for fostering a number of those refinements which have come to be regarded as an integral part of the style in general. A combination of alliteration with the devices of intralinear rime and consonance was employed by the Germanic composers. But it is in the

early verse of Ireland and Wales that this amalgam of techniques appears in its first regularized form.<sup>15</sup>

Certain of the refinements effected by the Celts were, it is true, not so much the result of a conscious attempt to enhance the verse form as the natural by-products of linguistic change. Old Irish and Old Welsh evolved, respectively, from the proto-Goidelic and Brythonic tongues. As Travis points out, the new languages "were characterized by the loss of inflectional suffixes, by the rise of initial inflection, and by the consequent tendency of accent to fall on a root syllable that was - in Irish usually, and in Welsh often - an initial. This linguistic change predisposed Celtic verse toward the cultivation of accentual rime, towards a shortened verse line, and towards a tightened accentual structure."<sup>16</sup> For whatever reasons, however, the fact remains that alliterative verse attained a polish and sophistication with the Welsh and Irish at an earlier period than in any other culture of that time.

Celtic techniques of versecraft influenced those of the Romance languages, which in turn significantly effected the development of Middle English and Middle Scots prosody. In Old English, the standard poetic line is made up of half lines separated by a caesura but connected by alliteration. It is unrhymed and conforms to a pattern of four stresses placed on the first or stem syllable of a word. The musical or chiming effect that is the hallmark of the line is achieved through the repetition of the same or a similar sounding initial letter. Consonants echo themselves, as in

The Kentish Hymn<sup>17</sup>

while vowels most frequently alliterate with a different vowel:

uppe mid ænglum, and on eorðan sibb

The Kentish Hymn

The governing principle of the Old English alliterative line was of course retained in Middle English and Scots. Those changes in structure due to Continental and Celtic influence took place during the post-Conquest period. In the Anglo-Saxon line, the connection between either half was, as I mentioned previously, most usually achieved by alliteration alone. In early Middle English, however, the link could be established through rhyme as well. Much the same effect might be wrought through the use of assonance. With the latter, the sound of the last accented vowel of a word was echoed by similarly placed vowels in succeeding words. In that no equivalent correspondence existed between consonants so situated, the assonantal system thus furnished the ideal complement to an alliterative scheme. Lazamon combined the two devices to no small advantage, as in

Arður þa up aras, and strehte his ærnes.  
He aras up and adun sat, swulc he weore  
swiðe secc.

The Brut

It is interesting to note that the linkage between the two lines quoted here is effected not only by alliteration and assonance but by the echo of a similar sounding phrase - in this case "up aras." This form of binding successive

verses together through the repetition of a particular word or group of words was a basic feature of both Irish and Welsh poetry. The device also came to figure prominently in certain of the Middle English alliterative poems - a point the significance of which I shall try to emphasize later in this chapter.

However successful the use of assonance was to prove in early Middle English, the technique was not destined to be preserved into the fourteenth century. Other post-Conquest innovations, such as rhyme, of course survived to become standard poetic practice in the later period. So profound were these changes as to encourage the development of not one but two traditions in insular alliterative verse. The first of these was the "classical" or Old English style and the second the "popular" mode adopted by the Middle English composers. The latter differs from the former in that the rhythm of the line becomes the consequence of the stress. "Popular" verse also shows a greater instance of unstressed syllables, and inclines toward the use of a half line having two stresses.<sup>18</sup>

What is particularly interesting is that both modes appear to have existed side by side for some time. The elegiac lines on the death of Edgar (975) show considerable affinity with the "popular" style characteristic of fourteenth century verse. Yet in the same technical sense The Description of Durham, a later composition (1104 - 9), has a great deal in common with "classical" or Old English poetry.<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting too that by the end of the fourteenth century a great deal of alliterative verse had

become stanzaic. End rhyme was an established feature of the line here, as in the case of the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane.<sup>20</sup>

The basic unit of alliterative poetry of the later Middle English and Middle Scots period is the "long line." This is characterized by the presence of four stressed syllables and an optional number of unstressed syllables. In keeping with Anglo-Saxon poetic practice, the line is divided into two parts by a caesura:

"Whyl I byde in yowre borȝe, be bayne to ȝowre best."

l. 1092, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

The linkage between either half is effected by alliteration. As with unstressed syllables, the number of corresponding initial letters varies according to the individual poet's requirements. Thus, the amount of alliteration may be minimal, as in

"Was neuer creature to me that carpede so large!"

l. 143, Morte Arthure

or exaggerated, as in

To feid hym of that fyne fude the freik wes full fane.

l. 83, Golagros and Gawane

In either case, the chiming effect produced by the repetition of any given initial letter remains the most striking single feature of the line.

Structure was not the only basis for departure between the Anglo-Saxon and the later Middle English alliterative traditions. The entire poetic vocabulary under-

went some considerable change. This particular alteration was inspired chiefly by the composers of the Romance languages. French loan-words supplied the Middle English poets with an unprecedented array of synonyms and expressions for modes of dress, styles of architecture, and for aristocratic pastimes such as the chase and the joust. The growth of a new poetic vocabulary of course presupposed the inclusion of a wider variety of themes and subject matter in the fourteenth century romances. This is not to imply that the horizons of the Old English poets were in any sense particularly limited. The concerns of these writers were, however, of a somewhat different order from those of their successors. The alteration to which the style of literary composition became subject in the later period reflected and was indeed a consequence of this reshuffling of interests. Old poetic forms were not so much discarded as pressed into new and different service. Longish descriptive passages, for example, constitute a fairly staple feature of Anglo-Saxon heroic and elegiac verse. But whereas in Old English such passages tended to occur in connection with battle or fighting scenes, the number of accounts of combat in Middle English poetry tends to be balanced and in many cases outweighed by passages describing banquets, tournaments, hunts, and other courtly institutions. This preoccupation with social ritual was but one more legacy of the French composers of romance.

It was to a variety of sources, then, that the later Middle English and Scottish alliterative tradition owed its

extreme richness. The craft of writing in alliterative verse was in view of this richness an especially demanding one. Its practitioners of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not, however, fail to uphold and even surpass the standards established by their predecessors. Outside of the narrative verse by Chaucer and Gower, by far the greater share of the foremost narrative poems in Middle English are composed in the alliterative meter. The most noteworthy representatives of the romance genre in Middle Scots are as well preserved in this medium. And, as I have mentioned before, the finest Arthurian romances in either later Middle English or Scottish literature are those composed in alliterative verse. The works which enjoy this unique status are, of course, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Morte Arthure, the Awntyrs off Arthure, and Golagros and Gawane. It is with particular reference to the latter two romances that I should now like to examine the mechanics of alliterative verse, and in doing so to arrive perhaps at some appreciation of the suitability of this form as a vehicle for the Arthurian tradition.

With respect to structure, both the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane are extremely complex pieces. The former contains fifty-five stanzas made up of nine long lines and a "wheel" of four short lines containing two accents each. The rhyme scheme is ababababcdcdc. Oakden calculates that about .8% of the alliteration in the poem occurs by vowel rather than by consonant, and anywhere from two to four of these letters may be the same.<sup>21</sup> Thus

Sir Arthur þe auenant, honest and able (l. 302)

The letter "h" may be ignored in favor of the vowel which directly follows it.

Golagros and Gawane consists of 105 stanzas, the structural pattern of which deviates from that of the Awntyrs only in having a "bob" of two syllables in the ninth line. Both poems show a considerable incidence of sequential verses linked together by identical alliteration. Forty-eight of the 105 stanzas in Golagros open with a couplet of which each line alliterates in the same manner. By this means, the first six lines of the first three stanzas have been linked together in three couplets. An identical technique of binding is employed by the Awntyrs poet, as thirty-three of the stanzas here begin with two lines alliterating according to the same letter. Stanzas 3, 4, 8, 17, 34, and 45 open with three couplets. The form of alliteration most prevalent in the Awntyrs is aa/aa, with aa/ax aa/xa following and aaa/(--) the least used.<sup>22</sup>

The linking of one stanza to the next by means of the repetition of certain words and phrases, alliteration, the continuation of an idea, or some other related means is one of the distinguishing features of the Awntyrs. This system of binding (concatenatio) also figures prominently in the romances of Sir Degrevant, Sir Tristrem, Syr Percyvella, Thomas of Erceldoune, and the Avowyngge of Arther, and almost always exists in connection with alliteration. The same device appears as well in Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. It is of particular interest that all of these poems, with the exception of Thomas of Ercel-



doune and Pearl, deal with Arthurian material. The technique of stanza-linking as illustrated in the Awntyrs has been discussed by several critics, most thoroughly however by Margaret Medary.<sup>23</sup> In this study, which is based on an examination of all four texts of the poem (Thornton, Douce Ireland, and Lambeth), the author concludes that

Type 1, Linking by repetition of several words or of an entire verse, existed in 27 cases out of a possible 54. Type 2, Linking by one word, may be restored in 18 cases. Type 3, Linking by a related word, existed in five cases. Type 4, Linking of adjacent sentences (not adjacent verses), in one case, stanzas 46 - 47:

'Gaynor gret for her sake wip her grey  
eyen.

Thus grette dame Gaynor þat grete grefe  
was to sene.'

Lambeth (Ireland and Thornton very nearly agree).

One case of linking by word-echo, that is by repetition of less than a whole word, existed, stanzas 45 - 46:

'þe brede of an hare.

Hard þene þes hapelise one helmes þey hewe.'

Douce (Ireland and Thornton nearly agree).

Two stanzas, 50 and 55, remain, which are unlinked at the beginning in all four MSS. These could be explained by the rule about proper names. Stanza 50 contains in all MSS. in its first verse, two proper names:

'Than spak Galron to Gawayn þe good.'

Lambeth

Stanza 55 contains in all MSS. one proper name:

'Gaynor gart wightly write in to þe weste'

Lambeth<sup>24</sup>

Medary also points out that enchaining occurs within the stanzas themselves, where the eighth verse generally links in one fashion or other with the ninth.<sup>25</sup> By collating the four manuscripts of the poem the critic has managed to restore this connection in 43 out of 55 potential instances. (Such a ratio implies that this type of enchaining may have existed throughout the entire poem.) Medary further suggests that alliteration itself may have provided the link in two cases. In ll. 8 - 9 of stanza 29, the "h" sound is emphasized, whereas in ll. 8 - 9 of 40, "d" is stressed.

The device of interlacing through verbal echo occurs in a number of instances. In this type of linking, a word or syllable present in one line may be repeated in the next. Thus

Gawayn gaynest on grene  
Dame Gunnore he ledis

In a gliteryng gyte pat  
glenneth so gay

st. 1 - 2 (Lambeth)

and

The canel bone also  
And clef his sheld shene

He clef þorghe þe cantelle  
þat covered þe knight

st. 40 - 41 (Douce)

Similar linkings are scattered elsewhere throughout the poem.<sup>26</sup>

Medary concludes her investigations with the proposal that the practice of stanza-linking was virtually confined to the poets of the north, and that the technique itself

originated from a popular insular tradition rather than from external artistic sources. The critic bases her argument on the fact that the first incidence of the device in English literature occurs in popular song dating from the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. Furthermore, the type of stanza-linking which appears in the metrical romances is distinct from the technique employed in Pearl, where the connection makes use of a refrain. According to Medary's reasoning, this secondary (refrain) pattern of binding would seem to derive from a more consciously artistic source.<sup>27</sup>

The case in favor of an insular origin for the form of stanza-linking found in the metrical romances such as the Awntyrs was advanced several steps further by A.C.L. Brown.<sup>28</sup> Inspired by the results of Margaret Medary's investigations, Brown suggested that the presence of the device in certain types of English poetry could be accounted for by a relatively simple geographic factor. The argument in support of this hypothesis runs as follows. Stanza-linking, or adgymeriad, occurs very frequently in Welsh poetry of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. The parallel development of this technique in Middle English verse took place in that area of the country in closest proximity to the border of Wales, the west and northwest. Those four narrative poems which exhibit stanza-linking to any remarkable degree - the Avowyngge of Arther, Syr Percyvelle, Sir Degrevant, and the Awntyrs - are Arthurian romances belonging to a tradition which, as

I have already pointed out, seems to have been localized in the same region during the fourteenth century. Furthermore, all but Syr Percyvelle are composed according to a circular design, as they open and close on virtually the same words. This latter device is one figuring prominently in both medieval Irish and Welsh verse - but not, curiously, in the literature of any other Western European language or culture. So it is unlikely that the Middle English poets borrowed the technique of circular composition from a Continental source. The same applies to the practice of stanza-linking. Finally, it is highly improbable that the elements of English versecraft could have significantly affected those of the Welsh. As Brown remarks, "if any interaction between Welsh and English poetry took place, no doubt can exist as to which way the influence operated. Welsh poets of this period had nothing to learn from the English poets...Stanza-linking and the habit of beginning and ending with the same words are sufficiently striking and practical features of style to have been noticed by gleemen, who listened to the recitation of Welsh verse even if the Englishmen understood little of what they heard." 29

Brown's hypothesis has unfortunately received somewhat less attention than it undoubtedly deserves. There seems, in view of the evidence, little doubt that the device of stanza-linking by word-echo or alliteration owes its appearance in the Middle English metrical romances to Celtic example. The general literary debt of the English composers to the Welsh and Irish was in any case one of

long standing. As Travis points out, even by the twelfth century Middle English verse had begun to take on features characteristic of Celtic poetry.<sup>30</sup> It is very possible that *Lazamon* borrowed his combination of assonance and alliteration from a Welsh model. The technique of circular composition, demonstrated in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and in the fifteenth century Scottish alliterative *Book of the Howlat*<sup>31</sup> as well as in the four romances cited by Brown, is manifested in the poetry of both Ireland and Wales at a very early period.<sup>32</sup> *Conachlonn* is the name given by present day literary historians to the practice in Old Irish whereby the final word in a verse line becomes the opening word of the succeeding line. The same device was employed in early Welsh poetry. Although a rudimentary version of the technique appears in some older Germanic verse,<sup>33</sup> it was again the Celts who were responsible for effecting refinements to the form. It is interesting to note in this context that whereas the Irish continued to develop the technique by linking alliteration, as time went on the poets of Wales inclined more toward the perfection of a system of binding by word-echo.<sup>34</sup> This latter factor above all else seems to indicate just where the source lay for the device of linking by verbal repetition as practiced by the Middle English and Scottish composers.

In his extensive discussion of the alliterative style, Oakden lists a number of characteristics that are more or less immediately identifiable as stock-in-trade items of the poets of the alliterative school.<sup>35</sup> Among these is

the frequent substitution of the substantive form of an adjective in place of a noun signifying either a person or an object, as in the case of "pat cruel" for "that valiant knight." It is common also to find superfluous adjectives used merely to reinforce the alliteration of the line rather than to enhance a descriptive passage. Both techniques are present to some degree in the Awntyrs. Oakden lists seven instances in which the substantive form of the adjective appears in place of the noun - "pat burly" (l. 645), "pat comly" (l. 288), "pat frely" (l. 376), "pat gay" (l. 530), "pat hende" (l. 698), "pat lufly" (l. 397), and "pe sturne" (l. 532).<sup>36</sup> To these may be added "pe dere" (l. 4), "pat cruel" (l. 612), "pe rialle" (l. 345), and "pat stourne," which appears in various forms in lines 391 and 657 as well as in 532. Familiar adjectives such as "clene" and "kene" are used to round out the alliteration of certain lines, as in the phrase "clanly enclosed" (l. 287) and "a knyghte kene" (l. 301). In neither case does the word add much meaning to the line. However, the poet of the Awntyrs was not nearly so addicted to this practice as some of his contemporaries.

Golagros and Gawane shows a higher incidence of the substitution of the substantive adjective for the noun than does the Awntyrs. There are in the Scottish poem twenty-seven incidences of such replacement. Yet curiously, the cumulative effect of the repetition of this device is far from wearisome. The frequent substitution of the adjective for the noun is rescued from monotony chiefly by the fact that the device seems to serve a purpose apart from that

of merely reinforcing the alliteration of the line in which it occurs or providing verbal variety. It is in the first place always used by the Golagros poet with reference to humans rather than animals or inanimate objects. The device thus becomes here a tool of characterization, employed alternately to satirize or commend the behavior of certain individuals. It is one of the main purposes of the poem that Arthur be portrayed in a light far from flattering. On one occasion, the composer depicts the king as giving way to a juvenile fit of spleen as the result of having the immediate satisfaction of one of his demands thwarted (ll. 299 - 302). The substitution of the phrase "that mighty" for Arthur's name or title has then in this context an ironic effect, pointing up the contrast between the kind of behavior expected of a sovereign and the sort in which this particular monarch is presently indulging. Similarly, we find Kay, starring here in his customary role as arch-boor, cited as "the sterne" (l. 108) just after a sequence in which he is severely chastised for breaking into a house and beating up the dwarf manservant of the householder. On the other hand, every time the substantive adjective is used with reference to Golagros - one of the two heroes of the poem and a figure who commands the sympathy and admiration of the audience - it is done so straightforwardly and with no motive other than commendation (cf. ll. 349, 396, 821, 947, 967, 987, 988, 991, 992, 1091, 1103, 1276, 1284, 1285). Thus is the device of replacing noun with adjective raised by the Scottish composer to a level above that of

mere mechanics.

There were a whole variety of related techniques at the disposal of the alliterative poets. The rhymed and stanzaic poems of northern England and southern Scotland, which include the Awntyrs, the Pistill of Susan, the Quatrefoil of Love, Golagros and Gawane, the Prologue to the Eighth Book of the Aeneid, Ane Satire on the Consistory Courts, St. John the Evangelist, the Book of the Howlat, Rauf Coilzear, and Fortune, share amongst each other a number of what are referred to generally as "alliterative phrases." These also appear in the non-rhymed and non-stanzaic works such as the Morte Arthure. As with the case of the supplementary adjective discussed previously, such expressions as "cruel and kene" or "beryns so bolde" exist primarily in order to bolster the alliteration of the line in which they appear. According to Oakden, some fifty-four of these phrases have prototypes in Old English literature. "Among these are few of any interest; wlonkeste in wedys (Awntyrs off Arthure 9, 374, and Pistill of Susan 26, 186) is perhaps the most valuable survival in the group."<sup>37</sup>

According to Oakden's tabulation over one hundred alliterative phrases appear in the Awntyrs.<sup>38</sup> Of these, approximately fifteen can be found in the Howlat, five in Fortune, fifteen in the Pistill, eleven in St. John, sixteen in the Quatrefoil, thirty-three in Golagros and Gawane, twelve in Rauf Coilzear, one in the Prologue, and two in the Consistory Court.<sup>39</sup> As has been mentioned before, all these poems are of Scottish or northern English



provenance, and all are composed in a similar form. However, the Awntyrs and Golagros share a number of alliterative phrases with the Morte Arthure ("dukes and dusiperes," "danger and doel") and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. As I will point out in subsequent chapters, a great many similarities of theme, plot, and characterization exist between these four poems. While it would be difficult to prove - as Neilson attempted - that such parallels are the result of common authorship of the poems, they at least indicate that the poets of both the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane were thoroughly familiar with the literary output of their contemporaries and did not hesitate to borrow certain elements which they admired in them.

In the introduction to his edition of the romance, Gates points out that similarities of phrasing and usage exist between the Awntyrs and certain of the metrical romances as well as the alliterative works already discussed.<sup>40</sup> Gates notes that some thirty-nine of the expressions found in the Awntyrs, such as "wlonkeste in wedys" and "beryns full bolde," appear also in Sir Degrevant. In addition, certain lines in either poem correspond almost exactly to each other. Thus we have:

Her courchefs were curious.

Deg. 669

Here kercheues were curiouse.

AA. 372

and

with wongus ful wete

Deg. 840

...with wonges ful wete.

AA. 87

and

He beris a schelde of asure  
Engreled with a sawtour.

Deg. 1045 - 1046

Suppriset with a suget pat beris  
of sable  
A sawtour engreled of siluer fulle  
schene

AA. 306 - 307

Gates cites a number of other such parallels, but these examples will suffice to show that some sort of connection does exist between the two poems. In view of this, it is particularly interesting that Sir Degrevant should be one of the six works showing evidence of stanza-linking, which as we have seen is present to a high degree in the Awntyrs. Gates concludes that "the evidence...indicates that a written poem such as the Awntyrs may be completely formulaic...Whether such parallels as those quoted above are due to borrowing, or rather to the existence within the lettered formulaic tradition of units longer than the alliterative half-line (they are not really thematic) will have to await further comparative study of the poems involved." 41

Along with the alliterative phrases in the Awntyrs and in Golagros and Gawane there exists a related group of alliterative words. Among these are included various synonyms for knight or man, such as "segge," "freke," "burne," "gome," or "wy." "Blonke" is a familiar equivalent for horse, as is "birde" for woman. The purpose of such words

was twofold. In the first place, they helped to circumvent monotony by providing a wide array of synonyms for terms which required frequent repetition. Because the initial letters of these words corresponded to those of the stressed words in a given line, they also enriched the musical effect of the verse. The use of certain terms in this vocabulary was not restricted to poets of the alliterative school. "Segge" and "birde," for example, occur in all types of Middle English and Middle Scots verse. The more esoteric synonyms - such as "hathill" or "wlonke" - were however a distinguishing feature of alliterative poetry.

Still another feature of this type of verse is the excessive use of "tags," expressions which generally form the second half of the alliterative long line or compose the wheel of the stanza. In the Awntyrs, there are a number of such phrases. Three of these are but variations on the popular "as the book says" - l. 2 has "as þe buke telles," l. 239 "as prophetau3 haue tolde," and l. 383 "as true men me tolde." The most widely used tag in the poem is however of the type composed of an infinitive introduced by a word the initial letter of which conforms to the alliterative pattern of the line as a whole.<sup>42</sup>

These are:

sopely to say (ll. 21, 309, 693)  
 þe trouthe for to telle (l. 34)  
 in lede is not to layne (l. 83)  
 þat fondene to fighte (l. 261)  
 tidings to telle (l. 314)  
 þat sharpe were to shrede (l. 395)  
 poudred to pay (l. 396)  
 þe gates to gayne (l. 85)

turment to telle (l. 90)  
in wo for to welle (l. 316)  
semly to sighte (l. 450)

In Golagros and Gawane, a similar assortment of such phrases appears, as

teirfull to tell (l. 42)  
foulis to fle (l. 45)  
suthly to say (l. 218)  
semely to se (l. 381)  
cumly to know (l. 407)  
treuly to tell (l. 659)  
peirles to price (l. 340)

Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it should serve to indicate the frequency with which such sayings were used. The expressions "'I herd a clerk say," used in l. 94 of the Awntyrs, and "as trew men me told," used in l. 1 of Golagros and Gawane, belong to a different grouping of tags which come under the general heading of "to (carpe, telle, mene, etc.) þe soþe." <sup>43</sup> Besides filling out the line these lent a spurious air of authenticity to the poet's words which fooled no one but satisfied convention. To bolster a statement with an "auctoritee" (in about half of such cases a nonexistent one at that) was of course not solely the prerogative of the alliterative school. Practically all the Middle English poets, including Chaucer, used this device on occasion. Such tags as "as þe buke telles" served a similar purpose.

In a survey of the "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Poetry," <sup>44</sup> Waldron points out that certain of those expressions to which Oakden assigns the label of "alliterative phrase" or "tag" may in fact be actual formulae which were preserved from the Anglo-Saxon. "It seems beyond doubt that there was some sort of continuity in

the use of the alliterative meter between the eleventh and the fourteenth century, although there are virtually no written records. The most convincing evidence of this is that the meter developed in just the direction and to just the extent that one would have expected if it had been in use all the time.... It is significant that most of this strict alliterative poetry which is now extant can be ascribed to the northwest midlands, an area which one might have expected, in view of its isolated situation, to have been unsympathetic towards the more continental culture of the south of England and to have preserved some of the traditions and ways of thought of Anglo-Saxon England."<sup>45</sup> Waldron does not, however, contend that the alliterative poetry of the fourteenth century can be proved to be purely oral in its composition. "What we shall expect to find is, at most, the remains of an oral technique embedded in written literature. But even this will give us grounds for seeing the alliterative style as it is found in the later Middle Ages, as still essentially an oral style."<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately, Waldron excludes from his discussion the group of stanzaic works to which the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane belong. However, it is possible to apply some of the principles which Waldron has established through an investigation of the Morte Arthure, the Parlement of the Thre Ages, and like pieces to a study of rhymed romance as well. Although the complicated stanzaic structure of the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane, combined with the sustained length of either, militates against the

possibility that they too were oral compositions, expressions present in these works which can be said to resemble formulae may be used to indicate that their respective poets were at least aware and made use of the elements of an oral tradition.

Waldron suggests that certain "rhythmical-syntactical patterns with greater or lesser degrees of verbal similarity"<sup>47</sup> in the alliterative poems show that their authors may have been not only familiar with such a tradition but schooled in it as well. The critic cites six such patterns, all of which appear with only negligible variation in the poems studied. The first of these consists of a line in which the superlative form of an adjective prefaces a noun, which is in turn followed by the phrase "that ever." It occurs in l. 138 of the Morte Arthure as "Thou arte þe lordlyeste lede þat euer I one lukyde," and in l. 1007 of William of Palerne as "þe gladdeste gom þat euer god wrou3t," to offer two examples. Although no such construction appears to be used in Golagros and Gawane, there are in the Awntyrs

...þe grisselist goost þat euer herd  
I grede. 1. 99

...þe burlokest blone þat euer bote  
brede. 1. 548

and possibly

...þe worpiest wighte þat eny wy welde  
wolde. 1. 365

In this last, the word "eny" has been substituted for "euer," but the construction of the line is in all other

respects exactly the same as that of 99 and 548. Another slight variation on this pattern may be found in 11.

358 - 359:

He was the souraynest of al, sitting in sete  
pat euer segge had sene with his eyesighte --

Here, the superlative form of the adjective is followed by an adverbial phrase. But again, the overall pattern of the line is the same as that of the passages quoted previously.

Waldron concludes his discussion of these constructions with a reference to "a syntactical pattern which remains constant in several half-lines in spite of verbal change. This also contains three stresses and consists of an imperative verb, plus a noun meaning 'man' in the vocative, plus a prepositional phrase."<sup>48</sup> One example of the construction may be cited from the Parlement of the Thre Ages, this being "'And wonne, wy, in thi witt, for wele-negh þou spillis'" (l. 193). In the Awntyrs, a pattern very much resembling this emerges on three occasions:

"'For-þi I rede þe, þou rathe mane,  
þou riste the al niȝte.'"

l. 438

"'Loke now, lordynges, cure lose be  
not lost.'"

l. 462

"'Here I make þe releyse, renke,  
by þe rode.'"

l. 640

So it may well be that certain of the devices Waldron ascribes to the preservation of an oral tradition also

appear to have been maintained in a written poem such as the Awntyrs almost certainly is.

In the course of his essay, Waldron laments the absence of documentation as a considerable deterrent to the study of the chronology of alliterative writing in Middle English. And it is of course precisely because so little of the alliterative verse composed just after the end of the Anglo-Saxon period has survived that tracing the development of the insular alliterative tradition has proved such a difficult matter. What data we have relating to the growth of this tradition lends itself, in any case, to conflicting interpretations. One school of thought holds that, in view of the lack of relevant early Middle English texts, no real grounds exist for regarding the alliterative movement as a continuous one in insular literature. Conversely, other critics have made the relative paucity of texts dating from the period of transition between Old English and later Middle English the basis for arguing that the tradition was preserved orally. Modern opinion has tended to support this interpretation of the known facts, and indeed there are points which do favor an hypothesis of oral preservation and transmission. The primary attraction of this argument lies in that it accounts for some of the changes not directly traceable to external - meaning Continental - influence the alliterative style underwent. But there are nonetheless certain factors which militate against the acceptance of the hypothesis. As Elizabeth Salter has remarked, "While it is clear enough that alliterative writing was never abandoned in the



western and northern counties of England between 1100 and 1500, 'continuity' alone will not bridge the gap between Laȝamon's Brut and Winner and Waster or the Parliament of the Three Ages."<sup>49</sup>

Several theories have been set forth to explain why the alliterative tradition, like the Arthurian tradition, came to be fostered in a provincial locale. In most respects, London or the south of England, being the major social, economic, and political center of the country, would appear to have constituted the natural focal point for the literary life of the period. This was of course true in the cases of Chaucer, Gower, and Chestre and any number of anonymous lesser lights. The writers of the alliterative school, however, appear to have been satisfied to exist apart from the urban milieu in which these particular poets flourished.<sup>50</sup> But what were the circumstances which caused this alienation? And was this exile from the London literary mainstream a self-imposed or accidental one?

It was slightly over forty years ago that J. R. Hulbert set forth the proposition that the provincial foundations of the alliterative school rested on no more substantial ground than disaffection.<sup>51</sup> Hulbert saw the exponents of this school as deliberately rejecting rather than merely drifting away from the southern metropolitan cultural milieu so favored by certain of their contemporaries. And in doing so, these writers were merely expressing in terms natural to creative artists a general opposition to London domination over the political, eco-

conomic, and social spheres of existence shared by their fellow inhabitants of the north and west. In Hulbert's view, this alienation of one part of the country from another was exacerbated by a power struggle between the provincial magnates and the crown. To borrow the phrase of Theodore Roszak and set it in a different context, the opposition of the nobles to their feudal overlord resulted, in the mid-fourteenth century, in the making of a counterculture.

For a long while, Hulbert's explanation of the causes for the alliterative revival was, if not universally accepted, at least favored above most other hypotheses regarding the circumstances which gave rise to this phenomenon. And indeed, relatively few suggestions were advanced to dispute Hulbert's contention. Recent scholarship has however shown that attractive as the notion of the alliterative poets as constituting a sort of medieval Third World revolutionary movement may be, it is not unfortunately substantiated by historical evidence.<sup>52</sup> That opposition to the crown upon which Hulbert based his proposal never actually occurred - at least, not during the period when the renaissance of alliterative verse took place. The reverse in fact seems to have been true, as the climate of feeling existing between king and nobles at the time could be said to have fairly exuded "franchise and felazschip."<sup>53</sup> Such of course was not the case earlier on in the century. Disaffection with the crown was symptomatic of the reign of Edward II, the span of which was punctuated by the periodic flare-up of endemic

discontent into open rebellion. This opposition was, furthermore, fostered and maintained chiefly by the provincial nobility. But by and large those very same magnates - or their sons and grandsons - who revolted against Edward and his policies gave their support to his successor.<sup>54</sup> This change in attitude was reflected in the literature of the period. As Salter points out, the alliterative Winner and Waster, far from showing any indication that its author might have opposed the king's party, is in fact an encomium on the glory of Edward III and the Black Prince.<sup>55</sup>

Clearly, "baronial opposition" was not the prime mover behind the alliterative renaissance in Middle English verse of the fourteenth century. Why, then, did such a literary cult come into being? And more importantly, why did it flourish chiefly in the provinces of the north and west? Although the question may never be answered, it is possible that part of the solution to the problem may lie in the very hypothesis put forward by Brown over fifty years ago. The development of stanza-linking in Middle English verse was, it will be recalled, very likely due to the influence of Welsh poetic technique. The first appearance of this device in fully systematized form occurred in the fourteenth century - in a group of romances, most of them Arthurian, all of them metrical, and all of them written in an area in closer proximity to the Welsh border than any other part of England. Now, the alliterative technique as developed in these works seems to bear a close resemblance to cynghanedd. This was a device, also formulated by the

Welsh bards, in which alliteration or consonance appear in conjunction with internal rhyme. There are several types of cynghanedd, though all conform to the basic pattern described above. Cynghanedd gytsain involves the repetition of a series of consonants. The two variations on this technique, cynghanedd draws and cynghanedd groes, are distinguished from each other by the presence in the first of a second, non-repeated consonant which divides the two sets of chiming consonants, as in

Tristach yw Cymru trostyn

Cynghanedd sain combines rhyme with alliteration. "A line of cynghanedd lusc ends in a word of more than one syllable and the penultimate syllable in that word rhymes with the last syllable in the first half of the line."<sup>56</sup> Thus

Poed it hedd pan or weddwyf

This latter technique bears a strong resemblance to the type of internal linking by verbal echo found in the Awntyrs:

Botonede with besantes and bokeled  
ful bene

1. 368

The real significance of cynghanedd in relation to the later Middle English alliterative tradition emerges in the light of a series of fairly well-established facts. Although cynghanedd in one form or another was a feature of Welsh prosody even in the earlier period, the principles governing the technique were actually formalized in the fourteenth century.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, there was an increase in the proliferation and, no doubt, in the dissemination of this verse form. The later Middle English alliterative

revival took place during much the same period as did the regularization of the Welsh poetic technique. And, as I have mentioned before, the style cultivated by the poets of the English school seems to bear a great similarity to cynghanedd. Furthermore, the alliterative revival occurred in that part of the country nearest the Welsh border - the west and the western reaches of the north. Taken separately, each one of these factors could be ascribed to coincidence. Put together, they amount to something more. In view of this, I think it reasonable to suggest not only that the standardization and diffusion of cynghanedd had a direct influence on the development of the later Middle English alliterative tradition, but that the former virtually inspired the rebirth of the latter. The element of geographic proximity alone would seem to favor such an hypothesis. In a similar fashion does this element account also for the translation of such an outstanding part of the later insular Arthurian romance tradition - also Welsh in its origins - into an alliterative medium. In any event, the fact remains that a cause and effect relationship between Welsh and English poetry of the fourteenth century was the one condition which above all else made possible the composition of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Morte Arthure, the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane in the form we know them.

"Where is now your sourquydryre and your  
conquestes,  
Your gryndellayk and your greme, and your  
grete wordes?"

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,  
ll. 311 - 312

Chapter IV  
The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Tern Wathelyne:  
The First Episode

It is both curious and unfortunate that The Awntyrs<sup>1</sup>  
off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne, a poem which evidence  
strongly implies enjoyed considerable popularity in the  
hundred or so years immediately following its composition,  
should have fallen into such neglect in the more recent  
past. Whereas the greater number of Middle English or Scots  
romances have been preserved in only one or, at the most,  
two texts, the Awntyrs survives in four. That these manu-  
scripts are of fairly wide-ranging provenance goes a long  
way toward suggesting something of the appeal the poem  
must have held for medieval audiences. Nor has the Awntyrs  
proved especially inaccessible to modern readers; the first  
printed edition of the work appeared in 1792, only to be  
superceded by the more scholarly publications of the nine-  
teenth century. Yet truly substantial critical studies of  
the poem are rare, and it is usually just accorded a pass-  
ing reference in literary histories. What minimal notice  
the Awntyrs has received, too, has tended to be mixed. The  
least favorable assessment of the poem's merits was that  
made by George Kane, who took the view that the romance was  
"distinguished by too much talent and too little art," and  
the author of it "original only in his excess."<sup>2</sup> This ex-  
treme - and certainly not justifiable - criticism is be-  
lanced somewhat by the opinion shared by John Speirs and  
Ann Paton, who have come to regard the Awntyrs as second  
only to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in terms of stylistic  
elegance and narrative vigor.

According to several critics, the Awntyrs is most severely  
flawed by a lack of unity between the two episodes of



which it is composed. In her study of the romance, Catherine Singh adopts the traditional line of thought with respect to this issue in maintaining that "the moral comment of the first half is scarcely, if at all, applied in the second half, even where we would most expect to find it, in descriptions of feasting, finery, and the like."<sup>3</sup> This contention that the linkage between either part of the poem is from a narrative and thematic standpoint inadequate has, however, been disputed by Paton and Matthews. "The conventional criticism that the Aunters consists of two utterly unrelated episodes," Paton remarks, "ignores the moral purpose which binds the two parts together."<sup>4</sup> And as Matthews writes, "The two plots may not be fused together with the skill displayed in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, but a basic pattern of theme and exemplum runs through the poem. In a confrontation of the pride-of-life with a memento mori, the first part states the moral principle of Christian world contempt: the second part is given over to a story that illustrates those principles and in which the characters of part one are protagonists."<sup>5</sup> Ralph Hanna, who disagrees with the positions taken by Paton and Matthews on the interpretation of the piece, quite rightly points out the unfairness of assessing the unity of a medieval romance by criteria that were not in existence when the work in question was written.<sup>6</sup>

Far from being as tenuous as Singh maintains; the relationship between the two episodes of the Aunters is in fact quite a subtle and intricate one. So cleverly did the poet mask his didactic purpose that the connection is not,

perhaps, immediately apparent. In the first part of the work, startling and entirely successful use is made of the supernatural in order to convey certain moral and philosophical themes. In the second episode, we see these themes illustrated through the medium of a tale of knightly adventure. A closer examination of the poem as a whole should help to clarify the means by which the linkage between either part is established.

Despite its title, the romance does not really deal with Arthur at all except in a peripheral sense. He is as usual the focal point of the court, but the "awntyrs" here recounted are almost entirely those of Gawain. The poem opens with a minutely detailed account of the court setting forth to hunt in the forest by the Tarn Wedling, a small lake near Carlisle. The descriptions of Gawain and Guinevere (Guenevere), seated on her milk-white mule, are particularly elaborate, as if to reinforce in the reader's mind the notion that these two are the supreme ornaments to an already magnificent entourage. However, the care the poet takes to establish the almost god-like dimensions of the queen and her escort serves still another and more ironic purpose, which will become apparent as the story progresses.

Both Matthews and Speirs regard the hunting scene as a representation of the concept of Pride-of-Life.<sup>7</sup> The author succeeds in evoking for us the image of a medieval earthly paradise - an Arthurian Eden, so to speak. The attitude with which he regards his characters impresses us as one of good-humored affection as well as admiration. His carefully detailed descriptions of the behavior and

dress of the court seem intended in part to reinforce the notion of youth, gaiety, and worldly innocence. Arthur himself is depicted as the kindly overseer of the entire hunting ritual, directing his courtiers to their proper stations and ensuring that no disruptions will mar the civilized charm of the occasion. Time and again we are impressed with the notion that he is the greatest and best-loved of kings, and that those who serve him can count themselves among the most fortunate of beings.

There is a note of deception, however, in the almost breathless admiration with which the poet speaks of the court and its activities. The whole scene is so beautifully ordered that we sense such perfection cannot possibly last, and unlike the characters, are prepared for ensuing events. Sure enough, the fragile image of paradise is soon shattered by the intrusion of both natural and supernatural elements - disruptions over which even the king can exercise no control. The splendor and omnipotence of which the poet has striven to convince us now stand revealed as an illusion, for beneath the god-like exterior of Arthur and his followers there lies a very human fallibility.

The "awntyrr" itself begins when Gaynour and Gawain pause to rest beneath a "lorere" while the rest of the court continue with the hunt. Although nothing outwardly disturbing or portentous has yet occurred, the reader nevertheless senses a threat in Gaynour's choice of a stopping place. As Speirs points out, "...it is always, in these tales, dangerous to rest under a tree; one is particularly liable to come under the influence of the supernatural there." An

even deeper significance underlies the fact that this particular tree is a laurel. In classical tradition the laurel was regarded as having numerous magical powers - it was thought, for example, to enhance the ability of a prophet to foretell future events. "The Delphian oracle chewed its leaves before seating herself over the volcanic tripod, and those who asked her services appeared with laurel crowns and nibbling the leaves that grew about Apollo's temple."<sup>9</sup> That this tradition also existed in the fourteenth century is suggested by a passage in the Parlement of Foules,<sup>10</sup> where Chaucer refers to

The olyve of pes, and eke the dronke  
                    vyne,  
The victor palm, the laurer to devyne.

ll. 181 - 182

So there is good reason to suppose that the first scene of the Awntyrs has been set for an otherworldly confrontation, and the presence of the laurel here becomes even more significant when it emerges that the ghost which figures in this confrontation is a prophetic one.

Undoubtedly the most striking feature of the first section of the poem is the description of the appearance of the spectre itself. To this the poet has brought all the imaginative power and eye for detail he demonstrated in the account of the court setting forth to the hunt. The ghost (which is that of Gaynour's mother) does not function solely in order to add a startling bit of ornamentation to the landscape of the poem, however, but becomes the most important and well-developed character in the scene in which it figures. The spectre appears primarily in order to

put in a bid for salvation and to warn the queen to mend her own ways on pain of suffering eternal torment. But in the course of her stay, Gaynour's mother takes the opportunity to utter political and military prophecies, give moral and theological advice to her listeners, discuss the nature of Fortune, and voice trenchant criticism of the Arthurian court. The queen and Gawain are her captive audience; she is as arresting a figure as the Green Knight.

In the introduction to his edition of the romance, Gates writes that "the first episode of The Awntyrs is related to two themes which appear with many variations throughout medieval literature. The theme of a mortal who is visited by a fairy under a tree or by a stream (both of which are present in our poem) is combined with a vision of a soul in torment who admonishes the sinful." To these may be added the medieval conception of the Other World and its inhabitants, the motif of the Loathly Lady, and the theme of transformation. It is interesting to note that while each of these traditions possesses its own unique features, all three bear certain characteristics in common and are on some points nearly indistinguishable.

Critics point to the Trentalle Sancti Gregorii, one of the most widely circulated of all saints' legends during the Middle Ages, as the primary source for the events of the first episode. Basically the story is that of a woman condemned to terrible punishment for consorting with the devil and secretly murdering the offspring of this union. Her release from torment is achieved through the prayers of her son, Pope Gregory, to whom she appears one morning

at mass and appeals for the "taking" of a trental. An even less attractive version of the legend, involving among other things incest between brother and sister, can be found in the Latin Gesta Romanorum.<sup>13</sup> The poet of the Awntyrs, however, evidently chose to work within the context of the former tradition.

In the Trentalle, the appearance of the spectre is heralded by the formation of a dark cloud, from which issues an appalling stench. Interrupted during the celebration of the mass, the pope can only stand "stonied" as he awaits the demon who will most certainly emerge from this hellish emanation. Sure enough, out of the fog there materializes a "wonpurfulle grysely creature" with a battered body and flames sprouting from its eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. When conjured in the name of Christ, the thing identifies itself as the spirit of the pope's mother and reveals that it is undergoing punishment for sins of the flesh - "I lyuede in lustes wykkedly in my life." In response to Gregory's anxious question the ghost replies that it can only attain salvation through the celebration of thirty masses.

In the Awntyrs, the ghost appears to the startled human characters at midday, during an eclipse of the sun. It emerges in a flame from the Tarn Wadling, howling and screaming in a terrifying manner, surrounded by a dark cloud. The creature has no covering on its face or body but is instead "blake to þe bone" (l. 105). Serpents crawl over it, and "on þe chefe of þe cholle/A pade pikes one hir polle" (l. 114 - 115). Muttering and staring as if insane, the creature glides toward Gaynour and Gawain, eyes glow-

ing and features a quiver.

There are a vast number of stories in Middle English literature alone dealing with the subject of women condemned to an afterlife of torment for having committed adultery, and, in some cases, for the murder of their illegitimate children as well. D. N. Klausner has examined a representative collection of such tales,<sup>14</sup> and from his discussion of the manner in which the motif has been handled, we can draw two main conclusions. The first is that none of these stories differs very much from any other in either basic detail or didactic purpose. Over and over again the same situation is described. Surrounded by snakes and other reptilian creatures, the spirit appears in a murky cloud to an astonished and terrified human observer. After explaining its predicament, the spirit returns to the torment from which it has momentarily escaped - generally to await the rescue which will be brought about by the prayers and supplications of the living. The pattern is one which will admit of few significant variations.

The essential similarity of these stories makes it tempting to conclude that they all derive from a common source, and in fact there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that this is so. Both the early Irish and Welsh traditions abound in tales of souls brought back from the Other World. The spirits were generally summoned forth from their abode by a saint who had a specific reason for doing so, as in the case of Patrick who recalled the dead Cuchulainn to give an account of his career to Loíguire.<sup>15</sup> It is particularly interesting that in this story the

ghost of the hero should materialize before the onlookers in a veil of mist, thus anticipating by many hundred of years the dark cloud in which the spirits of the Trentalle appear.

It seems that at least in the Irish tradition, the services of a saint or a priest were not necessarily required to bring forth a spirit from the dead. In the story of the Founding of the Tain, what Robin Flower has termed "the function of invocation" has been transferred to a poet rather than an ecclesiastic.<sup>16</sup> Here, the prospective summoner of the dead sits by the grave of Fergus mac Roig and sings until the ghost of the dead hero appears, clad in full battle dress, to relate to the poet all his great adventures from beginning to end. It is interesting, too, that a great fog settles down over the area for three days before Fergus himself materializes. So here again we find a situation very much similar to the one found in the Trentalle, the Awntyrs, and the multitude of other lesser tales of the returned dead in later medieval literature. But in the Tain story it is the fact that a secular character rather than a saint succeeds in calling up the soul of Fergus which has a special significance in terms of the Awntyrs itself. In the first episode of the romance, Gawain is said to "conjure" the spirit of Gaynour's mother. Although the ghost emerges from the Tarn Wadling of its own volition, it must apparently be addressed in a special fashion before it can enter into any sort of dialogue with the humans. Gawain calls upon Christ; the poet of the Tain sings a certain song. In either case, the end result is the same - the



spirit is now free to speak to those who have called it forth.

Although the Trentalle is the best-known embodiment of the theme of a mortal interceding on behalf of a soul in torment, the motif is preserved elsewhere in the English literary tradition. The fifteenth-century translation of An Alphabet of Tales <sup>17</sup> contains no less than two versions of the story. The first of these, a tale told by "Helynendus" (Helinende), has as its protagonist a collier who tends the coal pits for a monastery. As he is going about his tasks one night, the collier is confronted by a naked woman emerging from the nearby woods. She is pursued by a knight on a black horse, who eventually catches her, runs her through with a sword, and casts her on the coal fire. The grisly interlude occurs the next night and for every night thereafter, and the collier finally induces a monk to accompany him to the pit one evening in order to witness the spectacle. When the woman and the knight emerge from the forest, the monk summons up enough courage to ask the man on horseback who - or what - he is. The knight replies that as punishment for the crimes of adultery and murder he and the lady are forced to reenact their eerie scenario every night until these transgressions have been atoned for. When the monk asks if there is anything he may do to alleviate their torment, the horseman's response is:

Ya, and ye wold gar syng so  
meny messis & gar sey so many  
psalters for vs anone we sulde  
be helpyd & our payn releasid.

This is done, and sure enough the troubled spirits never

return to interrupt the labors of the collier.

Like the Trentalle, the second tale concerns Pope Gregory. A member of the monastic order over which the saint presided chanced to fall sick. Among his "medcyns" were found three gold nobles, a discovery which caused Gregory much sorrow and personal anguish. The saint commanded, therefore, that none but the sick man's brother should speak to the sufferer, or offer him any word of comfort in his travail, "because he kepyd golde prively vnto hym selfe." When the monk died, Gregory ordered that both the body and the money be cast into a midden. These grim obsequies were to be performed to the accompaniment of the chant pecunia tua tecum perditionem - a ritual evidently intended to serve as a deterrent to the easily tempted. However, "when xxx dayes were passyd (Gregory) had compassion of pis monk, and garte say mes for hym xxx dayes." When the month was up, the dead man appeared to his brother in transfigured form with the announcement that "Vnto now it was bod il with me, bod now I thank God it is wele, ffor pis day I resyvid my howsil."

None of the medieval exempla, including the Awntyrs, specifies exactly where the tormented spirits have returned from. Whether or not this omission was intentional is difficult to say, largely because other contemporary sources dealing with the subject of salvation tend to be equally vague. In any case, the position taken by the very early medieval church regarding the release of souls from hell was an equivocal one. The Irish Church in the primary stages of its development apparently maintained the belief

that such a deliverance was indeed feasible under certain circumstances. In the ninth-century Martyrology of Tallaght it is said that prayers and fasting can release the souls of the dead from hell, which was not at that point regarded only as the final stopping-place of those for whom salvation was an impossibility. The Anglo-Saxon Church, on the other hand, appears to have maintained right from the beginning that deliverance was out of the question under any circumstances at all. As a consequence of this, the notion of a Purgatorial state arose here at a fairly early period. Not surprisingly, the primary source for this belief seems to have been the dialogues of Pope Gregory the Great.

Certainly Saint Gregory himself was responsible for releasing the soul of the Emperor Trajan from hell, just as Saint Cadog was credited with performing a similar service for the robber giant Caw. There is, then, a certain amount of precedence outside the Irish tradition to suggest that the motif of the deliverance of the damned was a prominent one in early medieval literature. However, by the time the Awntyrs itself came to be written, the idea of a Purgatorial state had for some time been an established doctrine of the church as a whole. Catholicism teaches that any soul which has not made adequate compensation for its sins must undergo the torments of Purgatory, which consist among other things of a great fire, or remain tied to the place where its sins were committed. (The story of the collier comes to mind with respect to this last instance.) The suffering the soul is subject to, according to one modern authority, may be remitted "by

works of charity performed by the soul during its lifetime or by others on its behalf after it has died. Masses and prayers offered for the departed have, then the effect of shortening the sojourn in Purgatory.<sup>19</sup> That the belief in the efficacy of prayer and almsgiving as a means of effecting the deliverance of a soul from torment was a widely held one is confirmed most eloquently in a speech made by Gaynour's mother, who enjoins her daughter to

Fede folk fore my sake þat failen þe  
fode,  
And munge me with matens and masses  
in melle.  
Masses arne medecynes to va þat bale  
bale bides;  
Vs þenke a masses as swete  
As eny spice þat euer ye ete.

11. 319 - 323

No such ministrations, on the other hand, will lead to the release of a soul condemned to hell. "The Medieval mind exercised its most lively and creative imagination in conceiving the horrors and abominations of what is, so far, the most dreadful product of the human mind...It has considered hell as dimension of linear time, from which there is no possibility whatever of deliverance."<sup>20</sup> This point is made succinctly in yet another one of the anecdotes included in the Alphabet of Tales. Here, we are told of a priest who prayed incessantly on behalf of the soul of a late prince of Germany. One day while the ecclesiastic was at his devotions, "þer apperid vnto hym a certeyn saynt & sayd; whi leburns þou for a man þat is dampned? It profettes hym no thyng, for his saule is in þe depe pitt of hell!" The priest replied that surely his intercession was merited, as the prince had during his lifetime performed many good

works. The saint, however, bade the ecclesiastic not to waste his prayers, as the dead man's soul had passed beyond redemption and his corporeal remains were inhabited by an evil spirit.

The descriptions of the apparitions of Gaynour's and Gregory's mothers bear a close resemblance to the accounts given by medieval visionary writers of the condition of the souls in Purgatory. None of these narratives makes particularly pleasant reading. In the vision of Tundale reference is made to a frozen lake into which were plunged the souls of lapsed ecclesiastics. While so immersed, these unfortunate beings were attacked by hosts of parasitic worms and snakes. The notion of demons in reptilian form seems to have held a gruesome fascination for the writers of medieval exempla; we find the motif repeated over and over again. In one of the stories in the Alphabet of Tales, toads similar to that which torments Gaynour's mother serve as the agents through which a horrifyingly appropriate form of punishment is meted out to the soul of a usurer.

The reasons for which the poet of the Awntyrs may have chosen to embody such a spectacular theme as that of the Trentalle in the first episode of his narrative are manifold. It is important to keep in mind that tales of souls reclaimed from the Purgatorial fires were tremendously popular during the Middle Ages. Undoubtedly because they possessed the virtue of being entertaining as well as instructive, they enjoyed the sanction of the church, which officially proscribed romances such as the Awntyrs. For

the storyteller, these tales provided a simple and effective means of keeping listeners in thrall while driving home a moral point. For the audience, they were a source of information concerning the state of the soul after death.

J. A. MacCulloch writes that these stories "came to be a literary fashion in Christian, as they had been in classical, literature. Lives of saints, chronicles, collections of stories, poems contain such visions. They played a great part in the Middle Ages, where there was a keen desire for exact details about the Other World."<sup>21</sup>

That the lake near Carlisle is a particularly suitable site for a supernatural encounter has been commented on by various critics. It is interesting, too, that the poet of the Awntyrs was not the only storyteller to exploit the dramatic possibilities of the Tarn as a setting for adventure. The lake - which incidentally no longer exists, having been drained in the nineteenth century to provide pasturage for sheep - serves as the backdrop in The Marriage of Sir Gawain for Arthur's encounter with the "bold Barron" who poses such a disconcerting challenge to both his sovereignty and his wit. In the Avowynge, it will be recalled, Gawain swears to abide by the lake all night and keep watch for some unspecified menace. "Tarn Wadling should almost certainly be understood as a place with spectral or magical connotations, possibly as a place where transfer from the Other World (whether Hell or Faery) is possible. The Marriage of Sir Gawaine suggests that the Tarn and the area around it provide the proper habitation for ghastly figures...Although no such confirmation for this view is found

in the conduct-centered version in the Weddyng, the Avowynge certainly provides suggestions of such an expectation. Gawain's vow to watch the lake throughout the night would be trivial or inconsequential were we not to understand that the site is a dangerous one; a superhuman figure would certainly be an awesome nighttime enemy.<sup>22</sup> So in a sense we can say that a literary tradition fostered and maintained during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries held this area of Cumberland to be the natural site of otherworldly occurrences.

It is interesting to speculate on the possibility that the poet of the Awntyrs may have intended his audience to regard the Tarn as an entrance to if not actually part of the Other World itself. The notion of a Purgatorial lake as well as fire was a common one in medieval literary tradition, both secular and religious. Certainly the watery abode of Grendel in Beowulf can be interpreted as an antechamber of hell.<sup>23</sup> A twelfth-century account of Saint Paul's vision of Purgatory includes a description of a fiery lake.<sup>24</sup> In a similar vision ascribed by Roger of Wendover to Turchill of Tunstead of body of water existed beside the more traditional flames. It was into this lake that souls were plunged after having spent an appropriate period in the fire itself.<sup>25</sup> The account of Tundale's sojourn in Purgatory, in which is given the description of the frozen lake where the souls of sinful monks and nuns were imprisoned, mentions yet another lake, storm-tossed and inhabited by monsters. This was spanned by a spiked bridge, over which thieves were compelled to transport any

goods they had stolen during their lifetimes. Matthew Paris gives an account of a vision of Purgatory allegedly experienced by a monk of Evesham in 1196. One of the most fearsome spectacles witnessed by the dreamer was of a great lake bounded on one side by a sheet of flame and on the other by a storm of ice and snow.

A. C. L. Brown notes that diving through a body of water was a favorite means of gaining access to the Other World with the Irish heroes, although the territories reached by this arduous route more often took on the aspect of Paradise rather than Purgatory. These submarine realms were, however, the habitat of supernatural beings, and affected mortals in peculiar ways. In the folktale Giolla an Fhuigha,<sup>27</sup> the hero is obliged to jump into a pond in order to retrieve a magic ferule. His leap takes him clear into Tir na n-Og, where he is entertained so splendidly he lingers in the underwater kingdom for a year and a day.<sup>28</sup>

The violent natural phenomena which herald the appearance of the Awntyrs ghost create an atmosphere of terror and foreboding essential to the story. There is reason to believe, however, that the unexpected storm which sends the queen and Gawain scurrying deeper into the woods in their search for shelter is not merely intended as an artistic device. In early Irish and Welsh literature so-called "magic storms" almost always overtake the hero in his travels, particularly if it is his intention to penetrate a barrier to the Other World. Like the storm in the Awntyrs, these are characterized by the rapid descent



of a dense black fog, rain, hail, and snow. Loíguire's journey to challenge a giant in Fled Bricrend is effectively impeded by a thick mist and dark cloud which completely envelope the landscape. <sup>29</sup> A violent hailstorm provides the chief natural obstacle to Mongain and his companions in the Tucait Baile. It is a blizzard that overtakes Conchobar, Conall and Bricriu as they make their way toward the palace of Lug. Pryderi and Rhiannon are conveyed into the Other World through the twin agencies of fog and thunder in Manawyddan Son of Llyr. <sup>30</sup> In the Awntyrs, we find that

The day wex als dirke  
 As hit were mydnighte myrke,  
 There-of þe king was irke  
 And liþte one his fote.

Thus to fote are þei farene,  
 þes frekes vnfayne,  
 And fleene fro þe forest to  
 þe fawe felle;  
 They rane faste to the roches  
 for reddoure of þe rayne,  
 For þe sneterand snowe þat  
 snayppede þame so snelle.

11. 75 - 82

Since it has already been mentioned that the Tarn Wadling may be an entrance to the Other World - of which the ghost is most assuredly an inhabitant - the storm the courtiers encounter as they approach the lake may be an analogue of those which trouble the Irish and Welsh heroes as they attempt to gain access to the various supernatural realms in which their greatest adventures take place.

Interwoven in the fabric of the first episode of the Awntyrs we find what is generally referred to as the motif of the Loathly Lady. Closely allied with the idea of the

soul reclaimed from Purgatory, the theme of a beautiful woman transformed into a hag as punishment for a sexual transgression is a constantly recurring one in medieval literature. It provides, for example, the basis for the romance of Thomas of Erceldoune, a work roughly contemporary with the Awntyrs. In this poem, a beautiful fairy woman is transformed into a misshapen hag immediately after consorting with a mortal man. Although in the Awntyrs we only encounter Gaynour's mother in the hideous guise created by the Purgatorial fires, we have her word that

I was redder of rode pene rose  
in þe rone,  
My lere as þe lele louched so  
li3te...

ll. 161 - 162

and that

...luf paramour, listes, and  
delites

l. 213

have brought her to this sorry pass.

A slightly different version of the motif of the Loathly Lady is present also in The Marriage of Sir Gawain and in The Weddyng of Syr Gawayne and Dame Ragnelle. Here, the lady's horrible external appearance results not from a sin of the flesh but from a spell cast by a malicious human agency. The enchantment can only be broken by a kiss or some other expression of sincere affection. As the titles of these two romances suggest, it is up to Gawain to perform the deed that will restore the lady to her former beauty. The main point of the story is, however, that the havoc wreaked by the enchantment need not be a permanent one -

just as the sojourn of the soul in Purgatory is a temporary stay shortened even further by the prayers of the living.

The previously mentioned similarities of the Tarn Wadling to an Other World lake such as the one mentioned in Giolla an Fhuigha and the parallels between the storm which overtakes the queen and Gawain and those which Rhiannon and Conchobar encounter provide ample proof that a great many of the most familiar themes of Arthurian romance were originally derived from motifs present in early Irish and Welsh literature. Just so may all the variations on the concept of the Loathly Lady be traced back to a single antecedent in those stories dealing with the kingship and foundation of the royal dynasties of Ireland. In these tales, the Sovereignty of the realm appeared to possible future rulers in the guise of a woman so repulsive that few men would care to offer the embrace she claimed as her due. He who overcame his distaste at the prospect of union with the creature was, however, rewarded with the kingship of Ireland - a gift only Sovereignty could bestow. Marriage with the king then effected the metamorphosis of the hag into a  
31  
a beautiful woman.

The transformation the ghost of Gaynour's mother is seeking is a spiritual one which will be externally manifested in physical terms. Her black and tattered body is symbolic of the state of her soul. The purification and deliverance which she seeks can only be effected by a human, which is her primary reason for returning to the mortal plane. The single difference between her situation and that of the Loathly Lady is that where the Lady's transfor-

mation will be accomplished by the means of a kiss, representative of human love, the ghost's will be wrought through prayer, symbolic of divine love.

Even in the prophetic aspect of Gaynour's mother's mission there may be discerned a connection with the theme of the hag transformed. In his pamphlet on "The Loathly Lady in Thomas of Erceldoune," William P. Albrecht points out the close ties existing between an ability to foretell future events and an evil or demonic nature. He cites as an example of this sort of relationship the story of Melerius, whose prophetic gifts resulted from fraternization with demons.<sup>32</sup> In the Awntyrs, Gaynour's mother speaks vividly of the host of devils who bank the Purgatorial fires and of her own connection with them:

Per folo me a ferde of fendes  
of helle  
Pey hurle me vnhendly, pei harme  
me in higte;  
In bras and in brymstone I brene  
as a belle...

11. 186 - 188

So it is possible that her ability to foretell the future may be a direct result of this contact.

It is clear, then, that the incidents which take place in the Awntyrs are drawn not from one but from a variety of traditions. A considerable number of analogues to these exist in other specimens of literature contemporary with the poem. In his discussion of Summer Sunday,<sup>33</sup> De Tribus Regibus Mortuis, and the Awntyrs, Thorlac Turville-Petre points out that all three pieces "have in common a description of a hunting scene which introduces,

in a delicately oblique fashion, a vision in which the protagonist is confronted by a personification of death or mutability. This is a particular use of a motif found often enough in the romances, where a hunting scene provides the setting for an adventure of some kind. In romances such as 'The Avowing of King Arthur', 'Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle', 'Partenope of Blois', and 'Sir Isumbras', the hero is lured by means of a hunt into a mysterious forest where strange adventures are only too likely to take place. The feature that distinguishes the three stanzaic alliterative poems...is the apparently incongruous use of a gay hunt to introduce a sombrely didactic vision of death." <sup>34</sup> Now, the similarities between the Awntyrs and Summer Sunday, a work which describes in its opening stages a deer chase which the narrator observes but does not actually participate in, have long been noted by critics. Both poems, for example, make extensive use of the motif of the wheel of Fortune, and place considerable emphasis on the notion of the transience of earthly existence. Turville-Petre is, however, the first writer to point out that many features of the Awntyrs bear a striking resemblance to those of De Tribus Regibus Mortuis. In this latter piece, as has been previously noted, the hunting scene serves as a prologue to an episode involving the supernatural. Here, three kings in pursuit of a boar are confronted by the ghosts of their fathers. As in the Awntyrs, a mist darkens the landscape just prior to the appearance of the spectres. Like Gaynour's mother, the

ghosts take the opportunity to contrast their former glory with their present pitiable state, and warn the three kings to mend their own ways on pain of eternal torment. Considerably shaken by this experience, the hunters thereupon resolve to lead lives devoted to good works. Gaynour's reaction is very much similar, although the effect the warning her mother's spirit has issued has had on the queen is not made clear until the very end of the second episode of the Awntyrs.<sup>35</sup>

There is a startling similarity between the prophecies the ghost utters concerning the fate of Arthur and the Round Table and certain incidents which take place in the Morte Arthure. Matthews, who has made a detailed examination of the subject, points out some of the more significant parallels between the two works:

The campaign in Italy that forms an unusual part of Morte Arthure is briefly alluded to in one line of Awntyrs: "Ther salle in tuskayne be tellede of that tresone" (l. 291); and a similar passing reference is made to Fortune's wheel: "Maye no mene stere hym (Arthur) of strenghe whilles þe whele standis" (l. 266). The ghost of Guenevere's mother, prophesying the death of Gawain, tells him that "in a slake þou salle be skayne" (l. 298); in Morte Arthure, the uncommon Norse loanword "slake," meaning a depression between hills, is used just before Gawain lands for his final battle: "Thene was it slyke a slowde in slakkes fulle hugge" (l. 3719). This prophesy contains further topographical details that make it fairly sure what was the source:

And ther sall the Rownde  
Tabille losse the renowne

Be-syde ramssaye, fulle ryghte  
at a rydyng,  
And at Dorset salle dy the  
doghetyeste of alle. (293-295)

The riding beside Romsey (seven miles from Southampton and still nearer to Winchester) corresponds to the battle between Southampton and Winchester in Morte Arthure, and although Dorset is incorrect (Romsey is just inside the Hampshire border), the name must derive from a line in Morte Arthure in which the king's movements to Cornwall for the final battle are mentioned: "Thene drawes he to Dorsett, and dreches no langere" (l. 4052). As symbols for the slaughter that Arthur has committed in his conquest of France, the ghost names "The Frollo and þe Farnaghe" (l. 275) (the other manuscripts have "Frol and his Farnet" and the rationalizing "Freol and his folke"). These names are clearly corruptions of names mentioned in the interpretation of Arthur's dream in Morte Arthure. In that interpretation, the philosopher cites Frollo and Feraunt as knights whom Arthur has slain in France and for whom he should make expiation (l. 3404). Frollo appears in all accounts of Arthur's conquest of France, but Feraunt seems to be the invention of the Morte Arthure poet. 36

In addition to his summary of these parallels, Matthews points out that:

It is also of interest that the ghost's prophecy in AA is imagined as occurring after the conquest of France and before the campaign against Lucius: this timing and the association of the events with Carlisle and its social pleasures might mean that AA was conceived as a prologue to MA, the events taking place sometime before Lucius' challenge. 37

The doctrine of Fortune which the ghost briefly expounds is, as Matthews remarks, that of Fortune-in-War. The purveyor of man's destiny is depicted as an agent of Provi-

dence, meting out divine justice to transgressors. Indeed, the ghost herself displays a properly Christian contempt for any more omnipotent role that may be allotted to the goddess when it refers to her as "False Fortune in fighte" (l. 270).

The ghost's trenchant criticism of King Arthur provides the occasion for this brief excursion into medieval philosophy. "'Your king is to couetous'" the spectre tells Gawain, and it is for his imperial dream that Arthur will be punished by the revolution of Fortune's wheel. The implication behind the ghost's commentary is that this reversal will be no mere accident of fate but a form of divine retribution for the sins of pride and aggression Arthur is guilty of committing. Fortune-in-War will betray the king, placing him defenseless in the hands of the goddess as she performs her duty as the agent of Providence.

Throughout the first episode of the poem the author provides us with examples of the effect of the revolution of the wheel. The plot itself - the situation of the dead returning from Purgatory to reproach the presumably virtuous living for their sins - constitutes a supreme irony of fate. The ghost herself is a pitiable example of the turn-of the wheel and of the results of divine retribution; from being the most beautiful of mortal women she has become the most hideous of supernatural hags. Even the natural world is subject to this inexorable change, as an eclipse turns bright noonday to midnight, and fair weather changes magically to foul. The implication behind all these paradoxical events is that even well-established standards



are subject to sudden and startling alteration by the revolution of Fortune's wheel. Transformation - typified by that which the ghost has undergone and presumably will undergo in the future - is the major pattern of the first part of the poem.

Our attitude toward the two other participants in the "awntyf" of this episode is profoundly affected by these revelations. We see Gaynour and Gawain unexpectedly thrust into a situation which demands to be met with all the reserves of moral and spiritual strength the two can possibly summon up. The encounter is a form of test, for the manner in which the queen and her escort choose to react to the apparition and her prophecies will reveal to us the dimensions of their characters.

On the mortal plane, of course, it is Gawain who becomes the most important figure in the poem. The interpretation of his character offered by the poet is a complex one, for it reveals to us a knight who discharges his duty bravely and well, yet expresses doubt that the actions he is called upon to perform in the service of his king can be adequately reconciled with the true Christian spirit. Gawain's faults, as well as his virtues, are subject to close scrutiny. The portrait is that of a generous and courageous knight, an outstanding personality, who nevertheless falls just slightly short of the ideal.

In interpreting the character of Gawain with respect to his behavior in this particular section of the poem, it may be useful to recall the traditional allegation that the knight's martial prowess increased and decreased with

the rising and the setting of the sun. A number of romances, both French and English, contain specific references to this curious phenomenon. According to the thirteenth-century prose Merlin,<sup>38</sup>

Quant heure de miedi fu venue  
et il se fuserent un poi repose,  
Gauvains, qui estoit de tel maniere  
que en tou tes saisons li doubloit  
sa force entour heure de miedi et  
crois soit et amondoit plus q'ua  
nul autre homme, si tost comme  
miedis fu venus, et il se senti  
legier et viste autant ou plus  
qu'il n'avoit este au commenche-  
ment.

In the stanzaic Morte Arthur, this striking passage occurs;

Than had syr gawayne such a grace,  
An holy man had boddyn that bone  
When he were in Any place,  
There he shuld batayle done  
Hys strength shulld wex in suche A  
space  
From the vndyr-tyme tylle none...

ll. 2805 - 2809

The poet of Arthur and Merlin offers a slightly different explanation for the source of Gawain's superhuman strength

Bitven auen-song and night  
He no hadde bot o mannes might,  
And that strengthe him laste  
Fort aruemorwe bi the last;  
He hadde strengthe of knightes  
tvay;  
Fram midday fort after-none  
He hadde strengthe bot of one;  
Fram afternone to euensong  
So to knightes he was strong.

ll. 4793 - 4802

The version given by Malory<sup>39</sup> parallels in almost every detail the one provided in the stanzaic Morte Arthur:

Then had sir Gawayne suche a  
grace and gyffte that an holy  
men had gyvyn hym; that every  
day in the yere, frome undern

tyll highe noone, hys myght  
increased tho three oures as  
much as thryse hys strength  
...And than when it was paste  
noone sir Gawaynes strengthe  
was gone and he had no more  
but hys owne myght.

In the Awntyrs, the encounter with the ghost occurs at midday. Since the sun at noon reaches its zenith, we would accordingly expect Gawain's strength to be at its peak when the "ferly" takes place. However, it must be recalled that the sun has vanished in an eclipse, and the world grown dark. Thus is the hero not only deprived of the main source of his prowess but is put in a situation where his strength is at its lowest ebb.

The disappearance of the sun, vital to the other-worldly setting of the first episode of the poem, may therefore help to explain why Gawain is initially unable to drive the ghost away. He reaches out with his sword and conjures the spirit in the name of Christ, but cannot prevent the creature from approaching the queen. Even Gaynour seems to realize that her knight is helpless under such circumstances, as her cries for help suggest:

"Sir Cadour, Sir Clegis, Sir Constantyne,  
Sir Cay,  
es kny<sub>3</sub>tes arne vncurtayse - by crose  
and by crede -  
at bus only haue me laft one my depe  
day  
With þe grisselist goost þat euer herd  
I grede."

11. 96 -99

There is no mention in these lines of her escort, to whom we would naturally suppose the queen would turn first for assistance.

Despite his inability to drive the creature back into the Tarn, however, Gawain remains remarkably unshaken. Hanna has interpreted this coolness in the face of supernatural danger as a form of foolhardiness, asking if "a rational sense of fear is not a desirable part of the character of a fighting man."<sup>40</sup> It would seem, however, that the critic has lost sight of Gawain's primary duty as escort, which is to protect the queen from all potential or real threats to her person. To panic in such circumstances would constitute a serious infraction of the code to which the knight subscribes. And in any case, Gawain's coolness serves an artistic purpose in the context of the story, helping as it does to relieve some of the tension created by the cries of Gaynour and the shrieks of the ghost.

It is in fact a measure of the strength of Gawain's character that his first reaction to the ghost is not one of horror but of concern. After soothing Gaynour, he informs the queen that he will

"...speke withe þe sprete,  
And of þe ways I shalle wete,  
What may þe bales bete  
Of þe body bare."

11. 101 - 104

It is as if he has discerned in the ghost's cries not menace but a real anguish which he will at least attempt to alleviate. The compassion he manifests, even toward a supernatural being, is an unexpected element in the character of a warrior. On the other hand, Gaynour expresses no such concern at first - her primary reaction to the situ-

ation is one of shock and outrage at being deserted by her companions in the face of danger.

It is in Gawain's conversation with the ghost that the first hints are given of what John Speirs has designated the "morally troubled" aspect of the knight's character.<sup>41</sup> After listening to the spectre describe to Gaynour the sins most grievous to God, Gawain breaks in with a question of his own:

"How shal we fare...pat fondene  
to fighte  
And þus defoulene þe folke one  
fele kinges londes;  
And riches ouer reymes with-outne  
eny righte -  
Wynnene worshippe in werre þorgh  
wightnesse of hondes?"

ll. 261 - 264

The key phrase in this speech is of course "'with-outene eny righte.'" So here Gawain not only makes the startling admission that the means by which Arthur has conquered the territory over which he is lord may have been unnecessarily harsh, but even that the idea of imperialism itself may be contrary to the dictates of justice and mercy. It is an unusual comment for a man whose whole existence is dedicated to conquest to make.

Matthews points out that "although Gawain is here assuming a responsibility that is primarily the king's, the ghost twice advises him to repentance."<sup>42</sup> It would seem, therefore, that for the spectre the knight exists not so much on the individual and personal level as on the representative. Ironically, it is by virtue of his position as the supreme warrior of the court that he becomes the scape-

goat for the Round Table as a whole. The compunction Gawain expresses in his exchanges with the ghost is insufficient to compensate for his past sins and for those of his fellows. He must actively make retribution for the role he has played in the conquest of other lands.

Hanna's interpretation of the knight's character seems to contradict everything we have just learned about him. "Gawain's pride and confidence in the value of martial experience form the basis of his conversation with the ghost. But the Arthurian hero proves unable to see the value of the ghost's counsel, her statement that the life of violence is a life of impermanence. Exulting in the beauty of conquest and despoliation (261-64), Gawain fails to consider his own mortality, that he too may be victimized in battle, that mere ceaseless activity cannot protect one from the ravages of Fortune."<sup>43</sup> The lines Hanna cites as proof of his contention, however, are just those in which Gawain expresses his doubt that the goals of the conquerer can be satisfactorily reconciled with the demands of common humanity. We see him deeply troubled over his role as a warrior rather than mindlessly confident of the rightness of his actions.

It is rather more difficult to interpret the character of the queen on the basis of her actions in the first episode of the poem. Despite the fact that she is the primary object of the ghost's warnings and reproaches, Guinevere seems not nearly so profoundly affected by the incident as does Gawain. True, the queen expresses genuine concern for her mother's condition, and agrees wholeheartedly to have

said the masses necessary for the spirit's repose. And it should be noted that her grief is powerful enough to banish the fear she had initially felt. The queen is not, however, prey to the anxious soul-searching and compunction that afflict her escort. It would seem that her reactions to the apparition stem from a less complex emotional source than do those of Gawain.

This is not to say, however, that Gaynour is incapable of perceiving the implications behind the ghost's remarks. Nor does she manifest insensitivity, for her first action upon recovering from her fright is to ask - twice - if there is anything she may do to alleviate her mother's torment. And after this problem has been resolved, the queen begs to be told what human failing is most offensive to God, thus demonstrating that she has some spiritual awareness and is troubled by the question of salvation. Gaynour's flaw in the first episode of the poem is that, unlike Gawain, she is not led by the ghost's words to ponder her role and the consequences of her actions.

"Pride" is the response which the queen's question elicits from the spectre, and it is of this sin which Gaynour is above all guilty. There is a nice touch of irony in the description of her at the beginning of the poem which clearly establishes this point. Despite the fact that the queen is arrayed in her finest robes, beribboned and liberally encrusted with sapphires and rubies, she appears at the hunt riding "one a mule as þe mylke" (l. 25). The mule is a symbol of humility - a virtue of which few other traces can be detected either in Gaynour's dress or be-

havior. Her choice of such a mount is apparently intended to convey an air of meekness (and, in view of the color of the animal, purity), but the effect she strives for is confounded by the richness of her attire. Gaynour is of course unaware of the fundamental contradiction represented by her actions. It is the queen's failure to grasp the essential meaning of humility that the ghost will challenge. Only in the latter part of the poem does the reader find that Gaynour has truly learned the lesson her mother's spirit has striven to impart. It will take a crisis to bring the significance of the ghost's counsel home to her.



The Scottis chyftayne was zong and in  
a rage.  
Vsynt in wer and fechtis with curage.

The Wallace, V, ll. 65-66

Chapter V  
The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne:  
The Second Episode

Perhaps because the second episode of the Awntyrs is a far more conventional one than that of the first - no solar eclipses or supernatural hags appear to darken the landscape here - it has received less critical attention and appreciation than it undoubtedly deserves. Hanna, for example, regards the latter part of the poem as distinctly inferior in both theme and technique to the former. The critic moreover supports the contention that there is but a vague philosophical connection between the events related in either episode.<sup>1</sup> This view is, however, an extreme one, and not really merited by the evidence cited in support of it. Indeed, the entire significance of the first episode of the poem hinges on the outcome of the second, for it is here that the ideas generated by the confrontation of the ghost with Gaynour and Gawain are translated into direct action.

The story itself begins when a stranger knight, one Galeron of Galloway, rides into Arthur's court to demand the return of lands which the king has seized and given to Gawain. The knight is accompanied by a beautiful woman whose presence emphasizes the drama of the occasion. It is eventually decided that the dispute will be resolved by armed combat between Gawain and Galeron, Galeron to be reinstated with his property if he wins. Midway through the battle, however, Gaynour intervenes on behalf of both knights, who are on the point of fatally injuring each other. Galeron's lands are thereupon restored to him, and in due course he is initiated into the fellowship of the Round Table. Gawain is similarly rewarded for his bravery

by the grant of a dukedom in Wales.

Hermann Lübke was the first critic to set forth the theory that the Awntyrs, rather than being a single self-contained narrative of some 715 lines, consists in fact of two separate poems probably composed by different authors, pieces which were at some later time tied loosely together by a scribe and then passed off as a unified whole. Lübke's argument, which appeared in print in 1883,<sup>2</sup> rests on six main points. These are outlined as follows:

1. Single rather than plural nouns are used throughout the poem to refer to each "awntyrr" and "ferly" being related.
2. The subject matter and theme of the first episode are diametrically opposed to those of the second.
3. No reference is made in the second part of the poem to the events of the first.
4. There exist numerous metric and linguistic differences between either episode.
5. Part I has a preponderance of -ight rhymes and II a corresponding frequency of -ell, -ow, and -ides rhymes.
6. The rhyme scheme of the work as a whole is irregular.

Lübke's theory is revived by Hanna, who follows his predecessor's lead in splitting the Awntyrs into two parts: A, consisting of ll. 1 - 338 and 703-715, and B, consisting of ll. 339 - 702. As I have mentioned previously, it is Hanna's contention as well that the opening episode of the work is much the superior of the latter in all respects. "A reader ought to be struck by the differing levels of poetic competence in the first and second halves of the poem. In particular, the author of the second portion proves repetitive and often unimaginative at fulfilling

satisfactorily the demanding artifices which his predecessor initiated as the ground form...If Awntyrs B is read as an independent work, however much its author may be expected to enhance his theme by collocation with an earlier work; a good deal of the supposed Christian force of that poem vanishes; Awntyrs A also stands out as a piece with considerably more unity than is generally supposed."<sup>3</sup>

Both Hanna's and Lübke's arguments, however, fail to stand up under examination.<sup>4</sup> The close thematic connection between the first and second episodes of the poem has already been noted, and so requires little further discussion here. Both the ghost of Gaynour's mother and Sir Galeron serve an identical purpose - that of undermining the complacency of the courtiers and awakening them to a sense of their own moral and spiritual failings. The idea of the uncertainty of existence and the inevitability of change is developed in much the same manner in either episode of the poem. The fall from high estate which the ghost predicts for Arthur finds a close parallel in the drastic change in Fortune of which Sir Galeron has come to the court to protest. Just as the Scottish knight has lost his lordship, so will the king eventually be deprived of his. Both parts of the Awntyrs are constructed around a sequence of striking and unusual events - all based on the challenge motif - intended not only to support the narrative framework but to provide insight as well into the moral points the author is attempting to drive home. It is difficult to imagine a more vivid way to depict the consequences sin will bring in the afterlife than by calling forth a spirit to describe the horrors of the Purgatorial state

to erring mortals. And in a similar fashion the plight of Sir Galeron provides a striking illustration of the change that accompanies the revolution of Fortune's wheel.

The unity of the Awntyrs exists in more than just theme and symbol, of course. It extends as far as the very approach which the poet takes toward his subject. Both sections, for example, contain highly detailed and ornamental portraits of the chief characters, portraits which serve much more than a descriptive purpose. In each part the poet contrasts the commonplace with the bizarre or the disruptive. His love of pageantry is reflected not only in his account of the courtiers setting forth to hunt (ll. 1 - 65) but in the description of Galeron's reception at the court (ll. 439 - 460). The two episodes of the work are further linked by a chain of incongruities. Irony is the principal medium upon which the poet relies to convey to his audience a sense of the inconsistency between thought and action betrayed by the speeches and behavior of his subjects. Gawain's assertion at one point that God will automatically stand on the side of Arthur's men is in direct opposition to the doubts he had expressed earlier that the actions of his fellow warriors and his sovereign could be justified - a contrast which underlines sharply the one particular weakness of his character. The vivid description of Arthur at the beginning of the second episode is very much similar in spirit and intent to that of Gaynour at the beginning of the first part:

The king to souper is set, and  
serued in sale,  
Under a siller of silke dayntly  
digte,  
With alle the wirchipe to welde  
and wyne for to wale...

11. 339 - 341

The mane in his mantylle syttis  
at his mete,  
In pal pured with pene, prodly  
pight,  
Trofelyte and trauerste wythe  
trewloues in trete;  
Ye tasses were of topas pat  
were pere-to tigte.

11. 352 - 355

Thus Sir Gawayne þe gay Dame  
Gaynour he ledes,  
In a gleterand gide þat glemed  
fulle gay,  
With riche ribaynes reuersset -  
ho-so righte redes -  
Rayled with rybees of rielle  
aray;  
Her hode of a hawe huwe, þat  
here hede hedes,  
Of pillour, of palwerke, of  
perre to paye;  
Schurde in a short cloke þat  
þe rayne shedes,  
Set ouer with saffres sopely  
to say -  
With saffres and seladynes  
serclet on þe sides.  
Here sadel set of þat ilke,  
Saude with sambutes of silke;  
One a mule als þe mylke,  
Gaili she glides.

11. 14 - 26

The enthusiastic praise accorded to Arthur's external appearance and bearing provides an ironic contrast to the far from laudatory observations which have been made concerning the king's character and actions. The fulsome adulation accorded Gaynour strikes a similar chord when the reader finds that the purely physical "fresshe favour" for

which she is celebrated conceals a corresponding spiritual weakness.

It is of course to the figure of the Scottish knight that our attention is first drawn in the latter part of the poem. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the characterization of Sir Galeron is that he becomes for us a sympathetic figure in a way that enemies of the Arthurian court seldom ever do. Despite the fact that he never loses his admiration for Gawain, the sympathies of the poet himself seem to lie in some respects as much with the Scottish knight and his cause as with the king's chief courtier. The audience is impressed with the notion that Galeron is no mere crude interloper gratuitously attempting to stir up trouble in the Arthurian circle but an honest and upright man in search of redress for a serious injury done him. Furthermore, the description afforded of the Scottish knight's bearing and dress certainly suggests that he will prove a formidable opponent to the one who accepts the challenge he has presented.<sup>5</sup>

Sir Galeron is more than just a physically impressive figure, however. I have already commented on the fact that his function as a character in the second episode of the poem closely parallels that of the ghost in the first. Like Gaynour's mother, he serves to bring the members of the court to an awareness of the many injustices they have fostered. We see Galeron as the principal victim of the very aggression and covetousness for which the ghost had most strongly criticized Arthur. Furthermore, the action of the knight in coming to court in order to reclaim what



is after all his rightful property ironically foreshadows the insurrection that will one day cost the king both his throne and his life. So ultimately the audience sees in Sir Galeron and his mission a verification of the ghost's warnings and predictions. He, like Gaynour's mother, is an exemplum the court cannot avoid coming to terms with. It is in order to draw attention to this point that the poet depicts the Scottish knight in such a sympathetic light.

Unlike the luminaries in the Arthurian corpus, such as Ywain, Tristan, Kay, and Gawain, Galeron does not appear to have an immediately recognizable prototype in the oldest tradition. It is only in the Awntyrs that the Scottish knight becomes a fully developed character. References to an individual with a similar-sounding name are however given in the French Perceval romances of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to discover that in these the hypothetical prototype of Galeron is persistently associated with Wales. The composers of the later Middle English verse and prose narratives, no doubt taking their cue from the Awntyrs poet, are on the other hand unanimous in attributing to Galeron a Scottish connection. The fine distinction drawn between the two no doubt originated from the fact that Cumbria, an early kingdom encompassing parts of both southwest Scotland and northwest England, was British (Welsh) territory.

Although Galeron's putative ancestor assumes only a very minor role in the French Perceval romances, he is nonetheless invariably connected in them with two of the

most exalted figures in the Arthurian corpus as a whole. The author of the Perlesvaus, for example, cites Galerians de la Blanche Tor as one of the twelve paternal uncles of the hero. In the various manuscripts of the First Continuation of the Perceval, the name of Galegentins li Galois is persistently coupled with that of Caradoc Briebras:

Et Galegentins li Galois  
Fu trezieme, qu'ainz ne  
    fu mez  
O le preu Caradoc Breibras  
Vos di ge que quatorze sont;  
Quinze o Toulas de Rogemont.

ll. 3782 - 3786

In view of Galegentins' association with Wales, it becomes doubly interesting to find that for Caradoc a prototype exists in the early tradition. Despite the relative scarcity of extant material relating to him, Caradawc Vreichvras (Caradawg Freichfras) appears to have been a figure of considerable importance in Welsh literature. The fame this character must have attained is attested to even by the hagiographers, who as we have seen were not ordinarily disposed toward the glorification of the images of the heroes of Arthurian romances. At any rate, the Life of Saint Padarn describes Caradoc Breibras as the principal colonist of Brittany. In the Livre de Caradoc, which constitutes a good part of the First Continuation of the Perceval, he appears as the ruler of Vannes. Bromwich remarks that "it is apparent that Welsh traditions about Caradawg made their way into Brittany at an early date, even if the historical connection claimed in the Life of Saint Padarn is to be rejected."<sup>7</sup> The antiquity of the

various stories relating to this character is confirmed by the presence in the Livre de Caradoc of a strange little anecdote concerning the circumstances of the hero's conception and birth. In this it is reported that Caradoc's mother was delivered of the future king of Vannes in conjunction with a horse, a hare, and a boar. The last mentioned of these beasts, Tortain, is of course none other than the Twrch Trwyth of the Mirabilia and the Gorchan of Cynfelyn.

It is not with Caradoc but with Gawain that Galeron is linked in the Middle English romances. The poet of the Morte Arthure cites "Galyrane" (l. 3636) as one of the stalwart men to whom the king turns first for aid in deposing Mordred. There is a reference to Galeron near the beginning of Sir Gawain and the Carle off Carlisle (l. 43), in which he is listed as one of the members of the Round Table. In Malory the representation of his character fluctuates between that of "a noble knyght who had done many dedys of armys" and is called upon to serve as one of the godfathers at the baptism of the pagan knight Palomides and that of a spy and informer, for Galeron is one of the twelve men who with Mordred and Agravaine surprise Lancelot and Guenevere at an assignation. Of the group, Malory remarks that "all they were of Scotlonde, others elles of sir Gawaynes kynne, othir well-wyllers to hys brother." In both the Morte d'Arthur and in Sir Gawain and the Carle off Carlisle, Galeron is associated with the town of Carlisle itself - a tradition evidently established by the poet of the Awntyrs.

As in the first episode of the alliterative romance,

Arthur himself plays only a secondary role in the action. We see him once again as the overseer and guiding spirit of the Round Table rather than as an actual participant in the affairs of the court. However, the flaws in the king's character that were only hinted at previously are here magnified into greater perspective by the circumstances in which the story is set. Arthur's manner of responding to the crisis created by Galeron's demand reveals to us a whole new side to his personality.

The second episode opens with a description of the king being served by his retainers at the high table. Once again the poet indulges in fulsome admiration for Arthur and all his royal magnificence:

He was þe soueraynest of al,  
sitting in sete,  
þat euer segge had sene with  
his eye-sighte -

ll. 358 - 359

On the surface, there is nothing particularly noteworthy about this passage except, perhaps, for the flamboyance of the language used in it. Since the poet has, however, already suggested that "the mane in his mantylle" is guilty of some rather barbaric acts of cruelty in addition to the sins of pride and avarice, the effect of his fine words here is somewhat spoiled. It would seem, in fact, that the author's praise of his royal subject is deliberately exaggerated in order to make the reader wonder uneasily whether or not Arthur is worthy of such adulation at all.

The list of grievances presented by the Scottish

knight seems to make little visible impression on the king, despite the fact that it is he who is the butt of Galeron's accusations. Throughout the entire discussion Arthur strikes the pose of someone whose patience is being severely tried but who nonetheless manages to bear up under the strain with fortitude. When the king finally consents to Galeron's demand, it is with an air of amused exasperation. He first explains that he and his companions are:

"...in þe wode went to walke one  
oure waithe,  
To hunte at þe herdis with hounde  
and with horne;  
We ar in oure gamen, we haue no  
gome gripe...

ll. 434 - 436

and as such are not really prepared to do battle over property rights. The implication behind his words seems to be that the court has better ways to spend its time than mediating a dispute between two landholders.

The faintly unpleasant impression we have so far been given of Arthur's character is reinforced by the ensuing events of the poem. After Galeron has been led away to his quarters, the king promptly summons a council of his warriors and asks for a volunteer to fight the Scottish knight. Ironically it is of course Arthur who is responsible for creating in the first place the situation of which Galeron has come to complain, but he does not appear willing to accept the consequences of his actions. Instead, he asks that an outsider take on the task of settling the dispute. Arthur immediately accepts Gawain's offer to do so, merely remarking that he would rather lose the estates

in contention then see his nephew's life endangered.

Intensely loyal though he is, Gawain is not so blinded by admiration for the king that he is unable to recognize Arthur's weakness in the face of the present crisis. The situation is, after all, one which demands rapid and decisive handling - something the king evidently cannot provide. Gawain's prompt offer to fight Galeron seems in part inspired by a desire to cover up Arthur's failure to claim responsibility for the whole affair, thus saving both his overlord and the Round Table the supreme embarrassment of having the Scottish knight win by default. As always in these romances, Gawain rises to the occasion. One of his most consistent attributes is his reliability in such emergencies.

But even Gawain's motives in accepting the challenge are open to some serious questioning. He is, of course, quite naturally anxious to retain the gift of land presented to him by the king as well as to defend the dubious honor of Arthur's actions. But in response to the king's expression of concern for his welfare, Gawain says:

"Let go...God stond with þe riȝte!  
If he skape skapelese hit were a  
foule scorene."

11. 471 - 472

His nonchalant acceptance of the risk involved in meeting Galeron's challenge is of course a mark of his personal courage. It is disconcerting, however, to find in Gawain's words a touch of that aggressive confidence so typical of the professional warrior - a quality which moreover Gawain had deplored in his conversations with the ghost. His

assumption that God will be on his side - the "right" side - strikes the reader as peculiarly inconsistent as well as arrogant.

It is at this point that many of the parallels between the second episode of the Awntyrs and other poems of the alliterative revival begin to become obvious. "One theme that is prominent in Morte Arthure and also appears in Awntyrs of Arthure is the sacrifice of a knight in a cause for which his king is blameworthy..." Matthews remarks. "The same theme appears in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, where it forms one of the many moral elements that fleck the poem's gaiety with seriousness... Gawain, prepared to sacrifice his life for the honor of the Round Table and the safety of his lord, is a Christ-like figure, even though, as in Morte Arthure and Awntyrs of Arthure, too, he is touched with human weakness - on the verge of his testing his resolve weakens and he clings to his life." <sup>8</sup> The same theme also appears in Golegros and Gawane, where Arthur dispatches his best knight to take the consequences for a situation the king's own greed and blundering have created. Once again, he suffers badly in comparison with Gawain, who is portrayed as the paragon of all the virtues his overlord lacks. <sup>9</sup>

Many critics tend to view the account of the battle between Gawain and Galeron as one of the least significant elements in the poem, both in terms of theme and originality. And it is true that because of their sensational quality the events related in the first section of the Awntyrs tend to overshadow those described in the second. But how-

ever (deceptively) pedestrian by comparison with the initial episode of the poem the combat scene in the final episode may appear, the fact remains that it serves a purpose essential to the function of the work as an organic whole. It is here that the moral potential of the opening sequence of the poem is fully realized. The reader finds too that the experience of combat has a direct bearing on the development of the characters of the two combatants. Although Gawain has a vested interest in the outcome of the fight, the issue does not affect him on the intensely personal level it does Galeron. Initially Arthur's knight fights only to defend the honor of his overlord and to maintain possession of a property he acquired through an accident of war. For Galeron, who is attempting to regain his patrimony, the implications of the struggle are much wider.

The outcome of the fight, however, becomes of supreme importance to Gawain when a chance blow of Galeron's sword decapitates his beloved horse Grizel. Gawain mourns over the body as if over the corpse of a comrade-in-arms:

"Grisselle," quod Gawayne, "gone is,  
God wote!  
He was þe burlokest blonke þat euer  
bote brede;  
By him þat in Bedeleem was borne for  
our bote,  
I shalle venge þe to day if I cone  
right rede."

ll. 547 - 550

He is profoundly touched by the death of the horse, and we see in his response to this crisis a new awareness of the vulnerability of all mortal things.



The effects and implications of the battle are not felt only by the combatants, however. It is during the course of the duel that we see the previously suspended development of the queen's character completed. Gaynour is the one spectator most deeply grieved by the incident. Although the other members of the court cry out in anguish at the sight of Gawain's wounds, it is the queen who ultimately attempts to put a stop to the carnage. And despite the fact that her intervention is in part prompted by the shrieks and pleas of the Scottish knight's lady, we see in Gaynour's reaction to the situation a strong indication that the reproaches of the ghost have finally taken hold.

The effect of Gaynour's fears for Gawain's safety is to inspire in her some awareness of the dimensions of human suffering, not only as represented in the immediate situation but in a universal sense as well. Both inclination and royal status had in the past combined to insulate the queen from the harsher aspects of reality. The conflict between the two knights has moved her to feel true pity - and pity's corollary charity - for the suffering. It is an indication of just how greatly the queen's character has broadened that she can even plead for mercy on behalf of Galeron, the sworn foe of her own husband. Moreover, as is suggested by ll. 599 - 600, she is the first of the spectators to realize the folly and waste of warfare;

Thus gretis Gaynour withe bope here  
gray yene,  
For gref of Sir Gawayne, grisly was  
wound...

It is interesting to note that before approaching

Arthur to plead for the lives of the knights Gaynour pauses to remove her crown. In doing so the queen is of course symbolically relegating her royal status. What is more, the attitude she adopts just prior to delivering her petition is that of any humble supplicant. In the course of her brief but poignant speech to the king, Gaynour even refers to herself simply as Arthur's wife rather than as his queen. So it would seem from her behavior here that the queen has finally learned that lesson in humility which the ghost had attempted to impart to her on the occasion of their meeting at the Tarn Wadling.

It is worthy of comment that while Galeron chooses to cease fighting, Gawain has to be ordered to do so by the king. Perhaps it is the debilitating effect of his wounds, but the Scottish knight has been purged of his wrath. This change in Galeron's attitude is as great as that which Gaynour has undergone. Both the queen and the Scottish knight have been matured by their various experiences as spectator and combatant. Gawain, on the other hand, is still bent on avenging the death of Grizel. It is only after he is made to cease fighting that the realization already attained by Gaynour and Galeron comes to him.

Arthur partially redeems himself by freely restoring Galeron's lands to him, even though the combat has resulted in a stalemate. Perhaps the king, too, has become slightly weary of bloodshed and conquest. At any rate, his generosity pleases us the more because he is not, by the condi-

tions previously stated, under any real obligation to restore the Scottish knight's property. His only debt is a moral one, and this he discharges with a fair amount of grace. But Arthur still, however, has not realized that the responsibility for creating the situation which led to the battle rests ultimately only with him. He remains to the end detached from the entire affair.

The poem ends on the same note on which it began. The reader sees the members of the Arthurian court reunited, and, for the moment at least, in harmony with their environment. Gaynour issues directives for the celebration of the masses necessary for the salvation of her mother's soul. Arthur and his "erles" resume their hunting activities near the Tarn Wadling, now no longer overshadowed by the spirit of a being in torment. Appearances suggest that neither of the "awntyrs" which has transpired has effected the slightest alteration in the life of the courtiers. But the implication - and the hope - of the poet is that at least three of his characters have learned a lesson in "resone and righte" they will not soon forget.

One final but nonetheless extremely important aspect of the latter episode of the Awntyrs still remains to be discussed. This involves the fact that no literary source has ever been discovered for the second part of the romance. It would seem then worthwhile considering the possibility that the plot of this sequence may in fact have been inspired by actual historical events, and that the participants in these events served as the models for the principal characters in the poem. Such a method of

interpretation has been applied with considerable success in the case of at least one other fourteenth century Arthurian verse narrative. The standard reading of the Morte Arthure hinges to a significant degree on the identification of the hero of the piece with Edward III. Matthews, following to some extent the path cleared by Neilson, not only maintains that the character of Arthur was based on that of the Plantagenet king, but that certain episodes of the poem consist in an analogue to the most dramatic events of Edward's reign.<sup>10</sup> Whereas the more recent of the two critics chooses to regard the piece as a criticism of Edward and his imperial ambitions, Neilson interprets the poem as a panegyric to Edward's greatness. There seems to be more evidence in support of Matthews's view, however, and in any case Neilson's great contention that the Morte Arthure was written by a Scot - and a Scot with a strong sense of national identity at that - can hardly be said to square with his conviction that the piece was written in<sup>11</sup> praise of an English king.

If there is an historical prototype for the Arthur of the Awntyrs, this may well be provided by the first rather than by the third Edward. The identification is suggested by a number of parallels existing between the incidents related in the second episode of the poem and certain events which took place in the final decade of the thirteenth century and the opening years of the fourteenth century, the latter years of Edward I's reign. The first Anglo-Scottish War of Independence began in 1296, precipitated by the attempts of Edward to impose suzerainty

on the northern kingdom. In the Awntyrs, the clash between Arthur and Galeron is occasioned by the latter's effort to regain and preserve the autonomy of which Arthur has endeavored to deprive him. A great deal of emphasis, too, is placed on the fact that Galeron is a Scot. Now, so general a resemblance between the sequence of events in the second episode of the alliterative romance and the state of Anglo-Scottish relations at the end of the thirteenth century cannot by itself support the argument that the latter might have served as the inspiration for the former. Such a contention is, however, strengthened by a number of other more specific parallels which may be drawn between the two situations. In September of 1298, Edward sent out a summons commanding a select group of nobles to assemble at Carlisle the following June.<sup>12</sup> At this convocation, the king took the opportunity to award some of his supporters with tracts of property in Scotland.<sup>13</sup> In the Awntyrs, the dispute between Arthur and Galeron over the ownership of certain Scottish lands takes place in Carlisle.

It is of no small significance that the territory to which Galeron lays primary claim should be Galloway. Today, the area designated by this name incorporates the two southernmost shires in Scotland, Wigtown and Kirkcudbright. During the early medieval period, however, Galloway defined a region and a population group far more extensive than that encompassed by the modern sense of the term. In the ninth century the early form of the name, Gall-Ghaidhil, applied not merely to the area and inhabitants of present-day Wigtown and Kirkcudbright but to the territory and

settlers of the west coast and islands as well. <sup>14</sup> It is to designate the same sweeping expanse that the term is used in the Awntyrs. <sup>15</sup> Like Carlisle, Galloway was the scene in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries of some of the most crucial events in Scottish history. It became in fact the springboard from which Edward I would launch the majority of his campaigns against the northern kingdom. The Plantagenet king had intentions of moving troops into Galloway in 1298, but was prevented from doing so by the muddled condition of Scotland's domestic affairs and by the lack of necessary supplies. His next proposed invasion in June of 1300 - which was, incidentally, to originate from Carlisle - fared little better. "The total force of cavalry and foot was comparable to that which Edward had at Falkirk, but nothing happened except the fall of Caer-<sup>16</sup>laverock castle and some marching to and fro in Galloway." A multitude of similar incidents, which lack of space prevents me from giving a further account of here, took place between 1296 and 1307. The fact that Edward made repeated but ultimately unsuccessful attempts to gain control of Galloway however assumes considerable importance in terms of the suggested identification of the Plantagenet king with the Arthur of the Awntyrs, who is represented as attempting to establish interests of his own above the Solway.

It is worthwhile noting in this context that if the composer of the alliterative romance indeed chose to model the character of Arthur on that of Edward I, he in doing so would merely have been reversing an established liter-

ary trend. During Edward's own lifetime a connection between the legendary king of the Britons and the incumbent English monarch had been drawn by poets and chroniclers alike. And after the death of Edward at Burgh-on-Sands in 1307, John of London composed for the widowed Queen Margaret an elegy in which the prowess of the late king was asserted to be greater than that of Arthur himself. Pierre de Langtoft, in his metrical chronicle, drew a number of comparisons between Edward and his exalted forerunner, most of them quite naturally favorable to Edward. The example of Arthur, Langtoft suggested, was in a large measure responsible for the success of the king's military campaigns. Similarly, what (rare) defeats Edward suffered could be attributed to his failure to heed this example.<sup>17</sup> But whatever the setbacks or advancements of his career, the Plantagenet king maintained throughout life a courage and chivalry of proportions equalled only by Arthur himself.

Testimonials such as that of Langtoft could only help to strengthen whatever connection might be imagined to exist between Edward and his legendary predecessor. And undoubtedly the English king, who manifested a keen appreciation of the value of propaganda,<sup>18</sup> did nothing to discourage the development of the Arthurian image so conveniently accorded him by his apologists. Many of Edward's actions indeed seemed calculated expressly to encourage the dissemination of the notion that a second Arthur had appeared on the scene. In translating the alleged remains of Arthur and Guenevere from the "tomb" in Glastonbury, Edward was merely exercising the prerogative of one who

desired to be regarded as the principal spiritual and temporal heir of the greatest of the British kings. To be interpreted on a similar basis was the king's passion for holding "round tables" or tournaments after the fashion depicted in the Arthurian romances. These celebrations generally served to cap a successful military campaign of some sort. The Plantagenet sense of style demanded that such rituals be observed with the maximum of high-spirited extravagance. So wholeheartedly did Edward's followers accede to their overlord's wishes in this respect that on one memorable occasion the floor of a banqueting hall caved in beneath the weight of the merrymaking. The accident occurred at Nefyn in 1284, ironically at a celebration marking the conquest of North Wales. Yet in spite of whatever casualties were sustained by the participants in this spectacular culmination to the festivities - a culmination which must have appeared to the defeated Welsh as God's judgment on the vainglorious - the Arthurian cult as a whole did not suffer any significant decline. Indeed, while at Nefyn Edward was alleged to have acquired from his former opponents the very crown worn by Arthur, thus adding the ultimate touch to his victory.<sup>19</sup>

The Arthurian element was not absent from Edward's negotiations with the Scots, although it was here manifested in a much less frivolous aspect. Powicke records that the king "based his right to the lordship of Scotland on the conquest of Britain by Brutus of Troy."<sup>20</sup> Far-fetched as such a claim may seem, it was at least during



the fourteenth century one to be reckoned with, if for no other reason than that it was as difficult to gainsay as to prove. In asserting his descent from Arthur's kin, Edward could establish a "hereditary" right of sorts to the Scottish crown. Yet if this ploy failed, there was yet another Arthurian ace up the Plantagenet sleeve. This latter, while lacking the subtlety of genealogical machinations, had the strength of expedience. At the Feast of the Swans held at Winchester in 1306, Edward took solemn oath to reconquer Scotland.<sup>21</sup> The future Edward II, who was knighted at this particular convocation of the "round table," swore not to pass two nights in the same place until the northern kingdom was recovered. One wonders, in view of the subsequent events of his career, in what light the memory of this vow recurred to the younger Edward.

Arthur is not the only character on the Awntyrs who appears to be modelled on a definite historical figure. There seems to be a fair basis for maintaining that Gawain as well has a specific prototype. Hints as to the identity of the personage he may be intended to represent are given as early as the opening stanzas of the second episode of the Awntyrs. It will be recalled that Galeron's first words after exchanging ritual greetings with Arthur take the form of an accusation:

"Mi name is Sir Galarone, withe-outene eny gile,  
De grettest of Galwey, of greues and gyllis,  
Of Carrake, of Cummake, of Conyngame, of Kile  
Of Lonwik, of Lannax, of Laudoune hillus.  
Dou has wonene hem in werre with a wrang wile  
And geuen hem to Sir Gawayne - þat my hert grylles -"

ll. 417 - 422

The seizure and redistribution of enemy territory is a common enough tactic "in werre" at any time. Edward I resorted to it on a number of occasions in his dealings with the Scots. But what gives this relevance to the situation described in the second episode of the Awntyrs is the fact that in 1298, as a gesture of appreciation for long and distinguished public service, the Plantagenet king awarded one of his closest personal friends one thousand marks of land in Galloway.<sup>22</sup> Two years later, on the ninth of November, Edward appointed the same individual lieutenant over the whole of Galloway, Dumfries, the valley of Annan, and the marches to Roxburgh.<sup>23</sup> The recipient of these benefices was John de St. John, and it is St. John whom the Gawain of the Awntyrs may be intended to represent.

The single factor which most strongly favors the identification is of course that the grant made in 1298 by Edward to his follower of Galloway lands "won in war" corresponds almost exactly to the transaction between Arthur and his nephew to which Galeron refers in the second episode of the Awntyrs. Yet there are several other resemblances between the situations of St. John and Gawain. St. John, in addition to being one of Edward's oldest and most trusted friends, served in the capacity of a principal advisor to his overlord. Gawain, who is consistently cited not only in the Awntyrs but in the Morte Arthure, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Avowyngge of Arther, and the stanzaic Morte Arthur as Arthur's most beloved companion, generally assumes as well in these romances the

role of chief counselor to his king. In the course of a public life which spanned nearly four decades, St. John was appointed to a number of high-ranking and responsible positions, including the lieutenancy of the duchy of Aquitaine.<sup>24</sup> It was however his military career that brought St. John the greatest glory. He accompanied Edward on the Welsh expedition of 1277, and was a leader in the Gascony campaigns of 1295 and 1297.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of this twenty year's service, St. John was acknowledged as the most experienced of all the commanders in the king's forces.<sup>26</sup> Contemporary sources credit him with having demonstrated in battle personal qualities of the highest order. Walter of Exeter refers to St. John as "li preus,"<sup>27</sup> and attributes to him a reputation for valor and prudence unmatched by any other man in England.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Nicholas Trivet praises him as "militem discretum, in armis strenuum, et in rebus bellius exercitatum."<sup>29</sup> Whoever is familiar with the descriptions of Gawain given in the Awntyrs and the other Middle English romances will be struck by the resemblance between the accolades bestowed on St. John and those accorded Arthur's knight, the "mane hardyeste of hande, happyeste in armes" (Morte Arthure, l. 314 ).

Yet there is another parallel between Arthur's knight and Edward's lieutenant. Galeron, the rightful owner of the territory in Galloway which Arthur has seized, expresses no intention of allowing anyone else to enjoy the revenues which should be his. In view of this, it is interesting to discover that St. John was never able to

draw an income from the lands Edward had presented him. As a sort of consolation prize, therefore, St. John was awarded life-tenure of the castles of Skipton and Cocker-mouth as well as additional English lands.<sup>30</sup> At the conclusion of the battle between Galeron and Gawain, the Scottish knight is reinstated with his lands in Galloway. But in order to make the loss up to Gawain, Arthur bestows on his nephew a dukedom in Wales. The resemblance between the two incidents is an interesting one. It will be recalled too that in the Awntyrs it is Arthur who at the end of the combat between Galeron and Gawain asks his favorite to restore the Scottish knight's property. Twice in February of 1301 Edward commanded St. John to return to their former owners, William de Ferrars and Alan la Zousche, certain Gallovidian holdings which the king had presented to his lieutenant some years earlier.<sup>31</sup>

In this context it should be noted that the association of Gawain with Galloway, far from being an invention of the alliterative poet, in fact predates the composition of the Awntyrs by at least three centuries. The first reference in written literature to such a connection occurs in the chronicle of William of Malmesbury (c. 1125). Here, it is recorded that during the reign of William the Conqueror the tomb of one Walwen was discovered in the Welsh province of Rhos. This renowned warrior, "qui fuit haud degener Arturus ex sorore nepos," had been ruler of Walweitha (Galloway) until his expulsion from the territory by the nephew and brother of Hengist. It is clear from William's remarks that Walwen is to be identified

with the Gwalchmai mab Gwyar of the early Welsh tradition, as well as with the Gauvains and the Gawain of the later French and Middle English Arthurian romances. In the Historia Regum Britanniae, Geoffrey both confirms and supplements the remarks by William in making Gualganus the son of King Lot of Lothian. This notion of a close blood relationship between these two heroes was not only preserved but considerably elaborated on by later writers. As Bromwich remarks, the fact that Gawain was at a fairly early stage in the development of the Arthurian tradition given two specific ties with Scotland seems to indicate that he was originally a north British hero belonging to the Gwyr y Gogledd (Men of the North).<sup>32</sup>

Gawain's association with Galloway is maintained in a number of French and Middle English verse romances other than the Awntyrs. One important instance of the preservation of this concept occurs in the Chastel Merveilleux episode of the Perceval. Here, Gauvoie (Galloway) is described as a mysterious and rather forbidding country ruled over by a woman named Orgueilleuse. In the course of the story it becomes Gawain's task to win the affections of this lady. Should he succeed in disarming Orgueilleuse, he will be rewarded with the lordship of Galloway. In the Weddyng, we are presented with a situation which in its initial stages resembles almost exactly that found in the second episode of the Awntyrs. Here, one who styles himself Sir Gromer Somer Joure accuses Arthur of seizing his lands in Galloway and bestowing them on Gawain. The whole dispute is eventually resolved by the marriage of Gawain

to Gromer's hideous sister Ragnelle, who is conveniently - and happily, for the sake of the bridegroom - transformed into a beauty on their wedding night. The means through which this resolution is achieved may be faintly reminiscent of the situation recounted in the Chastel Merveilleux episode. In either case, the outcome of the contention over the lordship of Galloway rests ultimately on the success of Gawain's courtship technique.

It is with obvious pride that, upon arriving at the Arthurian court, Sir Galeron announces himself as "the greatest of Galwey." If this title affords any clue at all to the identity of the personage the Scottish knight may be intended to represent, there is then more than one figure to be considered as a possible prototype for Galeron. John Balliol, Edward I's luckless vassal king of Scots, was a direct descendant of Alan, the lord of Galloway. Balliol in fact assumed his ancestor's title. Edward Bruce, the younger brother of Robert, was in a large measure responsible for bringing Galloway under the control of the Scottish king. By virtue of his superior military strength, Edward could for a brief time anyway claim to be considered "the greatest of Galloway." What is more, he had the lordship of the area conferred on him by his brother, who when he became king stripped Balliol of the inherited title. There is, however, little reason other than this to associate Edward Bruce with Galeron. In any case, Edward's conquest of Galloway only took place a year after the death of Edward I, too late to fall within the time period relevant to the second episode of

the Awntyrs. Insofar as Balliol is concerned, there is even less reason to associate his checkered career with the circumstances of Galeron than there is to connect the Scottish knight with Edward Bruce.

Balliol and the younger Bruce having been eliminated as possible prototypes for Galeron, speculation focuses on the one remaining historical figure whose characteristics and position suggest that he in any way might have served as the model for the Scottish knight. This last is Robert Bruce. And it is Bruce who, after just preliminary consideration, emerges as the strongest of all potential candidates for identification with Galeron. In the Awntyrs, the Scottish knight lays claim to the lordship of Carrick as part of his patrimony. Carrick was one of the southwest earldoms held by the descendants of Fergus of Galloway. The last male member of the family to hold the title was Neil, who died in 1265. His daughter Marjorie took as her second husband Robert Bruce, fifth lord of Annandale, who through the marriage became earl of Carrick.<sup>33</sup> This title passed on to his son Robert, the future king of Scots and the figure with whom I propose Galeron be identified. In due course the younger Robert became as well lord of Annandale. Although Annandale is not one of the territories to which Galeron lays specific claim, it nevertheless seems significant in view of the circumstances of the second episode of the Awntyrs that on January 5, 1300, Edward I should have appointed as lieutenant of the area John de St. John,<sup>34</sup> the suggested prototype of Gawain.

The resemblances between Bruce and Galeron are not limited to the fact that both aspired to the lordship of Galloway and held the earldom of Carrick. The resolution of the dispute between the Scottish knight and Gawain finds an interesting parallel in the events of 1302-03, events in which the three figures most intimately concerned were Bruce, Edward, and St. John. Since 1297, Bruce had maintained a strong and fairly consistent opposition to the policy of the Plantagenet king. His sudden capitulation to Edward in February 1302, then, came as something of a shock to the cronies of the one-time resistance leader. This submission has been explained on the grounds of Bruce's awareness of the lately increasing possibility of the restoration of his enemy John Balliol, and all that such an event would imply. Forced by Edward to abdicate in July 1296, Balliol had spent his time from July 1299 onwards in exile on the Continent, passing from papal custody to the wardship of the king of France. Sometime prior to February of 1302, however, there had begun to circulate rumors to the effect that the quondam king of Scots had secured the backing of Philip the Fair - a backing which took the very considerable form of a French army to re-establish Balliol on his lost throne.<sup>35</sup> The possibility of Balliol's restoration, which in 1301 must have seemed very real indeed in view of the fact that Edward's control over Scottish affairs was badly slipping, involved for Bruce a threat not so much to any kingly ambitions he himself might have harbored as to the source of his very liveli-



hood. And so, the immediate and personalized fear of the loss of the lordship of Annandale and the earldom of Carrick conquering resistance to the larger but less sharply defined spectre of English domination over the whole of Scotland, Bruce changed his allegiance.<sup>36</sup> It is, however, the actual fact of his submission to Edward rather than the motives for this act - far more complex than my brief discussion of them would suggest -<sup>37</sup> which relates to the incidents in the second episode of the Awntyrs. At the end of the combat between Galeron and Gawain, the Scottish knight surrenders to his opponent. On or before February 16, 1302, Bruce surrendered to Edward's representative in Scotland, the warden of Annandale and Galloway, John de St. John.<sup>38</sup> He was, thereafter, received into the king's peace. In a written agreement, Edward promised in return for the submission of his opponent to protect Bruce's right of inheritance, to grant him and his tenants safety, and to maintain him as earl of Carrick.<sup>39</sup> In the Awntyrs, in recognition of his acknowledgment of physical defeat, Galeron is admitted to the Round Table (certainly a form of king's peace) and reinstated with the lordship of Carrick. In 1303, Bruce was granted by Edward the sheriffdoms of Lanark and Ayr.<sup>40</sup> After his submission, Galeron is reinstated with the holding of all the lands between Lanark and Ayr. He is also confirmed as overlord of Cunningham, Kile, and Cumnock. Lying within the bounds of Bruce's sheriffdom of Lanark and Ayr were Cunningham, Kile and Cumnock. At the culmination of the battle between Gawain and Galeron,

the latter is restored to the ancient earldom of Lennox. It was from this territory that Bruce, when he eventually became king, derived a very considerable measure of his support.<sup>41</sup> Now, the resemblances so far outlined as existing between the situation of Bruce and that of Galeron are striking enough to warrant the supposition that the latter might have been modeled on the former. Yet the most remarkable of all the parallels between the events of 1302-03 and the second episode of the Awntyrs remains to be drawn. Shortly after his submission to Edward, Bruce married Elizabeth de Burgh, daughter of the earl of Ulster.<sup>42</sup> In the Awntyrs, following his admittance to the Round Table, Galeron is said to wed the lady who accompanies him to Arthur's court. The woman is furthermore described as wearing a coronet, a feature which implies she is a person of high social rank.

In view of the correspondences just outlined, it seems to me that a fairly strong case may be made for the interpretation of the second episode of the Awntyrs as an analogue to the events of 1296 - 1303.<sup>43</sup> Such an hypothesis has of course to be considered in the light of what has been ascertained relative to the circumstances of the composition of the poem. The four manuscripts in which the Awntyrs is preserved are Thornton (Lincoln Cathedral Library 91), Douce (Douce 324 Bodleian Library) Ireland (Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Coligny, Geneva), and Lambeth (Lambeth Palace Library 491). Thornton was transcribed in Yorkshire, in what appears to be a basically northern dialect into which a considerable percentage of North Midland

elements have filtered. Douce reverses this position, being a North Midlands copy overlaid with certain northern features. The Ireland MS. is a West Midlands transcript having a sprinkling of northern forms. Lambeth is the southernmost copy of the Awntyrs, and may possibly be of East Midlands provenance. All the variations among the mss. naturally present an enormous obstacle to attempts to trace the linguistic roots of the poem. Gates has outlined the three main difficulties involved: "First, each MS. is in a different, but mixed, dialect. Second, whatever features are shared by all the mss. can only indicate the dialect of their archetype, which may have differed from that of the original poem because of copying. Finally, the dialect of the original may have been mixed because of the use of traditional or formulaic phrases which preserve features not common in the dialect of the author."<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the results of the latest full-scale study of this aspect of the poem tend to confirm that the language of the original was northern Middle English.<sup>45</sup>

It is generally accepted that the Awntyrs was written sometime in the latter half of the fourteenth century. Various attempts have been made to assign a more specific date of composition to the poem, none of which have proved especially conclusive. On the basis of the descriptions of costume, armor, and modes of hairdressing included in the work, Clayton Christianson has argued that the Awntyrs was written sometime toward the end of Edward III's reign or at the beginning of Richard II's.<sup>46</sup> Similar grounds

provide the support for Catherine Singh's proposal that the romance belongs to the period between 1375 - 1390.<sup>47</sup> Either hypothesis is however contingent upon the assumption that the poet's descriptions constitute an accurate reflection of contemporary fashion, when in fact no concrete evidence has ever been brought forth to warrant such an assumption. Nor for much the same reason can any allusions in the work to so-called contemporary affairs be used to determine the date of composition. Singh's suggestion that the ghost's admonition to Gawain to "take witness by France" embodies a reference to the repeated defeats of the English at the hands of the French during the latter years<sup>48</sup> of Edward III's reign is untenable for two reasons. First, the experience of Edward III was suffered in much the same form by his descendant Henry VI. So on that basis the Awntyrs might just as well be attributed to a mid-fifteenth century poet. Second, the ghost issues its warning in conjunction with a series of references to Arthur's victory over Frolo and his conquests of Burgundy and Brittany (ll. 273 - 277), references moreover borrowed from the Morte Arthure. Certainly no French victory is implied by the spectre's words, but rather the opposite. What the ghost seems to be telling Gawain is that the Britons will one day suffer a crushing defeat similar to the one that they under Arthur have inflicted on "Frolo and his folke."

Such methods of establishing a specific date of composition for the work having proved unsatisfactory, and since no more reliable means of doing so are immediately

forthcoming, the generalized attribution of the Awntyrs to a mid to late fourteenth century hand will have to suffice. I should note here that the unreliability of topical allusions as a determinant of date of composition in no way affects the validity of the proposal that the second episode of the poem functions as an analogue to Anglo-Scottish affairs of 1296 - 1303. This hypothesis neither implies nor is in fact dependent upon proof that the author was a witness to the events in question. He was as free to refer to the past as to the present in his search for material. The Middle English Arthurian narratives in general were, after all, inspired by events which transpired, as far as the fourteenth century poets knew, some seven or eight hundred years previously.

It has been argued, on the basis of the familiarity with which the Awntyrs poet describes Galloway, and the sympathy he expresses for Galeron's cause, that the romance was the work of a Scot. While it is certainly true that the poet manifests an insider's knowledge of the southwest of Scotland, the mere familiarity with a given locale evinced by the author cannot be used without supporting evidence to determine his nationality. And a Caledonian provenance for the Awntyrs is ruled out on linguistic grounds. However, the ease and intimacy with which the poet wrote of Carlisle and its environs, coupled with the fact that he did so in a dialect of northern Middle English, implies very strongly that he was a native or at least a longterm resident of Cumberland.

The staunchest advocate of Caledonian authorship for the Awntyrs was of course George Neilson, who would have attributed not only this poem but the Morte Arthure, Golagros and Gawane, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Destruction of Troy, Purity, Patience, Pearl, the Pistill of Susan, Titus and Vespasian, the Parlement of the Thre Ages, Winner and Waster, Saint Erkenwald, and the Wars of Alexander to one "Huchown of the Awle Ryale," an enigmatic figure whom Neilson equated with "the gude Sir Hew of Eglintoun"<sup>49</sup> whose passing from the ranks of the makars was so eloquently lamented by Dunbar.<sup>50</sup> Although a great deal is known about Eglinton, including the fact that he was a poet, there is unfortunately no concrete evidence to suggest that in between his duties as landlord, soldier, diplomat, courtier, jurist, privy councillor, and auditor of the Exchequer he also found the time to dash off some 40,000 lines of the finest alliterative verse in existence. Nor is there any basis for maintaining that Eglinton was ever referred to as "Huchown of the Awle Ryale" by his associates at the courts of David II and Robert II.

In contrast to the wealth of information we possess concerning Eglinton, nothing whatsoever is known of the life or circumstances of Huchown. The only contemporary testimonial to the poetic talents of this individual - and, indeed, to his very existence - is that given by Andrew Wyntoun (1350 - 1420) in his "original chronicle."<sup>51</sup> Yet on the basis of this sparse data some elaborate theories have been concocted as to the identity of Huchown. While Amours equates him with the Sir Hew men-

tioned in the Lament for the Makaris, he does not agree with the generally accepted view that Dunbar's bard was the Hugh Eglinton who served in so many official capacities at the Scottish court. The critic proposes rather that Huchown/Hew was an ecclesiastic, a figure possibly to be identified with the Hugh who served as chaplain of Dunbarton Castle during the first part of the fourteenth century.<sup>52</sup> There is, however, not a scrap of evidence to indicate that this latter ever wrote a line of verse. Nor is Amours' contention that "Awle Ryale" constitutes a "very suitable appellation" for Dunbarton Castle admissible.<sup>53</sup>

The various claims that Huchown wrote the Morte Arthure, the Awntyrs, and the Pistill of Susan are based on the fact that to Huchown Wyntoun attributes the authorship of a "gret Gest of Arthure," an "Awntyre of Gawane," and the "Pistil als of Suet Susane."<sup>54</sup> It is just possible that the second named is the Awntyrs off Arthure, and it is quite likely that the latter is the poem we know by the same title today. Whether the "gret Gest of Arthure" is as some critics have maintained the Morte Arthure remains an open question. The argument in support of the identification of the two runs as follows: Wyntoun accords a disproportionate amount of space in his narrative to a discussion of the fact that the author of the "gret Gest" mistakenly refers to Lucius as emperor rather than as procurator of Rome. The exact same error is made by the poet of the Morte Arthure. Wyntoun also remarks that the composer of the "gret Gest" credits Arthur with overthrow-

ing Lucius in Italy. Only in the Morte Arthure is a similar claim made. Finally, the list of the British king's conquests as supposedly given by Huchown tallies very closely indeed with that appearing in the Morte Arthure.

The argument against the identification of the alliterative poem with the "gret Gest" is based on the assertion that Wyntoun's synopsis of the account of Arthur's end allegedly given by Huchown does not agree with the version given in the Morte Arthure. The alliterative poem states that after the king died, he was buried with great ceremony at Glastonbury Abbey. Wyntoun, however, makes reference to a tradition that Arthur was borne off to an island to be healed of the wounds he received in his last battle with Mordred. It has been assumed that the chronicler derived this information from the ending of the "gret Gest." Wyntoun, however, makes no such claim. What he does say is that upon reaching the conclusion of Huchown's work, in terms of the circumstances of Arthur's death

I fand na writt coup mak it kend;  
Sen I fand nane at þar of wrait,  
I will say na mare na I wait.  
Bot quhen he had focht in fast,  
Efter þat in ane Ile he past,  
Saire woundit, to be lechit þare,  
And efter he wes sene na mare.

ll. 4376 - 4382

Book V, c. xiii

What Wyntoun's self-confessed failure to find in the "gret Gest" any account of Arthur's death strongly implies is that the chronicler only had access to an incomplete version of Huchown's work, and so furnished a standard ro-



mance ending to the story out of his own copious knowledge of the Arthurian tradition. In view of this, it is interesting that just above the explicit in the single surviving manuscript of the Morte Arthure there should appear the words Hic iacit Arthurus rex quondam rexque futurus, an inscription suggesting that the scribe himself experienced some bewilderment when confronted by the version of Arthur's end given in the text he was copying from. The confusion may be attributed to the existence of the tradition that Glastonbury, where in the alliterative poem Arthur is said to be buried, was held to be the site of Avallon.

On balance, it must be conceded that at least a reasonable possibility exists of Wyntoun's oddly named bard being the composer of the Morte Arthure. In view of the similarity between the titles, there would seem to be fair grounds as well for identifying the "Pistil als of Suet Susan" with our Pistill of Susan. And since the Awntyrs off Arthure is in actual fact an "Awntyre of Gawane," it is not inconceivable that the former could be the poem which Wyntoun ascribes to Huchown's authorship. The fact remains that whoever and whatever the poet of the Morte Arthure, the Awntyrs, and the Pistill was, he was not a Scot. In assuming Huchown to have been a compatriot of Wyntoun's, Amours and Neilson neglected to take into consideration one very important fact. This is simply that the language of the Morte Arthure and the Pistill, like that of the Awntyrs, is the Middle English written and spoken below the Tweed.

Like prodigal children, scholars in search of an author for the Awntyrs have wandered far afield but in the end have always returned to the fold of Hew/Huchown. It is not difficult to understand why, if for no other reason than that the minstrel of the Awle Ryale (whatever that may have been) is one of only two candidates for authorship to whose pen a contemporary source has attributed a work with a title even vaguely resembling that of the alliterative romance. The other is Clerk of Tranant, whom Dunbar credited with an "Awntyre of Gawane."<sup>55</sup> But because he was a Scot, Clerk must however regretfully be eliminated from the competition.

This is not to suggest that Huchown wins by default. What is suggested, however, is the possibility that the Awntyrs was written by a poet known as Hugh or Huchown who lived in Cumberland sometime during the latter half of the fourteenth century. Acting on the first part of this assumption, T. E. Casson made a very tentative proposal that the composer be identified with a "Hugh le Harpur" who sat on the jury of an inquest held at Penrith in 1319.<sup>56</sup> If the title attached to his name carries any significance at all, we are to infer that this Hugh was a minstrel, and therefore someone of recognized creative talents. However, the date of his floruit as implied by his presence at the Penrith inquest seems a bit too early to coincide with that projected for the Awntyrs poet. Catherine Singh suggested that Wyntoun's bard may have been an ancestor of those Grahams who lived in the Debateable Land during the sixteenth century. The only evidence

offered in support of this view is however the fact that one of the members of the Graham clan was known to his fellows as "Huchon."<sup>57</sup>

The odds are very much in favor of the contention that the Awntyrs poet, whoever he might have been, lived and wrote in Cumberland. Quite possibly he made his home near the Tarn Wadling, the supernatural inhabitant of which he described with such grim relish. The familiarity with which he spoke of the southwest of Scotland, since it cannot be used to prove that he was a Scot, implies strongly that he was someone who knew Galloway and Carrick at first hand. An inhabitant of Cumberland would have been in an ideal position to acquire such information, not the least because of his relative proximity to the area. The population of the northern counties of England and of Lowland Scotland was in many respects a floating one. When the men of Galloway fled before Bruce in 1307, they sought refuge in Inglewood Forest.<sup>58</sup> After the battle of Bannockburn in 1314, Scottish raids into north Cumberland and Northumberland were carried out with such devastating efficiency and regularity that the area became virtually an extension of Scotland.<sup>59</sup> Many of the victims of this harrying eventually cast their lot in with Bruce, thereby becoming in their own and everyone else's eyes Scots.<sup>60</sup> Not all the shifts in population were dictated by the exigencies of war. Considerable numbers of Scots held lands in Cumberland by grant of the English king, while many Cumbrians held estates in Scotland. Personal factors as well lay behind many a demographic switch. Bruce's grand-

father the Competitor took as his second wife the daughter of William Ireby, a Cumberland knight.<sup>61</sup> Christopher Seton was a Yorkshireman, but he married Bruce's sister Christiane and ultimately became in his personal outlook and political views more aggressively Scottish than the Scots themselves.<sup>62</sup>

Whether the poet of the Awntyrs was a Cumbrian who held lands in the southwest of Scotland is something that can only be determined - if at all - by long research into contemporary documents. In the meantime, one thing about him will remain fairly certain. With respect to the Grahams, Singh writes that "an inhabitant of the borders would inevitably have divided loyalties, and might consider himself neither Scottish nor English, and yet both, much like a present-day inhabitant of Berwick."<sup>63</sup> And he would have manifested "no declared political sympathies, but simply a broad moral outlook with a strong emphasis on conciliation."<sup>64</sup> No better description can be found of the spirit moving behind the second episode of the Awntyrs, nor indeed of the kind of poetic personality that could have chosen to write an analogue to the Anglo-Scottish conflict at the turn of the fourteenth century, an analogue moreover in which the defeated was portrayed with greater sympathy than was the victor.

When auld King Arthur ruled this land  
He was a thieving King.

Johnnie Lad

Chapter VI  
The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane

It has often been remarked that one of the more prominent features of alliterative Arthurian romance in general is the striking similarity which the themes, motifs, and imagery of the individual poems bear to each other. We have already seen a vivid example of this sort of correspondence in the case of the Morte Arthure and the Awntyrs, where the thematic relationship between the two is so clearly defined as to have given rise to theories of single authorship. Just as striking is the repetition in the Awntyrs of the challenge motif which provides the cornerstone of the plot in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. And there are sufficient points of comparison between Sir Gawain itself and the Morte Arthure to argue that both poems, despite their intrinsic dissimilarities of style and subject matter, were inspired by the same basic tradition.

The very fact that attempts have been made to assign the composition of all the alliterative romances to one individual does in itself indicate something of the unmistakable unity of the works as a whole. Yet there are cases where the distinct relationship between one poem and another manifests itself even more vividly than elsewhere. Although the Middle Scots romance known as The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane runs to almost twice the length of the Awntyrs, and was very probably composed at least a half-century after the eerie prophecies of Gaynour's mother and the exploits of Sir Geleron had been recounted, there exists between the poems a continuity of theme, style, imagery, and characterization more than

sufficient to override these disparities. They are companion pieces separated only by time, and it is in the light of this association that they deserve to be studied.

Even a brief summary of the most obvious points of similarity should serve to indicate just how close the relationship between the two poems is. It is of primary importance that the concerns of the Awntyrs poet, in particular the vexed question of the rights of the individual as opposed to those of the sovereign, should become those of the Golagros composer as well. In either case the reader encounters the familiar preoccupation with the concept of Fortune and the manner in which it effects mens' lives, surely not an uncommon one in alliterative poetry but seldom as integral a part of the work as it is here. Both romances fall into two episodes revolving around the central character of Gawain, who must maintain his position as chief guardian of his king's interests while obliged by the continued proddings of his own conscience to champion the underdog - even when the two roles conflict. It is in fact the untenable spiritual position into which Gawain is forced by the opposing claims of moral responsibility and feudal duty that gives both stories some of the psychological realism they possess. In either poem the first episode centers around an important lesson to which the characters are compelled to pay close heed - in Golagros, the issue is courtesy, whereas in the Awntyrs it is morality, both personal and political. The second part of both romances is concerned with the ultimately successful attempts of an independent lord to win back,



one way or another, the patrimony which Arthur has so persistently endeavored to wrest from him. As a consequence of this, a critical attitude toward the king and a contrastingly favorable one toward his opponent are developed and maintained throughout either piece. The wilful and unjustified seizure of another's property becomes the crucial issue upon which both poets eventually pass moral judgment against Arthur. Ultimately wars of aggression and conquest are revealed as the gravest transgression a sovereign can commit, and it is this conviction which provides the basic theme of either work.

The resemblances between Golagros and the Awntyrs are not confined to theme and characterization, of course. Even the structure of the poems - both employ the thirteen-line bob and wheel stanza riming ababababcdde - is the same. The descriptive element in either work, particularly where it involves the supernormal or unusual, is especially strong. In fact, the pivotal incident of the first episode of both poems is sparked by the presence of a grotesque - in Golagros, the courtesy lesson so forcibly administered to Kay is precipitated by his ill-treatment of a dwarf, while in the Awntyrs, precepts of morality are conveyed to the characters through the offices of a revenant temporarily released from the Purgatorial fires.

This absorption with the fantastic is not, of course, confined to Golagros or the Awntyrs, as the appearance of the giant in the Morte Arthure or the green man in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight will attest. However, the latter two are much longer works composed of a greater

number of incidents, most of which involve human rather than supernatural protagonists. In Golagros and the Awntyrs, where space is far more limited, the element of the grotesque takes on a much wider significance due to the smaller context in which it is presented. What is merely an incident in the Morte Arthure, becomes, therefore, a crucial event in the shorter works. A similar process of reasoning can be used to explain the attention given the motif of the wheel of Fortune in both Golagros and the Awntyrs. The concept is borrowed from the Morte Arthure, where the occasion of the king's dream of Fortune forms but one of a related series of occurrences which forecast the poem's conclusion. Proportionately as much attention is given to the idea in Golagros and the Awntyrs, however, and the fact that this is accomplished within a considerably reduced narrative framework seems to imply that an even greater significance was being attached to the concept here than in the Morte Arthure.

The parallels between the Awntyrs and Golagros continue. In either work there is a vivid feeling for scenic effects, evinced notably in the descriptions of the landscapes against which the stories are set. The powers of observation of either poet embrace a great deal more than natural phenomena, of course. Lengthy and lovingly detailed descriptions of architecture, dress, food, and drink occupy an almost disproportionate amount of space, as do similarly graphic accounts of tournaments, feasts, and other ceremonies in which the courtiers participate. Both poets press meteorological phenomena into active service, the

predominant visual image in Golagros being that of sunlight and the dancing reflections it creates on the turreted and bastioned cities which dot the landscape of the Scottish romance like so many fairy castles. Similarly, the violent storm which heralds the appearance of the ghost in the Awntyrs not only mirrors the emotional confrontation which will take place between Gaynour and her mother but conveys in terms comprehensible to humans something of the torment in which the soul consigned to Purgatory must dwell. Both Golagros' shining city and the haunted wood around the Tarn Wadling can be interpreted from one standpoint as but representations of the Other World in its two most extreme forms. The latter, perched on its high rock, presents a shimmering illusion of remoteness and inviolability to Arthur and his men, who do not in the end succeed in their attempt to breach its walls. The same can be said of the wood around the Tarn, a realm of the supernatural into which the queen and her escort trespass with such surprising consequences.

There are, additionally, numerous verbal echoes of the Awntyrs in Golagros and Gawene. The greater number of these phrases - such as "gamyn and gle" or "freke upon folde" - are common to all alliterative poetry, even that of it which is non-Arthurian, and as such possess little value as indications of the influence which one work exerted over another. They are in any case expressions devoid of any significant meaning, their purpose being to fill out the second half of the long line. However, we find in

Gologros certain vivid turns of phrase which appear to hark directly back to the Awntyrs, arguing at least some definite connection between the two works. One striking example occurs during the monologue on the vagaries of Fortune delivered by the lord Gologros, when he reminds his hushed and attentive followers that

Ilk man may kith be his cure,  
Baith knyght, kyng, and empriour,  
And muse in his myrroure,  
And mater maist mine is.

ll. 1229 - 1232

Compare this with the ghost's admonitory speech to Gaynour, during which she asks the queen to:

Muse one my mirroure,  
For, king and emperour,  
Thus shul ye be.

ll. 167 - 169

There are other passages reminiscent of the Awntyrs scattered through the Awntyrs, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Unlike its predecessor, the Scots romance survives in only one text - that printed on April 8, 1508 "in the south gait of Edinburgh, be Walter Chepman and Androw Myllar." That at least one written copy of the poem did exist is attested to by the fact that a reference to the "book of Gologras and Gawane" appears in the list of the contents of the Asloan Manuscript. Whether the scribe reproduced his version from a printed edition or from an entirely different source is impossible to say, since the section of Asloan's massive compilation that contained

the poem has been lost. Despite the dearth of any texts that might convey to us something of the extent to which the work was circulated, outside evidence indicates that Golagros and Gawane was a "romaunt" widely read and enjoyed in its own time. The hero of David Lyndesay's History of Squire Meldrum is described by his creator as having the same prowess at arms as "Golibras against Gawain," while in the Complaint of Scotland the poem itself is cited along with Rauf Coilgear in a list of works<sup>2</sup> most favored by contemporary audiences. Acting on the slender lead provided by such tantalizing nuggets of information, more recent critics have put forth the suggestion that the mysterious "awntyre of Gawane" attributed to one Clerk of Trenent by Dunbar in the Lament for the Makaris may in fact be the alliterative romance. How well this speculation - which is all it is - can stand without other support is testified to by the fact that the same process of reasoning can be used to identify Clerk's narrative with the Awntyrs.<sup>3</sup>

There has been no lack of modern editions of the poem. The credit for having been the first to print Golagros and Gawane, however, belongs to John Pinkerton, whose publication of a somewhat "improved" text constitutes a lasting memorial to one man's talent for invention if not his editorial skills.<sup>4</sup> This initial offering was fortunately superseded by the more sober efforts of the nineteenth-century antiquarians. Even these, however, are hampered by some severe limitations. Laing's The Knightly Tale of Gologres and Gawane (1827), a facsimile

of the Chepman and Myllar print, faithfully reproduces all the typographical errors of the original. A carefully edited and glossed text was included by Madden in Syre Gawayne, a beautifully produced volume containing all the Middle English romances dealing with that hero. The version prepared by Moritz Trautmann for Anglia is a similarly scholarly piece of work, prefaced by a useful interpretative essay. The most thorough and easily accessible edition remains that done by Amours for the Scottish Text Society. A facsimile of the Chepman and Myllar print, introduced by William Beattie, has been published by the National Library of Scotland.

It would probably be best for the purposes of this chapter to give a summary of the double narrative which constitutes Golagros and Gawane. Unlike the other Arthurian alliterative romances, all the action here takes place on the Continent. The opening sequence finds Arthur and his men, the "biggest of bene and blude bred in Britane," on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They have been travelling for some time through rough countryside without encountering any vestige of civilization, and provisions have just about run out. The courtiers are gloomily contemplating the remainder of their supplies when one of their number spots a walled city in the distance and calls the king's attention to it. Considerably relieved by this prospect, Arthur proposes that an envoy be dispatched to purchase food and drink. Sir Kay volunteers for the mission and the king accepts his offer, although not without first charging him to behave with tact and diplomacy.

Because the gates have been flung wide as if in anticipation of his arrival, Kay experiences no difficulty in gaining entrance to the city. His attention is immediately attracted by a palatial building, which he decides to investigate. Once inside the manor house, however, he discovers that the apartments, although magnificently appointed, are devoid of any trace of normal activity. Not one to be put off by the absence of welcome, he continues his explorations. Peering through an open doorway, the knight spots a dwarf roasting small birds on a spit over an open fire. Overcome with hunger at the sight and smell of food, Kay rushes into the room, shoves the dwarf aside, and snatches the fowl away from him. Understandably outraged at this treatment, the dwarf begins to shriek. Summoned by the commotion, which has set the entire hall to ringing, "one woundir grym sire" appears in the doorway and angrily reproves Kay for abusing his servant. Kay impertinently refuses to apologize, and in a fit of rage the knight knocks him to the floor and stalks off. Stunned and humiliated, Kay picks himself up and scuttles out of the hall to his waiting horse. He then rides back to Arthur to inform him that they had best look elsewhere for provisions.

Gawain, sensing that Kay has made a botch of the mission through his lack of courtesy, suggests that Arthur send a man "mekar of mude" back to the city to see if reparation can be made. The king perceives the good sense behind this suggestion and assigns Gawain himself to the task. At the hall, the knight is met by the overlord and

his followers, who have somewhat inexplicably materialized en masse to greet the visitor. After politely acknowledging the welcome, Gawain reveals the purpose of his mission and requests permission to purchase supplies. The host, however, blandly rejects this unexceptional petition out of hand. Courteous as always, Gawain replies that it is the privilege of the freeman to dispose of his property in the manner he sees fit: "To mak you lord of your avne, me think it grete skill." <sup>10</sup> The man then explains his peculiar refusal of Gawain's request on the grounds that as he is a vassal of Arthur's, he could not in all conscience sell the king what was already his due, but would be happy in any case to receive the pilgrims as his guests. As an afterthought, he complains of Kay's churlish behavior and inquires if the "laithles leid" who invaded the privacy of his domain is one of the Round Table fellowship.

Gawain informs Arthur of the pleasant news, and the king and his followers hasten off to the city. They are met en route by the lord and his entourage, who escort the pilgrims to the great hall. After setting up camp in the surrounding area, Arthur and his men are feted at a splendid banquet. The celebrations prepared in their honor continue uninterrupted for four days thereafter. Toward the close of this pleasant interlude the pilgrims, now considerably refreshed, begin preparations to resume the journey to the Holy City. Arthur gives thanks to the lord for his lavish hospitality, and the cavalcade sets off on the second stage of its progress through southern France.



While riding along the banks of the Rhone, the travellers come upon a magnificent castellated city perched on an enormous rock overlooking the river. No less than thirty-three towers project upward from the wall, while sixty-seven ships cruise along the waterway below. Arthur voices admiration of this imposing sight, and inquires of his knights who the overlord of such a domain might be. When informed by Sir Spynagros that the territory is ruled over by a man who has never acknowledged allegiance to a superior authority, the king expresses amazement at such a peculiar situation and vows to rectify it on his return from Jerusalem. Horrified at the effect of his words, Spynagros explains that no conqueror has ever managed to subjugate the province. Although he implores Arthur to leave well enough alone, his pleas only serve to reinforce the king's already formidable determination. Uttering dark threats of violence and despoliation, Arthur reaffirms his vow to impose suzerainty on the province, "or ellis mony wedou/Ful wreithly sal weip." Seeing how angry he has grown, no one dares gainsay him, and the procession continues on its way toward Jerusalem.

Arthur's obsession with conquest is not tempered by his visit to the Holy Land. The spiritual quest accomplished, his vision is dominated by the fulfillment of the earthly one. He urges his men back toward the city on the Rhone, where they set up camp beside the river. Advised to send a delegation to the town before attempting to seize it by force, Arthur deposes Gawain, Lancelot, and Ewin (Ywain) to deliver his challenge to the inhabitants. Before the

knights set off, Spynegros calls them aside to offer a bit of advice. The three listen respectfully to his words and, after thanking him for his concern, depart. Upon arriving at the town, they identify themselves to the gatekeeper and are directed to the overlord's establishment. There they are greeted by thirty-three knights and a group of ladies and escorted into the presence of the lord himself. After the requisite courtesies are exchanged, Gawain delivers Arthur's message. His words are received with some sadness by the lord, who expresses his thanks for Arthur's "gude wil" but firmly refuses to consider swearing allegiance to the king. He explains that as the descendant of a long line of freemen, he is charged to maintain this independence, for were he to break with tradition he would only deserve to be

Hingit hie on sne tre,  
That ilk creature might se,  
To waif with the wynde.

11. 438 - 440

However, he graciously offers to receive Arthur with all the respect due a visiting sovereign.

Gawain and the others return to the camp to deliver this message, which Arthur interprets as a challenge. The inhabitants of the city prepare to withstand a siege as he mobilizes his troops to attack. Reaffirming his earlier vow, the king declares that he will raze the city if he cannot force its inhabitants to acknowledge his feudal superiority. Shaken by these threats, Spynegros desperately attempts to dissuade Arthur from the course of action he has chosen. The lord, whose name is Golagros,

will never be coerced into tamely accepting thralldom, nor will he be easily subjugated by a show of arms. Neither practical nor humanitarian considerations have, however, the slightest softening effect on Arthur's resolve. Dismissing Spynagros' counsel, he returns to his preparations for battle.

His conference with his knights is interrupted by a bugle blast issuing from the castle, heralding the opening of the battle. Spynagros informs Arthur of the approach of an armed man on horseback, who "'thinkis provese to preve, for his paramour/And prik in your presence, to purchase his pray.'" Overjoyed, the king deposes Sir Gaudifeir to meet the challenger, whose name turns out to be Galiot. After a ferocious struggle, Gaudifeir manages to take his opponent prisoner and lead him back to the camp. Grieved and angered by this initial loss, Golagros sends Sir Rigal of Rhone out to the field, where he is met by Arthur's man Rannald. Both men die of wounds received during their clash, and their bodies are removed for honorable interment. The tournament continues until Arthur's knights Bedwer, Lionel, Owale, and Iwell are taken prisoner. Golagros loses Hew, Agslus, Sanguel, and Edmond. Weeping with grief and rage, he vows to ride out himself on the following day.

The next morning two small bells are heard ringing in the castle. In response to Arthur's query, Spynagros explains that the chiming heralds the approach of Golagros, "'who thinks his aune self shall do for his dail.'" The king's pleasure at this disclosure knows no bounds,

although he himself shows no inclination to clash with his opponent on the field. Cassandralike, Spynegros reminds Arthur of Golagros' considerable reputation as a warrior, and for once his warnings seem to strike a responsive chord. At that moment, Gawain steps in and volunteers for combat. His offer is gratefully received by Arthur. Under cover of the king's loud demands for heavenly sanction of his enterprise, Spynegros takes Gawain aside to express concern for his safety and to offer a bit of advice. The knight refuses to be discouraged, however, and Spynegros releases him with a few parting words of caution. In the meantime, Kay has ridden out to do battle with another warrior, whom he eventually manages to overcome.

Fully and magnificently arrayed for battle, Gawain and Golagros meet on the field. During the first violent clash the lances of both are splintered. Unhorsed, the two knights continue the duel on foot. The battle grows more and more ferocious, and Arthur, despairing of the outcome, begins to pray frantically for Gawain's safety. Eventually, Golagros stumbles and falls to the ground. Seizing the opportunity to put a speedy end to the hostilities, Gawain raises his dagger and demands his opponent's submission. Golagros refuses to yield and defiantly expresses a preference for a warrior's death on the battlefield to the shameful twilight existence of a prisoner. Stricken, his followers beseech heaven to protect their overlord. Torn between his determination to put an end to the conflict and his equally strong reluctance to shed blood, Gawain asks Golagros to suggest a means by which

the safety and honor of both combatants can be preserved. The defeated man then asks Gawain to return to the castle with him. Suspicious of a trap, Gawain nevertheless agrees to this peculiar request and releases his captive. In order not to arouse curiosity in the minds of the onlookers, the two pretend to resume their duel. Golagros finally "overcomes" Gawain and leads him off the field, to the great lamentations of Arthur's men and the fervent joy of the city dwellers. The king himself returns to his tent to grieve long and loudly for his lost knight.

In the meantime, the erstwhile prisoner has been received at the castle with all the honors usually reserved for a visiting potentate. While Arthur and his followers mourn, Gawain and the other captive knights are feted at a lavish banquet. At the height of the festivities, Golagros rises from his place and motions for silence. During the hush which follows, he asks his followers to tell him "treuly and traist" if they would prefer his death at Arthur's hands to subjugation. The knights and ladies un-animously assert that the life of their overlord is of far greater importance to them than the continued independence of the principality. Heartened immeasurably by this demonstration of affection and support, Golagros explains how Gawain, the actual victor in the combat, generously yielded to him to preserve his honor. He then launches into an eloquent tirade against the vagaries of Fortune. At the conclusion of his speech, he orders the release of the captive knights, and with his followers

in tow escorts them back to Arthur's camp. Here he swears allegiance to the king, and a great feast is held at the castle to celebrate the termination of the hostilities. On the ninth day, Arthur releases Golagros from his feudal bond, and the men of the Round Table begin preparations to return home.

Although the relationship between Golagros and Gawane and the Awntyrs is inarguably a strong one, it was not in fact the earlier alliterative poem which served as the inspiration for the actual plot of the Scots romance. For a long time the exact source of the story was unknown, despite the intense and sometimes fevered speculation the question of origins aroused. Early critics tended toward the rather simple assumption that all the alliterative Scottish poems were based on traditions indigenous to the British Isles, none of them having any one specific literary ancestor. Although Madden had in 1839 put forth the opinion that Golagros was derived from parts of the OF Perceval, his thesis was largely ignored by his contemporaries, upon whom the desire to attribute a shadowy "Celtic" origin to any and all of the medieval romances exercised a particularly heady influence. John Veitch reviewed the possible sources of the poem in his long essay on the History and Poetry of the Scottish Border (1878), dismissing Madden's proposal as negligible but failing in the end to provide any more satisfactory solution of his own to the problem. There the matter rested for some time. Closer toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, critical theory began to swing almost inevitably

back in the direction which Madden had pointed out some fifty years ago, and his hypothesis that the story of Golegros might in fact be based on the French romance was revived and given fresh consideration by both Paul Steinbach and Gaston Paris.<sup>12</sup> Trautmann, who hit upon the idea of comparing Potvin's print of the Perceval with the Scots poem, eventually concluded that while a relationship of some sort could definitely be established between the two, it could not be said with any certainty that the former had been the direct source of the latter.<sup>13</sup> His fellow scholar Korting was largely of the same opinion.<sup>14</sup> Amours agreed that Golegros was indeed taken from ll. 16,331 - 16,624 and 18,209 - 19,446 of the Perceval, but declined to specify the closeness of the connection.<sup>15</sup> Neilson, who was inclined to discover illustrations of episodes of Scottish history in the most unlikely places, interpreted the second part of the Scots romance as an historical parable tacked on to a reconstructed version of the dwarf episode originally in the French poem.<sup>16</sup> Jessie Weston saw Golegros as a rehash of the Chastel Orgueilleux story in the Perceval which, in her view, was in its own turn ultimately based on a Welsh source.<sup>17</sup> Brugger adopted a line similar to Weston's theory that both the Perceval continuator and the author of Golegros derived their material not from Chretien's work but from this original version of the legend.<sup>18</sup> Peter Giles opted in favor of Madden's theory, although like his predecessor he failed to offer detailed proof of his contention.<sup>19</sup>

It was Paul Ketrick who undertook, in 1931, to settle the dispute by making a detailed comparison of Golagros and the relevant parts of the Perceval.<sup>20</sup> This intensive study led Ketrick to the conclusion that the direct source of the Scots poem was in fact the Continental romance, specifically a prose version very much similar to that given in MS. Bibliotheque Nationale 12,576. Since the only rendering of the Perceval in commercially printed form which had heretofore been available to scholars was that appearing in the Mons MS., Ketrick's work therefore has the great advantage of being constructed around completely fresh material. His study, based as it is on an extremely detailed line-by-line comparison of the two romances, has been generally accepted by scholars as being the definitive one.

Because the results of Ketrick's work fill an entire book, it would be difficult to summarize them adequately here. The main points of his argument are, however, well worth repeating, since they shed light not only on the relation of Golagros to its French source but indirectly as well on the connection of the Scottish romance with the Awntyrs. Ketrick primarily suggests that the northern composer was "intent upon creating a story that would be compact in incident, complete in itself, and require no extraneous elucidation. For that reason he omitted completely any mention of Gyflet fis Do and the motif given in the Perceval for Arthur's venture against the Chastel Orgueilleus, i.e., the three year imprisonment of Gyflet, - the explanation of which goes far back in the previous text of



the Perceval, - substituting instead Arthur's visit to the Holy Land."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Ketrick says, it was the purpose of the Golagros poet to glorify the military rather than the amatory exploits of his characters, and for this reason he chose to ignore those subplots in the French original dealing with the various affairs of Gawain and the Riche Soudoier.<sup>22</sup> However, it should be recognized that the Scottish poet was not alone in his reluctance to deal with the love themes present in the Continental representations of the Arthurian legend. The "romantic" element in virtually all the Middle English Arthurian romances, outside of those dealing with the Lancelot story, generally constitutes only a very slender thread in the entire fabric of the narrative. This is especially so when the subject of the poem in question happens to be the adventures which befall Gawain. Except in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and the rather silly Weddyng - where the love intrigue present is introduced not as an end in itself but for the quite opposite purpose of demonstrating the hero's sexual continence and chivalry - Gawain is in fact rarely mentioned in connection with a woman at all. The English and Scottish poets seemed to prefer their literary heroes untainted by any personal contact with romantic passion, whatever the social customs of the day may have dictated with respect to real life.

Ketrick also points out that the elaborate metrical form employed by the Scottish poet would quite naturally result in a substantial change in the actual retelling of the Perceval story in Golagros.<sup>23</sup> So it is here again that

we find the influence of the French version waning and being replaced by that of the alliterative Awntyrs and, to a lesser extent, by that of the Morte Arthure and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Although Ketrick admits this influence, he does not in fact seem to fully appreciate either the strength or the extent to which it operated. The plot, and in many cases the actual phrasing of Golagros were undeniably derived from the Perceval.<sup>24</sup> The themes, characterizations, imagery, style, and vocabulary here, however, belong wholly to the alliterative school. And it is at the top of this cycle in direct relation to Golagros that the Awntyrs stands.

This point naturally brings up the question of the verbal borrowings of the Scottish poet from his predecessor. We have already seen the similarity of the injunctions to "muse on this mirror" issued both by Golagros himself and by Gaynour's mother to their respective audiences. Just as vividly, however, do other reminiscences of the Awntyrs occur in the Scots romance. Perhaps first among these is the use of the phrase "turned toward Tuscany" to describe the movements of Arthur's troops on the Continent. This line appears to derive ultimately from the Morte Arthure, where it is repeated some six times with little significant change in either form or meaning:

He was in Tuskayne that time...(328)  
 And turn in-to Tuschayne...(431)  
 They turne thurghe Tuskayne...(449)  
 In-to Tuskane he turnez...(3150)  
 And tendirly to Tuskayne take tente  
     alls I bide (3586)  
 Turnys thorowe Tuskayne...(3593)

In the Awntyrs, Gawain is somewhat mysteriously advised by

the ghost to "Turne þe to Tuskayne" (l. 284), for some dreadful catastrophe is about to befall Britain. Shortly afterward, Gaynour's mother makes the gloomy if accurate prediction that Arthur himself "shal in Tuskane be tolde of þe tresone" (l. 291) wrought by one who is yet a child playing games in the great hall at Carlisle. In the opening stanza of Golagros, where the motive for the excursion to Jerusalem is established, we are informed that "The king turnit on ane tyde toward Tuskane" (l. 2) on his way to the Holy City.

A third incidence of borrowing occurs again in the first episode of the Scots poem, where Kay assaults the dwarf-servant and thereby earns for himself the undying opprobrium of the tiny creature's master. It will be remembered that Kay's investigations of the manor house into which he has so boldly intruded have led him to discover the room where the little man is roasting some game birds over the hearth. So far, the poet's depiction of this scene accords with that given in the Perceval. However, in the Scots romance special notice is given to the fact that the fowl is being cooked over "charcole in ane chimney" (l. 76). No confirmation of this seemingly trivial detail appears in the French version of the incident. In the Awntyrs, however, we find that when Galeron is led off by Gawain to rest and prepare for the following day's combat, the apartment to which he is conducted is described as being warmed and illuminated by "a chymne with charcole" (l. 446). The idea for this appears to have been derived from an episode in Sir Gawain in which the hero, upon

arriving at Bercilak's castle, is assigned to a chamber fitted out among other things with a "chemne, per charcole brenned" (l. 886). Just why this relatively simple description of a blazing hearth should have proved attractive enough to the Awntyrs and Golagros poets for them to include it almost verbatim in their stories is difficult to say. The word "charcole" does of course alliterate with "chimney", but the fact that the accounts of all three firelit rooms are so similar in other respects implies that a more subtle form of borrowing than the usual one from the common alliterative vocabulary had taken place.<sup>25</sup> It is interesting to recollect too that these graciously appointed chambers all serve much the same purpose in the plots of Golagros, the Awntyrs, and Sir Gawain - that of sheltering, if only temporarily, an intruding stranger.

The significance of these borrowings in determining the relationship between the poems is undeniable. Although the composer of Golagros might possibly have taken the phrase "turned toward Tuscany" from the Morte Arthure, and his description of the coal fire in the chimney from Sir Gawain, there can be no doubt at all as to the source for his hero's remarks on the mirror of man's fate. Both Golagros' and the ghost's speeches are not only couched in the same terms, but are delivered within a similar context as well. Each one refers directly back to the idea of Fortune's wheel, and how the revolution of this wheel can bring about such a drastic change in the destinies of all men, no matter the circumstances of their lives. Both Golagros and Gaynour's mother can, in their own ways, right-

fully claim to be the looking glasses of Fortune.

Actually, the use of the notion of the mirror as exemplum as a literary device is not confined to Golagros and the Awntyrs. Amours quotes three examples of its occurrence in Sir Tristrem, the Testament of Cresseid, and Lazarus in the Towneley plays, and cites similar references to the idea in Piers the Plowman, Handlyng Synne, and the Boke of the Howlat.<sup>26</sup> All of these tend to take the form of a dire warning:

Folk of yrland side,  
3our mirour 3e may se.  
Mo pat hider wil ride,  
Pus grayped schul 3e be.

Sir Tristrem, ll. 1092 - 1095

Youre myrroure here ye loke,  
And let me be youre boke,  
Youre sampille take by me.

Lazarus

And in your mynd ane mirrour  
mak of me.

Cresseid, l. 457

Now mark 3our mirour be me, all  
maner of man,  
3e princis, prentis of pride for  
penneis and prowē,  
That pullis the pure ay,  
3e sall syng as I say,  
All 3our weith will away,  
Thus I warn 3ow.

Howlat ll. 970 - 975

All of these are directly related to the idea of Fortune, but it is in the Awntyrs and in Golagros that the connection with the wheel is explicitly made.

False Fortune in fighte,  
That wondirfulle whele wrighte,  
Shalle make lordes low to lizte -

Take witnessse by France.

AA, ll. 270 - 273

Quhan on-fortune quhelmys the quheil,  
    thair gais grace by;  
Ouha may his danger endure or destanye  
    dispise,  
That led men in langour ay lestand inly,  
The date na langar may endure na  
    Drichtin deuinis.

GG, ll. 1225 -- 1228

Directly following these lines is Golagros' reminder to his audience to study well their reflections in the mirror of fate.

There is yet another curious echo of the Awntyrs in the later poem which deserves to be studied. After Golagros has explained to his followers how Gawain most generously saved both his life and his honor when under no obligation to do so, the lord turns to his pretended prisoner and once again thanks him for his kindness. "Sir," he says

"...I know be conquest thow art ane kynd  
    man;  
Quhen my life and my dede wes baith at thi  
    will,  
Thy frendschip frely I fand;  
Now I will be obeyand,  
And make the manrent with hand,  
As right is, and skil."

ll. 1214 - 1219

Compare this with an incident which takes place in the second episode of the Awntyrs. Galeron, his righteous anger against Arthur diffused by the effect of Gaynour's impassioned pleas for peace, acknowledges Gawain as the physical victor of the combat they have just fought to determine the ownership of the lands in Galloway. Setting aside his weapon, the Scottish knight turns to his opponent and says:

"I wend neuer wee in þis worlde had  
been half so wize;  
Here I make þe releyse, renke, by þe  
rode,  
And by-fore thiese ryalle resynge þe  
my righte;  
And sibene make the monradene with a  
mylde mode,  
As mane of medlart makeles of nighte."

ll. 638 - 643

Although there is little discernible difference between either passage as a whole, it is Golagros' offer to "make manrent" to Gawain which is particularly reminiscent of Galeron's words. The circumstances in which both speeches are delivered are virtually the same, too - the loser of the contest gracefully accepting his defeat before an assemblage made up of the highest in the land, and, afterward, acknowledging the superiority of Gawain. With this in mind, it is tempting to speculate that the Scottish poet may have modeled his version of the exchange between Gawain and his opponent on the corresponding incident in the second episode of the Awntyrs.

That this is indeed the case seems even more likely when one considers the striking similarity which exists between the character of Golagros and that of Galeron. The two are in the first place depicted in an extremely favorable light by their creators - much more so, of course, than Arthur himself. Like Galeron, Golagros is portrayed as an honorable, peace-loving individual forced by an outsider's greed into a struggle for supremacy. And again, like the dispossessed Scottish knight, Golagros reacts to the attempted seizure of his lands with a fine show of courageous defiance. Although both men are in the end com-

pelled to submit to superior physical force, they nevertheless emerge from the contest with Arthur as the moral and therefore true victors over odds which after all have been against them from the very beginning. It is interesting too that while Galeron and Golagros eventually come to acknowledge Gawain's prowess, and express their admiration for him, their homage is never really given in the same fashion to Arthur, who had demanded it in the first place. Peace is restored between the king and his opponents, but the feudal relationship which it had been Arthur's great intent to impose on the Scottish knight and his French counterpart is never really established.

All this, it should be noted, is in fairly sharp contrast to the ending of that part of the Perceval which corresponds to the second episode of Golagros and Gawane. In the French romance, the Riche Soudoier not only gives Arthur his homage but compells his men to swear obeisance as well. It is on this note that the episode terminates. In the Awntyrs, it will be recalled, the king releases Galeron from whatever vague feudal commitments had been imposed on the Scottish knight. Likewise in Golagros and Gawane, Golagros is at the end fully restored to his status as an independent lord. So it would seem that once again the composer of the Scottish romance chose to follow the line adopted by the Awntyrs poet rather than the one taken by Chrétien's continuator.

There are of course several other interesting differences in the treatment given the story in the Perceval and the version of it offered in Golagros and Gawane. With



respect to the Scots poem, most of these constitute a very large part of what appears to be a deliberate attempt by the composer to blacken Arthur's character, both by contrast with those of his opponents and through the exceedingly unflattering descriptions given of his behavior. In the Perceval, the king's decision to march against the Chastel Orguëllous is justified by his desire to free Gyflet fis Do, who is being held captive in the castle by the Riche Soudoier. His motive for besieging Golagros is, on the other hand, given quite simply as nothing more than avarice. It is also made clear in the French romance that Arthur and his men hear a mass every morning before recommencing their attack on the castle of the Soudoier. The Scottish poet passes completely over any references to such devotions, an omission which strikes a no doubt deliberately ironic note when one recalls that Arthur's reason for being on the Continent in the first place is to complete a pilgrimage. In the Perceval, too, the siege of the Chastel Orguëllous is punctuated by periods of recreation, as the men of the Round Table take time off from combat to hunt in a nearby forest and pursue other pleasures. In the Scottish version of the story, Arthur will allow no diversion, however compelling, to sway him from his attempt to take Golagros' stronghold. It is on fact this obstinate refusal to consider any course of action other than the one he himself has chosen, together with his arrogance and greed, that appears to be his chief characteristic here.

Other, somewhat less significant, changes in the

story have taken place in its transition from the French to the Scots. Oddly enough, in the alliterative poem, Sir Kay comes off as a somewhat less unattractive character than his prototype in the Perceval. In the French romance, he not only abuses the dwarf manservant of Yder li Biaus but falsely claims to have vanquished a knight of the Riche Soudoier in combat. In Golagros, although he is certainly guilty of mistreating an inferior - a grievous offense against the chivalric code - he acquits himself reasonably well in battle. Thus the liar, braggart and bully of the French romance becomes in the Scots nothing more than a quick-tempered and heavy-handed blunderer. His abuse of the dwarf seems more the result of a naturally choleric disposition given free rein than actual cruelty.

There are certain descriptive passages in Golagros which the Scottish poet apparently lifted from the Perceval but put to an entirely different purpose from that they had served in the source work. One of the more interesting of these cases of transposition occurs toward the end of the alliterative poem. After Golagros has delivered his speech of thanks to Gawain, he turns to his followers and asks them to accompany him to Arthur's camp to effect the release of the prisoners. The courtiers naturally agree to this request and immediately thereafter set forth. Their progress is depicted in vivid terms. Out of the castle marches an assembly of

...lordis and ladis, lufsum to lere;  
With grete lightis on loft, that gaif  
grete leim;  
Sexty torcheis ful bright,  
Before schir Gologras the knight;

That wes ane semely syght,  
In ony riche reime.

ll. 1253 - 1258

The description of this glittering entourage has in fact a close parallel earlier on in the Perceval, although the context in which this occurs is a quite different one. Upon returning to the Chastel Orguellous from an assignation in the woods with his amie, the Riche Soudoier is met by a procession of his followers. Special reference is made here, too, to the torches which the lords and ladies carry as they stream from the castle to greet their overlord. The illumination is in fact so strong that Arthur and his men, watching from their camp, are deceived into thinking the Chastel Orguellous ablaze.

As Amours points out, the Scottish poet appears to have borrowed the motif of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem from a passage near the beginning of the Morte Arthure.<sup>27</sup> It will be recalled that the story here opens with an account of how a Roman emissary arrived at Carlisle one Christmas to deliver a challenge to Arthur from his master the Emperor Lucius. After the messenger has been entertained in a fashion befitting one of his rank, the king summons his chief knights to a council of war. It is decided that Lucius' arrogant demand for tribute shall not go unanswered, and Arthur grimly vows to avenge the Britons for the many insults and privations they have endured at Roman hands. "I shall lead the army myself," the king promises,

Tylle I haue venquiste the Vicounte of Rome  
That wroghte me at Viterbe a velanye ones,

As I paste in pylgremage by the Pounte Tremble;  
 He was in Tuskayne that tyme, and tuke of oure  
     knyghttes,  
 Areste theme vnryghttwyslye, and raunsounde thame  
     aftyre;  
 I salle him surelye ensure, that saghtetylle salle  
     we neuer,  
 Are we sadly assemble by our selfene ones,  
 And dele dyntes of dethe with oure derfe wapyns!

11. 325 - 332

It is interesting that the account of this event should occur in conjunction with the first of the six references in the Morte Arthure to Tuscany. So it is not at all difficult to see how the link between the two was established in Golagros and Gawane. There is a strong implication too that the Scottish poet's use of the motif of the pilgrimage was intended to provide more than just an excuse for Arthur's foray onto the Continent. The nature of the king's mission in the first episode of the poem is quite markedly at variance with his decidedly unChristian behavior in the second part, a contrast which highlights the vast gulf between the ideals he pays hurried lip service to and the crude reality of his actions. There is a neatly developed irony in the spectacle of Arthur rushing frenziedly back from Jerusalem in order to begin his siege of Golagros' castle.

As Matthews points out, both the Awntyrs and Golagros and Gawane were written at least partially in response to a great issue raised by the poet of the alliterative Morte Arthure - that of the morality of imperial ambition and of conquest.<sup>28</sup> The composer of the latter work was by no means unique in his choice of such a theme, however. Concern with the implications and consequences of imperial

ambition became a widespread one in both secular and religious medieval literature. There are a great number of philosophical, political, and theological treatises devoted almost solely to an examination of this issue. Romances other than the three alliterative ones dealt with it to a considerable extent as well. The originality of the Morte Arthure and, by extension, the originality of the Awntyrs and of Golagros and Gawane, lies in the fact that in these particular works the attempt to resolve the problem of the justification of warfare was made within the context of the Arthurian tradition.

The ramifications of this issue were explored by the most influential medieval writers. As a general rule, neither civil nor religious authorities tended to advocate pacifism.<sup>29</sup> Such an attitude was indicative not of a lack of humanitarian concern but rather of the essentially fatalistic cast of the medieval mind. The basic premise appears to have been that conflict was an inevitable - and in certain cases even a desirable - part of man's condition. It was from this assumption that all discussion of the issue proceeded. Thomas Aquinas, acting on the guidelines established in the writings of Saint Augustine, maintained a set of sharp distinctions between that sort of warfare which could reasonably be accorded sanction and that which could not. In order to merit justification conflict, so the argument in Summa Theologica ran, had to be initiated by a proper (royal) authority in a righteous cause and thereafter waged in good intent. Among the kinds of military action condoned or even approved

by Aquinas and his predecessor was that which had as its end the preservation of peace or the defense of the state. On the other hand, no justification whatever could be provided for wars of conquest, revolution, or vengeance. <sup>30</sup>

The three alliterative poems all reflect closely the way of thinking represented by the writings of Aquinas and Augustine. In the Morte Arthure, Arthur's first campaign against the Romans receives the full moral approval of both the poet and the reader. It is initiated by the proper authority (the king himself) for a high purpose (the maintenance of the autonomy of Britain) and waged in good intent. A better example of the sort of circumstance in which military action becomes not only justifiable but laudable would in fact be hard to find. But it is on a war of conquest that Arthur, emboldened by past success, embarks in the latter stages of the Morte Arthure, and by doing so loses the sanction merited by his previous deeds. In the Awntyrs, the king's avarice manifests itself in terms of the seizure of lands "with a wrang wile" or bad intent. Much the same is true of Golagros and Gawane. In the conflict described here it is the latter who, acting in the defense of the independence of his realm, has all moral right on his side. The position of Golagros is in fact exactly equivalent to that of Arthur in the opening phases of the Morte Arthure. In the Scottish romance, however, the king's behavior, motivated as it is by greed, neither deserves nor is accorded any sanction.

One of the great recurrent themes in both the literature and art of the medieval period is that of Fortune. Like the doctrine of justified warfare, such a notion held a curiously strong appeal for a mind essentially fatalistic in its world view. Janet M. Ferrier, in her study of the representation given the theme of Fortune in the works of Alain Chartier, comments that "the idea of a Fate at once capricious and inevitable provided a convenient shorthand to express man's experience of the uncertain outcome of the human effort and the frequent disappointment of human hopes."<sup>31</sup> This notion of an arbiter of destiny, which coincided so neatly with the medieval view of cause and effect relationships and which provided such a neat solution to a seemingly insoluble problem, was not at base an invention of the age. The whole idea of an agency exercising control over fate, an agency usually personified in the shape of a goddess, actually had its roots in pre-classical tradition. The medieval conception of Fortune was, on the other hand, something at once more complex and less pure than that from which it was derived. In order for the pagan tradition to acquire acceptability in an age dominated primarily by faith, such a tradition had to be reconciled with prevailing religious doctrine. Such a synthesis could not be achieved without some effort and ingenuity. From one standpoint at least, the pagan and Christian traditions were mutually contradictory. Not only did the older belief grant Fortune a concrete existence, but conceived of her as a goddess accountable

for her actions to no higher authority than herself. To the rationally-minded, adhering as they did to that most fundamental article of the Christian faith which denies the existence of any supreme being other than its own God, such a concept was au fond completely unacceptable. Yet there seemed no way of satisfactorily accounting for the changes in the human condition other than by attributing these to the workings of a force external and independent of the Almighty. The ultimate compromise, then, made of the heathen goddess an agent of Providence, answerable to the Christian God by whom she was empowered to intercede in human affairs. As Patch remarks, this reconciliation was primarily effected by the medieval poets. It was they rather than the philosophers who "gave full recognition to personifying chance - that is to say, in accepting the personified figure of the heathens - and in making the figure subservient to the rational God. In this way complete account was taken of both experience and faith, and reason was satisfied."<sup>32</sup>

The basic concept of Fortune as the agent of Providence provided for medieval literature a commonplace theme upon which many variations could be imposed by individual authors. In many cases these variations consisted in the representation given the personification itself. In De Consolatione Philosophiae,<sup>33</sup> Boethius makes Philosophy describe the goddess as a blind yet subtle and treacherous flatterer who lures men to their doom through the expectation of earthly reward. These promises are of course mere bagatelles, for Fortune retracts her



benefices with the same free hand as that with which she bestows them. This disposition to volatility is also characteristic of Dante's goddess, although the poet attributes it to a specific cause. Patch writes that Fortune here "still appears to be arbitrary, she still receives the scorn and reproaches of mankind; but she has her own concealed method in her apparent madness, and to all blame she is serenely indifferent."<sup>34</sup> Chaucer generally follows the line taken by Boethius in describing the goddess as

...fals, and ever laughynge  
With oon eye, and that other wepynge.  
That ys broghte up, she set al down.  
I lykne hyr to the scorpioun,  
That ys a fals, flaterynge beste;  
For with his hed he maketh feste,  
But al amydde hys flaterynge  
With his tayle he wol styng  
And envenyme; and so wol she.

Book of the Duchess,<sup>35</sup> ll. 633 - 641

Descriptions of the actual appearance of the goddess varied from one instance to the next. In the alliterative Morte Arthure, Fortune is represented as

A duches dereworthily dyghte in dyaperde wedis,  
In a surcot of sylke full selkouthely hewede,  
Alle with loyotour ouer-laide lowe to the hemmes,  
And with ladily lappes the lenghe of a 3erde,  
And alle redily reuersside with rebanes of golde,  
Bruchez and besauntez, and other bryghte stonys,  
With hir bake and hir brest was brochede alle  
ouer,  
With kelle and with corenalle clenliche arrayde,  
And that so comly of colour one knowene was  
neuer!

ll. 3251 - 3259

This coruscating vision finds a distinct contrast in the description of the goddess afforded by Lydgate in the Fall of Princes.<sup>36</sup> In the opening of Book VI Bochas is

sitting alone in his study when Fortune appears, arrayed like Joseph in a coat of many colors. Each hue of her garment represents a different quality, pale blue symbolizing steadfastness, light green standing for "doubilness," black for mourning, russet for "trauaille," and white for purity. In her physical aspect, however, Fortune is repulsive. She changes both her shape and her sex as well, alternating human with animal forms under the startled gaze of Bochas. In the Kingis Quair,<sup>37</sup> Fortune also appears wearing a surcote of "diuerse hewis," although her features are not referred to here as being loathsome. Emphasis is placed rather on the variability of the goddess's countenance. The sudden and rapid changes her disposition toward men undergoes are reflected in the quick shifts of her facial expression.

In most literary and pictorial representations, Fortune is depicted as having control over a great wheel, the revolutions of which will determine the course man's fate will take. Descriptions of this wheel are nearly as elaborate as are those of the goddess herself. In the Morte Arthure, it is said to be curiously and elaborately wrought, with silver spokes and a silver seat upon which are enthroned those at the height of their fame and glory. As the wheel turns, however, the occupant topples from his perch and is dashed to the ground below. There he is crushed and broken beneath the feet of those who scramble upward to take possession of the recently vacated throne. According to the Kingis Quair, an even worse fate awaits those who fall from Fortune's graces:

An vgly pit, depe as ony helle,  
 That for to behald thereon I quoke  
           for fere.  
 Bot o thing herd I, that qhuo therein  
           fell  
 Com no more vp agane, tidingis to  
           telle.  
 Of quhich, astonait of that ferefull  
           syght,  
 I ne wist quhat to done, so was I  
           fricht.

Stanza 162

Attitudes toward Fortune ranged from a serenely philosophic acceptance of her vagaries to outright rage at what was considered to be the arbitrary injustice of fate. The former way of thinking embodies a tacit acknowledgment that since the goddess is after all the agent of Providence, the sufferings she inflicts on men are no more than what is their due for lives ill-spent. To question the reversal of fate would be in effect to question the wisdom of the Deity. Such calm stoicism pervades a short poem contained in MS. Harl. 7322, in which the author implies that it is man himself who is the final arbiter of his own destiny:

pou most fort, wit wele or wo,  
     be pou lef, oþer be pou lot,  
 forto gon vp on þis wel  
     þat euermore aboutēgot.

3if pou be cointē, pou ssalt liue:  
 &ellis dedis dint i ssal þe 3iue.  
vel sic  
 3if pou go cointeli on þis wel,  
     pou ssalt liue euermore:  
 bot 3if pou falle, & go amis  
     wit dulful det i wonde þe sore.

Elsewhere in the same manuscript occurs a verse expressing the conviction that the reversals of Fortune are not in fact arbitrary but rather entirely predictable. The poet uses the images of the waxing and waning moon to convey

some sense of the manner in which the ups and downs of fate fall into a fixed and regular cyclical pattern:

bis wondir wel vndir bis trone,  
it changit ofte as dot þe mone;  
al þat euere come þer-on,  
it fondit forto gile:  
& bot þey be war be-forn,  
it zelt hem euele her wile.

Alexander Montgomerie's Invectione Against Fortun,<sup>38</sup>

as the title implies, embodies a sentiment quite the opposite of philosophic resignation to non-anticipated and unfavorable change. Unlike some of his predecessors, Montgomerie can discern no coherent pattern in the workings of destiny. Nor does he see Fortune as the impartial agent of Providence, but characterizes her instead as a blind unreasoning entity whose actions cannot be attributed to a rational cause. The poet's rage at "that curst inconstant Cative," "that bloodie Bitch," "that buskit belly blind" spills over from every line. Fortune is no respecter of either position or worth, for she casts down the noble and uplifts the base with the same flagrant disregard for what is meet and just:

For men of merit sho no mater maks:  
Bot when a toy intil hir heid sho taks,  
But ryme or reson or respect to richt  
The worthiest and valiantest sho wraks,  
And honours out-waills for wnworthie acts;  
As of a kitchin-knaive to mak a knicht  
That witch, that warlok, that vnworthie  
wicht  
Turnis ay the best men tittest on thair bakis;  
Syn settis vp sik as somtym war bot slycht.

ll. 19 - 27

Nor does the goddess draw any distinction between good and evil. The virtuous are not necessarily rewarded, and sinners for their transgressions escape punishment:

Ouhen with a quhisk sho quhirlis about hir  
 quheill,  
 Rude is that rattail running with a reill,  
 Ouhill top ouer tail goes honest men  
 atains.  
 Then spurgald sporters they begin to speill;  
 The cadger clims, neu cleikit from the creill;  
 And ladds vploips to lordships all thair  
 lains:  
 Doun goes the bravest, brecking all their  
 banis.  
 Sho works hir will; God wot if it be weill.  
 Sho stottis at strais, syn stumbillis not  
 at stanis.

11. 28 - 36

At the base of Montgomerie's argument lies the conviction  
 that man, far from being the arbiter of his own destiny,  
 is at the mercy of a fickle yet inexorable fate.

The poet of the Morte Arthure manifestly did not sub-  
 scribe to this view. The assumption here appears to be  
 that man exercises control over his own destiny to the ex-  
 tent that his actions will determine whether or not he  
 will be rewarded or punished by the revolution of the  
 wheel. In the end, he will be held accountable only to  
 God for his transgressions. Fortune will then dispense  
 whatever retribution is deemed fitting by Providence. While  
 the actions of the goddess may at first appear to be arbi-  
 trary and her ways inscrutable, both in fact follow a  
 course ultimately determined by man himself. The logic  
 behind the revolutions of the wheel can only be understood  
 in the framework of Christian belief. Such understanding,  
 too, can become the basis for an acceptance of the rever-  
 sals of fate. Those who do not recognize Fortune's role  
 as the agent of Providence, as in the case of Montgomerie,  
 are those who rail the most at her ways. They see no  
 rationale behind her actions, because it is of course

only in the light of her association with the Christian God that this rationale emerges.

In the Morte Arthure, the Awntyrs, and Golagros and Gawane the theme of Fortune is closely allied with the concept of justified and unjustified warfare.<sup>39</sup> All three poems embody the conviction that wars of vengeance and aggression constitute just the sort of transgression for which those who commit it will be most stringently punished by the revolution of the wheel. It is explicit in the Morte Arthure and in the Awntyrs and at least implicit in Golagros and Gawane that Arthur's fall will come about as a result of his imperial ambitions and his pride in conquest. We have already seen how the process operates with respect to the Morte Arthure. As I mentioned previously, the poet of the Awntyrs seems to have had an essentially Boethian vision of destiny. At any rate he stresses the fickleness of the goddess herself:

"False Fortune in fighte,  
That wondirfulle whele wryghte  
Shalle make lordes lowe to lizte -  
Take witnesse by France."

ll. 270 - 273

The poet of Golagros and Gawane, on the other hand, makes a point of emphasizing the inexorability of fate once this fate has been set in motion:

"Quhen fortune worthis vnfrende, then  
faileis welefair,  
Thair may na tresour outak nor twyn  
hir intent."

ll. 1239 - 1240

The connection of Fortune with Providence is clearly established here:

"Quha may his danger endure or  
destanye dispise,  
That led men in langour ay  
lestand inly,  
The date na langar may endure na  
Drichtin deuinis."

ll. 1226 - 28

It says a great deal for the literary gifts of the poet of Golagros and Gawane that, like the composer of the Awntyrs, he was not only able to overcome the limitations imposed by the alliterative meter, a complex stanza form, and exacting rhyme scheme but actually turn them to his advantage in creating a fast-moving and consistently interesting narrative. The fundamental purpose of the poet was to entertain, and in doing so he succeeded admirably. Yet the Scottish romance is far from being just a pleasing tale of adventure and of virtue and courage rewarded. As was the case with its companion piece the Awntyrs, the writing of Golagros and Gawane was motivated by a strongly didactic spirit. And the issues with which the author dealt - such as the justification of warfare - counted among some of the most crucial of his day.

The didactic purpose of the poem is brought forth through the medium of character and plot. In view of this, it is doubly regrettable that the fine character portrayals in Golagros and Gawane have not perhaps been as fully appreciated as they deserve to be. There is a tendency to regard the poem chiefly as a glorification of war and all things military - a notion which in itself would appear to be based on a misapprehension, since one of the underlying purposes of the story of Arthur's conflict

with Golagros is as we have just seen to point out the injustice of all forms of aggression. However this may be, the critical concern with the martial aspect of Golagros and Gawane has resulted in an unfortunate neglect of the more human aspect of the poem, which is in fact very strong. We have already seen something of the complexity with which Arthur himself is portrayed, revealed as he is as a man in whom long awareness of total personal supremacy has become a force for destruction. His stature as a king and conqueror is considerably diminished by his obstinacy and insatiable ambition, but the external traces of his former glory still cling to him. It is this contrast between past grandeur and present decay which makes the fact of his degeneration particularly sad and ironic. In comparison with his opponent, he is an almost pitiable figure.

So thoroughly critical is the portrait of the king afforded in Golagros and Gawane that it seems very likely that this particular characterization was intended to serve as an exemplum. The manner in which Arthur and his actions are here described amounts to what is virtually a study in the art of kingship. Not, of course, that Arthur emerges from the romance with an image remotely resembling anything like that of the perfect monarch. As we have seen, quite the opposite in fact occurs. But it is just this negative portrayal of Arthur which makes of him in the end a sort of object lesson in reverse in ideal kingship.

The medieval concept of the duties and responsibilities



of the sovereign was a well-defined one, and, judging from the references to it in contemporary writing, one to which a great deal of importance was attached as well. The widespread interest in the subject is reflected in almost all genres of the literature of the period. It is a key issue in the Awntyrs, where the ghost of Gaynour's mother delivers a speech on the various temptations to which a ruler is prone to succumb. The references in both the Siege of Thebes and the Fall of Princes to those once omnipotent sovereigns who fell from glory as a result of their own arrogance testify to Lydgate's continuing interest in the subject.<sup>40</sup> But the actual code to which the ideal monarch should subscribe was set forth by Christine de Pisan (c. 1364 -- c. 1429) in the Livre des Faitz d'Armes et de Chevalrie, a work which proved so popular that it was translated into English and printed by Caxton 1490 under the title The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye.<sup>41</sup> The principle source for that section of this tract which aims at portraying the good general was Vegetius' treatise of the art of warfare. Chapters I through VII of the Faitz d'Armes, however, betray to a much greater extent the influence of the school of thought represented by Aquinas and Augustine. In view of this the work becomes doubly relevant with respect to a full understanding of the themes of the Morte Arthure, the Awntyrs, and Golagros and Gawane. And the fact that Christine's treatise was widely circulated during the time when the latter of the three alliterative poems was written gives it particular importance

in terms of any discussion of Arthur's role in Golagros and Gawane.

It becomes clear at once from a comparison of Arthur's conduct with the standards for princely behavior set forth in the opening seven chapters of Book One of the Fayttes of Armes just how far the king falls short of the ideal. In Chapter IV, Christine establishes the causes of war, categorizing them as either lawful or wilful. Like Aquinas, the author concedes that a prince may be permitted to take arms in order to uphold justice, suppress evil, or regain usurped territory. Wars of vengeance or aggression, however, fall outside the bounds of justification. Christine reserves her special abhorrence for wars of conquest, motivated as they are by nothing more high-minded than avarice. "By the law of god," she states, "it apperteyneth not to a man onely to take ne vsurpe nothyng of others/ nor on no wise to coueite it."<sup>42</sup> The ideal monarch is also expected to offer his protection to the weak and helpless, particularly in time of war. According to Christine, "the prynce may iustly yf it please hym to ayde & helpe euery prynce baron or other hys alye or frende/ or ony contre or londe yf he be requyred in caas that the quarell be iust/ & and in this point be comprised wimmen wydowes/ orphans/ & alle them that may have necessite."<sup>43</sup> Arthur not only fails to meet this obligation but actually betrays an intention of doing exactly the opposite when informed by Spynagros that Golagros will probably refuse to submit to the king's demands:

"Sall neuer my likame be laid vnlassit  
to sleip,  
Quhill I haue gart yone berne bow,  
As I haue maid myne auow,  
Or ellis mony wedou  
Ful wraithly sall weip."

ll. 294 - 298

Christine also stresses the importance of the king's advisors. Even under those circumstances in which the prince finds himself not only permitted but obligated to take up arms, he should first seek the advice of disinterested parties. Ideally, he should invite representatives of different factions to participate in a discussion of the issues, so that all possibilities of a peaceful settlement may be explored and weighed. If the attempt at mediation fails due to the intransigency of the opposing side, then the prince is justified in declaring war.

Arthur, of course, does not attempt to negotiate with Golagros over the matter of feudal obligations, nor does he heed the advice of Spynagros. Instead, he rushes blindly into a conflict which he himself has provoked. Such recklessness comes under heavy attack by Christine in Chapter V of Book One. Wars undertaken lightly or impulsively, she warns, may have disastrous consequences.<sup>44</sup> Since no man can know in which direction Fortune's wheel may turn - a point which, it will be recalled, Golagros makes toward the end of the Scottish romance - the sovereign would be well-advised not to jeopardize his position by an unnecessary gamble. He should also remain aware of his own strengths and limitations - something which Arthur does not - and he should never under any circumstances underestimate his opponent's resources. This last is an

error which Arthur seems doomed to repeat throughout the course of Golagros and Gawane. Time and again Spynagros reiterates the impossibility of forcing the governor of the castle on the Rhone to submission:

The mighty king of Massidone,  
Wourthiest but wene,  
Thair he gat nane homage,  
For all his hie parage,  
Of lord of yone lynage,  
Nor neuer none sene

ll. 282 - 286

Why should Arthur, so Spynagros reasons, expect to succeed where the great Alexander himself has failed? Yet every one of his warnings and pleas for peace are dismissed out of hand.

From the standpoint of originality, the best conceived and developed characterization in Golagros is that of Arthur's harried and anxiety-ridden counselor, Spynagros. Although his part in the poem is based on the role taken by Brandelis in the Perceval, Spynagros himself has apparently no single prototype in Arthurian literature. Not that of a soldier, nor precisely that of a courtier, his function in Golagros is in some ways very much akin to that of the fool in Renaissance drama. Like the jester in, say, Lear, Spynagros can advise or criticize his king without fear of reprisal, although not always with the assurance that his words will be heeded. And the fact that his commentaries on Arthur's behavior almost inevitably fall on deaf ears makes his constant attempts to divert the king from the reckless course he has chosen all the more poignant.

Spynagros is in fact the perfect foil for Arthur, possessing as he does all those virtues of patience, wisdom, and humanity so sadly lacking in the king. Like the ghost in the Awntyrs - to whom in some of his more gloomy pronouncements he bears a great similarity - he exists in part to warn the arrogant and ambitious of the terrible fall awaiting those who overreach themselves. Unlike Brandelis, he stands slightly apart from the rest of the warriors, taking no active role in their affairs. Content to serve as the watchdog of the king's sluggish conscience, Spynagros remains always the mediator and philosopher. He is the mouthpiece of the poet, whose own strong convictions are expressed through the medium of the counselor's lengthy and often pessimistic dissertations on the human condition. Spynagros delivers the message of the poem; it is illustrated by the actions of the other characters.

Certain critics have found Spynagros rather too verbose as well as too irritatingly present to rank as an entirely believable and consequently sympathetic character. While it is true that he is not a heroic figure of the mold of Gawain or Golagros, and does not therefore command the same sort of intense response as they, he was not after all intended by his creator to do so. His very lack of the kind of stature they possess is a corollary of the purpose he serves in the story. Proceeding as it does from his earnest if sometimes heavyhanded efforts to set things right, his longwindedness comes across as one of those complex flaws which elicits the sort of

sympathetic response a simple virtue cannot. As pedantic and slow as he can undoubtedly be, he unerringly hits on the truth, and is capable of flashes of real eloquence. Quite a few of his speeches, in fact, constitute the most memorable passages of dialogue in the poem.

As befits the philosopher figure, Spynagros has a tendency to speak in aphorisms - some of which are gems of their kind. The first of these is delivered on the occasion when Arthur, having expressed his interest in the turreted city overlooking the Rhone, announces his intention of forcing its inhabitants to accept him as their overlord. Having unsuccessfully attempted to frighten the king into abandoning his project by describing to him the reputation the city-dwellers hold as fighters, Spynagros then launches into a contemplation of the misfortunes awaiting those who arrogantly insist on the fulfillment of all their desires when reason and prudence dictate restraint:

"The wy that wendis for to wer quhen he  
    wenys best  
All his will in this warld, with welthis  
    I wys,  
Yit sall be licht as leif of the lynd  
    lest,  
That welteris down with the wynd, sa  
    wauerand it is."

ll. 287 - 290

This is about as concise and accurate a summary of the poem's whole theme as can be found anywhere, and it is fitting that it should be made by Spynagros, through whom the poet himself directly speaks.

One other of Spynagros' remarks deserves special

notice, as the point made in it not only bears great intrinsic significance, but holds as well a key to the full understanding of yet another basic issue of the poem. Just before Gawain, Ewin, and Lancelot set out to deliver Arthur's challenge to Golagros, they are taken aside by Spynagros for a brief consultation. After explaining to them just what sort of opponent they have set themselves up against, the counselor implores the knights to be diplomatic and courteous in their dealings with Golagros. Threats and violence, in addition to reflecting badly on those who resort to such tactics, have in any case no real practical value, whereas

"It hynderis neuer for to be heyndly of speche." Although this observation is inspired by an incident which sets the plot of the second episode of the poem in motion, it applies equally well and in fact serves as a moral to the events of the first. Kay, seldom known ever "to be heyndly of speche," fails to carry out the mission to which he has been assigned through his crude and uncalled for harrassment of the very people toward whom his behavior should have been most correct. Through courtesy and soft words, Gawain is not only able to rectify Kay's error, but succeed where the other knight had failed. In its wider sense, "to be heyndly of speche" means to be circumspect in thought and action. And it is this lesson, so doggedly propounded by Spynagros, which constitutes the ultimate message of the poem.

In my end is my beginning.

Motto of Mary, Queen of Scots

In my beginning is my end.

Burnt Norton, T. S. Eliot



Chapter VII  
The Arthurian Tradition in Scotland from the  
Late Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries

That certain attitudes often thought to be characteristic of the alliterative Arthurian cycle were reflected in works not belonging to this cycle is amply demonstrated in the case of Lancelot of the Laik,<sup>1</sup> a late fifteenth-century Scots romance roughly contemporary with Golagros and Gawane although not unfortunately its peer in literary merit. In most respects a rather tedious piece, the poem takes on considerable interest in terms of the manner in which Arthur himself is portrayed. In Golagros, the British king emerges as a character amongst whose worst attributes must be numbered avarice and self-indulgence. The composer of Lancelot of the Laik has not only incorporated such traits into his portrayal of Arthur, but magnified them almost beyond artistically viable proportions. Throughout the first and second books of the poem appear references to a king who is both cowardly and cruel - an Arthur who "stondeth al afrayt" before his opponents yet subjects his social and political inferiors to a ferocious bullying. The theme of the degeneration of a once-great man, suggested in the Awntyrs and more strongly reaffirmed in Golegros and Gawane, is brought to a resounding conclusion in Lancelot of the Laik.<sup>2</sup>

The hostility of the author of this last poem toward the British hero was of a peculiarly virulent kind. In Book I of Lancelot Arthur's knights, chafing at the sedentary existence they have been forced to lead at the Carlisle court, delegate Sir Kay to petition the king for a progress to Camelot. Arthur at first agrees to the request, but during the course of the following evening is

visited by nightmares so horrifically portentous as to cause him to change his mind. Despite the wishes of his knights, the king refuses to depart from Carlisle until his dream has been satisfactorily interpreted by the court clerks. It is during the course of this incident that the more unpleasant aspects of Arthur's personality are first revealed. The astrologers and advisors who are called in eventually do work out the meaning of the nocturnal vision; unfortunately the conclusions they reach are of such a nature that they hesitate to reveal them to Arthur "for dreid of his danger." The stalemate is compounded when the king, learning of his advisors' apparent inability to cope with the task he has set them, refuses to allow the astrologers to leave court until they have arrived at a solution. Thus trapped between two equally uncomfortable alternatives, the clerks can only maintain their pretence of baffled subservience and plead for more time to consult their books and charts. Arthur more or less ungraciously assents to these conditions, but

The term passit, no thing wold the say,  
Wharof the King stondeth hevye cherith,  
And to the clerkis his visage so apperith,  
That all thei dreid them of the Kingis  
myght.

11. 458 - 461

Unable to discover any safe way out of their predicament, the advisors finally decide to cast themselves on the king's unstable mercies and confess failure. Arthur's reaction to this news confirms all the worst fears the clerks had expressed, for in an excess of thwarted fury he orders his barons to commit five of the astrologers

to the stake and another five to the gibbet. Under the circumstances the punishment seems quite harsh enough. However, the "flour of chevalrie" secretly stipulates that the clerks should only be frightened rather than physically harmed. Unaware of this and evidently concluding that no further punishment could prove worse than the one to which they have just been condemned, the advisors decide to reveal to Arthur what they have discovered about his dream. "Dreidful of his Ire," however, they first ask the king not to take offense at their disclosures.

Book II opens with a somewhat similar situation. After spending a night once again troubled by unpleasant dreams, Arthur goes for an early morning walk in order to collect his thoughts and cope with the stirrings of an uneasy conscience. While wandering about the palace grounds, he meets the learned advisor Amytans, who has evidently just returned to the court after an absence of some time. Amytans, however, refuses to acknowledge the king's pleased greeting, and only after a good bit of coaxing on Arthur's part does he launch into a diatribe enumerating his sovereign's various sins:

Yow haith non Ey bot one thyne awn delyt,  
Or quhat that plesing shall thyne appetyt.  
In the defalt of law and of Iustice,  
Wndir thi hond is sufferyt gret suppress  
Of fedirless, and modirless also,  
And wedwis ek sustenit mekill wo.  
With gret mychef oppressit are the pure;  
And thou art causs of al this hol Iniure.

ll. 1348 - 1355

and later

The mychty folk, and ek the flattereris  
Are cheif with the, and doeith this  
oppressioun.

ll. 1361 - 1362

Amytens' appraisal of Arthur is a harsh one, but it does serve to confirm what has been suggested about the king's character by his previous actions. Without regards for the needs of other, Arthur caters only to his own appetite, oppresses the weak, and surrounds himself with self-seeking courtiers on whose behalf he commits even further excesses. Injustice is rampant in the land, and honest people suffer at the hands of criminals due to their king's failure to enforce the law. Arthur neglects his subjects, and consequently is losing their support. Peevish and irritable when forced to draw on his own slender resources, he is the antithesis of all a sovereign should ideally be.

In Lancelot of the Laik the image of the all-powerful conqueror has been replaced by that of a weak and vacillating petty chieftain who cannot even organize an army to defend his own domain. To his brother monarchs Arthur becomes a figure of fun, a grotesque parody of kingship. He responds to a challenge not with enthusiasm but with fear and anger, lashing out at his neglected subjects for their understandable refusal to support him. Book I ends with Arthur in the untenable position of being unable to cope with the threat posed by a neighbor king named Galiot, whose troops are on the verge of overrunning the land. The fact that Galiot later withdraws his army on the grounds that Arthur's weakness makes him an unworthy opponent indicates just how low the king has sunk in the estimation of his peers. It is no wonder his sleep is troubled.

Lancelot of the Laik is basically just a free metrical translation of a substantial chunk of the French prose

Lancelot du Lac. As the latter exists in a number of manuscript versions, the exact source for the Scottish romance has never been determined. That part of the French work utilized by the fifteenth century poet deals, in any case, with Lancelot's role in the wars between Arthur and Galiot and with the knight's developing passion for Guenevere. Although the Scottish poet stuck fairly close to the original insofar as plot is concerned, he effected some interesting changes in characterization and to the sequence of events in the story. The most important of these is the inclusion of Amytans' speech of criticism and advice to Arthur, for which there is no real parallel in Lancelot du Lac. Now, the unfavorable attitude toward the British king which becomes such a prominent feature of the Scottish poem was already present to a certain degree in the French romance. The Arthur depicted here is an Arthur whose predominant trait seems to be an inability to arrive at a firm decision and act on it. On this point the monarch of Lancelot du Lac in fact bears a strong resemblance to the ineffectual lay-figure who hovers in the background of some of Chrétien's romances. What the Scottish poet has done is to seize upon the element of weakness established by his predecessors as being inherent in Arthur's character and exploit it to the furthest possible extent. What is more, he has made of the king a bully and tyrant of almost Caligulan proportions. There is of course nothing particularly original in such a conception of Arthur. As I mentioned in Chapter II, a hostile portrait of the British hero as tormenter and oppressor of the weak appears

in some of the Welsh hagiographies, notably the Life of Saint Padarn. But between the motives of the Welsh writers in seeking to diminish the repute of Arthur and the motives of the Scottish writer in setting himself the same task there lay a world of difference. And it is with defining this difference that I am primarily concerned.

It is important to keep in mind that a positive as well as a negative Arthurian tradition existed in later medieval Scottish literature. This was maintained at first in the epic poetry of the period, a genre represented chiefly by the Bruce and the Wallace. In these, Arthur is restored to something of the status accorded him by Geoffrey, Wace, and Layamon. The ineffectual boor of Lancelot of the Laik emerges from Barbour's epic as a paragon of chivalry and nobility. For Hary, Arthur provides the ultimate and shining example of military valor, one to which all men fighting in the defense of liberty are repeatedly urged to pay heed. His downfall results not from a flaw in his own character but from, as Barbour asserts, the treachery and wickedness of his own nephew. Hary draws a vivid parallel between the slaying of Arthur in battle and the execution of Wallace, acts which deprived the world of two of its greatest heroes. In both cases, the facts of the matter are clear-cut and unclouded by the moral issues which arise in the Morte Arthure, the Awntyrs off Arthure, and Golagros and Gawene. The assumption at work here is simply that Arthur, the noblest of British princes, died tragically at the hands of a cowardly usurper.

It is interesting that the Arthurian romance tradition in Scotland should have taken such a radically different turn from the heroic tradition as embodied in the two national epics. But the split was not merely confined to the narrative poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The dichotomy exists as well in the northern chronicles, where Arthur appears alternately as hero and villain. To one anonymous Scottish historian he was in the most literal sense of the term a bastard, self-seeking and tyrannical, who succeeded to his father's throne by a combination of sorcery and treachery. Yet in George Buchanan's writings Arthur appears as a Christian prince of hallowed memory, one whose name would be associated for all time with the virtues of nobility, wisdom, and humanity.

Since it was from the lengthy and sometimes contradictory account of Arthur's career given by Geoffrey of Monmouth that most of the northern chroniclers derived inspiration, it would probably be best to recapitulate here the main points of that account insofar as they relate to Scottish interests. Uther, king of the Britons, developed a wild infatuation with Igerne, wife of Gorlois, earl of Cornwall. Suspicious of the attentions his overlord had begun to pay to his duchess, Gorlois withdrew from court and returned to his own domain. Accurately foreseeing reprisals for this defiance of etiquette, the earl installed his wife in remote Tintagel Castle and went off to prepare a second fortress to withstand attack by the king's army. In the meantime, Uther set off in pursuit of



the fleeing couple. Arriving in Cornwall, the king found his principal quarry Igerne incarcerated in a virtually impregnable stronghold. Aware that the walls of Tintagel could not be breached by any normal means, he turned to the sorcerer Merlin for assistance. Merlin, who counted shape-changing amongst his many skills, transformed Uther's appearance into that of Gorlois, and in such a guise the king managed to gain entrance to the castle. He spent the night with Igerne, who became pregnant. During the course of this interlude, Uther's troops laid siege to the fortalice where Gorlois and his followers were stationed, and the earl was killed while leading the defense. Uther later married the widowed countess, and the child born to them was Arthur. Upon his father's death by poisoning some fifteen years later, this boy became king of Britain. Geoffrey relates that he showed great promise, having been endowed by nature with all the noble qualities befitting a sovereign.

Of all Arthur's attributes, the most outstanding was his military genius. Under his generalship, the Britons won a resounding victory over their nearest neighbors, the Scots and Picts. An extremely detailed account of this northern campaign is given in the Historia Regum Britanniae. Arthur spared neither Pict nor Scot, treating them with great cruelty, although according to Geoffrey such harsh measures were justified. So savage was the British king's handling of his opponents that the bishops of Scotland were finally compelled to sue for mercy on behalf of their suffering people. Moved by their eloquence,

Arthur ceased his devastation of the country.

Shortly after this, the young king retired to York to celebrate the Christmas season. Living in exile in the city at that time were three brothers of royal descent, Loth, Urian, and Angusel, who had been driven out of their domains by the Saxons. Arthur, sympathetic to the plight of the refugees, set about restoring them to their rights. Loth he made overlord of Lothian, Angusel king of Scots, and Urian prince of Moray. Yet Arthur's efforts on behalf of the three did not end with reinstatement. The eldest of the brothers had inherited the crown of Norway on the death of his grandfather, Sichelm. The Norwegians, however, refused to accept a Scot as their king and raised instead one Riculf to the throne. Accordingly, Arthur invaded Norway, conquered the rebels, and forced them to take Loth as their overlord. The British king's intercession in this instance may have been prompted by practical considerations as well as altruism, for Loth had for sometime been married to Anna, Arthur's younger sister. To this couple two sons were born, Gawain and Mordred.

The Scottish chronicle tradition concerning Arthur stresses certain features of the legend which are ordinarily either glossed over or interpreted in an entirely different light by the English historians.<sup>4</sup> Primarily, Arthur is almost automatically portrayed as the natural son of Uther and Igerne, a point which strictly speaking seems true enough in view of the peculiar circumstances surrounding his conception and birth. Consequently, the legitimacy of Anna and her sons Gawain and Mordred is heavily emphasized.

In the northern chronicles, too, it is generally maintained that Mordred is the elder of the two brothers, whereas in the English histories the reverse is accepted. On these two points is based the Scottish variation on the Arthurian theme. Due to his illegitimacy, Arthur's claim to his father's throne is technically void. The succession should pass, therefore, to Uther's next closest kin, who according to the Scottish interpretation are his daughter and grandsons. Mordred's claim is however rejected by the Britons on the grounds of his extreme youth, and the succession reverts to the somewhat older Arthur. In the northern tradition then it is the archetypal traitor of the English chronicles and romances who is assumed to be the rightful king of Britain, whereas the incumbent is pointed to as the usurper. This curious but not illogical reversal of the standard version of the story quite naturally gives rise to a whole new set of attitudes.

The Scottish Arthurian chronicle tradition begins with the Chronicon Gentis Scotorum<sup>5</sup> of John Fordun. Fordun, a churchman who died sometime about 1388, was an historian of considerable ability and impartiality. Brief though it is, his account of Arthur's career is remarkable for the objectivity with which it has been rendered. The author resists the temptation to moralize over the potentially inflammatory issue of the British king's legitimacy. Instead, Fordun confines himself to remarking that although Arthur was undoubtedly suited to rule by virtue of his wisdom and nobility, the crown of Britain should properly have passed to the sons of Lot on Uther's death. Due to

"the contrivance of certain men," however, Mordred and Gawain were deprived of their inheritance.

Despite the favorable opinion which he advances of Arthur's personal qualities, and the acknowledgment of Arthur's right to kingship that this would seem to entail, Fordun refuses to allow any slur on the reputation of Mordred to creep into his narrative. He in fact devotes considerable space to exploding some of the myths which have besmirched the posterity of the maligned Scottish prince. It is in the Chronicon Gentis Scotorum that reference is made to a question of Mordred's paternity - a question which Fordun refutes by reiterating the youth's descent from a line of Romano-Scottish magnates. Loth, the historian records, was the consul and ruler of Lothian, "who came from the family of the leader Fulgentius; and of Anna begat two sons - the noble Galwenus and Mordred - whom, on the other hand, some relate, without foundation, to have had another origin." Fordun was of course thinking of the romance tradition which held Mordred to be the offspring of an incestuous relationship between Arthur and his sister. The earliest known reference to this notion in explicit form occurs in the Vulgate Mort Artu. It became widespread in French Arthurian literature as a whole shortly thereafter, and was repeated in Lancelot and the Vulgate Merlin. The idea was exploited as well by some of the later English writers, notably Malory. The implications of this motif were considerable, for many of those composers who gave credence to the notion of Mordred's incestuous birth attempted to establish the "sinful and

unnatural" relationship which resulted in this as the ultimate cause of Arthur's downfall. Such an interpretation of the case would however have been quite fatal to Scottish interests. Hence, Fordun's anxiety to confirm Mordred's status as the legitimate son of Loth.

A great deal of the account in the Chronicon Gentis Scotorum is taken up with the author's valiant if not altogether successful attempts to unravel the inconsistencies of his source, Geoffrey's Historia. In Geoffrey, the exact relationship between Mordred, Gawain, Arthur, and Anna is never quite made clear, for Anna alternately appears as Uther's sister and as his younger daughter. Fordun, after striving to disentangle this genealogical web, finally leaves the solution of the problem up to "the sagacity of the reader." He himself adopts the line that Anna was Arthur's younger sister and Mordred and Gawain his two nephews.

Fordun accepts Geoffrey's statement that the Britons chose Arthur over Gawain or Mordred as king as a means of discouraging a fresh Saxon invasion. "On so strong a necessity arising," he remarks, "they were justified in electing a youth verging on manhood rather than a child in the cradle." He even lends a sympathetic ear to the plight of Dubricius (Brice), Archbishop of Caerleon, who had the unhappy task of bringing order out of the chaos created by Uther's death. But although Fordun gives an understanding hearing to the case of those who invested Arthur with the kingship, he nevertheless remains firm in his conviction that the safety of the realm was

achieved at the expense of justice and fair play to Anna's two sons. For this reason, he views Mordred's ultimate rebellion not as an act of treachery but as an attempt to redress a serious injury done both him and the Scots.

Precisely what the sources were for the Arthurian material in Andrew Wyntoun's chronicle (c. 1420) is a matter of debate. That the account was taken from the chanson-de-geste tradition seems beyond dispute, however, particularly in view of the fact that several times the author expresses a debt of gratitude to "Huchown off the Awle Ryale," composer of a "gret Gest of Arthure." It is on Huchown's rendering of the story - a version remarkably like that given in the alliterative Morte Arthure if not the Morte Arthure itself<sup>6</sup> - that Wyntoun has based his account, a quaint amalgam of medieval literary criticism and pseudohistorical data. The Arthur who appears here is in many respects the Arthur of the Bruce (the moral complexities of the Morte Arthure are avoided) - a noble conqueror of many realms whose work is undone by a villainous nephew. The issue of the succession, so closely dissected by Fordun and the later chroniclers, is never raised by Wyntoun. Arthur is instead portrayed as the rightful king of Britain, while Mordred appears in his customary traitor's role. At least with respect to his treatment of this subject, Wyntoun is much closer in spirit to Geoffrey of Monmouth than to Fordun, or, certainly, the composer of the later fifteenth-century Scottis Originale.<sup>7</sup>

The earliest surviving copy of the Scottis Originale,

an abbreviated but highly entertaining account of the foundations of the kingdom of Scotland, appears to date from about 1460. Another slightly different version is included in the Asloen MS, compiled during the reign of James V. It is possible that both may be independent translations of a Latin text now no longer extant. Whatever its origins, however, the Scottis Originale is something unique in the chronology of northern historical literature. The strain of anti-Arthurian sentiment which pervades the piece is so virulent as to be almost comical. However dubious the talents of the author as an historian might have been, his fervor as a propagandist was beyond compare. In this jumbled and at times nearly incoherent account, "Arthur pat tyrend" is represented as a faithless ingrate who breaks his alliance with the Picts and Scots - after, it is furiously asserted, they have assisted him in driving the Saxons out of the country. His military excesses are legend. What is more, he abuses a kingship which legally does not even belong to him. Building on Fordun, the composer of the Scottis Originale takes the line that Arthur succeeded to his father's throne not by right but "throw þe devilry of merlyne," thus cheating "þe richt-uiss aire" Mordred out of his legacy.

The violence of the author gives his story a peculiar twist. It also results in some interesting alterations and omissions. No mention is made of Mordred's war against Arthur, for example, nor of his regency during the king's absence. Certainly no reference is made to the accusation of adultery between Arthur's nephew and Guenevere. Instead,

The quhilk mordred quhen arthour was  
 out of þe cuntre In his tyrandry he  
 gadderit all þe estaitis and scottis  
 men to londoun & schew þaim his richt  
 and þar awysitly þe brettounis chesit  
 him king and crovnit him Incontinent  
 and in his richtuiss querell & defence  
 he slewe þis arthoure and arthure him  
 /as brute says and gorane þat tyme  
 king of scotland send his ost of  
 scottis men with modred aganis  
 arthour allway becauss of modredis  
 richt And ane noþer way becauss  
 arthure falsly agane his allya and  
 bend maid betuix ws and him maid  
 weir on ws/For fra we had maid him in  
 pece of his enemys he with þe bretannis  
 Raiss apon ws and weld haue put ws out  
 of our cuntre with þe suple þat he had  
 of Romanis Bot thro<sup>u</sup> helpe of god we  
 and þe pictis resistit þaim... 8

The Scottis Originale is not very good history, nor does it have much to recommend it in terms of literary style. It is, however, a fascinating document from a psychological standpoint, for nowhere else in the Scottish chronicle tradition is such vicious and unreasoning hatred of Arthur expressed. Even his harshest critics generally allow him at least one saving grace - Fordun credits him with a certain sweetness of character, and even Major, despite his much vaunted sympathy for Mordred's claim to the throne, gives Arthur physical beauty and a chivalric spirit. But to the composer of the Scottis Originale, Arthur was merely "þe son of adultry" who ultimately received the punishment he so richly deserved for betraying the Scots.

In comparison with this frenzied denunciation, there is John Major's cool and methodical treatment of the same subject to consider. This, given in the History of Greater Britain<sup>9</sup> (1521), is the fullest account of Arthur's life



yet to appear in a Scottish chronicle. Major also includes some interesting details and variations on the theme which were excluded from the earlier northern versions of the legend. Here, Anna becomes the sister of Aurelius, Uther's older brother, and thus Arthur's aunt. Major also demonstrates an unusual sympathy for Igerne, absolving her of the blame for the adulterous affair with Uther and placing it instead on Merlin, whose sorcery caused Gorlois' wife to mistake the king of the Britons for her own husband.

Major does, however, remain firm in the conviction that Arthur was illegitimate and therefore technically barred from the throne. He presents his case more strongly than Fordun, and certainly a good deal more lucidly than the author of the Scottis Originale. The succession to the throne, Major argues, should rightfully have gone to Lot's oldest son Mordred upon the death of Uther. "But here the Britons say that Modred and Valvanus were under age, and as the need was urgent, and a hostile invasion imminent, they were held to be unfit to guide the affairs of the Britons. Wherof into the hands of Arthur, albeit he was a bastard, they gave the reigns of government. Now I am not prepared to deny that, in certain cases, it is within the rights of the people to transfer from one race to another the kingly power; but let that always be done after weighing carefully all the circumstances and with much deliberation. And they should rather have said that to Modred, inasmuch as he was under age, a coadjutor should have been given. However this matter should have been undertaken, what is certain is this: that Arthur, youth as he was, was

declared king of the Britons."

Major's sympathy for Mordred's claim does not, however, prevent him from expressing admiration for Arthur. Endowed from birth with personal valor, charm, and a pleasing appearance, Arthur also made a strong and efficient ruler. "The Saxons he drove from the islands, the Scots and the Picts likewise (if we are to credit British chroniclers) he brought to subjection and compelled to obedience." It is interesting - and amusing - that Major should attempt to reconcile his favorable opinion of Arthur with Arthur's summary solution of the eternal Scottish problem by implying that the sources for this particular bit of information are not entirely reliable.

This desire to disbelieve anything ill of Arthur with respect to his treatment of the Scots crops up again in Major's discussion. The king of the northern country declared war on his southern neighbor, but was defeated and afterward compelled to enter into an alliance with Arthur. Now, Arthur had originally intended to dispose of the Scottish problem by the simple expedient of putting the entire population of the country to the sword, and would have carried out this plan had the Scots not come to him to sue for peace. However, Major enigmatically remarks, the source for this information was Geoffrey of Monmouth. So the reader is left with the distinct impression that the story is to be taken with a grain of salt.

Like the English chroniclers, Major places the blame for Arthur's downfall on Mordred. Although the king of

Scots grew to love and respect the man who defeated him and subjected his country, the Scots themselves were ill-disposed toward Arthur. Sensing this, Mordred gathered together an army of the disaffected during one of the absences of the British king. (Unintentionally humorous, Major remarks that it might have been less anti-Arthurian feeling than love of the money which Mordred promised them that caused the Scots to switch allegiance.) While carrying out his Roman campaign, Arthur received word that not only had Mordred usurped his throne but his marital rights as well. Upon his return to Britain, three battles were fought, during the last of which both Arthur and Mordred were slain.

Major's account is by and large a well-reasoned and lucid one, even if at times a little strained by the author's attempts to square the facts of Arthur's career with his favorable opinion of the man. A skeptic, he is unwilling to place much credence in the various fantastic stories which obscure the true events of the British king's reign. Major does, however, admit the possibility of demonic interference, although he refuses to accept the notion that Arthur himself may have been a sorcerer. Like the author of the Scottis Originale, he is quite ready to believe in "þe devilry of merlyne."

It is in Hector Boece's account (Scotorum Historiae,  
11  
1526-7) that Arthur's reputation once again begins to slide downhill. The decline culminates with Boece's discussion of the British king's celebrations in York, where debauchery and drunkenness are implied to have been the

order of the day. Arthur additionally distinguishes himself by the somewhat dubious means of becoming the first person ever to commemorate the anniversary of Christ's birth not with the observance of religious services but with an orgy. He is portrayed not as a Christian prince but as a libertine who gives free rein to all his baser desires. Even his reputation as a soldier is diminished, for Boece makes no mention of his conquests in foreign lands.

This lowering of the Arthurian profile inevitably results in an elevation of Scottish interests. The Britons are portrayed as treacherous ingrates, whereas the Scots appear as steadfast and valuable adherents to the Christian cause. Lot, who is here described as a Pictish king, becomes the enemy of Arthur - quite justifiably so, since the Britons have broken the alliance between the two nations. However, it is not only this infidelity which creates the dissension. The war between the Picts and the Britons results from Uther's intransigent dismissal of Mordred's claim to the throne. Arthur later agrees to name his cousin as his successor, but is induced by his advisors to retract the promise. Thereupon Mordred declares war on the Britons, and both he and Arthur die in battle by the Humber River. Eugenius, the king of Scots, takes Guenevere captive. She is then imprisoned by the Picts until her death. Boece ends his account with a reference to an apocryphal story about the queen's grave.

John Bellenden's translation of Boece (1531)<sup>12</sup> differs from the original in a number of ways. Bellenden's orienta-<sup>13</sup>

tion seems to have been more heavily psychological than was his predecessor's - as Robert Huntington Fletcher points out, he provides the reader not only with a record of his characters' actions but with the motives for their behavior as well. His discussion of the atrocities committed by the Britons during war is more understated than that of Boece, as are his descriptions of battles.<sup>14</sup>

Bellenden does, however, exhibit a strong tendency to moralize, and the actions of Uther and Arthur provide him with ample opportunity to give free rein to his instincts in this respect.

The portrait of Arthur which Bellenden gives is a study in contrasts. He is an able general and a capable leader, but there is more than a suggestion here that he is compelled to buy the loyalty of his troops. As a matter of fact, Arthur is forced to spend so much money to win the affections and service of his countrymen that he has almost none left over for his "necessair vse." As a Christian, his greatest ambition is to drive all the pagans out of Britain, but his own behavior and that of his followers is sometimes mightily out of accord with Christian principles. Following the victory over the Saxons, a great celebration takes place in York. Here is Bellenden's account of the proceedings:

This towun was then richt populous  
all þe nixt winter with mony nobillis  
and commonis of Briten, gevin to þaire  
lust, sleip, ryottis bankettis & sen-  
sualite, confiding mair in þaire vic-  
tory bigane þan in þaire present strenth.  
It is sayid that þe surfaitt chere that  
is vsitt emeng Ingliss men and Scottis

xij dayis to giddir efter Christ-  
ymmes wes institute þat tyme be  
King Arthour. Nochttheles, how evir  
þat schaymful glutony began, it  
hes corruppit the ingyne sa of  
Inglissmen & Scottis þat in þe  
dayis of Christis netiuitie callit  
Christnmes þai are gevin mair to  
voracite þan vertu, and mair to  
þaire wame þan to divyne seruice;  
throw quhilk þat solempne fest,  
sum tyme had in sik deuocion and  
reuerence amang oure anciant federis,  
is now corruppit, and like vnto þe  
festes of Gentyllis maid in honour of  
Bachus, Flora, and Priepus, quhilkis  
were deuisit mair for þe lust and  
plesouris of men women than ony gude  
religioun. 15

In keeping with most of his predecessors, Bellenden makes Gawain and Mordred the legitimate heirs of Britain. (As with Boece, Anna here appears as the sister of Aurelius and Uther.) The ambassadors sent to plead their case are, however, given short shrift by the Britons, their hosts. This summery treatment notwithstanding, Lot, who here appears as the king of Picts, enters into an alliance with Arthur. He does, though, attach a codicil to his agreement - that the British king name his two sons as successors to the throne. It is also decided that Mordred shall marry a British princess and Gawain remain in permanent residence at Arthur's court, "with rentis according to his esteitt."

Both the Picts and the Scots are portrayed as brave fighters and invaluable allies in this account. Arthur's dependence on them shows up vividly in the chronic outbreaks of war with the Saxons. Having allowed the pagans to remain in Britain on condition they convert to Christianity, Arthur sets about repairing the devastation to the towns and "kirks" caused by repeated invasions. While

he is rebuilding York, the apparently vanquished Saxons begin to mobilize. Sensing trouble, Arthur enlists Mordred's aid and assembles his own army, taking care to insure that his troops have not been debilitated by riotous living. Confronted by this evidence that their plans have gone awry, the Saxons plead for time to leave Britian. Suspecting a trap, Arthur refuses to grant their request. Eventually, Mordred and his troops put the Saxons to flight, leaving the British army to commence a cleaning-up operation. A heavy emphasis is laid on the part played by the Scots and Picts here, and Mordred emerges as the hero of the day. It is he who leads the vanguard, while Arthur merely trails along to the rear.

Bellenden, a skeptic in the tradition of Major, refuses to credit Arthur with the foreign conquests Wyntoun attributes to him. "Sum autoris writis that Arthure in thir dayis dantit Scotland, Ireland, Island, Orkneye, Denmark, Swedrik, Pruse, Zeland, Gothland, Holland, Brabant, Flandris, Picardy, Normendy, Bertan3e and ell France, and maid þe pepill of þe samyn tributar to him. Eftir this he brocht to his dominioun Grece, Perse, Mede, Araby, Egipt, Affrik and Spayn3e, and tuke Lucius, Romane Emprioure, presonere be force of armys." <sup>16</sup> Impossible, is Bellenden's comment - no men could have subdued such a large and varied group in a single lifetime. What is more, the chroniclers of certain of the countries named make no mention of Arthur in their annals. "Nochpeles," Bellenden adds hastily, "sen we are sett to mynneis na manis honouris, we find þat Arthure wes in gloir of marciall dedis na les wail3eand than vther

princes of Britan, and ekit his realme equalie in pollesy and riches." As evidence of this, Bellenden makes reference to the democratic institution of the Round Table, where Arthur and his knights sat together in perfect amity. Valiant as this fellowship was, however, Bellenden remarks, the fantastic stories which have grown up about it have somewhat tarnished its lustre.

The ultimate betrayal of the Picts and Scots by the Britons occurs when Constantine is named heir to the throne in place of Mordred and Gawain. This, a direct violation of the agreement with Lot, Bellenden imputes to the insolence and ingratitude of the Britons. Lot having died, Mordred is now king of Picts. He sends his ambassadors to Arthur with a gentle and courteous reminder that it is "nocht semend to princes to violaitt pair faith and mynde, but intervencioun of sum lefull causs." The Britons reply rudely that since one of the parties to the original agreement is now deceased, the bond no longer holds. Bellenden, although he praises Constantine as a wise and noble man, is very quick to draw a distinct comparison between the faithlessness of the Britons and the uprightness of the Picts and Scots.

Infuriated by the betrayal and collapse of the negotiations, the Picts decide to invade Briton, and solicit the aid of Eugenius, king of Scots. Arthur retaliates by assembling an enormous army, and the opposing forces meet at the Humber. Prelates and bishops from both sides make one last attempt to repair the breach between the two camps, and do eventually succeed in getting Arthur, Mordred,



and Eugenius to lay down arms. Constantine's adherents, however, refuse to give ear to the prelates' words, and demand that Arthur do the same. "Als," Bellenden writes sadly, "it wes bot foly to þame to persuade peece." He winds up his account by ticking off a list of princes killed in the battle - Arthur, Mordred, and, most tragically, Gawain, "fechtand þat day for þe lufe of King Arthure agenis his native pepill." Guenevere is taken prisoner by the Picts and incarcerated "in Anguse till ane castell callit Donbarre." Her tomb lies ten miles outside of Dundee, and Bellenden, whose skepticism is for once slightly shaken, adds that no woman "except nunnys" dares tread on it for fear of becoming barren.

The attitudes expressed in William Stewart's metrical translation of Boece<sup>17</sup> are interesting enough to be worth recording. Presiding over all is the same sternly moralizing outlook as adopted by Bellenden, particularly with respect to sexual license. Stewart is harshly critical of the Britons, accusing them of sloth, self-indulgence, "insolence and other vices mo" (l. 26,179). A skeptic, he refuses to credit the idea that Merlin transformed Uther into the shape of Gorlois in order to seduce Igera. He does, however, reiterate the notion that Arthur was "gottin in adulterie" and therefore illegitimate. Uther, because of his inordinate affection for his son, forced his nobles into accepting the boy as his successor. The "narrest and lauchfull air," however, was Uther's sister Christane, the wife of King Lot.

Stewart's picture of Arthur was not a particularly

flattering one. Although the king is undoubtedly a great general and an able strategist, and at times even compassionate in his dealings with his enemies, his character is riddled with serious flaws. His morals, too, leave much to be desired, a point which is made clear in the description of the celebrations at Eborac (York). As is their wont, the Britons are concerned only with the satisfaction of "lichorous appetytes." Arthur himself falls victim to this corruption, and soon begins to outstrip his own men in self-indulgence. "He wes the first with glutony and guill," Stewart reports with gloomy relish.

In contrast, Mordred, "ane cheftane chevalrous" is described in glowing terms. His valor and loyalty stand out in bas-relief against the weakness and faithlessness of the Britons, who call upon him for assistance in driving out the Saxons. Although vastly outnumbered in battle, he continues fighting and makes no attempt to escape even when such a course seems most advisable. For his own safety, he eventually has to be removed forcibly from the field by some less valiant but more sensible followers. In return for his services, Arthur rewards him richly and sends him staggering back to Scotland under a weight of honors.

The Saxon threat having been dispelled - singlehandedly by Mordred, Stewart would have his audience believe - peace reigns in Britain for a time. Arthur succeeds in giving his people true freedom and respite from war at last. However,

Lang peax end rest causis greit  
     policie,  
 Quhair throw oft syis their cumis  
     grit plentie  
 Of gold and riches in till abund-  
     ance,  
 Of meit and drink, with sporting  
     and plesance,  
 In sic acces quhilk causis mony  
     men  
 The ward, thame self, and God for  
     to misken.

11. 27,609 - 27,614

Thus it was with the Britons. Arthur himself grew lax and self-indulgent, and soon forgot the alliance he had made with the Picts. His nobles were able to coerce him into setting aside Mordred's rights and making Constantine of Cornwall the heir to the throne. When Mordred, who was now king of the Picts, heard of this latest manifestation of the chronic faithlessness of the Britons - "He knew so weill their instabilitie" - he sent a herald to Arthur to demand an explanation of the British sovereign's actions. Arthur's reply, delivered with "loud lauchter and scornynge of the laif," was simply that he no longer considered himself bound to keep the promise made to Mordred's father, Lot being dead. The Pictish king thereupon sent for Eugenius, mobilized his army, and met Arthur at the Humber, where both sides engaged in the battle that resulted in the death of the two kings and of Gawain. Guenevere was taken captive by the Picts and imprisoned at "ane castell callit Doun-bervie." By way of an epitaph, Stewart says of Arthur that

I held him for the maist vnhappie  
king  
Off all the Britis that did in  
Britane ring  
For-ghuy he wes so faithles and  
watrew  
To king Modred, befoir as I 3ow  
shew,  
And menesworne als, the hand of  
God thairfore,  
As ressonne wald, it tuechit him  
full soir.

11. 27,979 - 27,984

The version of the story given in John Leslie's  
De Origine Moribus & rebus gestis Scotorum (1578)<sup>18</sup> is a  
very brief one. Rendered rather haphazardly "intil Scottis"  
in 1596 by Father James Dalrymple,<sup>19</sup> the account is an en-  
tirely laudatory one which omits any mention either of  
Mordred or the reasons for the dissension between the  
Picts and Scots and Britons. Leslie is dubious about the  
veracity of those who attribute to Arthur what then virt-  
tually amounted to world conquest, "bot how evir the mater  
may be, the King Arthur was notable, of a coregious spirit,  
a noble and balde virtue, end honorable in acts." The  
issue of bastardy is not raised.

Leslie was, however, very much taken with the notion  
of Arthur's Round Table, which he describes at length. There  
twenty-four knights could sit in perfect equality, each  
assured that none outranked his neighbor. Interestingly,  
Leslie claims to have seen the table with his own eyes,  
"quhair it is solemnlie keiped perpetuallie to be remem-  
bered of; in the castle of Wintoune." (The original Latin  
has Wintoniensi, or Winchester.)

No reference is made to the final great battle beside  
the Humber. Leslie ends his discussion by merely recording

that Arthur was killed by the Picts and Scots, offering no explanation of the means by which his downfall was effected. He adds that Guenevere was imprisoned by the Picts in Angus, and that her tomb can yet be visited by the curious. Somewhat confusingly, Eugenius' liberality toward the victors and the children of the men who fought in battle becomes a subject for comment. No real value judgments are made here. But, Leslie remarks somewhat ominously in conclusion, "Mony monstrous things vnnatural war seine in Albione afore the deith of King Arthur."

With The History of Scotland (1582),<sup>20</sup> the northern chronicle tradition comes to a close. Buchanan begins his narrative by deploring the means by which the "audacious and wicked Merlin," never a general favorite of the Scots, brought about the affair between Uther and Igerne. He is as well highly critical of the British king, on whom the responsibility for the death of Gorlois lies. In complete contrast to this denunciation is the following description of Arthur, who, Buchanan writes, "in the dawn of manhood, displayed such admirable symmetry of person, such superiority of mind, and gave so many indications of future greatness, that the eyes and the affections of the people<sup>21</sup> had already marked him out as successor to the throne."

This happy consensus of opinion was not, unfortunately, echoed by the Britons' northern neighbors. Fully aware of the direction in which the successional wind was veering, and seeing the rights of his two sons jeopardized, the Pictish king Lot raised a violent objection to Arthur's claim. "The whole Britons, however, adhered to Arthur,

and denied that he was a bastard, because Uter, after he was born, had married his mother, and by that marriage had legalized the son, whom he ever afterward treated as legitimate..." This overwhelming popular support in favor of Arthur persuaded Lot not only to abandon his claim to the throne but his intentions of forming a league with the Saxons as well. Buchanan writes that the Pictish king's associates managed to convince their sovereign that no kingdom was worth allying with the infidel, who would in any case betray him as they had betrayed the Britons. Subsequently, Lot and Arthur renewed their old bond and became close friends.

Arthur, Buchanan writes, was a paragon of kingly virtues, known for his strength, wisdom, and liberality. He managed to overthrow the Saxons in two battles, but the coming of winter forced his campaign to a halt. He and his army thereupon encamped in York, where the troops spent the Christmas season "in plays, drunkenness, and such debasing vices." No mention is made of Arthur's part in these debauched revelries. The Britons, however, paid for their folly, for "exhausted by their pleasures," they had no strength left to repulse the Saxon invasion, and had to seek help from the Picts and Scots.

Lot agreed readily to come to Arthur's assistance, and "that he might give a more public proof of his reconciliation, brought his two sons, Modred and Galvinus, to the camp along with him." Buchanan describes Mordred as a youth of great promise, much like Arthur in his young manhood. Courageous and prudent, he proved to be an able fighter,

holding back the Saxons until he was forced to flee for his life. Evidently sensing the qualities of a born leader in his cousin (Anna is Uther's sister here), Arthur appointed Mordred regent before his departure for France and Brittany.

This happy state of affairs was to end before long. Constantine, son of Cadur of Cornwall, had his sights fixed on the succession to the throne of Britain. By virtue of his accomplishments and general popularity, he managed to enlist the support of the people as well as that of a number of magnates for his cause. The nobles found it easy to persuade Arthur to annul his agreement with Lot, as his mind was distracted with administrative problems. Buchanan writes that he acceded to his barons' wishes not only because of his concern with affairs of state but because he was "a gracious prince" who bowed to the will of his people. At any rate, Mordred's friends, infuriated by this slight on their leader, immediately launched a protest on his behalf. Undaunted by this challenge, the Britons replied smoothly that it was to the advantage of the kingdom to take a native-born monarch rather than a foreign one, which Mordred was. In any case, they no longer considered themselves bound to a treaty whose co-author, Lot, had long since died.

From this violation of an agreement the war between the two countries arose. Mordred and his allies were the victors in the final battle, principally because the British were driven back into a marsh and trapped, but also because a "traitor" (the same individual to whom Stewart

refers as a "stalwart Scot") spread the word in the British ranks that Arthur had been killed. Demoralized by this false alarm, the Britons attempted to flee, and in the ensuing havoc both Arthur and Mordred were killed and Gawain wounded.

Buchanan's account is distinguished from those of his predecessors in a number of ways. It is, in the first place, much more a paean of praise than a sober historical essay. Critical though Buchanan is of his subject's father and fellow countrymen, the writer has nothing but praise for Arthur himself. What is more, Buchanan acknowledges Arthur as the legitimate son of Uther and Igerne - a point on which even those chroniclers favorably disposed toward the British hero refuse to yield. Buchanan also absolves Arthur of any responsibility for the orgies at York, and even supplies a justification for the breaking of the treaty with Mordred. By far the most remarkable feature of the account is, however, the historian's affirmation of Arthur's right to assume kingly powers. It scarcely need be said that this represents a totally unprecedented development in the Scottish Arthurian chronicle tradition.

Buchanan's support of Arthur's claim does at first appear to elevate the interests of the Britons above those of the Scots. It was not, however, pro-British sentiment which motivated the historian to adopt such a stance, but rather a world view and a philosophy of government totally different from those subscribed to by his predecessors. Fordun, Major, Boece, Bellenden, and Stewart were writing in an age when the divine right of kings was a basic tenet



of political thought. Their support of Mordred's claim to the British throne, though it reflected Scottish patriotism, was essentially the consequence of a firm belief in the rules of primogeniture. For according to these rules, Lot's elder son was indeed the true heir of Uther Pendragon. Both expedience and personal inclination, however, combined to make of Buchanan one of the earliest and most vehement detractors of the concept of rule by divine right. In the De Jure Regne Apud Scotos,<sup>22</sup> written to justify in the eyes of the world the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots, the historian maintained that the king's authority is invested in him not by Providence but by law. And as law is the creation of the people, it is to the people that the sovereign is answerable to for his actions. Kings, being not above human weakness, require the guidance of a legal system.

Just how revolutionary Buchanan's political thought was can only be appreciated within the context of his call for an electorate, "for unless we have a king chosen by suffrages, I am afraid we shall have no true king at all."<sup>23</sup> It is in this proposal too that the motives emerge for the historian's support of Arthur's claim to the British throne. "In the creation of a King, I think the Ancients have followed it this way, that if any among the Citizens were of any singular excellency, and seemed to exceed all others in equity and in precedence, as is reported to be done in beehives, they willingly conferred the government on him."<sup>24</sup> Compare this with the historian's comment that Arthur, "in the dawn of manhood, displayed such admirable symmetry of

person, such superiority of mind, and gave so many indications of future greatness, that the eyes and the affections of the people had already marked him out as successor to the throne." <sup>25</sup> In this last of the Scottish chronicles, then, the figure of Arthur becomes nothing so much as an illustration of the ideal sovereign, a sovereign moreover on whom the kingly dignity has been bestowed not by divine right but by the will of the people.

On such a basis, then, may be explained Buchanan's departure from precedent. It is perhaps less easy to account for some of the other inconsistencies manifested in the later Scottish Arthurian tradition. The chasm in terms of point of view existing between the version of the story given in Wyntoun's chronicle and that found in the Scottis Originale is virtually unbridgeable. What the breadth of this gap seems to suggest more than anything else is that there were at one time two separate traditions concerning Arthur current in the north, both of which had equally fervent exponents. The first could be said to have glorified the British hero on an impersonal basis as the ultimate symbol of valor and chivalry, while the second represented him in more personal and immediate terms as the prototype of a long line of enemies to Scotland. Arthur was, it is true, originally the hero of a population group which at one time spread across Lowland Scotland. But by the twelfth century, the legendary king of the Britons had been adopted in a similar role by the English - the traditional enemies of the Scots. And it was as a representative of such that he was conceived by his most thoroughgoing detractors.

The survival of a dual Arthurian tradition would account for many of the ambiguities present in Major, who attempts to reconcile his strong support for Mordred's claim to the throne with an equally strong desire not to believe anything ill of Arthur with respect to his treatment of the Scots. Similarly, the existence of a tradition which held up the British hero as a paragon of kingship and military genius would help to explain the attitude taken by Barbour and Hary, in whose works the notion of the great conqueror and ideal monarch becomes such an important theme. Though his motives in doing so were of a different order, Buchanan was not alone in choosing to uphold the favorable repute of the British king in order to exploit its exemplary potential. Such a course was closed to Boece, Bellenden, Stewart, and the anonymous author of the Scottis Originale, for whom Arthur - despite his acknowledged northern origins - had become intimately associated with interests inimical to their own.

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to the fact that the anti-Arthurian feelings of the composers of Golagros and Gawane and Lancelot of the Laik may be accounted for in terms of the nature of the fourteenth century Middle English alliterative tradition of which these works were in spirit - and, in the case of Golagros, in form - the end product. What the authors of the two Scottish romances did was to exploit the more unfavorable aspects of the attitude toward Arthur taken by the poets of the Morte Arthure and the Awntyrs, and exploit them to such an extent that criticism became hostility. Their motives for

doing so are considerably clarified if the Arthur of the Morte Arthure and the Arthur of the Awntyrs are to be regarded, respectively, as the fictional counterparts of Edward III and Edward I. This, in sum, represents the essential difference between the Scottish Arthurian tradition as maintained in the two national epics and as carried on in the two romances. It is at any rate manifestly clear that neither Barbour nor Hary felt the need to portray Arthur as the symbol of an oppressor race. For them, this symbol already existed in Edward I himself.

In the face of such variety of method, outlook, and purpose, it would be difficult - as well as dangerous - to attempt any sweeping generalizations concerning the Scottish Arthurian romance and chronicle tradition. There are in fact very few comprehensive statements at all to be made about this tradition other than that it began and ended a good deal later than the Continental and Middle English traditions, and reversed some of the basic tenets of these for a political purpose. It expired after only two centuries, but during this limited floruit influenced the composition of some of the most outstanding examples of narrative verse in Middle Scots literature. There can be little doubt, too, that a great deal of the interest in Arthur which arose in Scotland toward the end of the fourteenth century was generated by the Morte Arthure and the Awntyrs off Arthure, both of which commanded a wide audience in the north. And, most importantly, the fact of the very emergence of a later medieval Scottish Arthurian tradition must be seen as one of the more remarkable

occurrences in the history of western literature. For after a process of transmission which lasted some eight hundred years, the legend had returned to the land of its origin.

APPENDIX A

Place-Names and Geography of the Awntyrs off  
Arthure

In view of the fact that the geographic setting of the Awntyrs off Arthure has been so vividly depicted, and adds such depth to the background of the narrative, it comes as a surprise to find that no full-length studies of this aspect of the poem exist. Amours discusses the matter briefly in the introduction to Scottish Alliterative Poems, and proposes several interesting identifications for some of the localities referred to in the romance. Illuminating as his remarks are, however, they unfortunately do not cover the entire subject. Robert Ackerman includes a list of most of the place-names mentioned in the Awntyrs in the Index of the Arthurian Names in Middle English,<sup>1</sup> but as he has based most of his conclusions on the findings of Amours, these shed little new light on the matter.

Admittedly, there are a number of difficulties involved in making a survey of so particularized a topic as the geography of a narrative poem such as the Awntyrs. A great many of these problems have been created by the manner in which the text was transmitted. The Awntyrs exists in four manuscript versions, all of which date from the mid to late fifteenth century. The Thornton version was copied in a dialect closer to that of the original than were the other three, but it is unfortunately not quite complete. Douce appears to be a tolerably complete transcript of a text close to the original, but even in this relatively satisfactory copy there is a high percentage of grammatical errors, obscure allusions, and omissions or alterations of certain words and phrases. The Ireland MS offers certain

readings which are superior to those of T and D, but the linguistic changes here are even more marked. In the introduction to his edition of the poem, Gates writes that "the Lambeth MS is the least satisfactory text... the fact that it was written in a dialect area far removed from the original has caused errors of geographic reference as well as grammatical form."<sup>2</sup>

The inaccuracy of the surviving transcripts is illustrated most clearly by the differences in the place-name references given in each text of the poem. A reading in D may conflict with its opposite number in T, be supported by I, and omitted from L. References to approximately sixteen different localities in southwestern Scotland alone are made during the course of the narrative. Because of scribal alterations and omissions, however, only six of these have in the past been identified with any certainty.

The first two place-names mentioned in the Awntyrs are immediately recognizable. The famous "Ternewathelyne" or Tarn Wadling, whose significance in relation to Arthurian romance in general has already been discussed, is located in Hesketh in the Forest in the Leath Ward of Cumberland. All of the action in the first episode of the poem takes place in Inglewood Forest, a name which appears variously in the MSS as "Ingulwud forest" (709I), "Englond forest" (709D), and "Yggilwode Foreste" (following l. 715 in T). Contemporary forms of the name in public documents include "Englewud," "Inglewod," "Inggilwode," and "Ingleswode."<sup>3</sup> As with the Tarn Wadling, the area is the setting for the romances of the Avowynge of Arther and the



Weddyngge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnelle. It may be identical with the forest of Goriende mentioned in the OF Fergus,<sup>4</sup> though such a contention seems at best unlikely. But if so, the fame of Inglewood Forest and its unearthly inhabitants - dominated by restless ghosts and rebellious "carles" - spread as far as the Continent.

"Carelele" or "Carlele" is of course Carlisle, a locality to which readers of Arthurian romances need even less introduction than Tarn Wadling. The connection between Carlisle and the Round Table was established at least as early as the lais of Marie de France and in the works of Chrétien de Troyes, dating from the latter end of the twelfth century. According to Heinrich Zimmer the reasons for this association can be traced back to the period when the Cymri - who gave their name to the area of which Carlisle is the seat - dominated Cumbria.<sup>5</sup> At any rate, Carlisle is the seat of Arthur's court in the Weddyngge, the later Marriage of Sir Gawaine, Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle, Carle off Careille, Sir Lanbe-well, The Boy and the Mantle, and The Grene Knight. The name occurs in several French Arthurian romances outside of Chrétien's, among them Beroul's fragmentary Tristan, Lanval, Li chevaliers as deus espees, and Fergus. In these it appears variously as Cardueil, Cardeil, or Kardoel.<sup>6</sup>

With the exception of Burgundy and Brittany, the Continental place-names mentioned in the poem bear no real relation to the setting of the story. And since they are in any case easy to identify, they will be discussed

only briefly. All of these references are given in the ghost's admonitory speech to Gawain, and are for the most part taken from the list of Arthur's conquests appearing at the beginning of the alliterative Morte Arthure.<sup>7</sup>

"Fraunce" (l. 273 passim), "Grece" (l. 278L), and "Gyane" (l. 278) ("Gynys" in L) are straightforward enough, as is "Tuskayne" (l. 284) or "Tuskane" (l. 291). The same applies to those localities in the British Isles which are not actually part of the setting of the narrative, such as Romsey (l. 294), Dorset (l. 295), and Cornwall (l. 301). The reference to the "Tybire" or "Tyber" in l. 282 of T and D is a rather puzzling one, which is probably why the scribes of I and L chose to omit it entirely. Amours identifies it as the "Tambire" or Camel River in Cornwall, where Arthur was traditionally supposed to have fought his last battle with Mordred.<sup>8</sup> A better suggestion might well be the Tamar, also in Cornwall, a name which bears a closer resemblance to that cited in the Awntyrs. (The possibility that the poet was in fact speaking of the Tiber is pretty well excluded on the grounds that a southern European locality makes little sense within the context of the line.) Again, this reference was probably inspired by a brief passage near the end of the Morte Arthure, where the rebels are described as setting up camp "by the Tambire" (l. 3092).

After the hunt, Arthur and his knights proceed "to paire suppere" at what is variously given as "Rondoles halle" (D), "Rondolfe sett" (T), and "Rondallsete" (IL). Amours has identified this site as Randalhloem Hall, in

Alston in the Leath Ward.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, no references to it seem to exist before the sixteenth century, so we have no medieval forms of the name to compare with those given in the Awntyrs. At any rate, it seems probable that Randalholm Hall was derived from "Randolf's holmr," the first element being a personal name and the second the Old Norse word for "islet."<sup>10</sup> The similarity to the "Rondole" of D, and the "Rondolfe" of T, and the "Rondalle" of I and L is obvious. And since Randalholm Hall lies within the same general area around Carlisle as Inglewood Forest and the Tarn Wadling, it seems likely that the Amours identification is the correct one.

The stranger knight who rides into Arthur's court claims to be the "greatest of Galloway" as well as lord of several other territories in the surrounding area. Modern Galloway is comprised of the shire of Wigtown and the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, the two southwesternmost districts in Scotland. At one time, the borders were extended to include parts of the counties of Ayr and Dumfries.<sup>11</sup> Just what association the term might have held for a poet who lived and wrote sometime during the latter half of the fourteenth century is, however, a different matter.

W. J. Watson writes that "of the history of Galloway and Dumfriesshire - the land of the Novantae and the Selgovae - in the centuries following the Roman evacuation we have but little definite knowledge."<sup>12</sup> The fifth century inhabitants of the territory were Britons. During the seventh century, Galloway was taken over by the Anglian

tribes of Northumbria. Roughly a hundred years anterior to this, however, there commenced an influx of Gaelic speakers into the area which was to continue into the ninth century. Galloway was settled between 875 and 950 by the Gall-gháidhil, a people of Celtic-Scandinavian heritage who ultimately became the predominating population group of the area. The name Gall-gháidhil means "foreign Gael," although, as MacQueen has remarked, "it is clear that by 1138 the Gallovidians did not think of themselves as being in any way gall - the term was reserved for the Normans and English."<sup>13</sup> This latter wave of immigrants proved to be an indomitably separatist minded people. "In the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the Gall-gháidhil existed as a virtually independent state with their own laws and customs administered by rulers whom the Irish annalists habitually describe as kings - Fergus, who died in 1161: his sons Uhtred, who died in 1174, and Gilbert, who died in 1185: Uhtred's son Roland, who died in 1200: Roland's son Alan, who died in 1234, and Thomas, Alan's bastard son, who on the death of his father attempted to succeed, but was rapidly and forcibly deposed in favor of his three legitimate sisters, each of whom married a Norman: Helen becoming the wife of Roger de Quincy: Derbforgill, the wife of John de Balliol, and Christiana, the wife of William de Fortibus, earl of Aumerle. Helen died young and childless, and in effect Derbforgill inherited the modern Kirkcudbright, Christiana, Wigtownshire."<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Scottish locale

dealt with in the Awntyrs takes on a particular significance in terms of medieval romance in general. K. G. T. Webster remarks that Galloway "was for the Middle Ages a land of special character...More of mystery attached to it than nearer worlds."<sup>15</sup> For whatever reasons, the area certainly attracted a considerable notice. In Lazamon's Brut, the men of Galloway, along with the Irish, Picts, Scots, Danes, and Norwegians, are defeated by Constantine and the Britons. Arthur later conquers the rebellious province and adds it to his dominion. "Gallowa" is mentioned in l. 2694 of the incomplete Lancelot of the Laik, in the course of a rather obscure passage which as far as I can understand seems to associate the territory with Gawain. There are additional references to the province in Arthur and Merlin and in the prose Merlin. In the latter, the men of Galloway are said to form a military unit under the leadership of Bretel, Duke of Tintagel.

The name appears in the Continental romances as well, although there seems to have been some confusion of Wales ("Gales") with Galloway. In Beroul's fragmentary Tristan mention is made of the conflict between the Scots king and the king of Galloway. Chrétien, in Erec and Enide, makes Galloway a kingdom ruled over by his hero's uncle. In the second continuation of the Perceval, it becomes the earldom of the father of le Biau/Bel Mauvais. Galloway is, on the other hand, given as the earldom of Brandis in Durmart le Gallois.<sup>16</sup> The list of references is far from complete, but it does serve to underscore some of the fascination this area of Scotland had for the

composers of French Arthurian romance.

With respect to the Awntyrs, the first cluster of Gallovidian place-names appears in ll. 419-20, when Galeron announces his claim to those territories which Arthur has allegedly seized and given to Gawain. As each of the manuscripts offers a slightly different reading of this passage, it would probably be best to quote from all four in order to determine which most closely approximates that given in the original version of the poem. According to the Thornton text, the Scottish knight asserts his right to the lordship

Of Konyng of Carryke of Conyngame of Kille  
Of Lomonde of Lenay of Lowthyane hillis

In the Douce version, however, Galeron lays claim to the territories

Of Connok of Conyngham and also Kyle  
Of Lomond of Losex of Loyane hilles.

The Ireland MS lists the holdings in question as including the districts

Of Carrake of Cummake of Conyngame of Kile  
Of Lonwik of Lannax of Laudoune hillus.

And finally, according to Lambeth, Galeron has been dispossessed

Of Connok of Careyke of Coynham of Kille  
Of Lomound of Leynaux of Lewans hillis.

Despite the obvious variation from one manuscript to the next, the place-names mentioned in the first of these lines present no real problems in terms of identification. As was noted before, Galloway originally included some parts of the counties of Ayr and Dumfries. Ayr itself is partitioned into thirds by the rivers Irvine and Doon.

Of these natural divisions, the area designated as Carrick lies to the south and that of Cunninghame to the north, with Kyle falling between the two. Lying within Kyle itself are the parishes of Old and New Cumnock, which were at one time incorporated into a single barony.

(Carrick was the earldom of the Bruce family, and Cunninghame and Kyle separate baronies in their own right.) With this in mind, it is not at all difficult to establish -- as Amours has done previously <sup>17</sup> that "Carryke" (T) "Carrake" (I) "Careyk" (L) correspond to Carrick, "Conyngame" (TI) "Conyngham" (D) "Coynham" (L) to Cunninghame, "Kylle" (T) "Kyle" (D) "Kile" (I) "Kylle" (L) to Kyle, and "Konynge" (T) "Connok" (DL) "Cummake" (I) to Cumnock.

The old forms of all four names correspond fairly closely to those given in the MSS of the Awntyrs. In The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland for 1264-1359, <sup>18</sup> Carrick appears as "Carrik," "Karric," "Carric," and "Carryk." Kyle is given as "Kyll." In the Register of the Great Seal of Scotland for 1306-1424, <sup>19</sup> there are, variously, "Carric," "Carrik," "Carryc," "Carryk," and "Carryke," along with "Kyll" and "Kile." Cunninghame appears as "Cuninghame," "Cunningham," "Cunninghame," "Cunyngham," "Cunynghame," "Cunnynghame," "Cwningham," "Cwnighame," "Coningham," "Conyngham," "Conynghame," "Conynghaame," "Coynham," or "Conyhame." Cumnock is given as "Cumnock," "Cumnoke," or "Cumnokis."

Despite the fact that "Konynge" in T does not really appear to bear much similarity to Cumnock, it would seem that no reference to another locality was intended here.

In the process of transcribing the text, the scribe most probably accidentally substituted the first two syllables of "Conyngame" for a name which more closely resembled the "Cummake" and "Connok" of the other MSS. At any rate, no district known simply as "Konyng" - or any reasonable variation thereof - appears to have existed in southwestern Scotland at the time the poem was written. And since T is a northern copy, it is entirely possible that the scribe was at least roughly familiar with the geography of the area.

In view of the fact that alliteration is the primary stylistic feature of the line, it is not difficult to see how such an error could have been made. One of a similar sort exists in the Lambeth MS, where the scribe has condensed the spelling of Cunninghame to "Coynham." In D, the reference to Carrick has been omitted, although the phrase "and also" has been inserted before "Kyle" to preserve the meter of the line. Both of these emendations can be attributed to either carelessness on the part of the scribe, an obscure reading in the text being copied from, or lack of familiarity with the area being referred to.

Due to a greater amount of disagreement between the texts, the localities mentioned in l. 420 are somewhat more difficult to identify than those referred to in l. 419. But it is possible to determine some sort of pattern not only in the scribal alterations to which the place-names have been subject but the position each occupies within the line itself. The groups break down



in the following manner:

A	B	C
Lomonde (T)	Lenay (T)	Lowthyane hillis (T)
Lomond (D)	Losex (D)	Loyane hilles (D)
Lonwik (I)	Lannax (I)	Laudoune hillus (I)
Lomound (L)	Leynaux (L)	Lewans hillis (L)

With one exception, all of the four place-names in each column apparently correspond to only one locality.

Although Amours of course recognizes the reference to "Lomound" in T, D, and L, he confesses to a certain puzzlement by the manner in which it is applied.<sup>20</sup> However, the use of the name as a territorial designation is entirely justifiable, both within the context of the poem and in geographic terms. Loch Lomond itself is situated in Dumbartonshire and Stirlingshire. Renfrew and Lanark lie roughly side by side beneath Dumbartonshire, which runs along and below the loch. The county of Ayr is in turn bordered in part by Lanark and Renfrew. Below these shires lies Dumfries to the east and Wigtown and Kirkcudbright to the west by the Solway Firth. As we have since seen, several of these territories have already been claimed by Galeron as a part of his "lordship." The place-name "Lomond" might here be intended to refer, then, to the northernmost half of the Scottish knight's holdings.

In the Ireland MS, however, the expected reference to Lomond has been replaced by one to a district apparently known to the scribe as "Lonwik." There are several possible explanations for this substitution. Amours, who believes that I offers a reading closer to the original version of l. 420 than the other three texts, points out that "Lonwik" may be in fact a corrupt spelling of "Lanrick," the old

spelling for Lanark.<sup>21</sup> This suggestion is substantiated by the fact that at least parts of Lanark lie well within the territory which Galeron is attempting to wrest back from Arthur and Gawain. And in l. 681 D we find a reference to the district of "Loynak" - a place-name which bears some similarity to "Lonwik."

All these elements add up to at least the possibility that the Ireland MS does, in this case, preserve a better reading of l. 420 than do the others. However, one final consideration remains. I was transcribed in Lancashire, and in this county we find the town of Lowick. The use of this name dates back to at least 1212, where one source gives it as "Lofwik." It is derived from the ON lauf-vík, meaning "leafy bay."<sup>22</sup> Now, since Lowick or "Lofwick" bear a closer similarity to "Lonwick" than do "Lanrick" or Lanark, it is possible that the scribe of I either accidentally or intentionally substituted a place-name in his home-ground for one which appeared to him to be of more distant and therefore obscure provenance. The fact that a similar sort of emendation occurs later on in the Ireland text of the Awntyrs adds weight to this argument. At any rate, the agreement in l. 420 between T and D - which are closer in a geographic sense to the original version of the poem than I - as well as the evidence of L both support the reading of Lomond and contradict Amours' assumption. But since "Lonwick" interpreted as Lanark falls naturally within the district of Lomond the disparity between I and T, D, and L does not really effect the actual setting of the Awntyrs.

Despite the wild variations in the spelling, it would seem that the names in Column B all apply to the same area. Amours identifies the district in question as "the Lenox." Admittedly, "Lenay" and "Losex" do not sound much like Lennox, but there is a sound linguistic basis for equating the three. It is interesting to note that the region, an earldom and ancient county, is "comprised of Dumbartonshire, a large part of Stirlingshire, and parts of Perthshire and Renfrewshire,"<sup>23</sup> or roughly the same territory designated by the poet as "Lomond." This correspondence has a definite historical precedent. The name Lennox is derived from Gaelic Leamhain.<sup>24</sup> On Gough's map (c. 1360), the territory is referred to as comitatus de levenay - a name much resembling the "Lenay" of T. And in the Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, 1306 - 1424, there are several citations of the district of "Levenax" or "Levenaux".<sup>25</sup> All such variants are merely Anglicized plurals of Gaelic Leamhnach, "men of Lennox." Such a term of course reflects the status of the district itself as an earldom. The latter form "Levenaux" in particular bears a distinct resemblance to the "Leynaux" of L. Only in I does a version of the name occur which closely resembles the modern spelling of Lennox, which is perhaps one of the reasons why Amours chose to regard the I text as being the most accurate in this instance.

Amours undoubtedly correctly identifies the "Laudoune hillus" of I as being Loudon Hill.<sup>26</sup> Loudon itself is a parish in Irvine, Ayr, and near Kilmarnock there is a Loudon Castle, so all three localities fit in well with

the geography of the poem. What gives Loudon Hill a special significance with respect to the situation in the second episode - the quarrel between a Scottish knight and his southern neighbor - is however the fact that it was the site of a battle in 1307 from which Robert Bruce emerged as victor. Of the reference to the "Lowthyane hillis" (T), Amours remarks that "the Lothian hills are too far east to be part of the lands of the lords of Galloway," and he is of course right.<sup>27</sup> Ackerman concurs with these remarks, but contributes no additional information on the subject.

"Loyane hilles" (D) and "Lewans hillis" (L) both correspond more closely to the reading of T than does I. Although it is most likely that the reference in the original version of the poem approximated that of the Ireland MS than the others, the causes for the scribal changes in D, T, and L are worth investigating. In the first place, the name Lothian was an old and widely-known one - more so probably than Loudon. And the territory which it designated was at one time a much greater one than that which presently bears the name. Watson writes that "the province of Lothian extended of old to the Tweed, which according to Symeon of Durham divided Northumbria and Loida... There are some indications of it even beyond Tweed, namely Lothiangill southwest of Carlisle, and Catlowdy east of Canonbie in Cumberland. Mount Lothian, southeast of Penicuik, is Mountlouthen, Mountlouthyen, Mundlouen, Muntlawdewen, Muntlouen in Reg. of Neubotle and Chart. of Holyrood."<sup>28</sup> Given this, it is easy to see how a reference to Loudon

Hill, specific and localized as it is, could have been amended to "Lothian hills" by a scribe who was not really familiar with the geography of Scotland himself or assumed his audience would not be. The latter place-name probably would have been universally recognizable, particularly in view of the fact that according to a long-standing popular tradition the province of Lothian received its name from Lot, the father of Gawain and brother-in-law of Arthur.

Galeron's challenge to the king is taken up by Gawain, who afterwards escorts the Scottish knight to an elaborately furnished suite to prepare for the following day's combat. While he is resting, servants are dispatched to set up a "palais" for the spectators of the tournament on what is variously given as "Plumtone land" (l. 475D), "Plumtun lone" (l. 475I), and "Plontone land" (l. 475L). (Most of the stanza containing this reference in T has been torn away, but what is left of l. 475 begins "By that one Plu..," so it is probable that some form of the same name originally appeared here.) Madden identifies this locality, "where neuer freke opone folde had fouzrne biforne" (l. 476), as Plumpton Park or Land in Lazenby in the Leath Ward.<sup>29</sup> Contemporary forms of the name other than those given in the Awntyrs include "Plumton" (1212-1460), "Plumpton" (1256), and "Plomton" (1478).<sup>30</sup> Since this area constituted one of the "hays" of Inglewood Forest, Madden's identification is undoubtedly the correct one.

The next cluster of place-names appears in ll. 669 - 670, immediately following the passages describing the

peaceable settlement of the dispute between Gawain and Galeron. Pleased by the manner in which his nephew has acquitted himself in combat, Arthur rewards Gawain with a sizable tract of land, consisting according to all the MSS of "Glamergane londe" and "þe worship of Wales" (ll. 665 - 666). In D, this grant also includes

...criffones castelles curnelled ful clene;  
Eke Vlster halle, to hafe and to holde,  
Wayford and Waterford in Wales I wene;  
Two baronrees in Bretayne, withe burghes so  
bolde,  
Dat arne batailed abouzte and bigged ful  
bene.

The corresponding passage in T gives Gawain the lordship of "Gryffones castelle," "þe Husters haulle," "Wayfurthe" and "Wakfelde," and "twa baronryse in Burgoyne." In I, these possession become "Kirfre castelle," "Hulkershome," "Wayifforthe and Waturforthe," and "toe baroners in Bretan." Line 667 in L reads simply "cuntres and castels," a probable rationalization on the part of a scribe to whom the name "Griffon" (or some variation thereof) meant absolutely nothing. The rest of the passage here lists Gawain's new possessions as "Hulster al holy," along with "Wayford and Waterford" and the two baronies mentioned in D and I.

Because they are generalized and of universal familiarity, the names of the two territories referred to in ll. 665 - 666 of the poem present no problem with respect to identification. "Glamergane lond" ("londus" in TIL) of course corresponds to the present day shire of Glamorgan in South Wales, the country of which Gawain has just assumed the "worship." Owing to the disagreement between

the MSS, however, the sites referred to in ll. 667 - 670 are much less easy to localize. "Criffones castelles," "Gryffones castelle," and "Kirfre castell" all apparently refer to the same place, of which I unfortunately cannot find any trace under that name in Wales, southwestern Scotland, or northwestern England. It is of course possible that such a site could at one time have existed in any one of these three territories without appearing in contemporary records. But the complete lack of any surviving notice seems to militate against the possibility that a place well-known enough to command the attention of a poet and at least three scribes - all of whom were working at separate times and places - could have managed to escape the eyes of the compilers of the exchequer rolls and other official documents.

It is possible that "Griffon's Castle" was a tag invented by the composer of the Awntyrs for application to a legitimate but, from his standpoint, less appropriately named locality. If this is so, then it becomes necessary to look for a site the associations and location of which fit in most neatly with the context of ll. 667 - 671 of the poem. Although they do not closely approximate it, there are a handful of place-names which bear enough resemblance to "Griffon" to warrant some discussion along these lines.

The first of these is Griffith's Moor, which appears as early as 1306 as "Mora Griff," in 1314 as "Gruffesmor," and between 1316 - 1405 as "Griffethesmor(e)." <sup>31</sup> The argument in favor of identifying it with the site mentioned in

the Awntyrs is strengthened by the fact that Griffith's Moor was located near the Rhymney in Roath, Glamorgan-shire, the area over which Gawain has just been given lordship. So here we have the necessary geographic correspondence. Furthermore, the name Griffith's Moor itself, which apparently fell into disuse sometime during the eighteenth century, bears enough of a similarity to the first element of Griffon's Castle to justify a connection being made between the two.

However, it seems somewhat unlikely that the poet would have arbitrarily chosen so small and relatively obscure a site for inclusion in the list of his hero's holdings. Griffon's Castle would have probably had to have been a locality more familiar to a large and varied audience than the less well-known Griffith's Moor. The same argument applies with respect to the identification of the site with Gryfe Cairn in Lanarkshire. Once again, the names resemble each other, and the geographic location corresponds to that of many of the other important place-names in the poem, but the site itself is an insignificant one in relation to the other localities mentioned in this passage. It goes without saying, too, that no castle is referred to in connection with either Griffith's Moor or Gryfe Cairn. So it seems reasonable at this point to eliminate both names from the roster of possibilities.

There are any number of place-names bearing a rough similarity to the one given in the Awntyrs, all of them either of too recent provenance or attached to too small a locality to be worthy of serious consideration. Griff



Head, Griff Ho, Griff Mill, Griffs Well and Griffs Wood in the West Riding of Yorkshire can all be eliminated on these grounds, as well as Griff Farm in the North Riding. This leaves us with a third possibility, the name of which ironically does not bear as much resemblance to that given in the Awntyrs as do Griffith's Moor, Gryfe Cairn, or any of the others listed above. But there are a number of reasons for identifying it with the castle over which Gawain assumes lordship.

This site is that known today as Walwyn's Castle, appearing in contemporary records as ecclesia de Castro Walwam (1290), "Castel Galwan" (1299), "Castel Gawen" (1293), "Castellgawene" (1350), or "Castrum Wallwayn" (1437).<sup>32</sup> From the vast number of references to it in official documents - only a sample of these has been cited above - Walwyn's Castle seems to have been quite a well-known locality during the period when the Awntyrs was composed and transcribed. Furthermore, it is situated in an area which falls well within the geographic scope of the poem - Pembrokeshire in South Wales. The very name of the site is the same as that of the hero of the Awntyrs, which gives it an undoubted and longstanding association with Arthurian tradition. "Gawain" is derived from the Welsh "Gwalchmai," as I have noted before. This latter is the earliest of the various forms of the name by which the hero was known.

The association between Walwyn's Castle and "Criffones" or "Gryffones" castle is further justified by an interesting bit of information provided in the poem itself. In

ll. 509 - 510, Gawain's armorial bearings are described as

...griffons of golde engreled fulle gay,  
Trifeled withe tranes and true-loves  
bitwene.

Now, it is only in the alliterative Morte Arthure that we find a similar device ascribed to him. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Gawain bears a pentangle, while in most of the other romances his arms consist of a lion or a two-headed eagle.<sup>33</sup> Keeping this in mind, it becomes easier to understand how a reference to "Gryffones" castle could have applied equally well to "Gawain's" castle. In the romances, it is not at all infrequent for an individual to be identified by his arms rather than by personal name - such a case in fact occurs in ll. 306 - 307 of the Awntyrs, where Mordred is described as a subject bearing a silver saltire on his shield. Furthermore, given the context of ll. 665 - 670, it would have been unnecessary as well as inartistic for the poet to give his hero the lordship of a castle which already bore his own name.

One final possibility - which may in fact turn out to be the strongest - remains to be discussed. "Gryffon," "Criffone," are certainly Anglicizations of Welsh Gruffydd. It may then be that the reference in the Awntyrs applies to a site associated with Gruffydd ap Cynan (c. 1054 - 1137) king of Gwynedd in North Wales. Gruffydd was born in Dublin of Welsh-Scandinavian parentage, and was, on his mother's side, a descendant of Sihtric Silkenbeard. His father was the son of Iago, who had been deposed from the throne of Gwynedd and subsequently slain in 1039. Cynan does not

appear to have been particularly inclined to exert himself to regain the inheritance of which this coup had deprived him, preferring to remain in Dublin and reap whatever emoluments came the way of an inlaw of a Viking royal family. His son, on the other hand, dedicated the greater part of his career to an attempt to establish himself securely on the throne of Gwynedd. So persistent were Gruffydd's efforts in this direction as to win him memorialization in a biography - an honor moreover accorded no other Welsh prince. This biography, although weighted heavily in its subject's favor, nonetheless provides a good record of affairs in Wales during Gruffydd's lifetime.<sup>34</sup> The very fact that Gruffydd's personal history was considered by at least one writer to be worthy of preservation implies too something of the nature and extent of the fame the prince enjoyed. Given this notoriety, it is entirely possible that his name could have become associated with a site in Wales, a site (or sites, in view of the plural "criffones castelles" given in Awntyrs D) also well-known enough to come to the attention of a fourteenth century poet. It is of course unfortunate that no documentary evidence exists to verify such a speculation. But the connection with Gruffydd ap Cynan is, as I shall point out later, worth keeping in mind with respect to yet another reference which emerges in the course of the Awntyrs.

The next place-name with which to deal is the "Vlster halle" of l. 668 (D), appearing in T as "þe Husters haulle," in I as "Hulkershome," and in L as "Hulster al holy." The

last of these can be pretty well eliminated from the discussion as a rationalization on the part of a scribe who was not in any case terribly familiar with a great many of the other localities in the poem. However, as was the case with "Criffones"/"Gryffones"/"Kirfre" Castle, we are still left with three names which have no real close equivalents in contemporary records. The one possible exception to this is the "Hulkershome" of I. As was mentioned before, the Ireland MS was written in Lancashire, and in Cartmel Parish, Lonsdale Hundred of this county we find Holker Hall. The name dates back to at least 1276, and up to 1557 appears in the forms of "Holkerre," "Holker," and "Howker." Ekwall writes that "the original Holker was no doubt near Holker Hall; the name came to be extended to the districts now called Lower and Upper Holker, the old Walton."<sup>35</sup> All forms of the name bear a distinct resemblance to the "Hulkershome" of I. So it is possible in this case that the scribe was reminded of Holker by a similar-sounding word in the passage of the poem he was transcribing, and so substituted a place-name he was well-acquainted with for one less familiar to him. However, this does not identify the site the poet of the Awntyrs had in mind. Lancashire falls rather too far outside the geographic boundaries of the poem, and as we have seen, the composer tended toward a certain precision in his choice of localities.

I could find no record of a place-name in southwestern Scotland which corresponded closely enough to either "Huster" or "Vlster" to merit serious consideration here. There is an Ulf's Well in Laleston, Newcastle Hundred, Glamorgan--

shire, but the name under which it was known at least in the latter half of the twelfth century (fons Ulfi) does not really bear a significant resemblance to "Vlster."<sup>36</sup> A "Howell's castell" (1390) at one time existed in St. Mary in Liberty, Tenby, Narberth Hundred, Pembrokeshire, but again the connection with either "Huster" or "Vlster" is a dubious one.<sup>37</sup> There are an Ulvedene, an Ulvesdale, an Ulverston, an Ulvergate, and an Ulvesthwaite in Lancashire, but if any of these had been the site referred to the scribe of I would probably have recognized the fact.

There are a variety of place-names all with the "ul" element in them scattered over the North, West and East Ridings of Yorkshire, but again, the connection between them and "Huster" or "Vlster" is a dubious one. This reduces the scope of possible sites in the north of England to the area around Carlisle, in which there are several locales which present themselves as candidates. The first of these is Hewer Hill, appearing in various records between 1292 - 1371 as "Houerg," "Houhere," "Hogher," and "Hwer."<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, none of the contemporary spellings bear enough of a resemblance to either "Huster" or "Vlster" to make a definite identification possible. (The "Hulster" of L appears to be a combination of both forms and bears out the readings of T and D.) Hewer Hill is, however, in Castle Sowerby in the Leath Ward, which places it not especially far from the other Cumberland localities mentioned in the poem. So the geographic association here is at least valid.

The same can be said of Hutton Hall in Penrith in Leath. The name appears as "Hutounhall" or "Hutonhall" in 1582, but there is no medieval form of it<sup>39</sup> to compare to the place-names in the Awntyrs. Houghton Hall Park in Stanwix in Eskdale is referred to in 1368 as "Hoghton Park."<sup>40</sup> Hewthwaite Hall in Selmurthy, Allerdale, is "Hotweyt" (1260), "Hothweyt" (1290), "Hothuuayt" (1312), "Hothwait" (1366), and "Hothwayt" (1369).<sup>41</sup> Hullerbank in Hayton, Eskdale, is given in the Chronicle of Lanercost as "Hulverhirst" (c. 1200), "Hulverbank yate" (c. 1220) and "hullerbank" (1380).<sup>42</sup> In addition, we find Uldale, also in Allerdale, appearing in contemporary records as "Woludale," "Uvedale," "Oulfsdale," "Ulledale," and "Uldale," to list just a few of the forms.<sup>43</sup> All of these place-names contain at least one element which resembles either "Huster" or "Vlster". Furthermore, each site is a fairly satisfactory one from a geographic standpoint.

In their notes to the Awntyrs, both Madden and Amours refer to the ruins of a Castle Hewen which at one time stood near the Tarn Wadling itself.<sup>44</sup> However, neither chose to draw a connection between this and the "Huster" or "Vlster" of l. 688 in the poem. Now, this site is definitely said to be that of a hall or castle, and so far Hewen is the only locality which fits this description. Situated as it is in Inglewood Forest, where a great deal of the action in the Awntyrs takes place, the temptation to identify this site with "Husters haille" or "Vlster haille" becomes nearly irresistible. Due to the lack of

any more specific information on the subject, however, it is difficult in this case to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. But Hewer Hill, Hutton Hall, Hewthwaite Hall, Houghton Hall Park, Hullerbank, and Castle Hewen should all be kept in mind as possibilities.

D is the only text which localizes "Wayford" and "Waterford" in Wales. T, I, and L merely refer to them as walled areas, giving no clue as to their situation. Although D appears to be on the whole a fairly reliable transcript of the poem, the agreement in l. 669 among the other three MSS somewhat diminishes the value of this particular reading as evidence. However, a Welsh locality should be kept in mind as at least a possibility. Ackerman suggests that "Wayford" and "Waterford" may simply be the same name repeated, a point also worth noting.<sup>45</sup> All the texts of the poem refer to "Wayford" ("Wayfurthe" T, "Wayifforthe" I), while T changes "Waterford" to "Wakfelde." But since there is no Wakefield in Cumberland, Wales, or southwestern Scotland that I could find notice of it seems likely that this emendation resulted from a desire on the part of the scribe to avoid the repetition of two virtually identical names. At any rate, it certainly does not shed any new light on the subject. There is a Wakefield in the West Riding, as well as a Wakefield Gate and Wakefield Folly, but it is highly improbable that the Awntrys poet had any of these in mind.

Wayford itself has two fairly close equivalents within an acceptable geographic range. The first of these is

Watford in Eglwysilian, Caerphilly Hundred, Glamorgan-shire. The name dates back at least as far as 1313, under which date can be found a reference to "Wotfordsweye" in the Unpublished Minister's Accounts in the Public Record Office.<sup>46</sup> It is not difficult to see how this name could be corrupted to "Wayford," "Wayfurthe," or "Wayifforthe." More interesting still is the sizable tract of land of Wasford or Vasfuid in Kylestewart in Ayrshire. This name appears in 1340 as "Waschford," and again in 1401 as "Wasforde,"<sup>47</sup> a form closer to Wayford than the previously mentioned "Wotfordsweye." It also refers to a site directly within the bounds of that area in southwestern Scotland over which Galeron claims lordship. (Interestingly enough, there is a harbor of Waterfoot at the mouth of Annan Water in Dumfriesshire.) So there appears to be good reason for establishing a connection between "Wayford" and Wasford. The only factor which militates against this identification is a relatively minor but still niggling one - merely that it seems senseless for Arthur to grant Gawain a territory which the knight will shortly hand back to his opponent.

In view of these drawbacks, it is interesting to consider the possibility that the four most obscure place-names in ll. 667 - 669 of the Awntyrs - "Griffones castelles," "Vlster halle," and "Wayford" and "Waterford" - may be of Irish provenance. The attractions of such an hypothesis are multiple. A connection could easily be drawn between Wayford and Wexford, on the southeast coast of Ireland, a name which occurs in early sources as



"Weisford."<sup>48</sup> And then there is the neighboring county and town of Waterford itself. The first element of "criffones castelles" bears a distinct resemblance to the first element of Griffinstown, a town in Ballynure Parish in the barony of Talbotstown Upper in County Wicklow. This name appears as early as 1297 as "Griffines-ton," "Griffiniston," or "Cryfyneston," and again in 1540 as "Gryfynston" or "Griffinston."<sup>49</sup> The word "castelles" which appears coupled with the first element of the name in the Awntyrs might merely have been appended by the poet to preserve the alliteration of the line, or to impress on the audience more strongly the idea that Gawain's new holdings are truly of ducal proportions. Finally, there should be considered the possibility that the place-name "Vlster halle" was intended to represent a site in the province of Ulster itself.

If the four sites referred to in ll. 667 - 669 are indeed of Irish provenance, then most of Gawain's new territories would be localized neatly into two areas, the second being South Wales. Such an arrangement would of course leave Galeron in undisputed possession of southwestern Scotland, a division which makes more sense with respect to the outcome of the combat between the two men. Granted, the obscurity of the passage makes it much less easy to assign any definite localizations to the sites mentioned therein. A fairly good case may be made, after all, for identifying "Vlster" or "Husters" hall with Castle Hewen. The same argument applies to "Wayford," which could be interpreted as Watford in Wales or Wasford in Ayrshire.

There is, however, one final factor which favors the Irish identification above all others. That Gruffydd ap Cynan mentioned earlier in connection with Griffon's Castle had, by virtue of his Dublin birth and his mother's descent, many connections with Ireland. And it was from this country that the future king of Gwynedd based his operation to regain his grandfather's throne. Gruffydd made three forcible attempts to recover his patrimony, the first taking place in 1075, the second in 1076 or 1077, and the third in 1081. Although the initial efforts failed disastrously, the last venture proved a success, at least in military terms. For the purpose of identifying the place-names mentioned in the Awntyrs, however, the real significance of Gruffydd's campaigns for self-restoration lies in the fact that all three invasions were launched from Wexford. It was from here that his conquering fleet - a gift from King Dermot of Dublin - embarked in 1081. And it was to Wexford as well that the hereditary monarch of Gwynedd returned in 1075 and 1076-77 to rebuild the remains of his devastated army into something once again resembling a fighting machine.<sup>50</sup>

In view of these associations, it would seem that the hypothesis of an Irish provenance for the place-names in ll. 667 - 669 of the Awntyrs is probably the best-favored of any that have been put forth. Unfortunately, any attempt to identify the last of the holdings with which Arthur rewards Gawain for his prowess in combat - the "Two baronrees in Bretayne" (T has "Burgoyne") - is bound to yield only inconclusive results. Since the

references are so general, and could apply to any one of dozens of places, there is little point in attempting to assign a definite localization to either site. However, Gates contention that both baronies are situated somewhere within the vaguely defined environs of "Britain" seems for a number of reasons untenable.<sup>51</sup> Had these been located in England, Wales, Scotland, or Ireland, the poet would have no doubt given the sites names at least roughly familiar to his audience. No purpose could have been served by a lack of specificity here, particularly in view of the fact that the reference to these baronies is preceded by a list of distinctly British place-names. It seems more likely that the audience was intended to regard the last two territories as being in Brittany rather than in England, Scotland, Ireland, or Wales. If this is so, then the necessity of localizing them more specifically would have been obviated. All of the other references to the Continent in the Awntyrs are of a very general nature.

The next list of place-names appears in l. 678, when Gawain is prompted by Arthur to renounce his claim to the lordship of Galloway. In a brief but significant speech the knight offers to return to Galeron all the territory extending from

Lowyke to Layre (T)  
Lauer to Layre (D)  
Logher to Layre (I)  
Lowyke to Layre (I)

His gesture is a munificent one, but due to the disagreement with respect to the first element amongst the four MSS it is difficult to tell exactly what lands Gawain is planning to surrender to his former opponent. There is

little doubt that "Layre" is in fact Ayr. Both Amours and Ackerman support this identification, arguing that the "l" has been prefixed to the name merely in order to maintain the alliteration of the line in which it appears. Ayr is, after all, the county comprised of three districts which Galeron lays claim to - Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham.

The references to "Lowyke," "Lauer," and "Logher" are those which present some difficulty. "The last name alone," Amours remarks, "can be guessed at as perhaps being the Locher Water or the Lochar Moss."<sup>52</sup> As the Lochar Moss is located in south Dumfriesshire and the Locher Water in Renfrewshire, it is not difficult to see how either one of the two localities could be considered as falling well within the boundaries of Galeron's domain. At least two other sites present themselves as possible identifications for "Logher"/"Lauer", however. The first of these is Loughrigg in St. Bees, Allerdale, Cumberland, which appears in 1288 as "Loukerig" and in 1540 as "Lokerigge."<sup>53</sup> Even more likely, though, is Lough, in Plumpton Wall itself. This was apparently an estate which received its name "from a small lake, as it seemeth, just before it" (NBii, 421).<sup>54</sup> If the "Logher" or the "Lauer" is indeed Lough, then Gawain would be ceding over to Galeron his claim to all the territory between roughly Ayr and Carlisle, which would include most of the old kingdom of Cumbria.

There is, incidentally, a Loughor Borough in Swansea Hundred, Glamorganshire - a region which as we have seen

figures prominently in the poem. If "Logher"/"Lauer" were indeed the Loughor Borough rather than Lough or the Lochar Moss or the Locker Water, however, then Gawain would not only be returning to Galeron the lordship of Galloway but investing him as well with the title to those lands with which Arthur has just rewarded him. So, given the context of the passage, any attempt to establish a connection between the Welsh locality and "Logher"/"Lauer" seems fruitless. The similarity between the three place-names is in this case probably purely coincidental.

The Thornton and Lambeth MSS refer to the area in question as "Lowyke" - a name which seems to bear at least as much resemblance to "Lanrick" (Lanark) as Lauer does to Lochar or Locher. Ayr and Lanark could quite reasonably be considered to form the eastern and western-most boundaries of the lordship to which Galeron lays claim. On the other hand, as Amours points out, the Lochar Moss lies in the southern half of a territory taken up in the north by Ayr.<sup>55</sup> Such is the case with Lough in Plumpton Wall. Purely in geographic terms, then, any of these place-names would suit the poet's purpose equally well, a fact which makes it difficult to determine which reference is the most nearly correct. On the basis of the support for the reading of l. 420 in I provided by l. 678 of T and L, Lanark and Ayr would appear to be the likeliest candidates. There is an additional possibility that "Logher" and "Lauer" may represent references to the river Lugar (and town so called) in Ayr. Such a suggestion draws some support from the fact that

Ayr itself is primarily a river name. <sup>56</sup>

Since l. 679 is merely a repetition of l. 419, the place-names mentioned here need not be discussed again. It is interesting to note, however, that the previous reference to "Konynge" in T has been in this instance emended to "Commoke," a reading more consistent with the readings offered in D, I, and L. The now unanimous agreement among the four MSS on this point lends further support to the contention that the district of which the poet is speaking is indeed Cumnock. In l. 679 D, however, the expected reference to Carrick has been replaced by one to "Carlele." The names do sound roughly similar, and both fit in with the alliterative pattern of the line. In addition, as Carlisle is the seat of Arthur's court, several references to it have already appeared throughout the poem. Keeping such factors in mind, it is not difficult to understand how the accidental substitution of Carlisle for Carrick could have taken place.

The localities mentioned in l. 681 - a line missing from the Lambeth and Ireland MSS - present an enormous difficulty with respect to identification. "One expects here the same names as in l. 420, the rime-letter being the same, though the end-rime is not," Amours remarks. "As the two texts stand, I am afraid nothing can be made out of them. We need scarcely regret the omission of two lines in I., as they probably would have made confusion worse confounded."<sup>57</sup> Ackerman, whose views on the matter are largely a recapitulation of the conclusions reached by Amours, makes no attempt at all to identify any of

the place-names mentioned here.

The confusion Amours speaks of is compounded too by the fact that D offers an entirely different reading of the line than does T. According to the Thornton version, Galeron's lands include

The Lebynge the Lowpynge þe Leveastre Iles  
In the Douce MS, however, his territory is said to encompass

þe Loþer þe Lemmoke þe Loynak þe Lile  
Within the space of one line, then the reader is confronted with a group of seven place-names having nothing in common but the letter with which each begins.

The references to the "Lebynge" and the "Lowpynge" in T appear to make absolutely no sense at all. It may be that the "Lebynge" is in fact the Levern, a stream near Paisley in Renfrewshire, or the River Leven in Dumbartonshire which flows from Loch Lomond to the Firth of Clyde. What gives this suggestion some weight is the fact that the Leven and the area through which it runs are a part of the old Lomond district. On the other hand, "Lowpynge" does not really bear much significant similarity at all to any of the place-names found in the general area of southwest Scotland. There is a slight possibility, however, that it may correspond to the reference to "þe Loþer" in D.

It is possible that the enchantingly named but mysterious "Leveastre Iles" of T are in fact the Western Isles. In the Register of the Great Seal of Scotland for 1513 - 1576, the word meaning "west" appears variously as "Vest," "Wester," "Westire," "Vester," and Vestir."<sup>58</sup>

Several of these forms - "Vester" in particular - bear enough of a similarity to "Le-Veastre" to at least suggest a connection between the two. But this is a minor consideration in view of the fact that the Awntyrs was written and transcribed in an age when regularized spelling was not a feature of the language.

The identification of the Hebrides with the "Le Veastre Iles" is, however, supported by two other somewhat more substantial arguments. The first of these is based on tradition and the second on historical fact. Judging by the considerable number of references to them in certain literary texts, the Western Isles held a peculiar fascination (as indeed did Scotland in general) for the composers of Continental as well as Middle English Arthurian romance. The Hebrides form a prominent part of the landscape of the early thirteenth century Fergus, a story which has as its general setting Cumbria at large.<sup>59</sup> It is of interest too in this romance that the Western Isles should be associated with Galloway - so closely that the author at times drew no distinction between the two.

There was in fact an historical connection between the southwest mainland and island territories. The Gall-ghaidhil moved not only into Galloway - a place-name which preserves in its initial position the first element of Gall-ghaidhil - but probably into Carrick and Kyle as well. Belonging to this same family of immigrants were the Gall who settled in the Western Isles. The Hebrides consequently became known as Inse-gall, or "Islands of the Foreigners." It is from this latter term that Ingegal, the name by which



the Western Isles are known in Fergus, appears to have been derived.

Given this, it is not difficult to see how the poet of the Awntyrs could have felt justified in allowing Galeron of Galloway to assume the much-contested "Lordship of the Isles." The argument still holds true even if the inclusion of "Le Veastre" among the Scottish properties listed in T is the result of a scribal emendation rather than the intent of the author. The point is simply that the association between Galloway and the Hebrides was well enough recognized for someone at some stage during either the composition or textual transmission of the Awntyrs to have felt it worth remarking on. Otherwise there would have been little reason for either poet or scribe to make Galeron the master of the Western Isles. The choice of such a locality is too arbitrary to be unjustified.

The identifications which can be proposed for the place-names mentioned in l. 681D are slightly less tentative. It may be that the district referred to here as "pe Loper" in fact corresponds to the Lowthers, a range of mountains separating Dumfriesshire from Lanarkshire. It is interesting to note that Lowther Hill itself and Green Lowther constitute the highest points in this chain. Furthermore, the fact that this area is also known as the Leadhills may partially account for Amours' failure to recognize the distinct resemblance the former place-name bears to the one in the Awntyrs.

By virtue of the similarity in spelling, the district

cited here as "þe Lemmoke" seems to correspond to that of the Lennox, the area around Loch Lomond first referred to in l. 420. If this identification is correct, then there is yet another variant of the name to add to the "Lenay," "Losex," "Lannax," and "Leynaux" of the previous passage. It seems reasonable to suggest too that the following reference to "Loynak" applies -- as may "Lowyke" and "Lon-wik" -- to the county of Lanark.

In view of the fact that a good deal of easily accessible information on the subject exists, it is curious that the final reference in D to "þe Lile" should have remained such a mystery to those who have examined the text.

George Fraser Black writes that "a family of this name were barons of Duchal in Renfrewshire as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century."<sup>60</sup> As I have pointed out, Renfrewshire -- where the Lyle family originated -- could quite reasonably be considered a part of Galeron's holdings. So it seems entirely possible that it is to the barony of this name which the reference in D applies.

Having proposed identifications for the place-names mentioned in both l. 681 T and D, the reader is left with the final problem of deciding which reading most nearly approximates the intention of the composer. Each manuscript has its own unique set of flaws and virtues which unfortunately merely confuse the issue. T is copied in a dialect close to that of the original version of the poem, but the number of gaps and omissions in the transcript considerably diminish its reliability. D is a more complete text, but is further removed from the geographic

and linguistic source of the Awntyrs than T. Furthermore, the localities named in 681T - the Western Isles, Leven or Lavern, and possibly the Lowther Hills - make just as much sense within the context of the poem as do those in 681D.

The reading in D receives some support from the fact that there is an apparent reference here to one of the place-names (Lennox) mentioned in l. 420 of all four MSS. "Loynak," too, seems to echo the "Lonwik" of l. 420 I and the "Lowyke" of l. 678 TL. All of the place-names mentioned in D are attached to somewhat better defined localities than those of T - the reference to the Barony of Lyle is, for example, a far more specific one than that to the generalized Leven or Lavern. Finally, there may be a repetition in 681T itself of the reading in D; as was noted previously, "Lowpynge" is possibly just a corruption of "Loper" or Lowther. For these reasons, it would probably be safest to accept 681D as a more accurate reflection of the composer's intention.

This, then, just about completes the survey of the geography of the Awntyrs. It is unfortunate that, because of textual corruption, no more than a tentative identification may be assigned to some of the place-names in the poem. What is fairly sure, however, is that most of these probably fall into one of four well-defined areas - South Wales, southeastern Ireland, southwestern Scotland, and Cumberland. The last two territories in particular gain a tremendous amount of importance with respect to the historical background of the poem, providing as they do

the natural setting for a story which has as one of its . major themes the power struggle between England and Scotland. It seems, at any rate, more than coincidental that so many of the decisive battles in the Wars of Independence should have been fought in the territory which Sir Galeron, himself a fighter for freedom, claims as his own.

APPENDIX B: NOTES

## ABBREVIATIONS

ALMA .....	<u>Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages; A Collaborative History.</u> Ed. Roger Sherman Loomis. Oxford, 1959.
BBSIA.....	<u>Bulletin Bibliographique de la Societe Internationale Arthurienne</u>
CWT .....	<u>Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society</u>
CYM .....	<u>Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion</u>
DGT .....	<u>Transactions and Journal of Proceedings of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society</u>
EETS .....	Early English Text Society
ITS .....	Irish Text Society
PCTEB .....	<u>Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English Bulletin</u>
PMLA .....	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association</u>
PSAS .....	<u>Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland</u>
SATF .....	Société des Anciens Textes Français
STS .....	Scottish Text Society

An asterisk \* indicates those items listed in the bibliography which were either inaccessible to me at the time of writing or came to hand too late to be utilized in the research for this thesis.

## Chapter I

1. J. Stevenson, ed., Nennii Historia Britonum, English History Society (London, 1837). For a good translation, see A. W. Wade-Evans, Nennius' "History of the Britons" (London, 1938). This edition includes the Annales Cambriae and genealogical tables.
2. A similar confusion between "shoulders" and "shield" shows up in the Annales Cambriae, and would appear to be the result of a scribal misreading of the one word for the other. The original version of the Annales was probably composed in Welsh, and then rendered into Latin by a later hand. Some attempt to rectify the ambiguity was made by both William of Malmesbury and Geoffrey of Monmouth, writing respectively in 1125 and 1137. At any rate, both appear to have recognized the sheer impracticality of the notion of a warrior going into battle burdened down by the weight of a holy image.
3. J. Williams ab Ithel, ed., Annales Cambriae (London, 1860).
4. W. Stubbs, ed., De gestis regum Anglorum libri v. Historiae novellae libri iii, Rolls Series, 90, 3 vols. (London, 1887 - 89).
5. Trioedd Ynys Prydein; The Welsh Triads (Cardiff, 1961), p. 274. Hereafter abbreviated to TYP.
6. Dux bellorum translates as "duke of wars." The title dux (<"duke") was used in the latter stages of the Roman occupation of Britain.
7. The Gododdin; The Oldest Scottish Poem (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 85. Hereafter referred to as Gododdin.
8. Gododdin, p. 112.
9. Gododdin, pp. 3 - 8.
10. "The Arthur of History," in ALMA, p. 3.
11. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, trans. and intro., The Mabinogion (London, 1949), pp. 95 - 136. For the various Welsh editions of the Mabinogion, see the bibliography.

It is an established principle that as Arthur's reputation increased, more and more stories and characters previously unrelated to the cycle were drawn into the orbit of the hero. Such is the case with Culhwch and Olwen, a tale which is probably a good deal older than that version which has come down to us. The Arthurian material here was a later addition to the original story, but one which ironically probably helped to insure its survival to the

- present day. See R. Bromwich, "The Character of the Early Welsh Tradition," in Studies in Early British History, ed. N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1954) p. 106, for a discussion of the recasting of non-Arthurian matter in an Arthurian context.
12. Bromwich, "The Character of the Early Welsh Tradition," p. 107.
  13. Gododdin, p. 155.
  14. K. H. Jackson, The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition (Cardiff, 1961), p. 73. Hereafter abbreviated as IPT.
  15. IPT, p. 73.
  16. Jackson suggests that this character may have been black, or have had Negroid characteristics. See IPT, p. 75, for an interesting brief discussion of this idea.
  17. IPT, pp. 76 - 8.
  18. IPT, p. 76 - 7.
  19. IPT, p. 73.
  20. TYP, p. 305.
  21. TYP, p. 371.
  22. TYP, p. 371.
  23. TYP, p. 372.
  24. TYP, p. 374.
  25. J. Hammer, ed. Historia Regum Britanniae, Medieval Academy of America Publications, 57 (Cambridge, Mass., 1951).
  26. J. J. Parry and Robert Caldwell, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," in ALMA, p. 84.
  27. It is interesting to note that the impressive rollcall of foreign acquisitions attributed by Geoffrey to Arthur became a staple feature of the later chronicles and romances. This notion of the king as a world-conqueror is already present in Culhwch and Olwen, where Arthur's dominions are said to include Africa, India the Great and India the Lesser, and Corsica. Numerous additions were made to the list by succeeding storytellers. This process of expansion eventually reached the point where the poet of the late fourteenth century alliterative Morte Arthure could, with perfect aplomb, credit the king with the subjugation not only of the British



Isles, Scandinavia, and France, but with having conquered most of the remaining European states and a fair portion of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries as well. It is possible that the notion of Arthur as emperor of what during the Middle Ages amounted to about half the known world arose as the result of attempts on the part of eleventh and twelfth century writers to rationalize the earlier concept of the king as an explorer of the Other World. This constitutes one of the prominent motifs of Preideu Annwfn, where Arthur and his men set off in the ship Prydwen on an expedition to hell.

28. TYP, p. 455.
29. See n. 5, above, for reference to edition.
30. TYP, p. 138n.
31. J. R. Lumby, ed., Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Rolls Series, 5 (London, 1974).
32. J. S. Brewer et al., eds., Giraldi Cambrensis Opera, Rolls Series, 21, 8 vols. (London, 1861 - 91). For a translation see H. E. Butler, The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis (London, 1937).
33. King Henry III and the Lord Edward (Oxford, 1954), II, 724.
34. A good translation of both Wace and Lazamon is provided in Arthurian Chronicles, trans. by Eugene Mason and introduced by Gwyn Jones (London, 1962). For the original version of Wace, see I. Arnold, Le Roman de Brut, SATF, 2 vols. (Paris, 1938 - 40).
35. The close of the relevant section of the Historia Regum Britanniae is tantalizingly obscure on this point. It will be recalled that, according to Geoffrey, Arthur received a deadly wound in his final battle and was thereafter transported to Avallon. This place name is rendered in the original Latin as insula Avallonis. As Bromwich notes, "The implication is that the meaning...is 'the Island of Apples' in reference to the abundant apple-trees characteristic of the Celtic Otherworld scene" (TYP, p. 267). Death did not exist in this Other World, a fact which perhaps provides the basis for Geoffrey's remark that Arthur was taken there in hopes that his injuries would be healed. This observation however seems to conflict with the statement that the king gave up his crown to his nearest heir. This contradiction suggests that Geoffrey might have been vaguely aware of the notion of Arthur's eventual return, but could not see his way to incorporating such a fanciful idea in what was after all purported to be a serious work of history.

What militates against this hypothesis is that Geoffrey, as his inclusion in the narrative of anecdotes concerning giants and flying dragons merely serves to point out, was never one to balk at bringing in a supernatural theme if by doing so his story could be improved.

36. F. Madden, ed., Laʒamon's Brut, 3 vols. (London, 1847). G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, eds., Laʒamon's Brut, EETS, 250 (London, 1968), I (Text, ll. 1 - 8020).
37. Mabinogion, pp. 137 - 154.
38. The narrator of the story is careful to point out that Rhonabwy and his companions, who are apparently normal-sized men, are considerably smaller than the king. This portrayal of Arthur as a physical giant has an interesting parallel in the story told by Giraldus, and may reflect a tradition in which the king was represented as such. The idea was not preserved in the English, Scottish, or Continental romances. In Irish literature, however, the inhabitants of supernatural realms are often presented as giants, whom the heroes are then compelled to fight. The dream world of Rhonabwy could certainly be considered as a sort of Other World territory. The notion of the gradual degeneracy of the human race since the fall could also be a contributory motif here.
39. "Culhwch and Olwen and Rhonabwy's Dream" in ALMA, p. 43.
40. A History of Welsh Literature, trans. H. I. Bell (Oxford, 1955), p. 84.
41. TYP, p. 416.
42. Lanzelet, trans. K. G. T. Webster, rev. with intro. by R. S. Loomis (New York, 1951).
43. W. A. Nitze and T. Atkinson Jenkins, eds. Le Haut Livre du Graal; Perlesvaus, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1932 - 37).
44. O. Sommer, ed., The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, 7 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1908 - 16).
45. O. D. MacRae-Gibson, ed. Of Arthour and of Merlin, EETS, 268 (London, 1973), I (Text).
46. A. O. H. Jarman, ed. Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin (Cardiff, 1951).
47. TYP, p. 471.
48. William Roach, ed., The Didot Perceval (Philadelphia, 1971).

1. The Welsh saints' lives have been edited and translated by A. W. Wade-Evans, Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae (Cardiff, 1944).
2. It is tempting to regard this passage as representing an allusion to the Round Table. This particular Life of Saint Carannog (there are two vitae, of which the present is the earlier) appears to have been composed at the beginning of the twelfth century, possibly about two decades prior to the appearance of the Historia Regum Britanniae. The oldest specific reference to the Round Table that we know of in literature is that given in the Roman de Brut of Wace (c. 1155). As scholars have long been aware, Wace was in the habit of incorporating oral tradition into his narrative (cf. C. Foulon, "Wace," in ALMA, p. 97). By his own testimony, the poet apparently gleaned his information about the Round Table from British storytellers. Therefore it seems not unlikely, given the dates of the composition of the Brut and the saints' lives, that the same source of information from which the Anglo-Norman writer gleaned his material could have been available to the hagiographers. I intend to discuss this idea - for the suggestion of which I am indebted to John MacQueen - in greater detail at a later date.

The origin of the concept of the Round Table has been a subject of much speculation. Laura Hibbard Loomis proposes that the emphasis Wace places on the democratizing purpose of the Round Table, and the association which Robert de Boron makes between it and the table of the Last Supper, arose from the fact that during the Middle Ages there was, in Jerusalem, a table put on exhibit to the faithful which was purported to have been that at which Christ and his Apostles partook of the Supper (Modern Language Notes, 44, 1929, 511 - 515). R. S. Loomis postulates that the notion may have been inspired by a motif current in Irish literature, specifically that assigning to the twelve greatest warriors of Ulster individual couches upon which each sat in a cluster about the couch of Conchobar. This arrangement, it should be noted, arose out of a dispute over precedence (Arthurian Literature and Chrétien de Troyes, New York, 1949, Ch. VI, ii, p. 63). In support of his contention, Loomis cites the work done by Lewis Mott (PMLA, 20, 1905, 260) and A. C. L. Brown (Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, 7, 1900, 183ff.). Brown points out the fact that the fight for precedence which broke out among Conchobar's men took place in hall, as did the argument over the same issue Arthur's warriors became involved in in Lazamon's Brut.

3. The kind of treatment which Padarn's hagiographer accords Arthur is paralleled elsewhere in the saints' legends. In these, as in the Arthurian-related hagiographies, the unflattering portrayal given a temporal prince was intended to strengthen by contrast the repute of the

saint. Cf. Grant Loomis, White Magic, Medieval Academy of America (Cambridge, Mass., 1948).

4. "The Arthur of History," in ALMA, p. 2.
  5. This role was in fact taken by other more or less well-known Welsh characters. In the Life of Saint Cadog Maelgwn of Gwynedd and his son Rhun, both kings, pay a severe penalty for crossing the holy man. The former is prevented from carrying out his design of attacking the territory of Gwynllyw by a heavy mist which Cadog causes to fall over the land. Maelgwn is compelled to go down on his knees and beg forgiveness from the saint for his many sins in order that the fog be lifted. Before returning peacefully to his own domain, the king asks Cadog to serve as his confessor, and vows to lay a curse on any of his progeny who should interfere with any of the holy man's rights and privileges. Some years after this event Rhun assembled an army to invade the territory of the southern Britons and lay waste to their holdings. Before the departure of the host, Maelgwn extracted a promise from his son that he and his men would inflict no injury on Cadog. This vow was subsequently broken by some of Rhun's troops, who tried to burn down one of the saint's barns in retaliation for the refusal of Cadog's overseer to supply them with milk. The attempt at arson failed, however, for the building miraculously refused to ignite. Although there was no fire to create it, a great cloud of smoke arose from the barn and drifted to Rhun's camp, where it penetrated the king's tent and blinded both him and his retainers. Rhun, aware that this sudden affliction must be a punishment dealt by Providence for some injury done Cadog, immediately made inquiries among his men as to the identity of the offenders. Afterwards he sent for the holy man and asked that his sight be restored. Cadog accordingly prayed, and Rhun recovered his lost vision. Subsequently the king made a vow, as his father had, to defend the interests of the saint.
  6. Respectively, the stanzaic Morte Arthur and Lancelot of the Laik. For a discussion of the first, see this chapter, pp. 81 - 86, and for the second, Chapter VII, pp. 278 - 283, 314.
  7. A. Micha, ed., Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: Cliges (Paris, 1957).
  8. M. Roques, ed., Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: Le Chevalier de la charrette (Paris, 1958).
  9. W. Roach, ed., Le Roman de Perceval; ou le conte du Graal, Textes Litt. Fr., 71 (Geneva, 1956).
- W. Roach et al, eds., The Continuations of the Old French Perceval of Chretien de Troyes, 4 vols. (Philadelphia, 1949 - 71).

10. Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes, p. 200.
11. G. Schoepperle, Tristan and Isolt, II, 422-29, 528-40; T. P. Cross and W. A. Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere, pp. 32-61; cited in Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes, p. 200 and n.8.
12. Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes, p. 200
13. Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes, p. 200.
14. Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes, p. 200
15. J. Campion and F. Holthausen, eds., Sir Perceval of Gales, Alt. -u. Mitteleng Texte, 5 (Heidelberg, 1915).
16. Many of the details of Perceval's early life correspond closely with those given in the story of Finn's boyhood (Cf. T. P. Cross and C. H. Slover, Ancient Irish Tales, Dublin, 1969, pp. 360-69). This latter account serves as an introduction to that series of tales referred to cumulatively as the Finn or Ossianic cycle. The narrative opens with a reference to the contention between the supporters of Cumall son of Trenmor and the followers of Urgriu son of Lugaid Cor of the Luagui. Unable or unwilling to arrive at a means of peacefully settling this dispute, which arose over the issue of the high stewardship of Ireland, the two factions finally met in battle at Cnucha. During the conflict Cumall was slain by a supporter of Urgriu, Goll mac Morna. At the time of his death, the warrior's wife Muirne was pregnant. In due course the widow gave birth to a son, whom she named Demne. Fearful for the child's safety in a land dominated by his father's enemies, Muirne handed the keeping of the baby over to Fiacal mac Conchinn and a pair of female warriors, Bodbhall the druidless and the Gray one of Luachar. The Amazons took the boy to the forest of Sliab Bladma, there to be brought up in isolation. Despite the hermit-like conditions of his existence, Demne received from his guardians an education befitting the son of a warrior. At an early age the boy proved himself a credit to his instructors. While wandering through the forest one day, Demne encountered a group of youths playing hurly. He joined them in their game, and such was his skill that he emerged as victor of the contest. The youths later reported this incident to the chief of their stronghold, who directed the boys to set upon their opponent and kill him when next they met. These orders the youths attempted but failed to carry out, for as it happened they were handily overcome by their intended victim. Sometime afterwards Demne came upon his erstwhile playmates swimming in a pond, and repaid them further for their treachery by drowning nine of the company. It was as a result of this episode that he acquired the name Finn, or Fair, for in such a manner had he been described by his late opponents.

The parallels between this story and the initial episode of the English romance are straightforward enough as to require no further explication here. It has long been recognized that the Finn and Perceval sagas have an analogue as well in the boyhood deeds of Cuchulainn. For a survey of scholarship concerning the relationship between the three cycles, see Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 335-340.

17. TYP, p. 490.
18. Rita Lejeune, "The Troubadours," in ALMA, p. 396.
19. TYP, p. 490.
20. Mabinogion, pp. 155-182.
21. TYP, p. 489.
22. TYP, p. 490. In the early part of the seventh century, Deira and Bernicia were to be incorporated by force into the kingdom of Northumberland.
23. Yet another character of the same name figures prominently in the early British tradition. This was Peredur mab Eliffer Gosgorduavr, one of the sixth-century Gwŷr y Gogledd of the family of Coel Hen (TYP, p. 492). According to Triad 44 of Tricoedd Ynys Prydein, Peredur and his brother Gwrgi fought against their cousin Gwenddoleu at the battle of Arfderydd. This claim is given added substance by the fact that the date of the battle agrees with the date of the death of the two brothers as recorded in Annales Cambriae (TYP, p. 492). Furthermore there seems no particular reason to question the possibility of close blood relatives coming into opposition. Bromwich, citing Nennius' reference to the means by which the death of Urien was encompassed by his cousin Morcant, has shown that incidents of conflict between members of the same family were not without parallel among the north British people.  
Like Peredur mab Efracw, Peredur mab Eliffer also has a Yorkshire association in that he is credited in Stow's Chronicle (1615) with founding the town of Pickering. Both Peredurs, furthermore, appear to have flourished during the same period in history, and both were north Britons. What militates against the identification of the two warriors as one individual is the fact that the latter is invariably mentioned in conjunction with his brother Gwrgi (TYP, p. 492). Peredur mab Efracw, on the other hand, is always referred to on his own, or at least not in connection with such a close relative.
24. The titles are used interchangeably.
25. TYP, p. 490.
26. TYP, p. 490.

27. A. B. Friedman and N. T. Harrington, eds., Yvain and Gawain, EETS, 254 (London, 1964).

M. Roques, ed., Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: Le Chevalier au lion (Paris, 1960).

28. A. G. Brodeur, "The Grateful Lion," PMLA, 39 (1924), 493-501.

A number of scholars have regarded the episode in le Chevalier au lion as having a combination of motifs. Loomis, summarizing the argument in support of this contention, remarks that "the French chivalric tradition represented by Jaufré de Vigois and Neckam supplied Yvain with these motifs: (1) A knight hears the outcry of a lion and rescues him from a serpent. (2) The grateful beast displays its gratitude, fetches him game, stands guard over him by night, and attacks his enemies when he is engaged in battle. The Irish tradition of the faithful horse supplied three motifs: (1) The hero's enemies remonstrate against the animal's participation. (2) The hero magnanimously accepts their protest. (3) The beast intervenes and tears open their bowls [sic]" (Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 316-17).

For a fuller exposition of the putative Celtic sources present in Yvain, see L. H. Loomis, Medieval Romance in England, pp. 314-16, Chotzen, Neophilologus, 18, 134f., G. Schoepperle, Tristan and Isolt, II, 267ff., R. S. and L. H. Loomis, Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art, Fig. 79, and A. C. L. Brown, PMLA, 20 (1905), 673-706.

29. Mabinogion, pp. 155-182.

30. This is primarily due to the fact that the historical Yvain (Owein), whose existence is well attested in both bardic verse and genealogies (TYP, p. 479), had no connections whatsoever with Arthur. The only common ground between the two is in fact that both were north British heroes and both flourished during roughly the same period. Owein was one of the sons of Urien, king of Rheged in the late sixth century. What this domain encompassed has long been the subject of debate. MacQueen remarks that "the kingdom of Rheged is only mentioned in Welsh tradition, but it may be said with confidence that it formed no part of the modern Wales...What is certain is that the name belongs to the North, to Southern Scotland or Northern England or both, and in all probability it belongs to the west rather than to the east of this region" ("Yvain, Ewen and Owein ap Urien," DGT, 3rd Series, 32, 1954-55, 110-11).

31. S. B. Hemingway, ed., Le Morte Arthur (Boston, 1912). All quotes taken from this edition.

32. A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400 (New Haven, Conn., 1916), p. 51.

33. "The Avowynge of King Arther, Sir Gawan, Sir Kaye, and Sir Bawdewyn of Bretan," in Three Early English Metrical Romances, ed. John Robson, Camden Society (London, 1842).
34. See Chapter IV, pp. 167-69, for a further discussion of this point.
35. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, eds. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, rev. N. Davis, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1968).
36. The question of the authorship of the alliterative poems is discussed in Chapter V, pp. 221-28.
37. I. Gollancz, ed., Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, and Sir Gawain, EETS OS, 162 (London, 1923).
38. Recent scholarship has shown that a very close relationship indeed exists between Sir Gawain and La Mule sans frein and Le chevalier à l'épée, a work of the same period as La Mule and just possibly by the same anonymous author. By means of a detailed comparison of the three texts, Owen has built a strong case in support of the theory that the English composer based his own narrative on a conflation of the two French romances. "A rough description of [the Gawain poet's] plan would be to say that he has framed the central episodes of Ch within the beheading theme inherited from M. But this is altogether too simple. For we find runs of borrowings from his main sources broken by passages of his own invention, designed to intensify a certain atmosphere or deepen the meaning of the story by introducing moral or psychological considerations, or in other cases supplied to make a smooth transition between the main stages of the plot. Sometimes a sequence from a primary source will be interrupted by a sub-theme (such as the hunt, or exchange of winnings), partly inspired by other texts but amplified, no doubt, by the poet's own skill. Elsewhere we may find a resemblance of one of the main texts inserted into a run from the other; or a feature such as the arming of Gawain or the whole seduction episode elaborated on and modified by the introduction of material from a secondary source. Even within an extended run of borrowings from one of the main models one may notice (as in the case of the use of the central episodes in Ch) that there is no slavish following of the order in which the episodes are recounted" (R. C. Johnston and D. D. R. Owen, eds., Two Old French Gauvain Romances; Le Chevalier à L'Epée and La Mule Sans Frein, with intro., notes, and glossary, Edinburgh and London, 1972, pp. 203-204.)

One of the most significant changes the English composer made in the French material in adapting it to suit his own purposes lies in his treatment of Gawain. Both La Mule and Le Chevalier offer a good-humoredly burlesque portrayal of the hero. In either case, Gawain betrays an unfortunate penchant for getting himself into compromising situations with women, and, yet more dis-



tressing, for sometimes failing to live up to the code to which he subscribes. Yet in spite of this blundering he manages in the end to rise above his mistakes and resume his position as supreme among knights. Owen and Johnston point out that this tradition of gentle mockery was an inheritance from Chrétien, by whom it was to all intents and purposes established. In le Chevalier au lion, it will be recalled, Gawain embarks on an affair with Lunete, the charming and resourceful handmaiden to Yvain's countess. Not only does he indulge in a bit of philandering in the course of le Chevalier de la charr-ette but in some unintentional buffoonery as well, for at one point the great lover falls into a stream and flounders about in the water until he is taken pity on by a comrade and extricated. This whole comic theme is expanded in the Perceval, where among other things Gawain manages to get himself trapped in a household of women, and is compelled, rather like Don Quixote, to make do with a decrepit old horse rather than the more appropriate charger. (Two Old French Gauvain Romances, pp. 6-7). Chrétien's satiric treatment of Gawain is nothing like as barbed as is the poet's portrayal of Arthur, however. Nor - and this is most important - was it echoed by the English and Scottish composers of romance. The Gawain poet's portrayal of his hero is radically different from that afforded in the French romances. Owen remarks that "from the impetuous pursuer of aventures, chivalric and amorous, that was Gauvain he has produced a far more serious and mature figure. That courtesy of which Arthur's nephew was the traditional embodiment survives not merely unimpaired but reinforced, with the surface polish and politeness backed by a more genuine humility than our French romances show. The heroic resolve, firm as ever, springs now from a pious sense of duty rather than recklessness. And in matters of the heart, Gawain gives only a glimpse of that gay initiative that had won him such a reputation among the ladies of his circle as other poets confirm" (Two Old French Gauvain Romances, pp. 207-08).

39. The Gawain-Poet: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1970), p. 182.
40. The Gawain-Poet, p. 182.
41. The Gawain-Poet, p. 176.
42. The Character of King Arthur in English Literature (Amsterdam, 1925), p. 137.
43. Edmund Brock, ed., Morte Arthure, EETS O.S., 8 (London 1871).

After having suffered a spell of neglect, the Morte Arthure has begun to receive a share of the critical attention it deserves. Interest in the poem was regenerated by the publication of William Matthews' The Tragedy of Arthur (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960). Several studies of the work appeared in quick succession

thereafter. It is Matthews' contention that the Morte Arthure is a tragedy of Fortune in which the hero, through excessive pride in imperial conquest, creates the circumstances leading to his own downfall. Although the critic has been challenged on this and other points, notably by John Finlayson, J. L. N. O'Loughlin, and Larry Benson (Finlayson's review appears in Medium Evum, 32, 1963, 74-77 and that of O'Loughlin in Review of English Studies, N.S., 14, 1963, 76. Benson's article appears in Tennessee Studies in Literature, 2, 1966, 75-87), The Tragedy of Arthur still remains the most systematic and penetrating of any of the various interpretations that have been offered of the poem.

44. See Chapter V, pp. 222-23
45. "Concerning Huchown," PMLA, 25 (1910), 507-34.
46. The Alliterative Morte Arthure, The Owl and the Nightingale, and Five Other Middle English Poems (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill., 1971), p. 240.
47. "The Alliterative Morte Arthure, the Concept of Medieval Tragedy, and the Cardinal Virtue Fortitude," Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ed. John M. Headley (Durham, N.C., 1968), p. 105.
48. Morte Arthure (Evanston, Ill., 1967), p. 17.
49. Morte Arthure, p. 17.
50. Morte Arthure, p. 66n.
51. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 135.
52. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 136.
53. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 135-36.
54. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 138.
55. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 142.
56. See E. V. Gordon and Eugene Vinaver, "New Light on the Text of the Alliterative Morte Arthure," Medium Evum, 6, 1937, 81-91.
57. W. W. Skeat, ed., Barbour's Bruce, STS, 31-33 (Edinburgh and London, 1893-95).
58. Matthew McDiarmid, ed., Hary's Wallace, STS, 4th Series, 3-4, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1959-61).

Chapter III

1. See R. M. Wilson, The Lost Literature of Medieval England, 2nd ed. (London, 1970), p. 104ff.
2. F. J. Furnivall, ed., Arthur, EETS, O.S., 2 (London, 1864).
3. M. Mills, ed., Lybeaus Desconus, EETS, O.S., 261 (London, 1969), and "Sir Iauufal," in Middle English Metrical Romances, ed. W. H. French and C. B. Hale (New York, 1930), pp. 345-80.
4. The author's patronymic seems, however, to suggest a more northern origin for his family. If the antecedent Chestres did emigrate from the Northwest Midland it is possible that they were familiar with Arthurian traditions current in this locale.
5. G. P. McNeill, ed., Sir Tristrem, STS, 1st Series, 8 (Edinburgh and London, 1885-86).
6. Cf. Angus McIntosh, "The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative Morte Arthure," in English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien, ed. N. Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), pp. 231-40.
7. L. F. Casson, ed., Sir Degrevant, EETS, O.S. 221 (London, 1949); W. W. Skeat, ed., Joseph of Arimathie, EETS, O.S. 44 (London, 1871); A. Kurvinen, ed., Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle in Two Versions (Helsinki, 1951); "The Turke and Gowin," in Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, ed. J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall (London, 1867-68), I, 497-507. For the dating of the latter see E. B. Lyle, "The Turke and Gawain a Source for Thomas of Erceldoune," in Arthurian Romance; Seven Essays, ed. D. D. R. Owen (Edinburgh, 1970), pp. 98-102.
8. See n.7, above, for reference to the edition by Kurvinen.
9. Laura Sumner, ed., The Weddyng of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell, Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, 5, No. 4 (1924); "The Marriage of Sir Gawain," in Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, I, 103-18.
10. Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, I, 56-77.
11. Cf. Rachel Bromwich, "Scotland and the Arthurian Tradition," BBSIA, 15 (1963), 85-95.
12. A complete list of the relevant passages is cited by Elizabeth Salter, "The Alliterative Revival. Part II," Modern Philology, 64, (1966-67), 234 n.34.
13. "The Early Germanic Background of Old English Verse," in Medieval Literature and Civilization, ed.

14. See James Travis, Early Celtic Versecraft (Shannon, 1973) for a detailed exposition of the origin of alliterative verse.

The source may possibly lie in the earliest Latin verse form. One of the predominant characteristics of the Saturnian was alliteration. The rhythm of the verse line, too, was contingent upon the placement of accented syllables. Both features are given full representation in the epitaph composed by Naevius (c. 270-c.199 B.C.) for himself:

Immortalis mortalis si foret fas flere  
Florent Divai camenai Naeviom poetam.  
Itaque postquam est Orchi traditus thesauro,  
Obliti sunt Romai loquier lingua Latina.

It is worthwhile noting that the Saturnian became a vehicle for a considerable amount of narrative poetry as well as for hymns, chants, and memorials such as that of Naevius.

I am indebted to John MacQueen for pointing out to me the close resemblance between early Latin verse forms and Celto-Germanic alliterative poetry, as well for the suggestion that the former might have provided the ultimate source for the latter.

15. Early Celtic Versecraft, p. 90.
16. Early Celtic Versecraft, p. 113.
17. "The Kentish Hymn," in An Old English Anthology, ed. W. F. Bolton (London, 1965), pp. 5 -6.
18. D. Everett, "The Alliterative Revival," in Essays on Middle English Literature, ed. P. M. Kean (Oxford, 1955), p. 26.
19. "The Alliterative Revival," p. 26.
20. R. J. Gates, ed., The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terme Wathelyne: A Critical Edition (Philadelphia, 1969)
- "The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane," in Scottish Alliterative Poems, ed. F. J. Amours, STS, 1st Series, 27 (Edinburgh and London, 1891-2), I, 1-46.

All quotations will be taken from these editions.

The development of end rhyme may have been due to Welsh influence. John MacQueen has suggested to me that Gaelic verse technique may have influenced to some degree the development of the alliterative tradition. The proximity of southwest Scotland (where Gaelic was spoken up to the eighteenth century, though it was not indigenous to the area) to that area of England in which the revival took place might in a sense be said to have facilitated such interaction. That the allitera-

tive poets of a slightly later period were familiar with the techniques of Gaelic versecraft by a passage in the fifteenth-century Book of the Howlat, where "a bard owt of Irland" recites what is obviously intended to be a representative extract of one of his own compositions:

"Gluntow guk dynyd dach hala mischy doch;  
 Raike hir a rug of the rost, or scho sall  
       ryiue the.  
 Mich macmory ach mach mometir moch loch;  
 Set hir dovne, gif hi drink; quhat Dele  
       alis the?"

ll. 796 - 799

Notice, even in this semi-parody of Gaelic oral poetry, the predominance of alliterating consonants.

For a discussion of the Gaelic language in south-west Scotland, see MacQueen's articles cited in the notes to the Appendix.

21. J. P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II. A Survey of the Traditions, asst. by E. R. Innes (Manchester, 1935), 220.
22. Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II., 221.
23. "Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," Romanic Review, 7 (1916), 243-70.
24. "Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," p. 252.
25. "Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," p. 253.
26. "Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," pp. 253-54.
27. "Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," p. 270.
28. "On the Origin of Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," Romanic Review, 7 (1916), 271-83
29. "On the Origin of Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," p. 281.
30. Early Celtic Versecraft, p. 124.
31. "The Buke of the Howlat," in Scottish Alliterative Poems, I, 47-81.
32. "On the Origin of Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse," p. 275.
33. Early Celtic Versecraft, p. 87.
34. Early Celtic Versecraft, p. 51.
35. Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II., 392ff.

36. Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II., 398.
37. Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II., 350.
38. Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II., 351-63.
39. "Rauf Coilgear," and "Pistill of Susan," in Scottish Alliterative Poems, I, 82 - 114; 172 - 87.  
Gavin Douglas, Virgil's Aeneid, ed. D. F. C. Coldwell, STS, 3rd Series, 25, 27, 28, 30, 4 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1950-51, 1952-54, 1956-57).  
I. Gollacz and M. Weale, eds., The Quatrefoil of Love EETS, O.S., 195 (London, 1935).  
"St. John the Evangelist," in Religious Pieces in Verse and Prose, ed. G. Perry, EETS, O.S., 26 (London, 1887), pp. 87 - 94.  
"A Satire on the Consistory Courts," in Political Songs of England, ed. T. Wright, Camden Society (London, 1839), pp. 155-9.
40. Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, p. 37.
41. Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, pp. 38-41.  
A formulaic phrase is one such as that commonly used to fill out the second half-line of alliterative verse, such as "gamyn and gle," or any one of the phrases which belonged to the common stock of alliterative poets, such as "by crose and by crede."
42. Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II., 382.
43. Alliterative Poetry in Middle English:II., 385-86.
44. Speculum, 39 (1957), 792-801.
45. "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry," pp. 793-94.
46. "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry," p. 794.
47. "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry," pp. 798-99.
48. "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry," p. 799.
49. "The Alliterative Revival.I.," Modern Philology, 64, (1966-67), 146.
50. The great exception being, of course, William Langland, who should to all intents and purposes be considered "a southren man."
51. "A Hypothesis concerning the Alliterative Revival," Modern Philology, 28, (1931), 405-22.
52. "The Alliterative Revival.I.," p. 146.
53. M. McKisack, The Fourteenth Century (Oxford, 1959),

- p. 254; cited in "The Alliterative Revival.I.," p. 146.
54. "The Alliterative Revival. I.," p. 147 and n.8.
- 5 . "The Alliterative Revival.I.," p. 148.
56. Gwyn Williams, An Introduction to Welsh Poetry (London, 1953), p. 245. All quotations from the Welsh are taken from this edition, pp. 244-45.
57. An Introduction to Welsh Poetry, p. 246.

#### Chapter IV

1. See n.20, Ch. III. A list of further editions of the poem will be found in the bibliography.
2. Middle English Literature (London, 1951), pp. 52-3.
3. "The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry" (University of Leeds: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1971), I, 63.
4. "It's Only Number Two: A Study of The AunTERS of Arthur," PCTEB, 15 (1967), 20.
5. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 160.
6. "The Awntyrs off Arthure: An Interpretation," Modern Language Quarterly, 31 (1970), 277.
7. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 160.  
Medieval English Poetry (London, 1957), p. 252.
8. Medieval English Poetry, p. 253.
9. C. M. Skinner, Myths and Legends of Flowers, Trees, Fruits, and Plants (Philadelphia and London, 1911), p. 147.
10. "The Parlement of Foules," in The Collected Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed., rev. (Boston, 1957), pp. 309 - 318.
11. Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, p. 19.
12. "Trentalle Sancti Gregorii," in Political, Religious, and Love Poems, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS, O.S., 15 (London, 1886), pp. 114-22.
13. H. Oesterley, ed., Gesta Romanorum, (Berlin, 1872) 399- 409.
14. "Exempla and The Awntyrs of Arthure," Medieval Studies, 34 (1972), 307-25.
15. Robin Flower, The Irish Tradition (Oxford, 1947), p. 8.
16. The Irish Tradition, p. 9.
17. M. M. Banks, ed., An Alphabet of Tales, EETS, O.S., 126, 127 (London, 1904-05), I, 404-09, 435-36.
18. St. J. D. Seymour, Irish Visions of the Otherworld (London, 1930), p. 48.
19. A. W. Watts, Myth and Ritual in Christianity (London and New York, 1954), p. 213.



20. Myth and Ritual in Christianity, p. 200.
21. Medieval Faith and Fable (Boston and London, 1932), p. 195.
22. Hanna, "Awntyrs of Arthure," p. 282.
23. Cf. "The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry," I, 71-2, for a brief discussion of the almost mystical significance which medieval authors seemed to attach to bodies of water.
24. T. Wright, Saint Patrick's Purgatory (London, 1844), p. 7.
25. Medieval Faith and Fable, p. 192.
26. Saint Patrick's Purgatory, p. 40.
27. Owain: A Study in the Origins of Arthurian Romance (? ; rpt. New York, 1965), p. 101.  
D. Hyde, ed., Ghiolla an Fhuigha; or the Lad of the Ferule, ITS, 1 (London, 1899).
28. A. C. L. Brown, "On the Independent Character of the Welsh Owain," Romanic Review, 3 (1912), p. 170n.
29. "On the Independent Character of the Welsh Owain," pp. 169-70.  
G. Henderson, ed., Fled Bricrend; The Feast of Bricriu ITS, 2 (London, 1899).
30. "Manawyddan Son of Llyr," in Mabinogion, pp. 41-54.
31. A. Rees and B. Rees, Celtic Heritage (London, 1961), pp. 73-6.
32. The Loathly Lady and Thomas of Erceldoune (Albuquerque, N. M., 1954), p. 63.
33. "'Summer Sunday', 'De Tribus Regibus Mortuis', and 'The Awntyrs off Arthure': Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza," Review of English Studies, N. S., 25 (1974), 1-14.
34. "'Summer Sunday', 'De Tribus Regibus Mortuis', and 'The Awntyrs off Arthure'," p. 3.
35. All of the imagery in this sequence resembles so closely that of the corresponding episode in the Awntyrs that one might have served as the model for the other. Both the dead kings and Gaynour's mother enjoin their children to regard them as mirrors reflecting the fate which surely awaits the unrepentant in the afterlife. This striking image of a

departed soul as the looking glass of destiny recurs in certain other Middle English and Scots poems. The use to which it was put in these instances will be related more fully in a later chapter. For a further discussion of the subject insofar as it relates to De Tribus Regibus Mortuis and the Awntyrs, see the article by Turville-Petre, p. 11.

36. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 157-8.
37. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 209.
38. G. Paris and J. Ulrich, eds., Merlin; Roman En Prose Du XIII Siecle, SATF (Paris, 1886), II, 239.
39. The Works of Thomas Malory, ed. E. Vinaver (Oxford, 1947), III, 1217.
40. Hanna, "Awntyrs of Arthure," pp. 291-92.
41. Medieval English Poetry, p. 261.
42. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 161.
43. Hanna, "Awntyrs of Arthure," p. 292.

## Chapter V

1. Hanna, "Awntyrs of Arthure," p. 277.
2. Due to the relative inaccessibility of Lubke's work, I was unable to examine it at first hand. A good summary of the German scholar's theories is, however, provided by P. C. Hoyt in an unpublished doctoral dissertation on "The Anters of Arthur at the Tarne Wathelan" (Harvard University, 1902). It is upon this summary that I have based my own outline of Lubke's arguments.
3. Hanna, "Awntyrs of Arthure," p. 277.
4. Hoyt dismisses as negligible most of the stylistic, linguistic, and metrical inconsistencies Lubke maintains exist between the two episodes, and rebuts the second part of the German critic's arguments on the grounds that the purpose of the Awntyrs as a whole is to glorify Gawain. Acting on the valid assumption that the author of the poem visualized his work as a single narrative and thematic unit despite its bipartite structure, Hoyt further submits that the presence of more than two elements in the story cannot be used as evidence of dual authorship. See "The Anters of Arthur," pp. 130-33, for an extended discussion of this issue.
5. Klausner ("Exempla and The Awntyrs of Arthure," pp. 322-23) remarks that "the audience's sympathies are quickly placed on the side of the interlopers by the tone of these descriptions. The knight's horse, squire, and arms are all as magnificent and noble as could be imagined. Thus it is that when he asks his boon of Arthur we are prejudiced in his favor, and recognize immediately and without further explanation the injustice done him by Arthur...Here, then, is the illustration of Arthur's covetousness, presented to us in the story of Galleroune."
6. The name was a popular one even in non-Arthurian French romances and chansons-de-geste. For an extended list of references to a character called Galeron, see E. Langlois, Table des noms propres de toute nature comris dan les chansons de geste imprimées (Paris, 1902).
7. TYP, p. 300.
8. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 161-62.
9. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 169.

The parallels between the romances extend even further, however. "The theme of Golagros and Gawane is Arthur's imperial war. In the tradition begun by Morte Arthure and continued in Awntyrs of Arthure, this is associated with the Italian campaign. The first of the two episodes of the fight against Golagros occurs when Arthur has turned toward Tuscany and crossed

the mountains, and the second on his return to Italy from the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The poet's attitude toward this war of conquest, expressed in the advice of Sir Spynagrose and in the author's own comments on the story, is much the same as in the two other romances" (The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 168). The similarities between certain incidents and motifs in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the entire second episode - and parts of the first - of the Awntyrs are equally numerous. "Some of the main scenes of the two romances match, with the Awntyrs treating them in a less elaborate fashion: the hunting scene, Gawain's conjuring of the ghost (which calls to mind the episode at the green mound in Sir Gawain), the challenge made by a northern knight who rides on horseback into Arthur's hall, Gawain's acceptance and the concern displayed for his possible death, the form of the hospitality given to the challenging knight and so on. In addition to these larger similarities, the following details may be mentioned, though some are conventional. The color of green that dominates GCK through the figure of the Green Knight reappears significantly in AA: Galeron's lady wears a green dress and in the combat with Galeron Gawain himself is 'gaily graped in grene,' AA, l. 508 (Douce), just as the giant, "Well gay watz þis gome gered in grene," GCK, l. 179. Gawain in both poems wears true loves as part of his adornment, GCK, l. 612, AA, l. 510. The hospitality given to Galeron in AA, ll. 443-459, bears some striking resemblances in a simpler fashion to the hospitality accorded Gawain in GCK, ll. 852-893. Galeron's 'stede was stabled,' the pavilion 'pighte was it prowdeley, with pupure and paulle' and elegantly furnished with cushions, and 'With inne was a chapelle, a chambir and ane haulle,' together with 'A chymneye with charecole, to chawffene þat knyghte.' Similarly in GCK, the horse of Gawain is cared for when stiff men 'stabeled his stede,' l. 823, and his bower has its rich hangings and cushions, its chapel, and a 'chance, þer charcole brenned,' and at which he 'achaufed hym chefly.' Both chapel and chimney, it may be noticed, have their purpose in GCK, although in AA they have no significance at all in the story. In both poems, the guest is thereafter feasted, and the descriptions of the feasts share details and have some similar phrasing: in AA 'he braydes vp a burde, and clathes gune calle,' and sets up the table with 'sanapes and salers' and silver vessels; in GCK they 'talded vp a tabil on treste ful fayre,' and set it 'wyth a clene cloþe' and with 'Sanape and salure and siluerin spones.' In the ghost scene of AA and the green mound scene of GCK, which are similar in their uncanny mood, there is also a similarity of sympathetic weather that is expressed in much the same phrasing... In both poems Gawain suffers a wound in the neck that is said to grieve him to his dying day (AA, ll. 514-515; GCK, ll. 2506-2510), and here again the reason for the grief is clear in GCK but not in AA. To these details may be added some

general resemblances in motif and device. Both poems begin and end with the same words, in both the challenging knight is associated with a young and beautiful wife, both poems develop a contrast between a woman in the pride of life and a female opposite, Guenevere and the macabre figure of her mother in AA, the wife of Bercilak and the old hag in GGK." (The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 208-09).

The list of names given in ll. 654-55 of the Awntyrs also seems to have been derived from a passage in the Morte Arthure, where we find:

Sir Ewayne and sir Errake and othire gret lordes;  
Demenys the medilwarde menskefully thareaf tyre,  
With Merrake and Menyduke, myghtty of strenghes.

ll. 4075-4077

(The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 158-59).

10. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 184-92.

The validity of Matthews' argument has been challenged several times. John Finlayson suggests that the composer of the piece, rather than having been an eyewitness to the historical events from which he drew inspiration, derived his Edwardian material from chronicle accounts ("Morte Arthure: The Date and a Source for the Contemporary References," Speculum, 42, 1967, 624-38). George Keiser takes exception to Matthews' contention that the alliterative work was intended as a criticism of the Plantagenet king. He furthermore questions some of the resemblances proposed by Neilson and Matthews as existing between the events of Edward's reign and episodes in the poem. Keiser remarks that "it seems reasonable to conclude that even if he were writing late in the reign of Edward III, the Morte Arthure poet, like most of his contemporaries, probably looked on the campaigns of the Plantagenet king with an entirely favorable attitude. The most striking similarities between Edward and the Arthur of the poem surely indicate that the poet, if he was influenced by the broad outlines of Edward's career, saw in this monarch a great national hero" ("Edward III and the Alliterative Morte Arthure," Speculum, 45, 1973, 50).

11. Cf. G. Neilson, Huchown of the Awle Ryale (Glasgow, 1902).

12. F. M. Powicke, The Thirteenth Century (Oxford, 1953), p. 692.

13. The Thirteenth Century, p. 692.

14. H. M. Chadwick, Early Scotland (Cambridge, 1949), p. 127.

15. See Appendix.

16. The Thirteenth Century, p. 692.

17. R. S. Loomis, "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast," Speculum, 28 (1953), 126.  
Pierre de Langtoft, The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft, ed. and trans. T. Wright, Rolls Series, 47, 2 vols. (London, 1866-68).
18. The Thirteenth Century, p. 516.
19. King Henry III and the Lord Edward, II, 724.
20. King Henry III and the Lord Edward, II, 724.
21. N. Denholm-Young, "The Tournament in the Thirteenth Century," in Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke, ed. R. W. Hunt et al. (Oxford, 1948), p. 266.
22. J. Bain, ed., Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, A.D. 1272-1307 (Edinburgh, 1884), II, 294.
23. Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, II, 298.
24. Walter of Exeter, The Siege of Carlaverock, ed. with trans. by N. H. Nicolas (London, 1828), p. 245.
25. Siege of Carlaverock, p. 245.
26. Siege of Carlaverock, p. 244.
27. Siege of Carlaverock, p. 42.
28. Siege of Carlaverock, p. 46.
29. F. Nicholai Triveti, De Ordine Frat. Praedicatorum, Annales, ed. T. Hog, English Historical Society (London, 1845), p. 328.
30. Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, II, 294.
31. Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, II, 304.
32. TYP, p. 372.
33. G. W. S. Barrow, Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland (London, 1965), p. 36.
34. Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, II, 287.
35. E. L. G. Stones, "The Submission of Robert Bruce to Edward I, c. 1301-02," Scottish Historical Review, 34 (1955), 131; cited in Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 172.
36. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 172.
37. See Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm,

pp. 174-5, for a further explication.

38. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 172.
39. This document has been convincingly dated from February 1302 by Stones. See Scottish Historical Review, 34 (1955), 122-34.
40. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 200.
41. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 269.
42. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, pp. 174-5.
43. The proposal that the alliterative romance embodies a commentary on Anglo-Scottish affairs did not originate with me. Neilson saw the work as a reflection of the events of 1358, the year after David II had been taken captive by Edward III and held prisoner in London. Arthur Neilson identified with this Edward, Gawain with the Black Prince, Galeron with Sir Robert Erskine, Galeron's lady with Joan, Edward's sister and Queen Consort of Scotland, and astonishingly, the innocuous "freke one a fresone" who accompanies Galeron with the author of the poem himself. But the parallels the critic adduced as existing between history and romance lack the specificity to be convincing. For a further exposition of these, see Huchown of the Awle Ryale, pp. 133-37.
44. Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, p. 29.
45. P. S. Burtness, "A Language Study of 'The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terme Wathelyne,'" (Chicago: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1953); cited by Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, pp. 32-4.
46. C. P. Christianson, "'The Awntyrs of Arthure': An Edition" (Washington University: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1964), p. xxv; cited by Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, p. 41.
47. "The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry," I, 431.
48. "The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry," I, 432.
49. See Huchown of the Awle Ryale, passim.
50. "Lament for the Makaris," in The Poems of William Dunbar, ed. W. MacKay MacKenzie (Edinburgh, 1932), pp. 20-23.
51. The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun, ed. F. J. Amours, STS, 1st Series, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 63, 6 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1901-06, 1908-09).
52. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, lxxviii-xxxii.
53. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, lxxi.

54. The Original Chronicle, Book V, c, xiii, ll. 4329 - 4334.
55. Cf. "Lament for the Makaris." It has sometimes been argued that the "awntyre of Gawane" referred to by Dunbar is Golagros and Gawane, and Clerk of Tranent the author thereof. See Chapter VI, p. 235.
56. "Hutchown of the Awle Ryale and Cumberland," CWT, N.S., 38 (1938), 48-62.
57. "The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry," I, 98-9.
58. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 247.
59. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 336.
60. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 336.
61. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, pp. 35-6.
62. Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm, p. 395.
63. "The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry," I, 100.
64. "The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry," I, 100.



1. The Golagros poet's "psychological use of sunshine to convey the inner mood of the characters" is pointed out by Singh, who compares this to a similar technique employed by the Awntyrs poet ("The Alliterative Tradition in Scottish Poetry," I, 125).

Singh has also compiled a useful and interesting list of some of the parallels existing between Golagros and the Awntyrs. In contrast to Amours, the critic views the two episodes of the Scottish poem as being well-unified in terms of theme. Singh also remarks that both the Awntyrs and Golagros appear to be set in the neighborhood of Carlisle and belong to much the same historical period - two points which are, however, open to some dispute. With Singh's other findings, I am in general agreement. The critic notes that "the same intricate alliterative stave, with only a minor difference," is employed in both poems. The language is similar, as is the structure, either work being made up of two episodes "which serve to illustrate a single theme, in one case the vice of covetousness and in the other the virtue of courtesy." The same attitude toward Arthur is expressed, and there is similar concern with the idea of the mutability of Fortune. Gawain is characterized in much the same fashion in Golagros as he is in the Awntyrs. Singh also points out that in the case of either work a similar descriptive technique is employed, that "both poems have a high content of direct speech," and that "their metrical faults and virtues are the same" (pp. 122-25). Although all these parallels serve to support the contention that there is some sort of direct relationship between Golagros and the Awntyrs, I would seriously dispute Singh's suggestion that they can be used as evidence of common authorship of the poems.

2. David Lyndesay, Squyer Meldrum, ed. J. Kinsley (Edinburgh and London, 1959).  
J. A. H. Murray, ed., The Complaynte of Scotland EETS, E.S., 17, 18, 2 vols. (London, 1873-3)
3. McDiarmid argues that Golagros and Gawane might have been written by the poet of the Wallace. For a discussion of this idea, see Hary's Wallace, I, cxi-cxxxiif.
4. J. Pinkerton, ed., Ancient Scottish Poems (London, 1786).
5. D. Laing, ed., The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawane (London, 1827).
6. F. Madden, ed., Syre Gawayne (London, 1839).
7. M. Trautmann, ed. "Golagrus und Gawane," Anglia, 2 (1879), 395-440.
8. See n. 20, Chapter III.

9. W. Beattie, intro., The Chepman and Myllar Prints Edinburgh Bibliographic Society (Edinburgh, 1950)  
One other modern edition of Golagros and Gawane does exist, that being the one done by G. Stevenson for the Scottish Text Society (Pieces from the Makculloch and Gray MSS; Together With the Chepman and Myllar Prints, STS, 1st Series, 65, 1909-10). Unfortunately, Stevenson died before his work was completed, and the volume lacks a real critical apparatus. It is in any case more of a facsimile than a critical edition such as that of Amours.
10. Cf. Rauf Coilzear, l. 28.
11. History and Poetry of the Scottish Border (Glasgow, 1878).
12. P. Steinbach, Über den einfluss des Chrestien de Troies auf die altenglische Litteratur (Liepzig, 1885), p. 50; G. Paris, Histoire Litteraire de la France (Paris, 1888), 30, 41.
13. "Der Dichter Huchown und seine Werke," Anglia, I (1878), 109-49.
14. Grundriss der Geschichte der Englischen Litteratur (Munster, 1887), p. 110.
15. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, xix-xx.
16. Huchown of the Awle Ryale, pp. 132-33.
17. Cited by P. Ketrick, The Relation of Golagros and and Gawane to the Old French Perceval (Washington, D.C., 1931), pp. 8-9.
18. Cited in The Relation of Golagros and Gawane to the Old French Perceval, p. 10.
19. "The Earliest Scottish Literature," in Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1908), II, 124.
20. See n. 17, above, for a full reference to this work.
21. The Relation of Golagros and Gawane to the Old French Perceval, p. 108.
22. The Relation of Golagros and Gawane to the Old French Perceval, p. 109.
23. The Relation of Golagros and Gawane to the Old French Perceval, pp. 109-10.
24. See The Relation of Golagros and Gawane to the Old French Perceval, pp. 86-107, for a comparison of

- the Scottish poem with its source.
25. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 156 and n.
  26. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 283-84.  
 Robert Henryson, "The Testament of Cresseid," in The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson, ed. H. Harvey Wood (London and Edinburgh, 1958).  
 "Lazarus," in The Towneley Plays, ed. G. England and A. W. Pollard, EETS, E.S., 71 (London, 1897).
  27. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 249.
  28. The Tragedy of Arthur, p. 168.
  29. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 80-82.
  30. See M. A. Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances (London, 1947), for a good summary of the attitudes taken by medieval theologians toward warfare.
  31. "The Theme of Fortune in the Writings of Alain Chartier," in Medieval Miscellany Presented to Eugene Vinaver, ed. F. Whitehead et al (Manchester, 1955), p. 125.  
 See also J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (1924; rpt. London, 1955), p. 311f.
  32. H. R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Mass, 1927), p. 34.
  33. "De Consolatione Philosophiae," trans. "I.T.," in Tractates: De Consolatione Philosophiae, ed. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (London, 1918).
  34. The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature, p. 19.
  35. "The Book of the Duchess," in The Collected Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, pp. 266-79.
  36. The Fall of Princes, ed. H. Bergen, EETS, E.S., 121-4, 4 vols (London, 1918-19).
  37. James I, The Kingis Quair, ed. J. Norton-Smith (Oxford, 1971).
  38. "Invectione Against Fortun," in The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie, ed. J. Cranstoun, STS, 1st Series, 9-10 (Edinburgh and London, 1885-87), I, 129-31.
  39. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 168-9.
  40. See Love and War in the Middle English Romances, pp. 118-27 for an analysis of this idea in the Middle English romances.

41. The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye, ed.  
A. T. P. Byles, 2nd, ed., EETS, O.S., 189 (London, 1937).
42. Book of Fayttes of Armes, p. 12.
43. Book of Fayttes of Armes, p. 12.
44. Book of Fayttes of Armes, pp. 14-18.

Chapter VII

1. M. M. Gray, ed., Lancelot of the Laik, STS, 2nd Series, 2 (Edinburgh and London, 1910-11).
2. See Bertram Vogel's article "Secular Politics and the Date of Lancelot of the Laik (Studies in Philology, 40, 1943, 1 - 13 ) for a discussion of the possibility that Arthur is here intended to represent James III of Scotland. If this is indeed so, then it is interesting that, out of all the legendary kings, the poet should have chosen the British hero to serve as the literary counterpart of the fifteenth century Scottish monarch.
3. Bruce, Book I, ll. 549 - 560.  
Wallace, Book VIII, ll. 845, 886, 967; Book XII, l. 841.
4. See R. H. Fletcher, The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles (Boston, 1906), for a comparison of the details of either tradition.
5. Chronicle of the Scottish Nation, ed. W. Skene, trans. F. J. H. Skene, in The Historians of Scotland, V (Edinburgh, 1872).
6. See The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. vii, 151, 159, 195, 214, 215, for a good if not totally unbiased discussion of the Huchown question.
7. "The Scottis Originale," in The Asloan Manuscript, ed. W. A. Craigie, STS, 2nd Series, 14 (Edinburgh and London, 1922-23), I, 186-95. See Craigie's introduction for some remarks concerning the dating of the work.
8. "The Scottis Originale," pp. 190-91.
9. A History of Greater Britain, trans. Archibald Constable Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 1892).
10. A History of Greater Britain, p. 82.
11. Scotorum Historiae (Paris, 1526).
12. See The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, p. 247, for a list of fine details.
13. The Chronicles of Scotland: Compiled by Hector Boece and Translated into Scots by John Bellenden 1531, ed. R. W. Chambers and E. C. Batho, STS, 3rd Series, 10, 15, 20s (Edinburgh and London, 1935-36, 1940-41).
14. The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, p. 247.
15. Bellenden's Chronicle, I, Book IX, c. vi, 369.
16. Bellenden's Chronicle, I, Book IX, c. x, 376.

17. The Buik of the Croniclis of Scotland, ed. W. B. D. D. Turnbull (London, 1858).
18. De Origine Moribus & rebus gestis Scotorum (Rome, 1578; nunc denuo recus. 1675).
19. The Historie of Scotland, ed. E. G. Cody, STS, 1st Series; 5, 14, 19, 34, 4 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1884-85, 1887-88, 1889-90, 1894-95).
20. The History of Scotland, trans, J. Aikman (Glasgow, 1827).
21. Buchanan's History, p. 237.
22. De Jure Regni Apud Scotos, trans. "Philalethes," (n. p., n. d.).
23. De Jure Regni Apud Scotos, p. 21.
24. De Jure Regni Apud Scotos, pp. 18-9.
25. op. cit., p. 313.

Appendix A

1. Stanford University Publications in Language and Literature, 10 (Stanford and London, 1952).
2. Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, p. 73.
3. A. M. Armstrong et al., The Place-Names of Cumberland, Part I, English Place-Name Society, 22 (Cambridge, 1950), 38. Hereafter abbreviated to PNC-I.
4. G. D. West, An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Verse Romances, 1150-1300 (Toronto, 1969), p. 77.
5. H. Zimmer, Gottingische gelehrte Anzeigen (1890); cited in Place-Names of Cumberland, Part III (1952), xviii-xix. Hereafter abbreviated to PNC-III.
6. An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Verse Romances, 1150-1300, p. 34.
7. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 157-58.
8. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 345.
9. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 348.
10. PNC-I, 179.
11. B. B. Hartop et al., eds., Johnston's Gazeteer of Scotland, 2nd. ed. (Edinburgh and London, 1958), p. 103.
12. History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland (Edinburgh and London, 1926), p. 155.
13. "The Picts in Galloway," DGT, 3rd Series, 39 (1960-61), 141. For further information on the early history of Galloway, see also J. MacQueen, "Kirk- and Kil- in Galloway Place-Names," Archivum Linguisticum 3, Fasc. 2 (1956), 135-49, and "Welsh and Gaelic in Galloway," DGT, 3rd Series, 32 (1953-54), 77-92.
14. J. MacQueen, "The Gaelic Speakers of Galloway and Carrick," Scottish Studies, 17 (1973), 27-8.
15. "Galloway and the Romances," Modern Language Notes, 60 (1940), 163.
16. An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Verse Romances, 1150-1300, p. 68.
17. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 354.
18. J. Stuart and G. Burnet, eds. (Edinburgh, 1878). See Index to I.

19. J. Maitland Thomson, ed. (Edinburgh, 1912). See Index.
20. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 354.
21. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 354.
22. E. Ekwall, Place-Names of Lancashire (Manchester, 1922), p. 213.
23. Johnston's Gazeteer of Scotland, p. 158.
24. History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland, p. 119.
25. Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, See Index.
26. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 354. See History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland, p. 199, for remarks on the derivation of the name.
27. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 354.
28. History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland, p. 101.
29. Madden, Syre Gawayne, p. 334; cited in Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 356.
30. PNC-I, p. 234.
31. B. G. Charles, Non-Celtic Place-Names of Wales London Medieval Studies Monograph, 1 (London, 1938), p. 160.
32. Non-Celtic Place-Names of Wales, p. 87.
33. The Tragedy of Arthur, pp. 157-58.
34. A. H. Williams, Introduction to the History of Wales (Cardiff, 1948), I, i, 2ff.
35. Place-Names of Lancashire, p. 197.
36. Non-Celtic Place-Names of Wales, p. 136.
37. Non-Celtic Place-Names of Wales, p. 105.
38. PNC-I, 245.
39. PNC-I, 232.
40. PNC-I, 110.
41. PNC-II, 434.
42. PNC-I, 88.
43. PNC-II, 327.
44. Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 329; Syre Gawayne, p. 330.



Samuel Jefferson, History and Antiquities of Cumberland (1840), I, 218; cited in Scottish Alliterative Poems, II, 329; Syre Gawayne, p. 330.

45. Index of the Arthurian Names in Middle English, p. 242.
46. Cited in Non-Celtic Place-Names of Wales, p. 164.
47. G. F. Black, The Surnames of Scotland (New York, 1962), p. 803.
48. P. W. Joyce, The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places (Dublin, 1875), p. 106.
49. L. Price, The Place Names of County Wicklow (Dublin, 1949), III, 146.  
The identification of the localities referred to in l. 669 with Wexford and Waterford was suggested briefly but not substantiated by Hoyt ("The Anters of Arthur," p. 182). T. E. Casson makes the sweeping statement that Gawain's lands lie in the south of England, but produces no justification for this claim ("Hutchown of the Awle Ryale and Cumberland," p. 59).
50. An Introduction to the History of Wales, II, i, 3ff.
51. Gates, Awntyrs off Arthure, p. 266.
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