

Remapping Insularity: Geographic Imagination in Medieval English Romance

Paul Augustus Broyles III
Charlottesville, Virginia

A.B., Harvard University, 2007

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ABSTRACT

“Remapping Insularity: Geographic Imagination in Medieval English Romance” argues that Middle English romances generate inventive virtual spaces that imaginatively reshape the world of medieval Britain, imbuing its topography with meanings that can challenge culturally dominant configurations of the island and its people. This project adopts a geocritical approach, examining both the verbal techniques romances use to evoke place and the ways in which textual spaces interact with the solid world. It focuses on romances representing the insular past to challenge the dominance of the English nation in medieval literary studies, arguing that romances both resist the solidification of developing categories like the nation and challenge the modern geographic categories we apply to the medieval past. As freestanding stories outside the frameworks of chronicles and travelogues, romances are uniquely positioned to rewrite the world in ways that challenge the centrality of the developing English nation. Despite their apparent simplicity, romances like *King Horn*, *Bevis of Hampton*, and *The Awntyrs off Arthure* employ inventive forms of spatial representation to imagine the island of Britain as a space that enables new forms of community and history that, surprisingly, are not structured around a centralizing notion of “England,” but produce more sophisticated geographies than our retrospective focus on nationalism has allowed us to see.

While space and geography in medieval narrative have chiefly been understood as a historical problem, this project argues that they must be approached formally, for spatial meaning arises from the literary techniques that generate the spaces. By identifying how lexical and narrative elements like toponyms, structural divisions, and differing levels of spatial detail produce interfaces between texts and the world, this project exposes romance as a key form for geographic imagination, able to process difficult questions about place and belonging precisely

because of the qualities (apparent rhetorical simplicity, privileging plot over expression, fantastical elements, disregard for historical accuracy) that made them unappealing objects of study to earlier generations. “Remapping Insularity” excavates the indigenous spatial vocabularies of medieval romances in order to recover lost alternative geographies and demonstrate the importance of their often fantastical stories to the history of spatial thought.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CT	Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i>
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
OS	Original Series
HC	<i>Horn Childe and the Maiden Rinnild</i> (ed. Mills)
KH	<i>King Horn</i> (ed. Allen)
LALME	Electronic Version of <i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i> . Ed. Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin. Rev. by Michael Benskin and Margaret Laing. Webscripts by Vasilis Karaiskos and Keith Williamson. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2013. Web. < http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html >.
MED	Electronic <i>Middle English Dictionary</i> . Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001. Web. < http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/ >.
MLT	Chaucer, The Man of Law's Tale
RH	Thomas, <i>The Romance of Horn</i> (ed. Pope)

Introduction

The Romance of the Island

Is it not far more consonant to propriety and reason, to believe, that the Romances founded on English history and tradition, the scene of which is laid in Britain, such as Merlin, Morte Arthur, Sir Tristrem, Lancelot, Kyng Horn, Havelok, Guy of Warwick, &c. should be the production of English authors writing in French, rather than of Norman poets, who (as Sir W. Scott observes) can scarcely be supposed, without absurdity, to have visited the remote corners of the kingdom merely to collect or celebrate the obscure traditions of their inhabitants.

—Frederick Madden, Introduction to *The Ancient English Romance of Havelok the Dane* (1828), xlvi.

In fact, the Arthurian histories made canonical by medievalist criticism all emerged from border cultures and engage the dynamics of boundary formation into the thirteenth century and across the Channel. As writers responded to disruptions in their contemporary landscapes by narrating the histories of Insular jurisdictions, Arthurian historiography took shape as a form of border writing.

—Michelle R. Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300* (2000), xi.

Written more than 150 years apart and in vastly different political climates, these assessments of medieval literature about Britain share a common interest in how land underlies literary representation and group identity. Madden, arguing for the literary category we now call the French of England, insists that telling stories of England (or of the island of Britain, understood as English) is an essentially English act. Warren, writing from a very different historical and scholarly position, seeks to decenter Arthurian narrative, to locate the tradition away from Norman or English centers of power. For Warren, Arthurian history is built on divisions and breaks, which map the political and geographical instabilities of the contemporary environment. Though their concerns and conclusions differ, both scholars share a sense of the connection between the places described by a text's narration and that of the world in which they are produced. This dissertation will explore the relationship between narrative and place, arguing that medieval English romances manipulate land in inventive ways in order to rewrite popular notions of historical and political community.

The past twenty years have seen an incredible outpouring of studies of Englishness in medieval literature. Following especially from Thorlac Turville-Petre's monumental study *England the Nation* (1996), medievalists have been eager to demonstrate the importance of our

period of study by showing that our area of study is relevant to writing the history of the nation, perhaps the central historiographic project of the modern era.¹ Literary scholars like Kathy Lavezzo and Patricia Clare Ingham have amply demonstrated that medieval narratives and compilation practices articulate and give rise to senses of English national identity.² The medieval nation may not always take the same form as in later periods—Lavezzo has recently celebrated the “uniquely medieval forms of nationhood” identified by this body of scholarship (“Nation,” 363)³—but scholarship has by now clearly established that medieval literature works to construct an English nation. Indeed, English nationhood has proven such an influential and compelling object of study that Simon Gaunt has recently complained of “the unfortunate impression that the main thing a medievalist can learn about by adopting a postcolonial perspective is Englishness” (163-64).⁴

The genre of romance has played a key role in telling the story of medieval Englishness. Turville-Petre enlisted both *Havelok the Dane* and the romances of the famed Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.2.1) in elaborating the literary construction of the nation (*England* 114-30, 143-55).⁵ Diane Speed, in another early study of medieval literary nationhood, compared the romance to the novel, that genre that Benedict Anderson so influentially claimed as essential to the production of the modern nation: “Like the nineteenth-century novel, the medieval romance gives the impression that the world of its action, with the nation at the centre, represents the knowable real world” (“Construction,” 148).⁶ Since then, studies by critics like Ingham, Geraldine Heng, and Robert Rouse have highlighted the prominent role played by romances in imagining English nationhood, whose fictive structures imaginatively deployed memories of the past to perform valuable cultural and political work in the medieval present.⁷

Romance may be particularly suited to telling stories about the nation because it is a genre that gives narrative form to cultural fantasy. According to Heng, romance possesses “special serviceability for nationalist discourse” because of the genre’s “characteristic freedom . . . to merge fantasy and reality without distinction or apology, and the ability of the medium to transform crisis into celebration and triumphalism” (*Empire* 67). Neither bound to reproduce slavishly an authoritative historical narrative, nor isolated from history as mere fiction, romances can sample from the past, from folklore, and from a broader cultural consciousness in order to produce culturally efficacious narratives.⁸

But the association of romance with English nationhood in particular seems to be founded in part on a relationship between space and the nation—a relationship that has appeared so natural that it often goes uninterrogated. Speed outlines this relationship in her essay, noting the particular prevalence before 1340 of Middle English romances either set in England, or in a Britain hegemonized as England. These settings work, in Speed’s view, to produce a sense of nationhood in the early Middle English romance corpus:

If only in terms of overt setting, the national has a dominating presence in this group of texts. In such company, the various ultranational settings constructed as the homeland could all perhaps be read as the one nation which is a shared experience for writer and audience in the early English romance tradition. (“Construction,” 146)

In arguing that insular settings work to produce a corpus of national romance, Speed invokes the famous division of medieval narrative into three “matters”—those of France, of Rome, and of Britain—that Jean Bodel elaborates in his *Chanson des Saisnes*, together with a fourth “Matter of England” adduced by modern scholars.⁹ The system of matters classifies narrative according to place, and Speed suggests that certain kinds of place are innately national.

Speed argues that later romances no longer had to locate themselves as explicitly in national space because the nation has already been established (“Construction,” 146). In practice,

a majority of the romances that have been enlisted in analyses of English nationalism are those belonging to the Matters of Britain and “England”: heroes like Havelok, Guy, and Bevis figure prominently, as of course do King Arthur and his knights. There are exceptions to this narrow focus on geographic England, of course: Siobhain Bly Calkin has inventively shown how the figures of the Saracens who feature so prominently in the Auchinleck romances, including those without English heroes, help to explore the borders of the category of Englishness and encode anxieties about differentiating between English and French at the time of the Hundred Years’ War (*Saracens*).¹⁰ Overall, though, the story of English romance nationalism as told by recent criticism is chiefly defined by insular space, either as setting or as point of origin for the characters.

In reproducing the geographic boundaries of medieval nation as a category of analysis, critics have allowed nationalism’s indigenous spatial regime to dominate our thinking. While there exist stateless nations not rooted in any single place, we have been influenced by the modern prominence of the nation-state to think of nations as territorial, defined by and rooted in specific spaces—an attitude promulgated by nationalisms deploying space to reify the nation.¹¹ But the medieval Latin *natio* and its Middle English derivative, *natioun*, referred primarily to race or *gens*, a sense rooted in the etymology of the word as “birth.” As Turville-Petre has shown, geography was certainly involved in medieval Englishness, but it was used strategically, along with ethnicity and language, to construct a sense of nation.¹² Thus, English chroniclers focus on the historical geography of their island to justify the “nation” of England—an approach paralleled cartographically by maps that present the island, circumscribed by the sea, as a unity (though both chronicles and maps also have to contend with internal subdivisions that trouble the desired unity) (*England* 2-3, 15-16). And indeed, the same attempt to unite geography and

ethnicity to imagine a community underlies the term *England* itself, a word that defines geography in terms of ethnicity (the land of the Angles) and in turn comes to function metonymically for the English people.¹³ Thus, we are not wrong to connect insular geography with English nationhood, but our modern expectations risk naturalizing this process rather than interrogating the conditions of its construction.

We should thus be cautious about assuming that settings generate a sense of the nation simply because they encompass England and feature English characters.¹⁴ England is a powerful category for modern scholarship that remains deeply rooted in a national literary canon—a category that exerts a tidal pull so strong that the suggestion of Englishness can actually rewrite a poem’s geography in the minds of modern readers.¹⁵ Chronicles often engage explicitly with the category of England, theorizing the connection between past and present through etymology or through a pattern of cyclical conquest in order to ground modern identities in the events of insular history. Such models are among the reasons Turville-Petre describes chronicles as “[taking] on the central role” in “representing the nation” (*England* 3). By contrast, romances are rarely so explicit. England may be one of their geographic terms—though, as I will show in the chapters that follow, it may not be, and even in romances that speak of “England,” it is not necessarily the most important term for describing insular space.

While insular geography was used by medieval authors to tell stories about the English people, the island is not the people. The geographer Edward Soja reminds us of this distinction in enumerating (drawing on philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s classic study *The Production of Space*) what he calls the Triad of Being: Spatiality–Historicity–Sociality. Soja cautions that although the three terms are mutually interdependent, twentieth-century thought century has too frequently deemphasized Spatiality in favor of the dynamic relationship

between the other two terms (71). Soja's criteria have been honored insofar as scholars have recognized a loose but interlinked relation between races and the island in forming the nation. The geography of narrative is not a mere container in which the relationships of people unfold in time; it is a constitutive part of those relationships, and indeed of temporality itself. The medieval geographic imagination did not inevitably organize itself around categories, like the nation-state, that have seemed retrospectively dominant and inevitable. To recognize these other categories and configurations requires attention to the spatial tools narratives use to organize their own geography.

Though my dissertation retreads the ground of the Matters of Britain and "England," it tells a story not about England, but about the verbal techniques through which written literary works produce ideas of place in the minds of their readers. I take a geocritical approach to romance treatments of insular space, seeking to excavate the native spatial vocabularies of the texts themselves and to use the terms and structures the places generate in order to analyze their correspondence with the world.

The term "geocriticism," popularized by literary scholars including Bertrand Westphal and Robert T. Tally, is probably best known from Westphal's book of that title (2007, English translation 2011);¹⁶ my use of the term, like that of Tally and of Eric Prieto, is broader than that articulated by Westphal.¹⁷ By *geocriticism*, I indicate a critical approach that takes place as its central analytical category and attends to the interrelationship between the virtual, represented spaces of literature and the solid spaces of the everyday (geospatial) world. Geocriticism takes as a central focus referentiality—the connection between the spaces of fiction and those of the solid world.¹⁸ In insisting on referentiality, Westphal does not mean a naïve representation, wherein a literary work reproduces with more or less fidelity a particular site. Rather, drawing both on

geographic thinkers like Lefebvre and Soja and on possible worlds theory, Westphal articulates the notion that fictions can influence reality without abandoning an ontological distinction between the fictitious and the real. Instead, he asserts, “literature—like all mimetic art—is always a representation of an infinitely plastic real, in which the seemingly obvious ‘reality’ constitutes only one position among others” (*Geocriticism* 90). That is, literary representations, with their transgressive ability to challenge our ideas about places, reveal that our *perceptions* of those places are already fictions.

Literature, in that happy cliché, “takes us places”; in more formal language, we might say that writing produces virtual spaces in conjunction with the minds of readers. Setting is a fundamental element of narrative, and so reading is always an encounter with another place. Yet, a geocritical approach to referentiality reminds us, the virtual spaces of literature and the real places of the physical world through which we move are not separate, but entangled. In Soja’s powerful phrase, lived space is “real-and-imagined,” neither strictly material and empirical nor conceived of and ordered by systematic representation but encompassing both kinds of space.¹⁹ Representations accordingly affect the world as we live and experience it; writers from Chaucer to Dickens to Neil Gaiman respond to the city of London and represent it in their works, but their works also change the ways in which we understand, perceive, and experience London.

My dissertation examines how a particular subset of medieval literature—romances (primarily in Middle English)—narratively generate insular space, and how these narrativizations imaginatively act upon the world. The object of my study is not a nation but an island. Rather than a historico-political entity, my focus will be a mass of land whose physical existence, transmuted into text, stretches between the present and the past. This solid ground, bounded by water, acts as a heterotopic zone of multiple and competing meanings. When I write of insular

space, I do not speak only of space that has been linguistically defined as belonging to Britain by the text; a text does not have to name Britain to invoke this space.²⁰ Because the name *Britain* carries with it a freight of (sometimes conflicting) associations—ethnic, historical, historiographical, political—I follow when precision and clarity will permit the terminological example of Norman Davies, who names his sweeping history of Britain, Ireland, and other islands in their archipelago, simply *The Isles*.²¹ Though a long literary tradition singles out insular space as a discrete entity,²² I approach the island not as a singular, culturally-defined place but as the physical ground on which are built multiple spatialities.

In considering how the verbal representations of romance interact with the physical space of the island, I seek to excavate the specific verbal technologies that generate and instance space. Textual space is a verbal product; words, in the form of names or descriptions, produce the impression of spaces, in which action unfolds. The processes through which texts generate these spaces define their contours and shape their narrative possibilities. To name a place is to invoke it in the mind of a reader, a process that may seem like a relatively simple and transparent indexing of a reader's prior knowledge. However, such naming is in fact part of a complicated semantic process. The repeated invasions of the island throughout the early Middle Ages left many places with more than one name; in a story set in the past, which one should an author choose? The interrelationships of the places within the text likewise significantly affect both individual places and the potential of the narrative. Naming places more densely in some areas than in others is not simply a matter of differing narrative detail; it supports certain kinds of political thought. The techniques through which a place is narrated allow it to comment on and indeed to reshape the world of its readers.

This study starts from the realization that England is often not where it is supposed to be in medieval English romances. Instead of forming a stable interpretative center that directs the political and communal work of the texts, England as a geographical category often plays a relatively minimal role in texts that are purportedly about it; other spatial categories often complicate, undermine, or challenge it. However, the solution is not as simple as the shift to the region as area of focus advocated by critics like Ralph Hanna and Robert Barrett,²³ or to the attention given to competing, counter-hegemonic identities by practitioners of postcolonial criticism like Michelle Warren and Patricia Clare Ingham.²⁴ These approaches begin in the realm of historical geospace; they are rooted in the categories and identities blessed by historical retrospection, and indeed often categories of current political importance, like the postcolonialist focus on Wales and Scotland. (The latter is particularly pressing as the referendum on Scottish independence looms.) Yet as Jeffrey J. Cohen reminds us, these categories and identities, which now seem natural, are the products of historical processes that might well have proceeded differently.²⁵ Beginning from such categories reifies and elevates them, offsetting the category of England only to replace it with a new, seemingly stable center. In order to understand how literary works shape and are shaped by the world, we must attend to the categories the texts themselves put forward, the language and mechanisms that they make constitute the world.

The texts I analyze in this dissertation have all appeared closely aligned with the category of England: *King Horn*, among the earliest English-language romances and (along with *Bevis of Hampton* and *Havelok the Dane*) a central text in the so-called “Matter of England”; *The Man of Law’s Tale*, the sole work in which the “father of English poetry” considers insular history; *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, the most popular English poem (at least to judge by manuscript survival) about England’s most popular Arthurian hero, who becomes involved in a border dispute. Yet

each tells a more complicated story about place, identity, and the past than the idea of England alone allows us to see. I excavate the spatial vocabularies native to each of these texts, demonstrating that all of them tell stories that run counter to the narrative of an emerging England. In some cases, I suggest that these texts engage explicitly with the idea of England, assertively imagining spatial communities that undercut ideas of English unity or centralization. Other texts simply have different spatial priorities, demonstrating that “national” communities are less significant than the abstract distribution of power. My dissertation joins the growing chorus of voices (like those of Hanna, Barrett, and Ardis Butterfield) dissatisfied with the centrality of England as a category for understanding English narrative.²⁶ But I show that it’s not just alignments of geography and identity, like Cumbrian or French, that challenge the centrality of England. The textual tools that produce space and link the virtual spaces of narrative to the solid topography of the world allow romances to map the world in ways that emphasize other categories and connections. We must let texts’ native spatial vocabularies guide our readings if we are to understand the spaces and communities they construct.

The remainder of this introduction explains the properties of romance that enable its particular forms of spatial inventiveness, and describes the kinds of space that I examine in my analyses.

Romance

While spatiality is an inherent component of all narrative, and while many other genres have been held to contribute to the writing of the nation, I argue that medieval romances in England possess particular properties, dictated both by generic expectations and by their historical position, that allow them a unique capacity for geographic creativity that other genres did not share—a capacity that waned as the emergent spatial technologies of the Early Modern

period found new ways to represent and concretize the nation. Though this dissertation is a study of romances, I wish to sidestep, as much as possible, the questions of genre definition that have plagued decades of romance criticism. Here, I will offer only a brief summary of the problem, before emphasizing what features associated with romances are most significant for my purposes.

The ambiguities of the term *romance* as applied by modern to medieval literature, and Middle English literature in particular, are well known.²⁷ The English term has its origin in the Old French *romans*, where it indicated writing in the French vernacular and accordingly a work written in French. By the thirteenth century, however, the word had begun to acquire specific associations of subject matter (it concerned the deeds of a particular hero) and form (differing in verse form from *chanson de geste*, for instance). It first appeared in English in the fourteenth century where it originally indicated a source work in the French language, but over the course of the century the word came to attach to English works as well, where it developed the sense of a narrative concerning the doughty deeds of a single hero, often following an upward trajectory, where it was often distinguished from *gestes* by an emphasis on the marvelous or the amorous.²⁸ Although this suggests a medieval conception of the genre of romance that approximates our own, the multiple senses lying behind the Middle English term and the inconsistency with which medieval generic terminology was applied make it difficult to infer any clear definition of romance from Middle English uses of the term.

In the course of the twentieth century, this critical problem produced a variety of definitions of romance, emphasizing elements that individual critics found to characterize the genre; scholars like Kathryn Hume and W. R. J. Barron have quite rightly chafed at generic definitions that exclude significant swaths of material that medieval audiences clearly understood

to belong together.²⁹ The most satisfactory solution to the problem of categorization is offered by Yin Liu and Melissa Furrow, who draw on linguist George Lakoff's theory of radial categories to describe the corpus of romance as bound together by chains of association between works rather than by common properties that define all the works in the genre.³⁰

Two main characteristics common to romances—a loose, flexible relationship to history and their independence from context—position romances to be able to engage with and represent geography with a creativity surpassing that of most other genres. Despite a tendency of later centuries to apply the label “romance” to fantastical works, medieval romance, as a genre, had ties to history. The earliest French works in the natal genre of romance, the *romans antiques*, drew on historical works and related events that their audiences would have understood as historical. However, after these beginnings, continental romance is most often seen as essentially fantastical, self-referential, and devoid of real interest in history.³¹ Finlayson takes this quality as fundamentally characteristic of the romance genre in total: “it is a tale in which a knight achieves great feats of arms, almost solely for his own *los et pris* in a series of adventures which have no social, political, or religious motivation and little or no connection with medieval actuality” (“Definitions,” 55). However, scholars across several decades have recognized that romance developed differently in England than in France, and that the English romances retained a closer relationship to history and were more deeply engaged with historical materials.³² Of course, even in England, not all romances were in any meaningful sense historical; as Kathryn Hume describes the scope of the genre, Middle English romances “range from armor-plated fairy tales to multi-volume ‘histories’” (158). But romance was not necessarily divorced from history. As Rosalind Field explains, writers seeking to smooth the rupture of the Norman Conquest

plundered the Briton and Anglo-Saxon pasts alike as they sought to establish a sense of identity and unity grounded in place rather than lineage (“Curious,” 164-165).

Drawing on both written history and oral legend, the stories of the insular past that entered the romance tradition—especially the stories of the Anglo-Saxon past that have been grouped by modern scholars under the rubric of the “Matter of England”—were credible to medieval audiences.³³ Robert Mannyng of Brunne, in his translation of Peter Langtoft’s *Chronicle*, interjected his astonishment at being unable to find a reputable historical source for the story of Havelok, evidently popular in Mannyng’s native Lincolnshire.³⁴ Langtoft’s *Chronicle* itself makes only a passing reference to Havelok, but incorporates Guy of Warwick into its historical narrative, disrupting the accepted history in order to incorporate Guy’s battle against the giant Colbrond.³⁵ Heroes who were the subjects of romance, and whom we believe today to have little if any relation to actual historical figures, could be seen as completely historical, belonging to the progression of history; Robert Rouse even suggests that in the Auchinleck manuscript romances like *Guy*, *Bevis*, and *Horn Childe* read *as* history, acting alongside chronicle material and Arthurian narrative as “episodes within an extensive and unified retelling of the whole of English history” (*Idea* 59). Audiences understood romances as spatially believable, too, connecting the stories of romance heroes with real places (see Appendix A).

However, for all that English romances cultivated a sense of historicity and were believable as history, romances possess different capacities from chronicles. While Field has shown that “Matter of England” romances share with contemporary historical writing not only a sense of the past but also elements of style and narrative structure (“Romance”), historical writing possesses an implied contract of historical truthfulness that does not characterize romance.³⁶ Robert Rouse describes such romances as “popular history” that “construct historical

narratives that represent popular understandings of the past” (*Idea* 54); they tell us about how authors and audiences of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries remembered, imagined, and appropriated the Anglo-Saxon past, but do not necessarily make explicit truth-claims about that past. As Paul Strohm has noted, “most writers of *romances* seem indifferent to the historicity or fictionality of their narratives” (“Origin,” 19); even a romance concerning as recent and well-attested a figure as King Richard I might acknowledge that it “wink[s] at historical truth” (Strohm, “*Storie*,” 355).³⁷

And, insofar as the romances of the so-called “Matter of England” cultivate a greater sense of historicity than do many romances from other groupings, they are often be a site for greater narrative freedom, at least compared to the three traditional matters. In a later essay, Field explains the critical history of the term “Matter of England” and argues that these texts do not constitute a group, a true matter, in the way Bodel’s three matters do: the three matters have established characters and settings available to all the texts in the group, while the “Matter of England” texts lack these kinds of intertextual references and must start afresh with each new text.³⁸ Field thus suggests that since the outcomes of the plots are much less known to readers than those of Bodel’s three matters, where the endings are clearly fixed, the main thing that identifies the “Matter of England” romances as a group is “modality—if the canonical Matters are expected to function as true, wise or entertaining, then perhaps these texts display an exploratory freedom unavailable to them” (“Curious,” 38). These romances evoke a sense of history, but before they are given definitive forms through their incorporation into history, they remain spaces of invention. Field explains that “The concept ‘England’ is not present in all of them, and is not monolithic when it is,” in part because many of their originals predate the consolidation of national identity; consequently, “the space offered by the English past—that is

the insular past differentiated from the Arthurian tradition—is one of constructive fantasy, of exploring a world similar to but not under the same constraints as, the known present. It has not (yet) been colonised by literary *auctores*, nor adopted by international political factions” (“Curious,” 38). Ironically, then, the relative freedom of the “Matter of England” romance allows it a counter-hegemonic capacity; it uses the past to remap the present, imagining it in configurations other than the political reality of the day.

The second capacity of romance that enables its particular geographic imagination seems so self-evident as almost to go without saying. The temporal span of romances is brief, typically lasting no more than a human lifetime as they represent the deeds of a single hero; at most, a romance might cover a couple of generations.³⁹ Moreover, they are geographically unified, for the most part circumscribed by the travels of their hero and his family. The limited, self-contained nature of romance sets it apart from chronicles, which give their places meaning within a context both temporally and geographically extensive.

Chronicles organize themselves according to a succession of years, and typically according to a progression of kings. Individual places must be legible within this progressive structure. Richard Helgerson has hailed the Renaissance invention of the genre of chorography as an important step in the realization of English nationhood because it takes land, rather than monarch, as defining England (132-33). But Geraldine Heng, embracing an idea of the medieval nation as “always a community of the realm, *communitas regni*,” points to “the symbolizing potential of the king,” a figure for imagining “unity, cohesion, and stability” not coextensive with his person (“Romance,” 139). This kind of continuity operates diachronically in the context of chronicle; the disposition of places in a sequence of rule links their past character or meaning legibly to the present even in the face of historical change. In short, the places of the past in

chronicle always carry a systematic context that leads to the present. Etymology is perhaps the technical form *par excellence* for this kind of intelligible sequence; while most chroniclers did not lavish the same level of attention on historical place-names as did Wace and his translator Lazamon, the changes in the name of the island, at least, were frequently an important element in the topos of the passage of dominion, which allowed chroniclers to periodize insular history and separate the Briton and English pasts.⁴⁰

Thus, romance stories have a greater freedom than chronicles to experiment with the form and meaning of space, to envision geographies and communities that run counter to the socially dominant forms, even when the two genres treat the same material. As we shall see in Chapter 2, for instance, Chaucer transforms Trevet's chronicle account of Constance—an account of the founding of English Christianity—into a romance exploration of how multiple identities and histories accrete like sediment in insular space. Romances are ideally positioned to explode our modern senses of the structures, the identities, and perhaps most importantly the spaces that retrospection has made appear inevitable. In romances, we can see the imaginative traces of lost geographies, different ways of understanding and belonging in the world than those that came to dominate the culture. Far from being disinterested in the geographical and political world, as some scholars have suggested, romances use their unique narrative tools to unmoor the apparently solid world of life, community, and politics, and in particular the familiar, immediate space of the island itself.

Scene-Space and Geographic Space

Medieval romances think geographically and interact with the space of the world in at least two distinct spatial registers, which I term scene-space and geographic space. Scene-space describes the precise physical environment in which characters' actions unfold. It typically

consists of stock settings—topoi in every sense—like the forest, the bower, the castle, and the garden. This space may be more or less specific (a specific, well-defined forest, or a forest whose description furnishes it with a distinct and recognizable character, or simply a forest fit for a knight), but regardless of the level of precision or description, such spaces generally form part of a recognizable vocabulary of romance space, and when they are unusual, it is often because they are intentionally exotic (as the crystal tower in *Floris and Blancheflour*, the Fairy King's castle in *Sir Orfeo*, and the Green Chapel in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—all, indeed, familiar even in their singularity). Repetition does not make such spaces meaningless; Dominique Battles has connected differences between castles and halls, as well as between wilderness woodlands and managed forests, to remembered cultural distinctions between Anglo-Saxons and Normans, while William F. Woods, drawing on Bachelard's phenomenological account of space, details their associations in the early *Canterbury Tales*. But they constitute types of space, apt containers for certain kinds of action (the forest for hunting or encounters; the bower for amatory play; the hall for contestations of authority). While Westphal has suggested the possibility of geocritical analysis of kinds of space—"one could examine 'the desert' or 'the archipelago' without limiting oneself to a particular named desert or archipelago" (*Geocriticism* 119)—these places, endlessly repeatable in different environments, function differently from the specific, named places that link the text and the world specifically.⁴¹

Geographic space is the space of continents and seas, countries and kingdoms, towns and outposts. It is the space of travel and conquest: not of the *representation* of travel, in which we learn what a character does en route, and hear his or her travels described, but rather of the simple succession of points (a character goes from London to Winchester), or of political control (a hero wins a kingdom). While the discipline of geography is sufficiently all-encompassing to

take in the built world, I term this space “geographic” in its colloquial sense, meaning space on a large level, removed from immediate sensory experience. This space is typically marked by toponyms: the cities and kingdoms that constitute it tend to be named, whether with familiar names referring to the everyday world or with unfamiliar names that may have no referent outside of romance. Names are not a necessity; romances like *Gamelyn* and *Sir Degrevant* tell stories of heroic action within a framework of nameless towns and estates. But, as this is the level of space subject to territorial control, place-names are typical. When present, these names define a referential framework that contains, organizes and gives specific meaning to the scene-spaces.

These two spatial modes have parallels in different forms of medieval visual art—though it is important to note that only one of these forms was associated with romance. While England lacks the abundance of illuminated romance manuscripts available for continental romances, a moderate number of English romance manuscripts are illustrated. These illustrations tend to be rather simple, focusing primarily on characters and their actions. Sometimes the setting is entirely absent or abstracted, but at other times, elements of the setting appear, carrying generic attributes that identify the setting as a type. Illuminations of the kind typically found in romance manuscripts are a visual representation of scene-space.



Figure 1. Lancelot rescues Guinevere from Burning (*Mort Arthu*). London, British Library, Royal MS 20 C VI, f. 150r (detail). England, late 13th cent. The space of the illumination serves purely as a container for action, including only the ground and fire against a blue background with an abstract pattern repeated elsewhere.⁴²

Geographic space, by contrast, is paralleled by cartography. Medieval *mappaemundi* (world maps) take a broad, schematic view of space as a collection of sites that accords well with the narrative model of geographic space. On many maps, important sites, like cities and castles, appear as iconographic representations with labels attached: that is, a city is a structure (perhaps buildings ringed by a wall, or perhaps simply a tower) along with a name. The depiction of any individual site can be more or less accurate and detailed—probably in accordance with the artist’s familiarity—but the name gives the iconographically realized city specific reality, often against a backdrop of undifferentiated space. However, *mappaemundi* act formally as much like encyclopedias or chronicles as romances. *Mappaemundi* bring together a wide variety of information—history, theology, anthropology, myth and lore—within a spatial framework; they have been described as “pictorial analogies to the medieval historical textual chronicles” (Woodward, “Medieval,” 288, summarizing the view of Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken). Christian Jacob memorably summarizes the synthesizing quality of *mappaemundi*: “A map is to

be read as a book encompassing all other books” (262). While *mappaemundi* imply narrative and often mobilize memorable stories on the map surface, they offer a holistic view of space very different from that of romance narrative.



Figure 2. *Mappamundi* from *Polychronicon* by Ranulph Higden. London, British Library, Royal MS 14 C IX, ff. 1v-2r. England, late 14th century. Note the use of architectural structures to represent cities in Britain (upper left, highlighted in red) and elsewhere.⁴³

Itinerary maps encapsulate even more precisely the spatial mode of romance, which arranges places linearly. Itinerary maps were comparatively rare in the Middle Ages—itineraries were more often textual (Harvey 495). Matthew Paris’s famous itinerary map from London to Jerusalem represent sites iconographically in the style of many *mappaemundi*, representing cities and other points of interest as architectural structures, but where *mappaemundi* place the places they represent in a directional relationship, in Paris’s map they are strictly linear, following each other in sequence as a traveler would encounter them.⁴⁴ The map even incorporates significant topographical features of the journey, like seas, rivers, and mountains, into this linear sequence.

A reader of the map experiences places much as a reader of romance does: a sequence of individual named places with only the space of travel between them.⁴⁵ Romance narratives offer a similar spatial perspective, following characters through a succession of places related by their sequence. Hence, where Paris's map acts chiefly to visualize a route and to allow a viewer to retrace it imaginatively, the actions of romance characters politicize these sites, drawing them into relationships; the sequential nature of romance narrative allows these relationships to differ from those suggested by space alone.

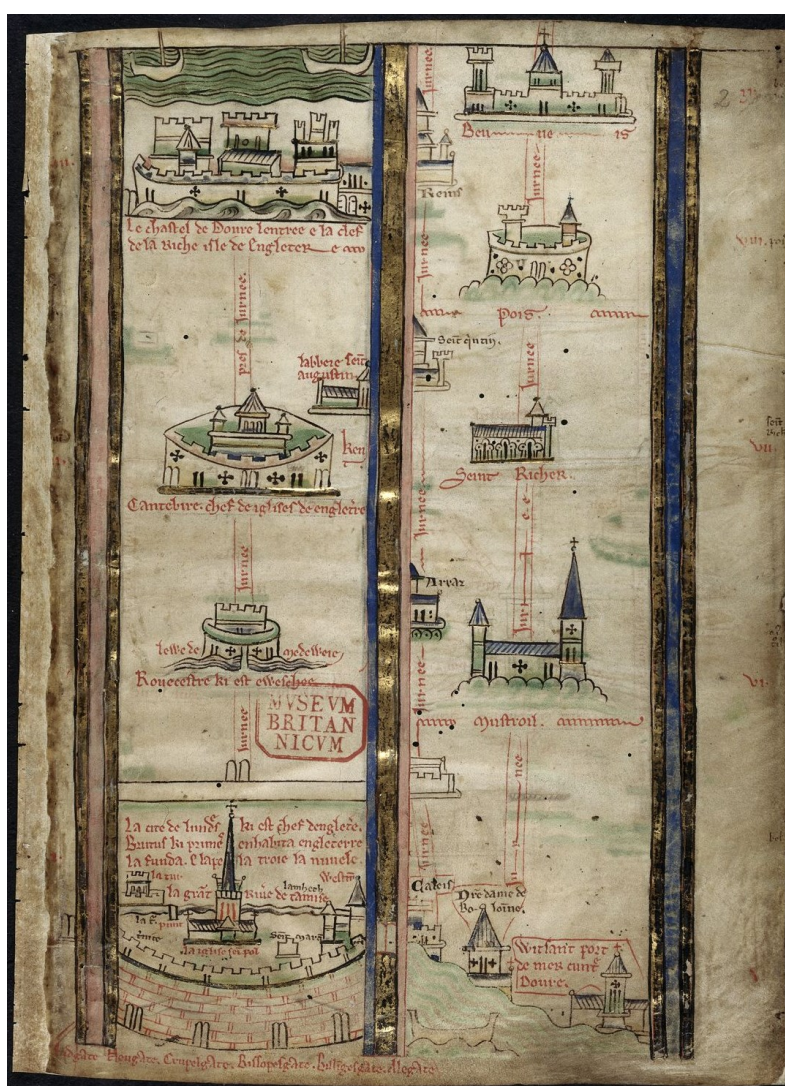


Figure 3. Itinerary map by Matthew Paris, segment 1: London to Beauvais. London, British Library, Royal MS 14 C VII, f. 2r. England, c. 1250.⁴⁶

Helen Cooper and Robert Rouse have outlined how romances, obsessed with travel, can themselves operate in a manner similar to itineraries. Cooper notes that “travel was experienced as linear” and adds that “The story, like an itinerary, focuses upon specific loci along the line of travel: the narrative settings are those places where things happen (a spring, a hermitage, a ford, a castle), and they are recognized by their characteristics, not by their spatial coordinates” (*English* 70). But particularly in “Matter of England” romances, the itinerary is likely to consist not only of scene-spaces but also of geographic spaces; named sites, and not merely kinds of space, serve as settings for action.⁴⁷ Rouse goes further, observing that romances can enable “vicarious travel,” allowing audiences to visit and experience other places in their imaginations (“Walking,” 139). Romances feature a series of sites, which readers encounter in sequence, as characters travel among them. The linearity of the romance experience of space is particularly prominent in English romances, which minimize the interlace structure common in French romances like the Lancelot–Grail Cycle and their attendant changes of scene as the story moves from knight to knight.⁴⁸ When reading *King Horn*, for instance (as we shall see in Chapter 1), readers follow Horn as he travels from Suddene to Westernesse to Ireland and back again; though we occasionally switch scenes to learn what is happening to Rymenhild, the backbone of the romance consists of Horn’s travels. Romances of more complicated structure, like *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, may interweave several itineraries: Eglamour follows the travels of Eglamour himself, his lover Cristabell, and their son Degrabell, but such romances remain fundamentally organized around movement from point to point.

The geographic points upon which the romance is built are most often named places: romance characters travel among named cities and countries. The number of lines devoted to the movement between places is rarely extensive. Despite the central role that the sea plays in *King*

Horn, the romance devotes only a few couplets at a time to its hero's voyages across it; even the *Man of Law's Tale* (discussed in Chapter 2), which details Custance's exposure at sea with marked pathos, spends only a few stanzas on her movements, which cover long distances. Even the better-known *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which devotes an unusual amount of attention for English romance to descriptions of topography (enough that modern literary tourists attempt to retrace Gawain's steps⁴⁹), still spends just three stanzas on Gawain's months-long journey through "contrayez straunge" from Camelot to Hautdesert by way of the Wirral (fewer lines than are given to Gawain's arming), even employing *occupatio* to skip over Gawain's adventurous encounters en route.⁵⁰ While *Sir Gawain* does offer a sense of the topography of the journey, travel is primarily about the transition between named places; the geographic space itself contains the scene-spaces in which the action unfolds.

Often, geographic spaces are themselves the object of much of the action that unfolds in scene-space. English romances are much occupied with issues of control and rule, and many of the things that happen in their plots are oriented toward determining who will control the land. Heroes engage in single combats or pitched battles that will defend a land from invaders or complete chivalric tasks on their way to attaining a rank that will ultimately lead them to rule; heroines travel, exiled or betrothed, to foreign lands where they may marry kings; men and women woo each other, consolidating holdings and establishing dynasties. These actions are not simply events in the lives of heroic characters; they define the contours of a land and determine who will rule it.

In exploring romances, this dissertation focuses specifically on their disposition of geographic space. As romance navigates named spaces and defined lands, it establishes a geographically referential relationship with the world. Scene-spaces constitute types of space,

universal and widely accessible; these spaces refer to kinds of experience familiar to readers and the sorts of environments in which they occur. Geographic space pins narrative to specific points in the world, anchoring them in a physical reality like the sites appearing on a map. The island, not merely a geographical but also a geological feature, forms part of a fundamental, solid spatial reality that anchors geographic space and is made meaningful by such spaces. In examining the narrative rules that allow romances to map and remap the world, I can discover not only how romance narratives put certain kinds of space to work, but how narrative configures the broad spaces for controlling and understanding the shape of the world.

Toponyms

In analyzing the geographic space of romances, this dissertation focuses particularly on toponymy, or place-names. Every chapter concerns toponyms and the ways in which they are used to generate insular space and other elements of world geography. Toponyms play a key role in all the spatial technologies I analyze, from rewriting familiar places with unfamiliar terms to generating categories of space that enable certain kinds of thought. Although toponyms often appear to be a mere barrier to our comprehension—glossed by editors, subject to decoding at the hands of philologists—toponyms in fact mediate the relationship between text and world, and consequently they are vital to the romance capacity for geographic thought.

Toponyms can generate an illusion of transparency. By their nature, they act to identify precisely a particular location: a place that can be named appears to us to be a place that can be located. Thus, toponyms can appear to offer a binary of recognition: either a toponym refers to a place we know, in which case its function is to act as a signifier for a particular piece of knowledge about the world and its geography, or it does not, in which case we might treat it as a linguistic or geographic puzzle to solve or might dismiss it outright as something fictional,

unconnected to the geographical reality of the world. (As we shall see in Chapter 1, scholars have had both reactions to the unrecognizable place-names of *King Horn*.)

This binary reaction may make sense in literature like histories and travel narratives that makes an explicit truth-claim. However, romances make the nature of their connection with the world much less explicit (and indeed, that relationship undoubtedly varies among different kinds of romance). *King Horn*, we will see, maintains at best an extremely tenuous connection to familiar insular geographies even as it seems to insist on imagining the island. By contrast, a romance like *Richard Coeur de Lion* projects a strong image of geospatial reality even as it imagines events outside the realm of what we today understand as history. The array of referential possibilities for romance invites a similar range of spatial strategies.

Scholars of romance have done relatively little to theorize toponymy beyond Rouse's observation that romance places signify particular histories (*Idea* 61). However, scholars of popular ballads have elaborated an understanding of place-names that usefully suggests an array of possible functions for toponyms. In a classic article, W. Edson Richmond lays out three main reasons for place-names to appear in ballads:

(1) because historical events necessitate the recording of particular names . . . (2) because the balladists either consciously or unconsciously wish to lend credibility to their tales by locating the events in (a) known places . . . or in (b) fictive or faraway places beyond the reach of curious scoffers . . . (3) because the ballad singer substitutes either an actual or a pseudo place name for (a) a place name which he fails to recognize . . . or for (b) a seemingly meaningless word or phrase . . . (263)

Richmond, then, treats place-names primarily as residue—they may encode historical events, or at a textual level, preserve linguistic difficulties—but they also serve an authenticating function, giving an impression that the events narrated unfolded within a place. W. F. H. Nicolaisen, who has made an extensive study of toponymy and of space in folk literature, expands Richmond's analysis, focusing especially on unreal places. Nicolaisen's work emphasizes that toponyms can

have a textual function even in the absence of a lexical meaning (that is, when they lack a clear referent) (“There was,” 79; “As I cam’,” 239). In many cases, Nicolaisen argues, there is “no congruency between the landscape of the ballad and the landscape of the actual world,” and whether a given place-name corresponds to a place in the world may be irrelevant when listeners at some remove from the setting don’t know which names are real and which fictional (“There was,” 74, 77).⁵¹ Unreal ballad places can nevertheless suggest “plausible, though illusory, space and spatial relationships,” but named places go beyond the mere creation of a topography within which the ballad action can occur; they can act almost metaphorically, structuring the action as spaces of home, separation, agricultural labor, etc. (“There was,” 79; “As I cam’,” 239). Ballad toponyms, Nicolaisen shows, do not simply instance a real place or generate a virtual one; they generate a framework of spatial meaning, fixed in specific, named places.

Romances, of course, are not ballads. Yet Richmond and Nicolaisen’s array of possible functions for place-names offers a useful starting point for considering the work accomplished by toponyms in verse romances. Named places organize stories. Most romances, like many ballads, unfold spatially as well as temporally. Named places structure this spatial logic. For instance, in the well-known exile-and-return (or, as I will later call it, estrangement-and-reclamation) pattern, the hero or heroine begins at a family home and travels away from it, enduring a series of ordeals until ultimately returning to the point of origin.⁵² Horn begins in Suddene, Bevis in Southampton, Havelok in Denmark, and their exile into other, named lands constitutes an important advancement of the romance structure; the “return” component of their journey is signaled by their reentry of the place identified by the initial toponym. Toponyms are not essential for these patterns: *Emaré*, for example, never names the land of its heroine’s birth, though it specifies the land of her exile and other pieces of political geography, while some

romances, including *Gamelyn* and *Sir Degrevant*, have perfectly functional plots while naming no places at all.⁵³ Most romances do name the places that make up their settings, tying elements of their narratives to specific place-names; a sequence of specific sites make up the framework that carries the narrative forward.⁵⁴

Yet the place-names of romances serve more than merely structural purposes. If structure were their only purpose, the names could be arbitrary; any would be as good as another. Instead, romance toponyms structure their narratives in relation to the world; a majority of toponyms refer clearly to places that would have been recognized by romance audiences. In some cases, like *The Siege of Jerusalem* and *Richard Coeur de Lion*, such references sustain historical truth-claims. While we know *Richard* to be a highly fantasticized account of the king's crusading, it also relates, in the form and the motifs of romance, events from the Third Crusade, sustained in part by spatial references.⁵⁵ Other romances, not founded in historical fact, produce an impression of historical solidity in part by naming the places across which events play out.⁵⁶

That romances mix solidly toponyms unambiguously pointing to familiar real-world locations with ones that lack clear referents need not diminish their referential power. Nicolaisen claims that "Fictive place names do not lose any of their fictitiousness through repetition" ("There was," 77), which may be true in an absolute sense, but is not a given where texts' audiences are concerned: especially in an era before atlases and other authoritative, comprehensive geographic references, there is every reason to believe that audiences would be more likely to accept the reality of a place they heard named frequently in narratives. On the other hand, John Finlayson considers the unreal place-names of Chrétien's *Yvain* and *King Horn* as characteristic of the genre of romance, and suggests that this unrealistic approach contaminates even the recognizable places of romance: "the historical or geographical reality of

a name is no automatic conferer of novelistic realism on a romance” (“*King Horn*,” 20). While “novelistic realism” is a criterion few would demand from a romance, it is surely difficult to believe that readers encountering a name they recognized in a narrative would not connect that name with their previous knowledge of the place. Although Richmond’s approach to typologizing ballad toponyms is author- or performer-centered, it is equally important to remember that place-names do not merely connect events and locations to a past, real or imagined, but to the knowledge and experiences of readers.

Indeed, place-names in narrative interface with the world precisely through invoking associations and connections in the minds of their readers. As Nicholas Horsfall puts it,

For a poet, the place-name distills and re-evokes everything that has happened in a place, the full range of its beauties, natural and man-made, all that its inhabitants have achieved, and all that has been written about that place in prose and verse, at least as much as the poet’s readers might reasonably be expected to know. (306)⁵⁷

Toponyms, in this account, act as keys to storehouses of cultural knowledge: they evoke a sense of place, of past, of cultural production—they even, Westphal might suggest, invoke the sensory experience of a place, at least for people who have been there themselves or read evocative descriptions.⁵⁸ Regardless of the precise knowledge they invoke, place-names are a central mechanism for georeferentiality—the ways in which texts invoke and refer to the world that exists outside them. Westphal, in articulating his geocritical project, has insisted that we attend to the referentiality of literary texts, the relationship between fiction and reality.⁵⁹ While fiction and reality interact in multiple ways, toponyms play a key role in Westphal’s discussion in mediating between fiction and reality: toponyms link narratives conforming to the real world to the places they are meant to represent, or allow the fiction to disrupt our perception of a specific place by naming it yet ascribing to it characteristics contrary to reality (what Westphal calls “heterotopic interference”), or by naming places we know not to be real and thus giving them the solidity of a

pseudo-referent.⁶⁰ Toponyms forge the most direct and obvious connections between word and world, and condition the other techniques literary works employ to shape our spatial thought.

As such a central technology for generating narrative space and bringing that space together with the world, toponymy will play a central role in my dissertation. I will have frequent recourse to philological onomastic studies, for often such work is the only scholarship to give serious consideration to place-names. However, while most work on place-names takes the form of decoding, treating them as puzzles to be solved, my dissertation shows that romances deploy them purposefully and inventively. In avoiding or inventing names, in naming some places while leaving others unspecified, romances lay the foundations for a narrative world that intersects with, but does not quite overlap, the familiar, solid world as instinctively perceived. The chapters that follow will tease out these spaces and the narrative techniques that realize them.

Plan of the Dissertation

In examining how imaginative texts produce place and how the virtual geography of narrative interacts with the solid geography of the everyday world, I turn to romances about the insular past, written in English, precisely because scholars have found their spaces so legible as supports for the English nation. Despite the increasingly sophisticated methodological approaches we bring to such texts, their language and setting, together with the enduring gravity of national (and nationalist) canons, have seemed until now to mark them inescapably as English. Barrett has commented on the enduring force of Englishness even in postcolonial studies that set out to challenge its categories: “Englishness may be put under analytical pressure, placed into dialogue with hitherto neglected identities, but English space emerges largely intact” (15). English space endures in part because Englishness attaches to space from the outside, imposed by cultural associations that fit national narratives. Thus, while many of my chapters discuss

French-language sources and analogues of Middle English romance, my central focus is on works written in English—a language that has itself been viewed as contributing to English nationhood.⁶¹ Even works produced in England and in English, I seek to show, developed spatial vocabularies where England was not a dominant category. Each chapter of my dissertation takes up a spatial technique as I tease out the ways in which these romances reinvented insular space for their own purposes.

Chapter 1 explores the creative capacity of toponyms to map familiar spaces in radically new ways by considering *King Horn*, a romance whose toponyms are largely unrecognizable. I look first at the role the poem's three named lands—Suddene, Westernesse, and Ireland—play in structuring its plot, noting the ways in which Horn himself becomes tightly interwoven with the lands he inhabits. But the *King Horn* is not inward-looking and self-referential; the name *Ireland* explicitly links what happens in the poem to the geography of the world. *King Horn* therefore opens the possibility of an alternative kind of referentiality, by which a text can become involved in political geography even when its spaces can't be mapped to particular locations. *King Horn* offers a vision of insularity that stands apart from the political processes that have shaped the island: a romance version of the past that suggests an alternative present.

Most romances of the insular past identify their settings more clearly and explicitly than *King Horn*. Chapter 2 takes up a romance that specifies the historical moment it depicts with some precision: Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* takes us to pagan Northumberland on the cusp of Christianity and tells how a woman washed up on the beach makes the first Northumbrian converts, marries the king, and gives birth to a Roman emperor. But it also tells other stories that hang around the edges of this conversion narrative: the story of a pagan woman who slaughters her son to protect her faith; the story of a repressed minority who have kept the Christian religion

alive in the heart of a heathen land. By weaving these stories into its central plot, Chaucer's tale helps us understand what capacities romance offers in representing the events of the past. In the Man of Law's Tale, Chaucer offers his only serious account of the insular past, and I read the tale in the context of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole to discover what it contributes to this diverse and compendious narrative collection. Chaucer's treatment of the popular Constance story also illuminates the relationship of romance to historical writing, for one of the tale's main sources is an Anglo-Norman chronicle. Although Chaucerian romances are not often considered alongside anonymous, popular romances, Chaucer's tale joins other text I consider here in the project of using a romance plot to reconsider the meaning of insular space.

The Awntyrs off Arthure is also a deeply learned, literary text. The poem draws on material from many genres, including chronicle, romance, and exemplum, and sets them in a loose romance framework that some readers have found disunified and incoherent. Different parts of the *Awntyrs* have different associated spaces, and Chapter 3 probes the relationship between geographic space and scene-space by examining how these spaces interact. The *Awntyrs* names so many places so precisely that it seems like one of the most densely referential of all romances, but I suggest that this referentiality is in part illusory; even as it talks about familiar sites on the Anglo-Scottish border, the poem uses these spaces as a support for more abstract thought about conquest and possession. The diverse components of the *Awntyrs* can come together in a variety of different ways because of its structural flexibility, and in this chapter I outline a notion of structural modularity to suggest how a romance can develop ideas across its plot. A coda considers how the same ideas about space might extend beyond the plot of the *Awntyrs* and resonate in its manuscript contexts.

While much of this dissertation is about the absence of England in texts where readers seem to expect it, Chapter 4 at last takes up two texts where England is a major spatial category: *Havelok the Dane* and *Bevis of Hampton*. Though the familiarity of the name of England can make it seem like a familiar, self-evident category, I examine the textual processes that produce England as a spatial category. In *Havelok*, we find just what long scholarly traditions might lead us to expect from such a space: a nation being produced. However, while the spatial rules that govern *Bevis* are very similar to those of *Havelok*, *Bevis* presents the island as radically unstable, even dangerous space. By examining the geographies of these two romances together, we can see both the sorts of techniques that allow a text to produce an element of its geography as national space and what other ways of organizing space compete. Toponymy is a major tool for linking narrative spaces intelligibly to the world, but even such major topographic categories as England itself derive their meaning not just from *what* they refer to but also from *how* the narrative produces them. Understanding the spatial grammar of texts like these allows us to understand the ways in which plot and space interact reciprocally to produce geographic meaning.

The experience of the nation-state has so shaped our modern era that the nation is available in everything; while our increasingly post-national, globalized moment confronts us with other models for understanding space and identity, the nation as a concept continues to serve as a constant reference point. While the Middle Ages were not, as many have believed, pre-national, the medieval nation did not possess the same categorical priority and inevitability that it can seem to possess for us today. By reading the geographies of romances treating insular space, I seek to show that even at a time and in a genre that have been associated with the emergence of English nationhood, romances were actively interrogating categories of identity formation and exploring the meaning of their insular geography across time.

To appreciate the vibrant creativity of these romances, we must learn to read geocritically. Their presentation of space is seldom transparent: it neither seeks merely to describe and reproduce a familiar experience of the world, nor to create a wholly virtual space suited merely for plot without any reference to the world beyond. The romances I study in this dissertation refer to the spaces of the island in a variety of ways—by naming it, by identifying sites within it, by invoking properties that readers will recognize—and set those places into meaningful relationship by narrativizing them. The spatial narratives they construct imbue the real topography they represent with meaning.

What I discover in these poems is not the *absence* of a nation, but the vital presence of a history of spatial thought that's lost to us. Sometimes, this thought takes the form of active resistance to categories that were becoming dominant even as these texts were written and that ultimately eclipsed competing possibilities: *King Horn*, for instance, seems to resist the militant English centralization advanced by Edward I, offering in its place a distributed community united peacefully. Other texts, rather than challenging their own audiences' views, instead challenge our understandings of the medieval past: *Bevis of Hampton*, in my reading, treats England as an unstable and unimportant space, less salient than networks of power that stretch across the world map. But all are united by a common awareness of the solid space of the island as a ground for thought: for community, for history, for politics. To understand what the island meant to the people who lived on it, and to recognize alternative paths that emerging insular identities could have taken, we must excavate the rich tradition of spatial thought that lies in medieval English romance, following its paths not into other worlds, but into other ways of understanding our own.

Chapter 1

Writing the Margins of the World: *King Horn*

King Horn, like Horn himself, is without a land to call its own.

King Horn, the poem, was long thought to be the earliest romance composed in English; thanks to Rosamund Allen's efforts to push the date of composition from the traditional 1225 into the later 13th century, we must now be content to identify it as one of the earliest ("Date"). It tells the story of Horn, the prince of Suddene. The young Horn is exiled from his native land when Saracens arrive on the shores of Suddene, slay Horn's father King Murri, and conquer the country. Horn and his companions are put out to sea to die, but make it to the shores of Westernesse, where they are taken in at court. Years later, when Horn is banished from Westernesse for alleged sexual misconduct with the king's daughter, he makes his way to Ireland, where he is once more accepted at court, and the king of Ireland offers Horn his daughter's hand in marriage.

Horn, then, is rarely and briefly without a place to lay his head; nor even does he go for long without the material and institutional support structure of a royal court. But his acceptance at court after court does little to dampen his foundational estrangement. Suddene, the land of his youth, is closed to him, occupied by invading foreigners who are watching out for his return. And, as his exile from Westernesse demonstrates, Horn's life in these other courts is contingent upon the good will of the sovereign; he cannot claim with any authority to belong there.

Horn's sudden landlessness mirrors the critical fate of the romance that bears his name. *King Horn* has long been identified with the so-called Matter of England. In 1828, Frederic Madden claimed not just the poem but the *story* as essentially English: Madden made an early case for studying what we now call the French of England by insisting that *King Horn's* close

French-language analogue, *The Romance of Horn* (which has, if anything, less claim to take place in insular space than does the Middle English version), was so English in its setting and tradition that it had to be the French-language composition of an English poet, rather than a continental work (*Ancient* xlvi).⁶² The romance's Englishness seems always to be something predetermined. It may even have seemed so to the composer of its fourteenth-century analogue *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*; the early sections of *Horne Childe* unfold within a thoroughly English geography, defined by the names of English towns and regions. (He also travels and dwells in Ireland and Wales.)

But *King Horn* itself makes no clear reference to England, or indeed to Britain, at all. Nearly all of the action in the romance takes place within three territories, which the poem names Suddene, Westernesse, and Ireland.⁶³ Of the three, only Ireland clearly corresponds to any land we recognize. For commentators of the early twentieth century, the ambiguity of the names Suddene and Westernesse presented a puzzle to be solved, and they suggested a number of possible mappings of the territory onto the real world.⁶⁴

Received notions about how the lands of the poem should be mapped, reproduced in the notes for modern editions, have exerted such influence over *King Horn*'s modern reception as to seem to rewrite its topography. For example, Dominique Battles, arguing that the poem encodes the Saracens as Viking invaders while adversaries Modi and Fikenhild are Norman figures, sums up the direct relationship of the poem to historical events thus: "Most of the character names of the poem (Murry, Godhild, Mody, Fikenhild, and Horn) as well as place names (Westernesse, Sudene), with the exception of 'England' and 'Ireland,' do not correspond clearly with any historical people or places" (18). Battles's comment is revealing because "England" is not a place-name in the poem; no manuscript employs the term.⁶⁵ Seeing "England" in the poem is

itself an interpretative act, a projection onto a poem whose verbal map is perhaps most striking in its indefinity.

Indeed, in the face of the uncertainty surrounding these toponyms, scholars are becoming more willing to suggest that *King Horn* does not take place in England at all. Suddene and Westernesse might, as some now presume, be meaningless, fictitious names.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the text's early audiences certainly might have recognized them.⁶⁷ However, the trouble scholars have had in attempting to pin down just where these lands might be is itself indicative; even if they did refer to familiar places, these terms were not important enough to survive to today. By contrast, Ireland was a well-defined geographical and political entity, as it is today.⁶⁸ The fact that no other clear references to Suddene or Westernesse survive indicates that these two names did not have a similar status.⁶⁹ *Suddene* and *Westernesse* might have meant something specific to a certain community at some point, perhaps even in the environment of *King Horn*'s composition. However, given that neither name survives elsewhere, they were surely not recognizable in all the contexts in which the romance circulated, and they cannot have had the same prominence as political and spatial categories as did Ireland. On the whole, I suspect these toponyms lacked specific referents even in the environment where the Middle English text originally circulated.

No matter how one attempts to place the various spaces of the poem on a map, it mixes very different *kinds* of space: Ireland, which has broad, current importance, and Westernesse and Suddene, which may never have existed outside the poem, and certainly cannot have been meaningful to all the poem's medieval audiences. *King Horn* presents a hybrid geography, in which places from the political world commingle with those that have a fictive (or at least marginal) existence.⁷⁰ This kind of geography is common enough in romance.⁷¹ *King Horn*

demonstrates the work that such a geography can do. The interchange of real and unreal places allows the poem to construct a creative geography that thinks about territory and community.

When scholars recognize that *King Horn* as we have it does not actually talk about England, they demonstrate a laudable willingness to allow the text to dictate how we read it, without assuming we know what its space *should* be like. Unfortunately, however, retreat from the puzzle of Suddene and Westernesse has largely meant retreat from the issue of geography in the poem.

As John Frankis characterizes it, “the whole tale is set in a fantasy world that owes little to historical or geographical reality” (“Views,” 239). Frankis makes this observation in a study of Middle English evocations of the Anglo-Saxon past, so that separating *King Horn*’s space from England is enough to disqualify it from further study. For John Finlayson, however, the poem’s uncertain geography is essential to its genre (“*King Horn*,” 20).⁷² He compares Westernesse and Suddene to the fantastical kingdoms of Chrétien’s *Erec* and *Yvain*, and asserts that the romance’s Ireland “is as quintessentially Irish as Cardigan is Welsh in *Yvain*—that is to say, not at all.” The poem’s mixture of known and unknown toponyms is meaningless for Finlayson; they just delineate spaces for action, but do not promote a sense of realism or correspond to anything outside the poem. Finlayson’s thesis is that *King Horn* is a proper chivalric romance in the French tradition, with no pretension to historical reference or to verisimilitude. Places are important to Finlayson in the way they structure to the romance, but for him the individual places are purely coincidental. He suggests that literary scholars have misunderstood *King Horn*’s genre precisely because they have been interested in these toponyms and the history that might lie behind them; they have made the mistake of discussing the *King Horn* next to the “realistic” *Havelok the Dane*, which Finlayson classifies as *geste* rather than romance.

Of course, places unconnected with the mappable world (as Finlayson argues *King Horn*'s are) can still be meaningful: witness the carefully structured realms of Dante's afterlife, or the allegorically charged landscape of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. But critics who have recognized the spaces of the poem as un-English have not proceeded to analyze the unreal places they find it to contain. And no critic, to my knowledge, has explored the feature of the romance that Finlayson dismisses as unimportant: the way its unknown, unmappable realms of Westernesse and Suddene and the recognizable territory of Ireland coexist. Why these places? Why are they configured as they are? (The itinerary of *King Horn* differs significantly from that of its Anglo-Norman analogue, *The Romance of Horn*, even though the same toponyms recur in both poems.)

By presenting this odd, compound space (part clearly mappable to Ireland, part not clearly associable with any known space), *King Horn* prominently raises the problem of referentiality. In outlining the project of geocriticism, Bertrand Westphal has called for scholars to devote renewed attention to the ways in which the represented worlds of art and the "solid" world touch each other (*Geocriticism*).⁷³ As Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja have made abundantly clear, the categories of the represented and the "solid" are dialogic and interdependent: space is "real-and-imagined."

While many features coordinate the space of textual worlds with the "solid" world, toponyms are one of the most important, particularly for medieval romance. Romances draw on stock settings that are *topoi* both in the sense of being places and in the sense of being commonplaces: fields, forests, halls, bowers. These places often lack specificity, and are essentially interchangeable among romances.⁷⁴ By contrast, toponyms are vehicles of specificity, nailing a place down to one specific point individualized by its name. These names allow the

spaces of a particular romance to be indexed against other forms of geographic knowledge: other romances, accounts of travel, chronicles, maps.

King Horn's presentation of its own geography is quite sparse. Aside from its small handful of toponyms it offers a few topographic details (like the coasts of its three lands, and the presence of a forest in Westernesse), but the bulk of its spatial thought resides in the movement of the hero among the territories the romance mapped. Since two of these territories bear names that do not clearly connect them to any "solid" space, the romance seems to offer a limit case for referentiality: it is neither entirely associated from the world of everyday life, nor entirely divisible from it.

King Horn employs a spatial strategy of hybrid referentiality. That is, the romance generates mental spaces that simultaneously both do and do not map onto locations in the "solid" world inhabited by its readers. *Horn*'s referentiality is not solely that of the abstracted mode of science fiction and fantasy, coordinating the two worlds merely by spatial vocabulary.⁷⁵ Nor is it the strictly literal referentiality of the travelogue, replete with recognized names understood to describe places one could visit. The toponyms of the romance, its account of defined, named (though not known) places and of movement among them, produces a kind of geography-effect independent of verisimilitude.⁷⁶ But the presence of Ireland, I insist, moves the space of the romance beyond just an impression of geography. The space generated by *King Horn* is hybrid, bringing together multiple kinds of space: the recognizable space of Ireland, the familiar-yet-unknown space of Westernesse and Suddene, the generalized space of Christendom. I will argue that this kind of space enables forms of thought that might otherwise be impossible.

We are more accustomed to dealing with such complicated representational strategies in more modern fiction. Surveying the spatial practices of postmodern literature, Brian McHale

identifies a kind of space that he calls the zone, where “space . . . is less constructed than *deconstructed* by the text, or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time” (45).

McHale identifies four representational strategies employed to create zones within postmodern fiction: juxtaposition, which puts known places in close proximity and enables movement between them despite their distance on the map; interpolation, which introduces a new, fictitious space within or among the spaces of the solid world (like Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County); superimposition, where two spaces that are distinct in the known world coexist as a single space within the representation (as when a work jams together two cities that share a name); and misattribution, when a work ascribes to a familiar place qualities besides those familiar to it (Shakespeare’s infamous ascription of a coast to Bohemia is an example of misattribution, albeit perhaps less self-consciously undertaken than the examples McHale is interested in).

Contrast this system—and it is but one account of spatial play in recent literature—with the ways in which (as we have already seen) medievalists have discussed the geography of *King Horn*: for some, the *places* of the romance are meaningless, just names attached to structural units, of which one name happens to refer (both in the thirteenth century and today) to an island to the west of Britain and the others happen not to refer to anything we recognize; for others, the names, seemingly by sheer virtue of being toponyms, *must* reference someplace in the known world, and so scholars offer linguistic and topographic explanations designed to provide the missing key to these references. These assumptions offer an impoverished view of medieval fictional spatiality as capable only of fantastic abstraction or of clear reference.

Though *King Horn* seems a remarkably simple poem in its expression, A. C. Spearing has identified its naturalness, its seeming transparency, as an “illusion,” an effect cultivated by technical features of the romance’s narrative style (*Readings* 28). Spearing points to features like

“invisible cutting” (transition between narrative elements conducted by associated ideas) and a reliance on synecdoche to express action and emotion as instrumental to the experience of reading *King Horn*, the apparent directness it offers its reader (*Readings* 31-43). In this chapter, I argue that the poem’s construction of space is similarly technical, and far more sophisticated than its modern readers have tended to recognize.

This chapter carefully reads *King Horn* to examine its geographic vocabulary. Rather than supposing, as critics of the early twentieth century did, that its realms correspond to spaces in the real world, I will examine the kind of meaning the poem itself gives to these places. While we cannot place them on a map with any certainty, the three named territories form a system. They provide a canvas perfectly suited for the action of the poem, and they act politically as Horn asserts his authority within each and knits them together into a network. As I will show, *King Horn*’s unknown places—Suddene and Westernesse—allow the poem to explore how community is constituted, without implicating it in the political process of thirteenth-century state formation. *King Horn*, despite what seems to modern critics like geographic imprecision or even unreality, nevertheless has a strong spatial vocabulary: a vocabulary that allows its territories to express ideas. The poem thinks through how distinct places relate to each other.

For, as experienced readers of romance will have recognized, the account of *King Horn*’s plot with which I began was incomplete. Because Horn was banished from his land at the beginning of the story, the narrative impulse of the exile-and-return romance demands he reclaim his rightful throne by the story’s end. But over the course of the romance Horn does not simply recapture Suddene from its Saracen occupiers. He acquires his own band of Irish knights, and wins the hand of Rymenhild, the princess of Westernesse. By the end, but he is dispensing land in every one of the poem’s territories, installing his retainers as the rulers of each land. If the

opening of the poem sees Horn dispossessed of land, by its conclusion he has an excess of land, improbably controlling kingdoms that were never his own.

This idea of territorial excess offers a way of understanding the poem's geography. *King Horn*, I want to suggest, is not so much about specific places as it is ways in which places are connected to each other. England is not *in* the romance, but the critical impulse that has made England so important in the romance's interpretation is not all wrong, for England is *implicated* in the romance; it sketches places that evoke Britain and surrounding islands, and its depiction of Ireland obliquely recalls medieval political geography. As I shall demonstrate, *King Horn* builds up a marginal, vulnerable community: a community that necessarily resonates with the islands of the Atlantic archipelago, situated at the edge of the known world. While the poem dramatizes its fair share of conquest and political domination—forces that have been instrumental in shaping the political configuration of the archipelago—it meditates on what binds such spaces together, and offers models of unity and connection not based on violent conquest. Insular Christianity, the romance suggest, binds the marginal places in the Atlantic Ocean together more strongly than geographic or cultural difference can separate them. *King Horn*'s hybrid geography allows it the freedom to explore insular community outside the confines of history.

Geographies: Manuscripts and Analogues

Though I write frequently about the “geography” of *King Horn*, from some perspectives it would be more accurate to speak of its *geographies*. The poem survives in three manuscripts: Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27(2) (C); Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Misc. 108 (O); and British Library, London, MS Harley 2253 (L). The three texts are similar in the broadest terms, but disagree in specifics at many points. Unsurprisingly, given my focus on the details of how *King Horn* evokes place, these variations bear upon my readings.

In general, I use the edition by Rosamund Allen (1984).⁷⁷ Allen, like most of the poem's editors, bases her text upon MS C, which (though not the earliest manuscript) has seemed the most reliable. However, where Allen finds all three extant manuscripts to be in error, she tries to restore an earlier and correct version of the poem. Thus her edition contains a number of readings unsupported by any manuscript.

Given my interest in the particularities of the geography evoked, I cannot rely entirely upon a modern text of the poem. With only three manuscripts, we cannot firmly establish an authoritative text. Even if we could, such an edition would be insufficient for this project. All three surviving manuscripts witness ways in which scribes articulated and readers encountered the poem's geography. Recognizing the value of variation, I have attempted to track the variants of each passage that I pay close attention to in this chapter. Unless I indicate otherwise, I quote from Allen's edition. However, when a particular manuscript reading bears upon the issues I am discussing, I try to note it, either in my text itself or in a footnote.⁷⁸

While each of the poem's manuscript versions arguably presents a discrete geography, I have not found systematic variation among the manuscripts that would justify treating them independently. Rather, as I discuss them, the surviving texts as offer a constellation of readings. As the texts are descendants of a common source, whatever the relationship between them, they carry the traces of how scribes and other readers reacted to what they encountered in their exemplars. Thus, readings that editors consider errors can be particularly illustrative, for they can show what seemed possible to the individuals who transmitted the poem. Where appropriate I will entertain the hypotheses Allen puts forward and muse on the relationships of the manuscripts to their sources, but for my purposes neither emendations nor the reading of any particular manuscript need be authoritative.

In addition to the three manuscripts of *King Horn*, the Horn story exists in several other versions. The two most important are the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*, which predates *King Horn*, and the Middle English *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*, which dates from the fourteenth century. The Anglo-Norman version, composed in the twelfth century by a poet who identifies himself as Thomas, corresponds closely with *King Horn* in plot, although the names of both characters and places differ. Thomas's text also differs drastically in style from *King Horn*. While the Middle English work is fairly concise, coming to around 1600 short lines, Thomas's poem runs to over 5200 lines of alexandrines. Thomas's scenes are dramatically longer and more detailed than *King Horn*'s; Thomas treats everything from material goods to the nuances of social life with precision, while *King Horn*'s narrative style is famously simple and economical. Particularly important for my purposes is the much more developed geographical and political world the *Romance of Horn* inhabits. For instance, Brittany (the second territory in the *Romance of Horn*, the structural equivalent of *King Horn*'s Westernesse⁷⁹) exists within a moderately fleshed out continental Europe; while there, Horn goes to war against Anjou, and the poem mentions cities such as Lyon and Paris. The *Romance of Horn* helps show how *King Horn*'s much sparser geography functions differently.

Horn Childe, a later Middle English analogue (fourteenth century) survives in only one copy, found in the Auchinleck manuscript. Like the Anglo-Norman *Romance*, *Horn Childe* tells a similar story to that of *King Horn*, but set in a radically different geography. The poem announces in its opening lines that it is set in England, and it depicts Northumbrian geography with a detail that has been taken to suggest that the poet was personally familiar with Northumbria. Horn's episodes of exile take place in Wales and in Ireland, which are less conscientiously detailed. Unfortunately, the text is significantly defective and breaks off after

Horn rescues Rinnild from forced marriage; only 1136 lines have survived. *Horn Childe* shows that even in the Middle Ages at least one poet associated the story of Horn with England. Indeed, *Horn Childe* might even represent a critical reaction to the Horn story, suggesting (as have modern critics) that the story is about the English past.⁸⁰ *Horn Childe* depicts a conspicuously insular world: while *King Horn*'s geography might recall the Atlantic archipelago, *Horn Childe* explicitly unfolds across some of its major borders. In doing so, it also illustrates the potential of *King Horn*'s hybrid geography; though we cannot be sure how the poet of *Horn Childe* treated the end of the story, its much more specific territories have less inventive potential.

Several other, later analogues exist, which I do not consider here in relation to *King Horn*. The fifteenth-century French prose romance *Ponthus et Sidoine* is derived from the *Romance of Horn*, and was in turn adapted into English, German, Dutch, and Icelandic. *Ponthus*, in its various forms, is distant enough from *King Horn* both in textual affiliation and in time that it is not a productive interlocutor for my purposes.⁸¹ The "Hind Horn" ballads (Child no. 17) occasionally do interesting things with geography (some situate the action, typically though not exclusively in Scotland, and many play on the land/sea dichotomy), but in the ballad tradition the story has essentially been reduced to the topos of recognition between Horn and his lover. As a result, ballads' geographic needs differ dramatically from the romance texts, so that their differences are due more to generic requirements and limitations than to expressive spatial strategy. The *Romance of Horn* and *Horn Childe and Maiden Rinnild* complement *King Horn* nicely, both providing rather different ways of imagining the same basic story geographically, and thus they will help me show exactly how *King Horn* builds and uses its geography.

Estrangement and Reclamation: Structural Geography

To understand the how the places named by *King Horn* operate, we must begin with its structure, for these places operate as a tightly-knit closed system. *King Horn* follows the pattern that scholars term the exile-and-return romance. It begins with the hero's dispossession and concludes when he regains his rightful status and lands. Geography is closely implicated in this story-pattern, for the plot as a whole concerns the loss of the hero's land, and his ordeals throughout the story lead him to regain it. Moreover, this pattern necessitates travel; the hero of the story passes out of his native land into unfamiliar territory in the path back to his home territory.

In some exile-and-return romances, such as *Bevis of Hampton*, these travels are expansive and can seem random. But *King Horn* is tightly structured. Its geography revolves chiefly around just three territories: Suddene, Westernesse, and Irelande. We briefly hear of a foray into a fourth country (Reynes), and one crucial part of the story unfolds within a space that is newly created for the purpose (Ffikenhild's fortress). Unlike sprawling romances such as *Bevis of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick*, which stretch across the world, encompassing distant lands like Armenia and Constantinople, the geography of *King Horn* is neat and compact. Indeed, the romance forecloses upon all interruptions to its geographic scheme, for nothing lies between these lands but the sea.

These places provide the structure for the poem, and traveling from one place to another initiates a new phase in the plot and a new stage in Horn's progress toward his heritage.⁸² Here is an overview of the plot, divided into steps based on the places in which they occur:

1. In **Suddene**, Horn's father, King Murri, is riding when he is ambushed on the beach and slain by Saracen invaders. The Saracens, fearing Horn's revenge, cast Horn and his companions out to sea in a boat.

2. The children reach the shore of **Westernesse**, where they are taken in and raised at King Almair's court, because of their superlative beauty. The king's daughter, Rymenhild, falls in love with Horn, who delays her advances first until he becomes a knight and then until he has proven himself in combat. He achieves this latter goal when he finds Saracens arrived on the shores of Westernesse and slays them. After this he accepts Rymenhild's advances, but Horn's treacherous companion Ffikenhild tells the king that Horn is sleeping with Rymenhild and intends to slay Almair. Almair finds Horn and Rymenhild in bed together and exiles Horn from the kingdom.
3. Horn leaves for **Ireland**, where he adopts a pseudonym but is accepted at court because of his beauty. A giant arrives at court and announces that Saracens have landed in Ireland. The giant proposes a combat to determine who will rule Ireland. Horn fights as the Irish champion and slays the giant, who turns out to be the same warrior who killed King Murri. The king offers his daughter Reynild's hand in marriage to Horn, but Horn defers for seven years until a message reaches him telling him that Rymenhild is being forced to marry.
4. Horn takes a company of Irish knights and returns to **Westernesse**. Disguised, he tests Rymenhild's fidelity, then leads his warriors to rescue her and slay her suitor, Modi. He proclaims his innocence to King Almair, and declares he will not lie with Rymenhild until he has liberated his homeland.
5. Horn and his Irish warriors travel to **Suddene**, which they liberate from the Saracens. Horn remains there until he receives word that Ffikenhild has seized Rymenhild in order to force her to marry him.

6. Horn and his followers travel to Ffikenhild's **new castle**, which he has constructed off the shore of **Westernesse**. There they rescue Rymenhild and execute Ffikenhild. Horn installs his retainer Arnoldin as the successor to King Almair in Westernesse.
7. The poem concludes in a flurry of travel when in less than thirty lines Horn and Rymenhild visit each remaining land that has been mentioned in the poem:
 - a. They go to **Reynes**, the kingdom of Modi, who earlier attempted to marry Rymenhild, and Horn installs King Almair's steward Apelbrus, who has been loyal to him, as the new king.
 - b. Then they travel to **Ireland**, where Horn marries the princess Reynild to his faithful retainer Apulf.
 - c. Finally, they return to **Suddene** to reign themselves.

The first part of the poem (through step 5) proceeds according to a very neat progression of steps out and in: Suddene → Westernesse → Ireland → Westernesse → Suddene. Horn moves two steps outward from his land to Ireland, the farthest point in the poem, and then returns to Suddene.

Making a King

The out-in motion of the romance articulates Horn as king: his movement within the poem's geography gives his character form. The romance follows a pattern of estrangement and reclamation; Horn is driven progressively farther away from his homeland until he is ready to begin reclaiming his heritage, and then his trajectory turns inward, propelling him back toward Suddene. The structure of estrangement and reclamation defines the romances we term exile-and-return (the hero must be cut off from the land of his heritage and later regain it), but in *King Horn* estrangement and reclamation do not merely describe the hero's passage out of and into his

ancestral territory.⁸³ They make Horn into a king by first requiring him to credential himself and then having him assert his ownership.

Horn as Machine

This is not a process of character development (in a modern, novelistic sense), for Horn lacks anything like an individual psychology.⁸⁴ Nor, indeed, does Horn actually develop. Robert Rouse has characterized the exile-and-return-style journeys of a different romance, *Guy of Warwick*, as helical: “helical rather than circular as Guy returns from these journeys changed” (“Walking,” 140).⁸⁵ But unlike Guy, Horn does not change in the course of his adventures. Characters throughout the romance make much of Horn’s superlative beauty, which, in a familiar romance motif, encodes his nobility consistently from his youth. Moreover, as the Saracens recognize, a certain kind of action is inherent in Horn’s character: the child Horn already contains his future revenge upon the Saracens.⁸⁶ Thus, at least in the case of *King Horn*, I take issue with Diane Speed’s characterization of the exile-and-return hero’s “process of learning and maturing” as the product of his period of exile (“Construction,” 146).⁸⁷

Instead of developmental, Horn’s progress through the romance is quasi-mechanistic. He does not learn or change through his deeds, but they credential him, advancing his rank and accomplishing steps necessary to actualize him not just as Horn but as King Horn.⁸⁸ Movement enables and structures this process: Horn first moves out, away from his own land of Suddene in a process that requires him to prove himself as he is successively further estranged from his native authority. Then, once the apogee of Horn’s self-assertion has been reached, the trajectory turns inward and Horn reclaims those things to which he has a claim. His movement through these territories underlies his progression to the state of king.

Estrangement

Horn's journey begins with estrangement. Horn, as the son of the slain king of Suddene, is the rightful heir to Suddene's throne. As Horn moves outward from Suddene toward Ireland, he becomes progressively more estranged from this heritage. When the Saracen invaders banish him from Suddene, he is isolated from his realm and the support structures it provides; his place in society is no longer assured. He enters Westernesse as a foundling, indebted to King Almair.⁸⁹

Horn himself underscores his debased status when Rymenhild, Almair's daughter, proposes marriage to him. Horn explains that they cannot marry because his status is too low:

Ihc am icome [*bore* O, *ybore* L] of þralle
 And fundling am bifalle;⁹⁰

 Hit nere no fair wedding
 Bitwexe þral and king.⁹¹ (425-30)

Horn is a thrall, his status erased by the Saracen takeover of his kingdom.⁹² At the same time, he is a foundling, subordinate to Rymenhild's father. Despite Horn's noble birth, he and Rymenhild are of incommensurate status, and cannot be joined.

But this impediment is not permanent, for as Horn explains, he could advance to the appropriate social status by becoming a knight.⁹³ Estranged from the nobility of his birth, he can credential himself through the prescribed ceremonial act of knighting and advance toward the appropriate social status. Yet dubbing alone proves insufficient. Once Horn is knighted, Rymenhild presses him to fulfill his pledge, but Horn objects essentially that he is not knight enough: "And mi kni3thod proue / Ar þen ihc þe wowe" (551-52). He appeals to courtly conventions—essentially to the conventions of romance—to insist that he must fight before he marries:

And of vre mestere
 So is þe manere
 Wiþ sume opere kni3te

For his lemman fiȝte
Or eni wif he take.⁹⁴ (555-59)

Combat actualizes Horn's knightly rank and readies him to marry Rymenhild. Once Horn has slaughtered the Saracen invaders on the coast of Westernesse, he comes to Rymenhild and marries her privately. By defending Westernesse from pagan attackers, Horn ratifies his knightliness and fits himself to marry the princess.

Though Horn first enters Westernesse without any claim to position within its society, he carries with him his own name and history. When he arrives, he tells King Almair the name of his native land (Suddene) and the story of how the Saracens drove him from it. Almair responds by asking Horn his name, which Horn tells him. Almair makes a point of Horn's name by punning on it. Ireland, where Horn goes when he is banished from Westernesse, not only places Horn structurally further away from his homeland than he was in Westernesse, but separates him from his history and from his very name. In Ireland, rather than telling King Purston where he comes from, Horn cuts himself off from his royal heritage by adopting the pseudonym Cutberd.⁹⁵ The text underwrites this new presentation of Horn; all three manuscripts regularly refer to him by pseudonym during the Irish episode.

Yet in Ireland, as in Westernesse, Horn once more successfully credentials himself. As in Westernesse, Horn is easily accepted by the court—here not because of his ancestry but only his exceptional beauty. And as in Westernesse, Horn cannot attain his highest status, his most thorough integration, until he has fought. Once again, Horn finds himself in a land menaced by Saracens. On Christmas, a giant arrives and issues a challenge: he will battle three Irish champions to determine whether Christians or pagans will hold Ireland. Horn quickly gets the king to appoint him Ireland's sole champion, and he launches into battle. After the battle is over, the Irish king offers to marry Horn to his daughter and make him heir to Ireland. Horn enters

each kingdom with low status—lower in Ireland than in Westernesse, for in Ireland he lacks even a noble past. His deeds in each kingdom elevate him and fit him for royal marriage, elevating him toward his proper social status.

Reclamation

Ireland is a structural tipping point on the poem, for this second ratification of Horn's noble status also moves the romance from estrangement to reclamation. At the same time Horn credentials himself by defending Ireland from Saracens, he also begins his revenge for his father's death. And the aftermath of the Irish episode begins a trajectory of geographic movement back toward the beginning of the romance, through Westernesse and finally to Suddene.

Horn's battle with the pagan giant is clearly positioned as a defense of Ireland: Horn is chosen as the champion who will fight to determine the land's fate. Like his battle against the Saracen invaders of Westernesse, the struggle recalls Horn's loss of Suddene to the hands of Saracen invaders. But in Ireland, unlike in Westernesse, the battle explicitly becomes personal. During a respite in the fight, the giant compares Horn's prowess to that of a previous opponent:

Nadde ihc neure ihent
Of man so harde dent,
Bute of þe king Murry
Þat was stalewurþe;
He was of Hornes kenne,
Ihc slo3 him in Suddenne. (881-86)

The giant reveals himself to be no random opponent but the very warrior who slew Horn's father. This revelation brings Horn's ancestry and heritage crashing back into his life in Ireland. The narration of the poem had referred to Horn pretty consistently as Cutberd from the time he set foot in Ireland onward.⁹⁶ Here, the pagan's speech makes Horn himself a major reference point: Horn's given name is spoken again, and indeed accorded great prominence as Horn, rather than Murri, defines the lineage. For C, this moment brings Horn (as opposed to Cutberd) back into the

narrative; in l. 887, it makes Horn once again its grammatical subject it describes his horror at this revelation: “Horn [C] *or* Godmod [L] *or* Cuberd [O] him gan agrise.”⁹⁷

Horn’s encounter with the giant who slew his father begins his reclamation of his heritage, for at this point he finds himself not only defending Ireland but avenging his father. He quickly dispatches the giant and refuses to let the remaining pagans flee to their ships. The text explicitly frames Horn’s slaughter of the retreating pagans as an act of revenge: “To deþe hem alle he broȝte; / His fader deþ hi boȝte” (903-04).⁹⁸ As Horn defends this territory farthest from his native land, the narrative trajectory turns inward, as he begins to right the wrongs that have been done to him.

The next episode in the romance restores his name to him and carries him back toward Westernesse. King Þurston of Ireland has offered to make Horn his heir and marry him to his daughter Reynild, threatening Horn’s existing marriage to Rymenhild, but Horn defers for seven years. At nearly the end of this time, a messenger travels comes to Ireland, seeking Horn to tell him that Rymenhild is to be married against her will to King Modi of Reynes, who has come to Westernesse to seek her hand. If the giant recalled Horn’s true name to the poem, the messenger definitively restores it to him. At l. 937, before the messenger arrives, two manuscripts still refer to Horn by his pseudonym.⁹⁹ However, in l. 981, after the messenger has spoken, all three manuscripts name him Horn, and none uses his pseudonym again. The message also leads Horn to reclaim his personal history in Ireland; he goes to King Þurston and tells the king his story as he prepares to save Rymenhild.

Horn’s return to Westernesse restores to him more than just his name and his past. His rescue of Rymenhild is, in fact, itself an act of reclamation; as his wife, she belongs to him, and her suitor seeks to estrange her from him. When he explains the situation to Þurston, he tells him

Þat Rimenhild was his owe;
 And of his gode kenne,
 Þe kinges of Suddene.
 And hu he sloȝ in felde
 Þat fader his aquelde. (1006-10)

He speaks of Rymenhild in the language of possession: she is *his*, as Suddene is his, and thus King Modi is attempting to deprive him of what is rightfully his, as did the Saracens in taking Suddenne. At the very same moment, he reclaims his past, dropping the pseudonym that had estranged him from his proper name. He turns back toward Westernesse in order to reclaim his bride from those who would take her from him, as the Saracens have taken his land.

From Westernesse, the narrative trajectory propels Horn inescapably further inward, toward his native land, the land from which he started: Suddene. One more, Rymenhild acts as the focal point for Horn's progression. Just as being knighted was not enough for him to become Rymenhild's husband, so rescuing her is insufficient to seal their marriage. After Horn has slain Rymenhild's suitor Modi (and the wedding guests, for good measure), he declares to her father that he will delay their sexual reunion until he has liberated Suddene.¹⁰⁰

Þu kep hure a stunde
 Þer whiles þat i funde
 In-to min heritage

 Þanne schal Rymenhild þe ȝinge
 Ligge bi Horn þe kinge! (1303-18)

The opening rubric in L describes the romance as "þe geste of Kyng Horn"; in this passage Horn describes the action necessary to constitute him as the titular king. He must complete his journey inward; in recapturing Suddene, he will realize the full extent of his hereditary entitlement and become a king. Strikingly, his official sexual union with Rymenhild is predicated upon his fulfilling this role. He must be a king for her to sleep with him legitimately. Horn speaks of Suddene as his "heritage," underscoring the foreordained nature of his accession.

Horn's reconquest of Suddene concludes the inward movement of the romance. Horn and his men readily defeat the Saracens, and Horn is reunited with his mother (who went into hiding when the Saracens invaded) and assumes the visible sign of his rule: "Croun he gan werie" (1419).¹⁰¹ Horn has defeated his Saracen enemy and is, at last, king.

Thus Horn has retraced the steps of his estrangement in reverse, returning to claim his rightful authority in the land where he began. The poem's process of estrangement has twice forced Horn to demonstrate his prowess by gaining acceptance at court and defeating the enemies who slew his father; after he has advanced from nothing to become a potential heir to Ireland, his process of reclamation restores to him territory, mother, and bride, reconstituting him as the king he ought to have been by inheritance.

Joining Kingdoms

Horn's heroic development, his process of estrangement and reclamation, is thus built around the poem's geography, and inflected by his passage through its territories.¹⁰² But this process of movement is not just about Horn's reclaiming Suddene, with the territories merely serving as stages in a progression that will bring him back toward home. He does not just "grow" into his own kingdom; he accrues claims to territories as he moves through them. Indeed, Horn's trials do not end when he recaptures Suddene; he returns to intervene in the poem's other territories before he can take up his final residence in Suddene. Horn's movement reconfigures the poem's territories so that he is not merely a singular king, but the hub of a network of interconnected spaces.

Cultivating Loyalty

Horn's ties to the territories through which he passes develop by an avenue traditional both in romance and in the political world: marriage. Horn develops a claim to Westernesse

through his marriage to Rymenhild, even without her father's consent. Likewise, Ireland's allegiance to Horn seems to revolve at least in part around King Þurston's proposal that Horn marry the Irish princess Reynild.

Indeed, the text flirts with the idea that marriage itself is a tool of conquest. When Ffikenhild betrays Horn to King Almair, he suggests that seizing the realm and taking Rymenhild are one and the same, telling the king that Horn plans "To bringe þe of lyue, / And take Rymenhild to wyue" (703-04). Horn, of course, does not actually intend to kill Almair, and has already married Rymenhild in the privacy of her bower. But Ffikenhild's couplet, rhyming *lyue* with *wyue*, acknowledges that these two ideas are linked. Unlike King Þurston of Ireland, Almair appears to have no children but Rymenhild, and so by marrying her Horn becomes the heir to Westernesse. Even though Horn has no plan to assassinate Almair, marrying Rymenhild stakes a territorial claim against the king. In the world of *King Horn*, as in life, marriage functions politically and geographically, altering the poem's map of authority.

The state of affairs in Ireland underscores the extent to which the domestic and geographic spheres inform each other. In the course of the battle against the Saracens, King Þurston's two sons, Berild and Harild, are slain, so there is no longer an heir to the Irish throne.¹⁰³ Because Horn is both beautiful and strong, Þurston proposes that Horn replace his sons as heir:

Mi Regne schaltu welde,
And to spuse helde
Reynild mi doȝter
þat sitteþ vpon lofte. (921-24)

Like Ffikenhild, Þurston leads with kingship and comes to marriage only second, but here the order is correct: the king proposes the marriage to get Ireland a new king. The king, of course, is rewarding Horn for his success in the battle to save Ireland. The proposal is not capricious;

Burston offers his daughter, and Ireland's throne, to Horn in recompense for protecting Ireland's territorial integrity. The sense of debt or obligation between Horn and Burston extends in both directions. When Horn finally declines to marry the Irish princess, he tells the king,

ischal do to spuse
 Bi do3ter wel to huse;
 Heo schal to spuse a3e
 Apulf mi gode felaze. (1015-18)

Horn makes good on this promise at the end of the poem, marrying Reynild to Apulf and installing Apulf as Burston's successor. Burston's proposal has made Horn to some degree responsible for Ireland's lineage. Even though Reynild has not been exchanged between them, the prospect of the marriage has allied them. Horn's marriage to Rymenhild, of course, constitutes an even firmer tie; since Almair apparently has no sons, Horn has entered the sequence of Westernesse's succession.

Even in Ireland, where Horn (having declined the princess's hand) has no direct authority, he is linked not just to Burston but to the country, or at least to the Irish people. Horn's actions in Ireland cement him as someone with authority over the Irish. When he departs from Ireland he does so with a company of Irish men, who accompany him for the rest of the poem and help him rescue Rymenhild and liberate Suddene.¹⁰⁴ While Ireland tips Horn's progress from estrangement to reclamation, he does not go out of Ireland alone, as he entered it. Instead, his Irish followers assist in his reconquests, both of Rymenhild and of Suddene. Ireland does not simply credential Horn and send him back inward to reclaim what he has lost. Instead, Ireland, in the form of this Irish troop, adheres to Horn, and Horn's Irish men cut across the map of the poem: as Horn drives off the Saracens from Ireland, so the Irish are instrumental in the liberation of Rymenhild and of Suddene itself.¹⁰⁵

The Threat of Non-Territory

Thus, while the term “exile-and-return” helpfully identifies a common romance plot pattern stretching back at least to the Greek novel, the structure of *King Horn* is in fact more complicated than the out-and-in pattern conjured by that name would suggest. The romance’s final major episode, in which Horn rescues Rymenhild from Ffikenhild’s castle, underscores its concern with connection and geographic cohesion. In a poem marked by the insufficiency of Horn’s actions, even his liberation of his homeland is not enough to complete his process of reclamation. Instead, to complete the action that the poem requires of him, Horn must rescue Rymenhild from yet another suitor and reunite with her.¹⁰⁶

Ffikenhild’s abduction of Rymenhild constitutes not just a personal attack against Horn, but a spatial crisis in the poem. The Saracen invaders who have menaced each land to this point threatened to subvert the rightful disposition of the land: they want to wrest Christian territory away from its Christian governors. But Ffikenhild tries to subvert the very idea of the land as a stable, bounded entity. He attempts to create an entirely new space in which he has sole authority and can ignore Horn’s prior claim to Rymenhild.

Ffikenhild does not seek to wed Rymenhild legitimately and thus enter into the succession of Westernesse, as King Modi in the previous Westernesse episode. Instead, he retreats with her to a castle of his own construction. This castle belongs to no land; it resides in a zone defined by its liminality and isolation. In a very real way, Ffikenhild is building not in any land but in the sea itself:

Castel he dede sette,
Mid séé him biflette;
þat þerin ne miȝte
Bute foȝel wiþ flizte;
Whanne þe se wiþ-droȝe
þer miȝte come ynoȝe. (1429-34)

Ffikenhild's new martial space is not only unlandish but unhuman; it is an environment accessible, generally, to birds, not to man. In this way the castle is almost entirely cut off from human society. The exception to this rule is not within the capacity of man, but of nature. Passage to Ffikenhild's castle is tidal, determined by the cyclical ebb and flow of the sea, an inexorable and superhuman force.

Critics of the romance have been quick to notice that Horn effectively dominates the sea in the poem, and he does indeed overcome Ffikenhild's stronghold (Crane, *Insular* 31-32; Sobecki 107-13). However, first, the poem emphasizes this new space's oddity and presents it as a challenge for Horn. After a visionary nightmare about losing Rymenhild to Ffikenhild, Horn ships out with his followers and reaches this strange castle. His first reaction to the space Ffikenhild has constructed is ignorance: "Nuste Horn no3te aliue / Whar he was a-riue" (1473-74).¹⁰⁷ The word *a-riue* emphasizes the novel geography created by Ffikenhild's construction, for Horn has literally come to a new shore (Anglo-Norman *rive*) from when he traveled to Westernesse before. The poem goes on to emphasize the novelty of this construction as the reason for Horn's ignorance: "Penne castel he ne knewe / For he was so newe" (1475-76). The language of novelty clings even to Ffikenhild's actions concerning the castle; when he takes Rymenhild to his castle to wed her, the poem says, he brings her "bi derke / In-to his *nywe* werke" (1467-68, my emphasis).

With the text's emphasis upon its novelty and constructedness, Ffikenhild's castle becomes in some ways the uncanny double of the churches Horn has built immediately after he liberates Suddene from the Saracens. In Suddene, Horn erects churches to paint the land Christian. By reversing the Saracen church-razing of the beginning of the romance, Horn's construction campaign inscribes his restoration of the proper Christian social order on the

kingdom's built environment. Here, Ffikenhild's landless castle allows Ffikenhild to assert his own authority and withdraw from existing structures of authority and hierarchy. And he pulls Rymenhild out of those structures as well; when he takes Rymenhild he rejects Horn's claim to her and subverts her father's authority.¹⁰⁸ At this point, Horn has risen to a position of prominence in all three of the poem's main territories. But, before allowing the plot to resolve, the romance poses an additional threat to his authority: Ffikenhild creates a new center of power outside the spheres of land-based authority Horn has attained.

Earlier, when King Modi attempted to marry Rymenhild, he did so within the territory of Westernesse. Horn traveled back into the space of the court from which he had been exiled, expelling the usurper and reasserting his claim to Rymenhild (and thus, indirectly, to the court). This time, the threat arises not when a usurper claims territory that belongs to someone else, but when someone inside the poem's geographical and political system withdraws to carve out a new space beyond existing political boundaries. King Modi and the Saracens were both threats from without which invaded space that Horn had to redomesticate. Ffikenhild, on the other hand, raises the threat that geography is endlessly extensible and unstable, and that rulers cannot enforce their rights across unstable borders. Expanding on his earlier treachery, he attempts to destabilize Horn's network of authority by withdrawing Horn's pledged wife into a new center of power. Just when Horn has driven out invaders and consolidated authority in all the text's realms, Ffikenhild creates a new place to be his stronghold, redrawing the text's map in the final act.¹⁰⁹

By overcoming this challenge and rescuing his rightful bride, Horn reasserts the strength and importance of the connections he has made among the lands of the poem. The sea begins in the romance as a threatening space: it carries invaders to the land; it is meant to swallow up Horn and his young companions when they are set adrift in it; it is supposed to isolate Rymenhild in an

impregnable fortress where she cannot be reclaimed by her husband. But Horn has made this threatening space a zone of connection, crossing it to weave three kingdoms together.¹¹⁰ As Horn easily gains access to Ffikenhild's castle, executes his former companion, and rescues Rymenhild, he reaffirms that he has remade the sea into something that binds the poem's territories together, instead of sundering them.¹¹¹ By defeating Ffikenhild, Horn affirms the principle of connection over the geographic potential for isolation.

Community through King-Making

The final lines of the poem, which follow the episode of Ffikenhild's castle, showcase the connectedness of its territories in the end. Once Ffikenhild has been defeated, the romance concludes with a tour of all the places Horn has visited; he goes around installing new kings everywhere.¹¹² This process begins in the very line after Horn has Ffikenhild executed:

Horn makede Arnoldin þare
King after king Aylmare
Of al Westernesse
For his mildhertnesse. (1527-30)

Arnoldin is the cousin of Horn's most trusted companion Apulf, and has proven himself loyal to Horn; when Horn came to Ffikenhild's castle, he found Arnoldin waiting to apprise him of the situation (1477-92). Then Horn and Rymenhild set sail. They travel first to Reynes, the realm of Rymenhild's late suitor King Modi. The next stop is Ireland, which has become a place from Horn's past.¹¹³ Here, Horn makes good on his promise to marry Apulf to Reynild. Thus Ireland, already Horn's ally, gains an even closer connection as Horn's most loved and faithful companion becomes heir to its throne, occupying the role once offered to Horn himself. From Ireland, Horn returns finally to Suddene.

Horn's sojourn to Reynes during this final voyage appears to rupture what is otherwise a very neat conclusion: aside from Reynes, Horn travels only to places he has already been, and

visits every land in the text. This voyage is the only time Reynes actually appears in the romance, and it is only mentioned in one other line. Though the land plays a very small role, the famously economical romance chooses to showcase it in this fast-paced conclusion. The inclusion of Reynes in this section is especially striking because it is the only land depicted (or even mentioned) outside the Suddene-Westernessee-Ireland system. *King Horn* seems to complicate its sense of space by taking us (briefly) to Reynes, yet Reynes functions in a manner compatible with the text's main geographic system.

Reynes has an extremely limited textual presence: the land is named in only one line, and only to identify "King Modi of Reynes (reny O), / þat Hornes enemi is" (971-72). For most of the poem, Reynes does not even seem to be a properly realized territory; it appears to have only this nominal existence in naming Modi (and only in the line that first names him). However, in the whirlwind final lines where Horn installs new kings everywhere, we learn that Horn and his followers "ariueden vnder reme / þer Modi king was sire / þat Horn slo3 with ire" (1540-42),¹¹⁴ and Horn installs Apelbrus (King Almair's steward and Horn's foster-father in Westernessee) as its new king, "For his gode teching" (1544).

This late passage to Reynes endows it with a concrete reality. At the end of the romance, Reynes is not merely the nominal point of origin for an antagonist, but a physical territory that can be traveled to. Moreover, the romance is conscious of its political existence: Horn has slain King Modi, leaving the land without a king, so he needs to provide it with a new one. Yet the romance does not name the kingdom when Horn travels to it at the end; it merely refers to it as King Modi's realm. That is, the land does not have the same lexical status as Suddene, Westernessee, and Ireland. The text thinks of it first and foremost in terms of its ruler, and it really materializes as a place only when Horn must install a new ruler.

In fact, *Reynes* may have an etymological background that renders it such a general term as to be almost meaningless. The name could derive from the Old Norse *rein*, which means a strip of land, particularly demarcating a boundary.¹¹⁵ Taken as such, *Reynes* might be only half a toponym; Modi of Reynes is perhaps parallel to John of Boundys (John of the Bounds), the only toponym employed in the whole of *Gamelyn*. A Norse derivation for the term is credible, as Walter French identifies Modi's name itself as probably Norse in origin (129-30), although if the name does possess this Norse background we cannot expect that most readers would have recognized it.

By contrast, the toponym found in the Anglo-Norman version, *Fenie*, opens out intertextually: it designates one or more Saracen lands in the *chanson de geste Aspremont* (Thomas 2:163).¹¹⁶ While *Fenie* does not clearly designate a territory we recognize any more than *Reynes*, the recurrence of this toponym suggests that at the very least it creates a referential effect: it connects the space within the *Romance of Horn* with (at minimum) an *imagined* larger world, in much the same way identifying Brittany and Ireland ties the romance to the world. Indeed, if (as scholars tend to believe) *King Horn* preserves the names of the hypothetical ur-*Horn* more regularly than the *Romance of Horn*,¹¹⁷ it is possible that Thomas, finding an unfamiliar name in his source, adopted a toponym familiar from other French-language materials that also carried associations of Christian-Saracen conflict.¹¹⁸

Fenie has a less concrete presence than *Reynes*, even though the term appears more often.¹¹⁹ Horn never travels to *Fenie* in the Anglo-Norman poem; it is mentioned only when naming King Modin (the Anglo-Norman equivalent of Modi). Yet, despite its non-presence, the greater social interconnectedness of the Anglo-Norman poem renders *Fenie* more closely linked to other territories than *Reynes*. In *King Horn*, Modi appears out of nowhere to marry

Rymenhild. The Anglo-Norman Modin, by contrast, is Horn's kinsman, descended from his great-grandfather's brother. Nor is this his only familial connection: while Horn simply slays Modi at the wedding feast, he unhorses Modin in a joust without killing him. Then, a bishop dissolves Modin's marriage to Rigmel because of consanguinity!¹²⁰

Of course this is merely an instance of that infamous excuse for dissolving inconvenient marriages; after all, the same *laisse* has already admitted that Modin sent for the bishop "Ainz qu'il ait sun païs ne malmis ne gasté" ("before he [Horn] might harry or lay waste his [Modin's] land," 4529, *laisse* 219).¹²¹ But the accessibility of this excuse highlights the interconnectedness of persons in the *Romance of Horn*. These connections have geographic consequences as well. Even though Modin has attempted to steal Horn's rightful wife, his blood relation to Modin and Modin's willingness to renounce Rigmel make them allies, so that at the end of the Anglo-Norman poem Horn gives Lenburc, the princess of Westir (Ireland), to Modin. The Irish king has two daughters in the *Romance of Horn*, and the kingdom still passes, along with the other princess, to Haderof (Apulf in *King Horn*). However, far from having to dispose of Modin's kingdom (as in the Middle English version), Horn pulls Modin further into the complicated network of alliances and familial relationships that exists in the Anglo-Norman romance.

The more fully realized political world of Thomas's poem causes its geography to work differently from *King Horn*'s. Fenenie is the locus for a figure connected to Horn by familial bonds that preexist the plot of the romance. Moreover, Modin is a king already, and does not hold his lands from Horn. Although all is at peace when the Anglo-Norman romance concludes, Modin has already demonstrated that blood relation does not automatically equate to personal loyalty.

King Horn eschews these complexities by avoiding any politics that preexist the romance. Modi is a usurper; he is dispatched; his land is granted to someone faithful to Horn. It is striking that Horn need not conquer Reynes; the romance does not think of the kingdom as having subjects who might consent or refuse to submit to the killer of their king. Reynes is a simple space, and having slain its king gives Horn the authority to reinscribe it as he wills.

Reynes, then, is in some senses the exception that proves the rule for the poem's main system of three territories. Reynes sits outside the romance's main territorial system, but it does not have history or politics of its own, as do many territories in the *Romance of Horn*. Instead, Reynes is an empty source for a challenge to Horn's authority that the romance needs to come from outside this territorial system, and once Horn has dealt with the challenger, the space is easily mastered and subordinated to Horn's system of control. Even though the land itself hardly factors into the plot of the romance, Reynes acts like the other autonomous, isolated territories and so is easily integrated into the network of spaces that Horn establishes on his king-making spree.

This spate of kingmaking concludes the poem. Horn and Rymenhild return to Suddene to rule, and the poem emphasizes their love for each other.¹²² Within a scant few lines, the poem abruptly terminates their story: "Nu ben hi boþe dede: / Driþe hem to heuene lede! AMEN!" (1559-60) The speed and finality of this resolution stand in stark contrast to the conclusion of the *Romance of Horn*, where Thomas announces that Horn "Le vaillant Hadermod de Rimel engendrat, / Ki Asfriche cunquist e qe pus i regnat / E ki tuz ses parenz de paens i vengat" ("fathered on Rigmel the valiant Hadermod, who conquered and then ruled Africa, and took revenge on the heathen for all his kin," 5236-38, *laisse* 245), and declares that the poet's own son will write of Horn's. That end looks outside the story at hand, gesturing to a larger history in

which Horn has descendants and there are still pagans in Africa that need to be dealt with. But *King Horn's* end is insular, with no such appeal to global issues. Each territory has a new king; Horn and his new queen love each other; and now they are dead. Thus, providing for the rulership of each of the poem's territories is the only gesture it (or Horn) makes to the future, and is the last major action the poem undertakes.¹²³

Horn's personal connections with each king reinforce the sense of interconnectedness created by this end. Instead of the isolation that was the status quo at the opening of the poem, these territories are now ruled by people who are personally loyal to each other. The notion of exile and return thus cannot account for all the political and structural work of the poem: Horn is pulling the poem's places together as he goes. He does return to rule in his own land, but he drags all the other lands along with him, creating a network out of places that had no clear political connection before. The structure of the poem enables the integration of its individual places around the figure of Horn.

Fantasy of Invasion: Saracens and the Land

While Horn rewrites these territories, linking them together through loyalty to him, it is the Saracens who act as the major geographic catalyst in the romance. Horn does not simply travel to neighbor kingdoms securing alliances through fosterage or marriage, as did happen within historical affairs of state. Instead, the romance plunges these lands into crisis as each in turn is menaced by the threat of Saracen invasion. The menace of this outside force defines each kingdom and exposes Christian religion as the single defining trait of each land. The threat posed by the Saracens is what allows Horn to prove himself in each kingdom and thus to connect them as he regains his own heritage from the Saracens.

These central Saracens themselves pose a serious problem of referentiality, at least for modern readers of the romance. Wherever we understand Suddene and Westernesse to be located, we do not expect to encounter Muslim warriors in Ireland; the Saracens appear to be an anachorism. Naturally, this puzzle has provoked scholarly interpretation. Dorothy Metlitzki, taking the notion of Muslim-Irish contact literally, has suggested that *King Horn* might preserve memories of historical encounters of Britain and Ireland with Muslim sea voyagers in the tenth century and before (120-26).¹²⁴ But even if such speculation is correct, it seems unlikely that readers from the thirteenth century on would have been aware of such encounters. If Metlitzki is correct, this voyage might explain how Muslim sea-voyagers entered narrative tradition, but this tells us nothing about what the incident meant to the author or audience of the poem as we have it.

Other interpreters point out that “Saracen” in Middle English did not necessarily mean Muslim; it can refer to pagans and religious Others of all stripes.¹²⁵ The fluidity of “Saracen” allows a different historical reading. Many readers have suggested that the poem encodes the memory of Viking raids upon England and Ireland in the earlier Middle Ages.¹²⁶ “Saracen,” in this view, is just a familiar term that the poem is applying to the pagan Northmen who raided the island in the Anglo-Saxon era. The presence of Ireland helps to underwrite this understanding of the romance for its proponents, for these Northmen established bases in Ireland and used them in their raids on England. Yet, however convincing a background for the development of the story Viking raids provide, we lack evidence that the romance was read that way in the thirteenth century.¹²⁷

Diane Speed has argued persuasively that it is less productive to think of these Saracens in terms of their historical than of their literary background.¹²⁸ Speed demonstrates that the

representation of Saracens in the poem emerges from the *chanson de geste* tradition. While the Saracens of *chanson de geste* can sometimes refer to Saxons (*Doon de Maience*) or to Scandinavians (*Patonopeu A*), on the whole “they are usually oriental Mediterranean peoples who were, or were regarded as, Islamic” (“Saracens,” 572). The Saracens of the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn* are unambiguously from Africa (Aufrike).¹²⁹ But the Anglo-Norman poem as a whole is much more deeply embedded in the space of the world than is *King Horn*, which feels no more need to place the Saracens on the map than it does the lands of Westernesse and Suddene. As Speed explains, the *King Horn* poet’s main focus was not on the Saracens as a real or realistic historical and geographical entity but on “the functional identity of the Saracens as the enemy in his literary construct” (“Saracens,” 595).

Yet although they lack territorial specificity, Saracens are not a generalized enemy: the name gives a religious inflection to the romance’s conflict. The Saracens are specifically an enemy to Christendom, and they establish a Christian/pagan dichotomy.¹³⁰ Making the poem’s aggressors Saracens forces the Christians to defend themselves *as Christians*. Moreover, Saracen/Christian conflicts are often explicitly geographical in the medieval Christian imagination. The *Chanson de Roland*’s Saracens attack Charlemagne’s forces at Roncevaux to put an end to Charlemagne’s campaign of conquest, which has seized all of Spain from pagan hands except for the city of Saragossa.¹³¹ In *Of Arthour and Merlin*, the Saracens are invaders, an outside force brought into the island to make war upon it.¹³²

Perhaps the most striking example for my purposes comes from a slightly later romance: *Sir Isumbras*. In his penitential wanderings, Isumbras comes to the shores of the “Grykkyssche see” (194), where he finds a startlingly massive fleet; “A hethene kyng was therinne / That Crystendome com to wyne, / To wakkyn woo ful wyde” (Hudson, *Four* 7-44, ll. 202-04).

Isumbras paints the world in broad strokes: there is a Christian part and a pagan part, and the heathen king seeks to conquer all of Christendom. This remarkable fantasy of invasion renders the body of Christian Europe vulnerable to attack, generating a militant Christianity in the figure of *Isumbras*.¹³³

The term *Saracen*, then, does not map neatly to a specific historical referent for us, and it is not clear that the romance's medieval readers would have understood it to refer to a specific people living in a specific place. But the term nevertheless functions geographically, defining the territories of Suddene, Westernesse, and Ireland as Christian against the Saracen threat.

Christian Territory under Assault

The romance's opening clearly announces a fundamental conflict between Christians and pagans, before Horn has even been mentioned. Moreover, the romance explicitly predicates the conflict on Saracen aggression. Horn's father, King Murri, is riding by the sea when fifteen Saracen ships come ashore. Murri, strikingly, does not immediately seek violence: "He axed what hi so3te / Oþer to londe bro3te" (41-42). The Christian king imagines the possibility of peaceful commercial exchange with the Saracens, like the trading expedition that opens Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* and the economic and cultural interchange that characterized the medieval Mediterranean. This is the last moment, however, where peace with the pagans is ever an option. In short order, one of the Saracens replies, "Þi lond-folk we schulle slon / Þat Crist [CL] or god [O] leueþ vpon" (45-46).¹³⁴ The Saracens, then, are aggressors: while Murri might have accepted them peaceably into his land, they have come specifically to slay all the Christians. Although they do not actually massacre all the inhabitants of Suddene, they forcibly convert the population and raze the land's churches, giving their violence a religious charge.

The Saracens do not explicitly specify that their violence will be against Christians when Horn later encounters them in Westernesse and Ireland. In Westernesse, the Saracen who addresses Horn tells him, “Þis lond we wulleȝ wyne / And sle þat þer beþ inne” (609-10). In Ireland, the scene is somewhat different; a Saracen challenger comes to the Irish court and proposes a combat to determine whether “al þis lond beo ȝoure” (that is, the Irish Christians’) or “al þis lond vre beo” (833, 835). But the repetitive structure of the romance causes us to read each Saracen assault as an echo of that first encounter on the shores of Suddene: as the Saracens threaten each land in turn, each successive invasion inherits its religious charge from the initial assault on Suddene.

Horn in turn frames the conflict as a test of the two religions when he alters the terms of combat against the Saracens in Ireland. Horn has established himself in the Irish court, under the alias Cutberd. At None on Christmas, “a Geant . . . iarmed of paynyme” (820-21) presents himself at the court announcing the arrival of a pagan fleet on the Irish coast. The giant proposes a combat at sunrise the next morning to determine who will hold the land, Christians or Saracens: three of the Irish king’s knights will fight against a single pagan warrior. But almost as soon as King Þurston has accepted the challenge and appointed his champions, Horn objects to the arrangement:

Sire king, hit nis no riȝte
On wiþ þre to fiȝte!
Aȝenes one hunde
Þre cristene to fonde! (847-50)

His modified repetition of the same claim moves his insistence that he fight alone into the realm of religious identity politics. At first, he offers a general maxim: a three-on-one fight is not just or appropriate. But in the following couplet he makes this claim more pointed: it would be particularly bad for three *Christians* to fight one *pagan*. This concern betrays that the combat is

about more than just the disposition of Burston's kingdom; it is also a contest of religions. The demeaning epithet *hunde* signifies innate Christian superiority. Horn's concern in this passage seems to be that the unfair fight of three Christians against a pagan would implicitly diminish Christianity through its imbalance. The fact that it is a *giant* that Horn fights furthers the clash-of-religions vibe, for the story recalls King David's improbably successful fight against the giant Goliath, which paved the way for him to become King of Israel.

Though the main struggle of the poem operates around the Christian/Saracen dichotomy, those terms do not hold equal status within the poem's lexis. The poem makes a spectacle of the Saracens, identifying them frequently by words that denote their religious identity—words like *Saracen*, *pagan*, *heathen*, and *hound*.¹³⁵ By contrast, the term *Christian* appears only three or four times (depending on the manuscript). Saracens are a more visible presence in the romance than are Christians because, for the poem, Christian is a natural, default state. The romance naturalizes Christianity; the Christian status of the inhabitants of Suddene, Westernesse, and Ireland need not be spoken.

While the poem naturalizes Christians themselves, it foregrounds the Christian deity. O, the manuscript most prolific in references to God, employs some term for the deity 23 times; the other two manuscripts are close behind.¹³⁶ By contrast, Saracen deities are almost entirely absent from the romance; we do not find here the “unholy trinity” of Apollin, Tervagant, and Mahoun frequently invoked in medieval depictions of Saracens. The Saracens' religious affiliation features in only one line and indeed in only one manuscript: during Horn's reconquest of Suddene, O announces that he slew the Saracens “*þe leuede on þe fende*” (1410).¹³⁷ Unlike the “unholy trinity,” which displays Saracen alterity by imagining them to worship a collection of

other gods, O's formulation imagines their belief within perfectly Christian terms: they believe not in some other (false) god, but in the (Christian) devil.

The Christian deity features most prominently in the poem as characters make direct appeals for events to unfold in a certain way.¹³⁸ Such references imagine a world governed and shaped by God; the fiend whom the Saracens follow, by contrast, lacks agency and authority. *God* is an organizing and ordering principle for the Christian characters in the poem, while the Saracens are a visible aberration from that order, verbally identified as Other and entering territories to disrupt them. Indeed, the romance casts the Saracen king as God's "wiperling" (152), an Old English word meaning "enemy" that is rare in Middle English period. Religious *belief* is a term in the poem, but it surfaces only in conjunction with religious violence and conversion; Christians and Saracens each identify their enemies and victims by the force in which they "believe," and Horn labels an ally in Saracen-occupied Suddene by noting that he "leuest on Criste" (1342 OL).¹³⁹ Aside from these brief identifications of the deities in whom Christians and Saracens believe, the content of belief does not enter the romance.¹⁴⁰ Belief is a cipher, defining the two polarized groups who contest and define the spaces of the romance.

Indeed, to try to separate specific elements of belief from other elements of society or behavior would be anachronistic and contrary to the philosophy of the romance. These elements—religious affiliation, civil authority, social structure, personal behavior, and indeed the land itself—are unified in the rich and resonant term *laze*, used three times in the romance.¹⁴¹ The term first appears quite early, as the romance describes the actions of the Saracens in Suddene after slaying Murri; no one might live, the text tells us, "Bute he his laze asoke" (67). *Laze* is personal in that line, but belongs elsewhere later on: as Horn and his followers enter Suddene with the intent of reconquering it, they see a knight lying in a field. OL go on to specify

that he lies under a shield, upon which is depicted “A croy3 of ihesu cristes lawe” (1334, L 1314).¹⁴² Here *laze* belongs not to man but to the deity. As I will discuss below, this cross codes the knight as intrinsically Christian despite his coerced conversion to paganism, and so preserves Christian religion within Suddene even while it is ruled by the Saracens. After these two weighty invocations, the third may seem trivial: during the scene where Horn, disguised as a palmer, infiltrates the banquet for the wedding of Rymenhild and Modi, we are told that Rymenhild serves drinks in the hall; she carries the drinking-horn “So laze was on londe” (1132). Here, we could gloss *laze* as custom; it describes the way a society habitually acts. These three uses situate the richly polyvalent *laze* at every level of action—the personal, the social/political, and the providential—demonstrating a strong sense of cultural integrity; the word carries a similar array of meanings in other narratives.¹⁴³

This conjunction of multiple spheres of action in the word *laze* is not a linguistic accident, but reflects the ideological operation of works like *King Horn*. The personal, social, and providential spheres are inseparable. As we shall see, the romance suggests that Christian religion and the land are intertwined categories that cannot be pulled apart; the effort to dissolve this intrinsic bond is what makes the Saracens the enemy in the poem. Horn’s actions in defending the three territories preserve this *laze*, which positions Horn for rulership. Moreover, a kind of *laze*, a necessary ordering, defines Horn’s accession to kingship as he repeatedly defers Rymenhild in order to achieve necessary preconditions. It is no coincidence that these preconditions are realized through Horn’s defense of the lands from the Saracens.

Analyzing the way *laze* articulates Isumbras’s accession to social personhood in his eponymous romance, Elizabeth Fowler characterizes the romance *laze* as fundamentally narrative: “Middle English *laye* describes the narrative qualities of such codes as law, faith,

sexual custom, and medieval romance itself” (118). So it acts in *King Horn*: the term, which the romance employs in three very different contexts, encapsulates the narrative drive of the romance as it tells a story of person, government, and religion, not simultaneously but all in one. It is thus especially appropriate that *laȝe* in Middle English could in fact be a territorial term, denominating “a territory or community ruled by one system of government, a kingdom, county, city.”¹⁴⁴ *King Horn* in large part articulates its *laȝe* geographically, and insists on the inseparability of land from the other aspects of *laȝe*.

Religion in the Land

Though the romance dramatizes conflict over territory, it in fact takes the position that land cannot be Saracen—cannot be divorced from its *laȝe*. The Christian/Saracen dichotomy that forms the romance’s central conflict refers to its peoples, not its spaces: unlike in other romances such as *Bevis of Hampton* and *Sir Isumbras*, religious adjectives (Christian, Saracen, pagan) never attach to the noun *land*.¹⁴⁵ In fact, the romance consistently defines land as inherently Christian. People are under the threat of forcible conversion, but land carries Christendom within itself; land is unconvertible, and religion itself inheres within the land.

The link between religion and land is fundamental to the scenes of conquest dramatized by the poem. When the Saracens arrive in Suddene at the poem’s opening, they announce to King Murri that they will slay all the Christians. Apulf’s father later reveals that the Saracens also practiced forced conversion in Suddene:

Ihc serue ille
 Payns aȝenes my wille!
 Ihc was cristene a while;
 Þo icom into þis ile
 Sarazins lope and blake
 Þat dude me asake
 On Driȝte þat ihc bileue. (1347-53)

There is no room, then, for religious multiplicity in the Saracens' version of Suddene. Territorial and religious identity are the same; if Saracens have captured a land, then to live in that land is to be Saracen.

Strikingly, the poem does not have to consider this issue from the Christian side; whether Christian land could tolerate religious diversity is never an issue. It achieves this through the posture of Saracen aggression. It is the Saracens who insist on slaughtering or converting Suddene's Christians; it is the Saracens who, upon arriving in each kingdom in turn, announce their intention to seize it wholesale. By the time Horn is slaughtering Saracens on the Irish beach, or killing all those who have lived in Suddene, this has been reframed as an act of just vengeance for the Saracen crime of killing his father. Because the Saracens are so thoroughly the aggressors (even when they are fleeing), the way Christians would constitute religion within their lands is not an issue within the poem. It is precisely the threat of the Saracens that yokes land and religion together.

The contest between Horn and the Saracens is not just about Christian profession or practice; it plays itself out across the built environment of the land. After the Saracens slew king Murri and began to invade in earnest, the poem tells us, "Folc hi gunne quelle / And churchen for to felle" (63-64). The destruction of churches by invading forces was a real concern about England's past. For instance, Hugh Candidus's chronicle of Peterborough (c. 1175) included the burning of monasteries among the depredations of the Vikings in the tenth century, and noted that many had never been restored (Gransden 278). Indeed, the Saracen destruction of churches in Suddene could support the notion that the romance encodes the memory of Viking raids.

In *King Horn*, churches serve as a concrete sign of territorial control, marking the passage of the land between Christians and Saracens. Churches bookend the Saracen occupation of

Suddene. Once Horn has dispatched the Saracen occupiers, he begins the work of rebuilding his kingdom:

Horn let sone werche
 Chapeles and cherche;
 Belles he dede ringe
 And prestes Masse singe. (1411-14)

When Horn has slain the invaders, the first thing we learn that he does is construct churches; this construction program directly precedes his going in search of his mother. Churches serve as signifiers of the possession of the land, intimately intertwined in the issue of its identity.¹⁴⁶ The plurality is important: Horn does not construct *a* church in celebration of his victory, but many, embedding the victory of Christendom not in a single site but through the kingdom. Just as the Saracens sought to alter the character of the land not just by slaying its believing inhabitants but by tearing down its churches, Horn restores Christianity to Suddene by building churches, marking the land with visible signs of its religious identity.

Religion in *King Horn* is not merely on the surface of the land in the form of religious structures; it is literally *in* the land. After King Murri has been slain at the beginning of the text, Horn's mother Godhild refuses to engage with the new lords of the land; grieving over her husband's death and the plight of her son Horn, she withdraws from society. Her escape is not just any form of going into hiding; it becomes a specifically religious form of exile. After leaving the court, the poem tells us, she hid

Vnder a roche of stone;
 Þer heo wonede alone:
 Þer heo seruede Gode
 Aȝenes payn forbode
 Þer he seruede Criste
 Þat no payn hit niste;
 Eure bad heo for Horn child
 Þat Driȝte him wurþe myld. (75-82)

Her solitary life is explicitly cast as a form of religious resistance: she continues with her Christian devotions despite the pagan proscription of the Christian religion. She lives completely alone as a quasi-anchoritic figure, having left behind even her maidens.

Significantly, while Godhild isolates herself from the court so thoroughly that the pagans do not know of her religious practices, she does not fly to exile in another country. There is a dichotomy between the social world of the court and the sparse stone where Godhild dwells. “Vt he wente of halle, / . . . / Vnder a roche of stone” (73-75), the poem tells us, and then reiterates this distinction when Horn goes to find his mother and reincorporate her into the court:

He soȝte his Moder halle
Binne roche walle:
He custe hire and grette
And into castel fette. (1415-18)

Though these lines obviously separate the space of the court and the space of Godhild’s devotions, it is striking how the text defines the place where Godhild resides chiefly by its rockiness. The quality of being enclosed by rock identifies Godhild’s residing place as distinctly other to the space of the court: the hall or castle of the life of the realm is contrasted with the rock hall of her cave. Her cave is a space that is distinctly *of the land*: she literally lives *within* the land of Suddene. Godhild represents an enduring territorial Christian identity that cannot be stamped out; she escapes from the Saracenized halls of power and retreats into the land itself in order to live out her religious identity.

Indeed, for all the Saracens’ efforts to slaughter and convert all Christians in Suddene, Christian religion clings to the land. Godhild mounts the most direct form of Christian resistance, withdrawing from society, but even those who convert at the behest of the Saracens have not necessarily completely forsaken their native religion.

The spiritual resistance of the people of Suddene is represented by Apulf's father, who explains the forced conversion of Suddene to Horn. Horn and his followers encounter Apulf's father soon after they land in Suddene; they find him "vnder schelde / . . . liggende in felde" (1331-32). He is a knight who has been set as watchman by the Saracens, intended to report the return of Horn from the west, an eventuality the Saracens fear. Yet he greets them with a Christian symbol. On the shield covering his body is depicted "A cruche of Driȝtes laȝe" (1334). His arms, then, attest his Christianity. Moreover, however, his arms precede him. The words "vnder schelde" literally enter the poem before the character, who is not introduced until the next line. This shield, bearing the sign of Christianity, is in the open, a part of the landscape of Suddene. It encapsulates the potential for enduring Christianity in the land.

This symbol also suggests that Christianity in Suddene has not been as fully subdued as the Saracens might presume. Horn reads it this way when he awakens the knight: "Me þinkþ bi crois liȝte / Þat þu leuest vre Driȝte" (1341-42). The symbol of the cross serves not only to pronounce the religious identity of the sleeping knight, but to create a community; it is "vre Driȝte," invoking the corporate religious identity of Christians from different places. And with the word *liȝte*, Horn enhances the visuality and power of the sign; though the syntax of the line has proven difficult for editors, it certainly describes the cross as shining, a miraculous source of light at their nighttime landing.¹⁴⁷

The exteriority of this sign of the cross clashes uncomfortably with the actual religious status of the land and the knight. Apulf's father subsequently explains Suddene's forced conversion:

Ihc was cristene a while;
 Þo icom into þis ile
 Sarazins loþe and blake

þat dude me asake
On Driȝte þat iħc bileue. (1349-53)

The words the knight chooses testify a complicated and ambivalent religious identity following the Saracen conquest. He was Christian *a while*—for some period of time in the past, grammatically signifying that he is no longer Christian. The arrival of the Saracens, of course, disrupted the religious status quo, and the knight describes a forced conversion. He has forsaken God, but has not departed from *belief* in the Christian god.¹⁴⁸

This is only part of the knight's commentary on his forced allegiance: as he soon reveals, he is the father of Horn's companion Apulf. He wishes more than anything to see Horn and his son, and encourages them to retake the land. Thus, the knight has been put as a whole into a position against his will: he is charged as a watchman to prevent Horn's return to his homeland, but as Horn is his son's lord he hopes for Horn's safety and his return. Personal, familial attachments are also part of his conflicted cultural position. But it is striking that religion is the first term that defines his encounter with Horn; Horn greets him in the name of a common Christian status, and the knight defines himself according to the subversion of that identity by the Saracen invasion. The territory's religious identity is the most important factor as Horn penetrates its barrier.

This encounter is also a distinctly liminal encounter; it occurs at the precise moment of border-crossing into Suddene. Horn and Apulf have just "ȝede to londe" (1330) when they discover this knight who turns out to be Apulf's father; they are in the act of penetrating the country.¹⁴⁹ As Apulf's father explains to Horn, the Saracens

makeden me reue
To kepe þis passage
Fram Horn þat is of age
þat wunieþ feor biweste. (1254-57)

This knight is meant to establish the border of the country, to make it solid and uncrossable. However, his enduring Christianity and his personal connection to Horn and Apulf instead render the border permeable. Horn himself assured the borders of Westernesse and Ireland, defending the coast so that the Saracens could not establish a stronghold. But because Christianity dwells within Suddene, the Saracens cannot similarly hold it firm against the Christians. The poem imagines that Christianity endures in the land, that it cannot be cast out entirely, and so that a land subdued by Saracens remains open to reconversion.

Christianity, then, can inhere in the land where pagandom cannot. This capacity of the land makes sense, for, as Sebastian I. Sobecki has observed, the poem persistently coordinates Christianity with the land and Saracens with the sea (107-08).¹⁵⁰ Of course, the basic geography of the poem consists of three Christian kingdoms menaced by Saracens from the sea. But, as Sobecki puts it, the land “is frequently used as an attribute of its inhabitants.” When the Saracens at the tale’s opening threaten the Christians of Suddene, they announce, “*ƿi lond-folk we schulle slon*” (45). In contrast with these Christian *lond-folk*, when Horn is reporting to the king of Westernesse that he has discovered and defeated Saracens on the shore of that country, he announces that he discovered a ship “*Mid none Londisse*¹⁵¹ *Menne*” (639). The land-sea dichotomy essentially makes the territories Christian by virtue of being land. Little wonder that Christianity clings to the lands of the poem, for the poem equates the two, while verbally dissociating Saracens from the land.

Building Religious Community

Thus the geographic logic of the poem aligns the three kingdoms together. All of them are “landish” territories; all are Christian. Indeed, there seems to be little cultural distinction between them. Horn crosses borders and integrates with the various courts without any apparent problem.

This is not something the romance seems much interested in; it certainly never comments on the ease with which Horn moves from kingdom to kingdom. But the facility of Horn's movement is a key part of how these territories work: the poem is not imagining lands with very different language or practices. Rather, the different Christian lands are fundamentally similar and compatible, so that the travel is the only major barrier in moving from one to another.

This basic similarity and compatibility is made even more striking by the presence of Ireland. Ireland was a location of profound difference from the perspective of the English. Gerald de Barri devotes much of the second and third parts of his *Topographia Hiberniae* to the alterity of the Irish, whom he characterizes as “gens barbara” (“a barbarous people”), and notes that they are too isolated to be otherwise:

Since conventions are formed from living together in society, and since they are so removed in these distant parts from the ordinary world of men, as if they were in another world altogether and consequently cut off from well-behaved and law-abiding people, they know only of the barbarous habits in which they were born and brought up, and embrace them as another nature. (Gerald of Wales 102-03)¹⁵²

Such views were fairly widespread; Elizabeth L. Rambo, in her study of representations of Ireland in medieval England, notes that negative stereotypes of Ireland outnumbered neutral or positive depictions, citing *King Horn* as one exception to this tendency (123). The Irish were portrayed as everything from otherworldly to just plain barbarous. But *King Horn* does not partake in such stereotypes; for it, Ireland is just like any other kingdom, the Irish court equivalent to that of Westernesse. Ireland is not a place of difference but of familiarity and even of refuge.¹⁵³ Unlike in the conventional discourse of Ireland, there is no sense of difference among *King Horn*'s kingdoms.

However, at the poem's opening, there is no connection among these territories, either. The text never gives any impression of the lands as connected to each other. This stands in contrast to the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*, which has a much stronger sense of its

territories as emplaced and interconnected. For instance, when Horn arrives in Brittany (the *Romance of Horn*'s structural equivalent to *King Horn*'s Westernesse), he worries aloud to the king about how political history will affect his reception at the court:

De mun pere ne sai si vus fist onc damage,
Kar il fist en meint liu a muz homes utrage,
Pur çoe crem ke trop ai descobert mun corage.

I do not know if my father ever did you wrong: he did much injury to many men in many places, so I fear whether I have spoken too openly. (312-14, laisse 15)

Indeed, Horn is so concerned that King Hunlaf of Brittany might bear a grudge against his father that he mentions it twice.¹⁵⁴ *The Romance of Horn* imagines its territories as elements in an interconnected world; they have a history that predates this story, and which can bear on its events.¹⁵⁵

This kind of connection is unimaginable in *King Horn*. When Horn arrives in Westernesse, he tells King Almair where he comes from, but there is no sense that the kingdoms are related, or even that Suddene is particularly meaningful to Almair. Likewise, *King Horn* seems to admit no possibility for alliance among its kingdoms. In the *Romance of Horn*, once Horn has told his story to King Hunlaf, the king offers him specific aid:

Quant meuz serrez crëuz, si serrez adubez;
Si vus aïderai purchacer voz regnez,
Dunt vus ont li felun a grant tort eissillez.

When you are grown you will be armed and so I will help you acquire your kingdom, whence the traitors have most wrongfully banished you. (335-36, laisse 16)

In *King Horn*, King Almair praises Horn and arranges for his fosterage with his retainer Apelbrus. But at no point does the king become interested in the realm of Suddene. Though Horn can move from kingdom to kingdom with ease, the kingdoms show no interest in each other.

Yet the narrative brings these territories into close proximity by menacing each of them with Saracen invasion. As we saw when examining the poem's structure, battles with Saracens forge connections among these places by creating alliances, as Horn crosses borders to defend Westernesse and Ireland and the troop of Irish followers he requires after defending Ireland in turn help him take back Suddene.

Moreover, the repetitive qualities of the romance unify its Saracen invasions so that they all seem like the same invasion, as though a single Saracen assault is being instanced repeatedly in Christian territories. Verbal and situational repetitions echo among these scenes. For instance, the same couplet describes the reaction upon first seeing the Saracens ashore both of Murri in Suddene and of Horn in Westernesse: "He axed what hi soȝte / Oþer to londe broȝte" (41-42, 605-06).¹⁵⁶ Likewise, the rhyme pair *stronde* and *londe* characterizes the Saracen land-fall both in Suddene and in Ireland.¹⁵⁷ Recognizable situations repeat even without verbal echoes: when Horn first encounters the Saracens in Westernesse, he is riding, and he finds himself vastly outnumbered, just as his father did.

The patterning of the story also unites these encounters. To some degree it is no exaggeration to say that these are all the same encounter, for we learn in Ireland that all the Saracens are connected, as Horn discovers he is fighting the same warrior who slew his father. Even though the two fights are separated by both years and miles, Horn's duel with the pagan warrior repeats and completes his father's. And each Saracen invasion comes from the sea and begins when the Saracens come ashore; even in Ireland, where a pagan messenger comes to the court, he emphasizes that the Saracens have reached the shore. Horn repeats this pattern in the inverse when he comes ashore to begin his reconquest, extending the same basic pattern to all Christian pagan encounters.

Thus, in a way, all the scenes of Saracen invasion are the same, as if the invaders are one undifferentiated body. The Saracen invasion mobilizes a kind of militant Christian unity. Horn defends other lands from the Saracens, and in Ireland he explicitly presents this conflict as being between Christian (writ large) and pagan. Defeating the Saracens is one crucial mechanism that allows him to advance within each of these lands; it also powers the narrative structure that forges connections between the poem's lands.

The threat of Saracen assault reveals that Christian community is natural and essential in the romance. Despite dramatizing three putatively separate kingdoms, the poem gives very little thought to cultural difference; the courts are for most purposes interchangeable.¹⁵⁸ This cultural compatibility is underscored by Horn's boast, right before driving the Saracens from Suddene, that "We schulle þe hundes teche / To speken vre speche" (1401-02). This is the only time in the poem that language is an issue; it's never a concern in Horn's numerous border-crossings. Linguistic difference exists in the poem only as a marker of religious-cultural difference, but Horn can move among Christian kingdoms because they share a common culture.

The Pull of the West: The Archipelago at the End of the World

The interchangeability of these spaces has led scholars like Finlayson to conclude that the geography of the romance is essentially meaningless, that its places are the arbitrary, unmappable places stereotypical of romance. Because the places in the romance are devoid of particularity and provide an undifferentiated canvas for action to unfold, the places themselves seem almost to vanish. For Finlayson, even Ireland, which we can map with ease, lacks meaning: it is basically just a name to attach to a space that is necessary for the plot of the romance. In this view, the romance's places lack any sort of direct referentiality. They imagine a generalized kind of place, one not anchored in any specific extra-textual location.

This view is based on what the poem does not do geographically. It does not, on the whole, furnish recognizable toponyms. It does not evoke recognizable local detail, nor render its three kingdoms in particularly distinct manners.¹⁵⁹ Though Susan Crane has shown how *King Horn* would have resonated in general with the concerns of the English barony, it does not appear to comment on specific political disputes.¹⁶⁰ However, although there is little to tie it to particular places, the poem does imagine its places within an external geographic framework. The individual kingdoms may not map clearly onto real-world territories, but that does not mean their place in the world as conceived by the poem is irrelevant.

King Horn uses the word *west* obsessively to situate the territories both in relation to each other and in the world at large. The action of the poem unfolds within a directional schema defined by the east-west axis: no other direction words appear in any manuscript of the poem. Of these two directions, west is clearly dominant; references to *west* far outnumber those to *east*, and in no case do all manuscripts read *east* rather than *west*. In her edition, Allen chooses *east* only once, and even then acknowledges that *west* could well have been the original, formulaic version.¹⁶¹ The original version of the poem might well have read *west* in every case. Of course, we can say nothing for certain about the original *King Horn*, and none of the three manuscripts we actually possess uses *west* exclusively. But in all surviving texts, *west* is a prominent element of the poem's lexis. The story begins in a land of the west, and flows more to the west as Horn travels farther from his home. One of the three territories, Westernesse, even carries *west* within its very name—a name that highlights the relationality of place. While “Suddene” and “Westernesse” resist mapping onto particular countries, they, along with Ireland, occupy a particular corner of the world. *King Horn* insists on the western-ness of its lands—a mapping charged with significance for the poem's insular (thus western) readers.

The West as Place

From the very beginning of *King Horn*, the west is itself a place which can be occupied: one may be *in* the west. After the tale-telling topos that opens the poem is complete, its first declarative line situates the kingdom of Murri, Horn's father, geographically: "King he was biweste / Þer whiles þat hit yleste" (5-6). The poem makes *west* the most prominent term to situate Murri's kingdom, defining it as western long before naming it. We learn that the land is called Suddene for the first time almost 200 lines later and only after Horn has been driven from the land by Saracens; encountering King Almair on the shores of Westernesse, Horn announces, "We beop of Suddenne" (181). Certainly this delay is related to Horn's identity; when he is cut off from his land, it becomes suddenly crucial to name it as a point of origin. But the delay in naming Suddene is not like, for instance, Lancelot's name in *Le chevalier de la charrette*, where Chrétien de Troyes withholds the knight's name until the midpoint of the poem in order to call attention to its absence and create a sense of mystery about his knight's identity.¹⁶² Rather, the delay suggests that we do not need to know that the land is Suddene in order to respond appropriately to the account of the land's loss. We can hear of Saracens invading a land, slaying its king, and driving out the heir to the throne without needing the land's name; in a sense, we only need the name once we must differentiate between Suddene and another kingdom. But we need to know from the opening lines where this kingdom is located in the world; we are told that it is found *biweste*—in the west.¹⁶³

Suddene's name may itself encode a different directionality. The name graphically suggests *south* (*sud*), and the major attempts to identify Suddene on philological grounds have taken its name to be derived from a form that included south: *Suðdene* (the South-Danes of *Beowulf* and *Widsith*), *Sudreia* (understood as the Isle of Man), a latinization of the Scandinavian

Suðreyjar (southern isles), *Suðdefne* (South Devon), and *Sud'n* (Southdean in Roxburgh, Scotland). While *sud* is a form of *south* attested by the MED, it is cited infrequently in textual quotations.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, *Suddene* resembles at least loosely attested forms for at least four other Middle English words: *sodein* (MnE *sudden*), *sethen* (MnE *seethe*, to boil), *soudan* (*Sultan*—a particularly odd echo in light of the text's Saracen invasion) and *souden* (subdean, a rare word first attested in English in *Piers Plowman A*). "South" may lie behind the place-name, but it is hard to say whether the term (which also names Horn's kingdom in the *Romance of Horn*, and thus inheres in an earlier version of the story) would have struck thirteenth-century English ears in this way. *Suddene* might thus inaugurate a directional system in the romance, starting a trajectory picked up by *Westernesse*. But while we will see that the name of *Westernesse* had clear directional meaning for *King Horn*'s early audiences, there is nothing to indicate that any medieval reader of the poem saw *Suddene* in this way.¹⁶⁵ At least to my ears, the name lacks the same immediate force of direction as *Westernesse*. While *Suddene* might participate in a general emphasis on directionality, what matters most in defining it as a space is that it is in the west.

The notion of the west as a large conceptual category—a way of situating someone broadly in the world—that marked the poem's opening recurs in C in the scene when King Almair encounters Horn upon his arrival in *Westernesse*. Though Horn is a stranger in the kingdom, Almair is struck by Horn's exceptional beauty (a romance topos signifying his nobility), and receives him kindly. Not only is Horn beautiful, but his twelve companions are as well, and Almair describes them in typically superlative terms: "So fair a verrade / Ne sauȝ ihc neuere stonde / Bi westene londe" (172-74). In O and L, the claim is less impressive: the king has never seen so fair a company in "Westnesse londe"—that is, within his own country.¹⁶⁶ C makes a more dramatic claim: Horn's company is superlative not just within a specific country,

but within all the western land (or, indeed, lands; *londe* can be a plural form). C creates a category of western land that recalls King Murri's rulership *biweste*. Both lines allow *west*, by itself, to mark off a part of the world map. In this western part of the world, *King Horn* takes place.

Westnesse and Western-ness

Though C twice marks off the west as a discrete space, O and L limit the scope of Almair's comment about the beauty of Horn and his companions to *Westnesse londe*. *Westnesse* is what O and L call the land named *Westnesse* in C, so this version of the line seems to choose the specificity of a named territory over the geographic breadth of Murri's rule *biweste* and C's account of Horn's beauty "bi westene londe." But the name of West(er)nesse itself contains the west. *Westnesse* is a place, certainly; it is the kingdom where Almair rules. But it hangs on the edge of place-ness. Its name bestows upon it an existence almost as much relative as concrete: it is west of someplace else. The nebulous name of *Westnesse* suggests that places in *King Horn* are as much part of a narrative flow as solid, concrete political geography.

Ness, which comes from Old English, can mean *promontory* or *headland* when used in toponyms and surnames.¹⁶⁷ Walter Oliver took this construction—Western promontory—quite literally to argue against an earlier suggestion that *Westnesse* is the Wirral peninsula in Cheshire.¹⁶⁸ Instead, Oliver argues, the name refers to the Mull of Galloway in the South of Scotland (111).¹⁶⁹ However, a different form of the name appears in the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*, where part of the action occurs in a land called *Westir*.¹⁷⁰ Despite this apparent similarity, the geography of the Anglo-Norman poem is drastically different from that of the Middle English version. *Westir* is the third major territory of the *Romance of Horn*, following Suddene and Brittany, and occupies the structural position belonging to Ireland in *King*

Horn. More than just structure connects Westir to Ireland, for the Anglo-Norman poem explicitly says that *Westir* is an ancient name of Ireland.¹⁷¹ In all, the available external evidence does not suggest a single specific referent likely to be invoked by the name of Westernesse.

A second pattern of variation further supports the idea that readers understood Westernesse as a name that had directional, relational force: the emergence of a second toponym, *Estnesse*. After Horn has arrived in Ireland, C twice identifies him in a way we might find rather peculiar; certainly, the scribes of O and L seem to have found it so. On two occasions, the text names him “Horn of Westernesse.” This name first appears when a messenger from Westernesse arrives in Ireland to tell Horn (who is living as Cutberd) that Rymenhild is going to be married. Horn asks the messenger’s business, and he replies, “I seche fram biweste / Horn of Westernesse” (965-66).¹⁷² Horn himself later claims this identity as he rescues Rymenhild. After testing her fidelity by disguising himself, Horn drops the charade:

Lof so dere,
Ne canstu me noȝt knowe ?
Nam ihc Horn þinowe ?
Ihc am Horn of Westernesse
In armes þu me kesse. (1232-36)

We might be able to rationalize away Rymenhild’s messenger’s search for “Horn of Westernesse”; after all, he was attempting to recall Horn to Westernesse, the country of his bride. But in the recognition topos, when Horn drops his disguise and calls on Rymenhild to acknowledge his proper identity, that identity is grounded not in Suddene, the land of his birth, but in Westernesse, Rymenhild’s land and the line of his knighting.¹⁷³

Thus C. But for O and L, *Westernesse* is not necessarily the appropriate origin for Horn. In line 965-66, when the messenger announces that he is seeking Horn, both O and L have him declare, “I seche fram Westnesse / Horn knyht of Estnesse.” And O repeats this in 1235, when

Horn reveals himself to Rymenhild: “Ihc am Horn of estnesse.”¹⁷⁴ If we believe Westernesse must be the name of a land, these lines abruptly introduce a whole new country!

Few other than the poem’s editors have concerned themselves with *Estnesse*. Oliver, attempting to locate the real Suddene and Westernesse in Scotland, did propose a promontory known as Estnesse on the Solway Firth (an inlet on the border between England and Scotland) as the counterpart to Westernesse (for him, the Mull of Galloway) (111). Though he found somewhere to put Estnesse, Oliver had nothing to say about what it is doing in two *King Horn* manuscripts; even if he is correct about the real locations of the poem’s territories, why would Horn be said to be from a location that is not (according to Oliver’s map) equivalent to Suddene or to Westernesse, and which is never otherwise mentioned in the poem? Estnesse is a non-entity in *Horn* scholarship because it is a virtual non-entity in the poem; it shows up only in two lines, does not appear in the most authoritative manuscript, and indeed is typically emended away in modern editions.

Estnesse, however, reveals something crucial about how the poem’s medieval readers understood its geographic terms. If we assume, as editors long have, that *Westnesse* is the original reading, *Estnesse* is probably the result of a scribal rationalization; though there are reasons to associate Horn with Westernesse, he is most obviously described as being *of Suddene*, his native land. Faced with the knowledge that Horn was not a Westernesse native, and indeed had been exiled for sexual misconduct with the princess, perhaps one or more scribes reacted by correcting what appeared to be an erroneous toponym.¹⁷⁵ Since OL use the form *Westnesse* rather than *Westernesse*, in these instances they are introducing a form that is exactly parallel to the name of Almair’s kingdom, but in the opposite direction on the east-west axis. While those who

would place Westernesse on a map have treated it as a distinct, named country, for the OL-scribes it is equally a term of orientation.¹⁷⁶

I do not mean to suggest that Westernesse was ever just a directional term. In all three manuscripts it acts toponymically, referring to a specific kingdom.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, Westernesse disturbs our notions of named places as concrete and self-defined. Directionality can powerfully condition our sense of place: Sutherland, for instance, acquired its curious name because it lay to the south for settlers from the Earldom of Orkney, despite being located in the far north of the island. But Westernesse, as name, maintains a remarkable plasticity. It is as though “going to Australia” and “going south” were interchangeable phrases—not metaphorically but literally—and as though with reference to Australia, any land to the north could be called *Borealia*. Westernesse does not simply designate a landmass; it encodes in the idea of place its relation to other places. In doing so, it gives the poem a directional trajectory; Horn begins in *the west* (as a place) and is drawn to a land fundamentally marked by its westernness.

Fortunately, the poem’s manuscripts capture its scribes’ encounters with this curious toponym. Scribal evidence suggests that when we assume Westernesse to be the set name of a specific place, as when we refer to Ireland or London, we may be understanding the moniker in a very different way than did the poem’s medieval interpreters. As is the case with much of the text of *King Horn*, the name of Westernesse shows minor but significant fluidity among manuscripts. To begin with, the most commonly cited form of the territory’s name—*Westernesse*—occurs exclusively in one manuscript, C. O and L both consistently provide the form *Westnesse* (with minor spelling variations) instead. In fact, the triumph of *Westernesse* (which is the form the name takes in almost all *King Horn* scholarship, because all the important modern editions take

C as their base text) has allowed the format of the modern print edition to color our graphic experience of the poem, for even the C-scribe never writes out *Westernesse* in full: the *-er-* is the product of a scribal expansion sign. The form *Westernesse* is philologically appealing because it closely resembles the *Westir* of the Anglo-Norman poem, but the experience of C for a reader of the manuscript would not have been so different from O and L.¹⁷⁸

The flexibility of reference to *Westernesse* may seem of little importance, but it enables other shifts that reveal a lot about the land's name. In two cases, OL refer to *Westnesse* while C chooses phrasing that refers to the direction *west*. We have already seen one of these instances, in which C praises Horn's company as the fairest "bi westene londe" where OL place this compliment in "Westnesse londe." The other instance occurs in line 772, at the moment of Horn's departure from *Westernesse*. "A god schup he him herde" (770), the manuscripts basically agree, but they differ in describing the function of the ship. For O and L, it is a ship "Þat him scholde wisse [O] *or* passe [L] / Vt of Westnesse" (771-72).¹⁷⁹ For C, on the other hand, he hires a ship "Þat him scholde londe / In westene londe" (771-72; C:753-4). This is not quite parallel to the situation we find in Almair's dialogue. In that case, the difference was between a general and a specific reference; O and L restrict the statement to what appears to be a particular, named territory, while C instead links the comment to a part of the world. Here, though, the referent of the lines is entirely opposite. In OL, the line focuses on Horn's departure; *Westernesse* is the land Horn is leaving. C, on the other hand, focuses on arrival; the ship will deposit Horn in a western land, which turns out to be Ireland.¹⁸⁰

Allen emends the lines to offer a reading that looks most like that of OL, so that the ship is carrying Horn away from *Westernesse*, but how the line may originally have read matters less than what the variation suggests. In two cases, what is clearly a directional term in C is a place-

name in OL. No matter where in the transmission history this divergence happened, it indicates that *Westernesse* and *west* were to some degree interchangeable. The variation may have been introduced by intentional modification—scribes chose one version or the other as more rational or appealing—or by accidental misreading of a copy text. In either case, this evidence indicates that at some point during the text’s transmission, one or more scribes who looked at *Westernesse* saw *west*, or vice versa. We can see from this variation that the toponym had geographic force, that the name *Westernesse* exerted a kind of westward pull on readers.

Ireland in the West

While *Westernesse* as a place seems almost to blur into an overall, generalized sense of orientation, Ireland remains a firmly referential locus in the text: its name denotes a discrete place on maps both medieval and modern, and thus seems to resist the abstract quality of the poem’s other places. Yet Ireland, for all its specificity, also contributes to the text’s program of Western-ness. Ireland culminates the westward trajectory established by Suddene and *Westernesse*. In the poem’s doubled exile-and-return structure, Ireland is the most distant point from the starting point in Suddene, and the point where the romance turns from estrangement to reclamation. Ireland thus represents Horn’s point of furthest estrangement: from his land, from his holdings, from own royal status.

This structural position corresponds with Ireland’s position at the edge of the geographic world. Medieval geographical and ethnographic writing also treated the island as an isolated frontier. Gerald de Barri (also known as Gerald of Wales), in his twelfth-century *Topographia Hiberniae*, labels Ireland “this farthest island of the west” (33).¹⁸¹ Ireland, he tells us, lies parallel to Spain and Iceland; together, the three lands seem to constitute a kind of western frontier for Christendom. Indeed, Gerald takes pains to defend Ireland’s frontier status by foreclosing upon a

legendary island with claims to being even farther west: Thule. He reveals that “Thule, which is said to be the farthest of the western islands, . . . is very well known among the eastern people both in name and for its nature, although it is entirely unknown to the people of the West” (68).¹⁸² However, for Gerald, this ignorance does not indicate that westerners are missing out on some sort of occultish knowledge of their own geographic surroundings. Rather, he uses his own knowledge of geography to put claims about Thule to the test. He cites Solinus, who “says that it is the farthest island among the many around Britain. He says that there, during the summer solstice, there is no night, and during the winter solstice, there is no day” (68).¹⁸³ But Gerald observes that these phenomena are rightly associated not with the west but with areas in the north; one manuscript adds explicitly that “it is quite clear that none of the western islands has such a nature” (68).¹⁸⁴ Though his own work is littered with miraculous tales about the virtues of Ireland, Gerald addresses claims about Thule on the basis of what looks to us like scientific rationality. The stories do not add up, he tells us, but if we look elsewhere we can find those same phenomena. In recording these facts, Gerald takes one of the most prominent legends about a western island and displaces it north, protecting Ireland as the westernmost point in his world map.

Even in sources that accept Thule’s existence, Ireland is inescapably peripheral to a world centered on Jerusalem and the Mediterranean, and cut off from the landmass of continental Europe.¹⁸⁵ Thus, medieval maps, like Gerald’s description, placed Ireland beyond Britain and indeed beyond any land except perhaps Thule. A thirteenth-century map found in a manuscript of the *Topographia Hibernica* (Dublin, National Library of Ireland MS 700, f. 48r) even depicts Ireland’s southern part extending farther westward than Iceland and Spain, effectively one-upping Gerald’s written description.¹⁸⁶

Mappaemundi, too, placed Ireland on the outer edge. Both Britain and Ireland, as islands in the Atlantic, sit at the edges of world maps whose most famous formal arrangement—the T-O map—is dominated by the three continents, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Formal strategies for placing these islands differ. On some English maps continental Europe scallops inward at the northwest, allowing Britain to sit within the circle that defines the landed part of the world; Ireland may be integrated as well, or may sit visibly outside Britain (see Figure 2, p. 20).¹⁸⁷ Other *mappaemundi* make no such provision, instead depicting Britain and Ireland as sitting in the band of the Ocean Sea that rings the known world, outside the circle that contains the continental landmasses. In medieval world maps, the marginality of both Britain and Ireland is visually inescapable, despite the occasional efforts of cartographers to limit this marginality.¹⁸⁸ But some maps used Ireland (sometimes along with Wales and Scotland) to mitigate the peripherality of England by representing these spaces of the “Celtic fringe” as even more peripheral—a function that Kathy Lavezzo also identifies Ireland as serving in Gerald’s *Topographia* (*Angels* ch. 2).¹⁸⁹ In the family of eleventh- and twelfth-century diagrammatic English maps that Martin K. Foys has labeled “Mission T-O maps,” for instance, Britain (*Britannia*) appears within the circle marking the outer boundary of the world, while Ireland (*Hibernia*) and Thule (*Thile*) are both outside the other ring, literally off the map (Figure 4).¹⁹⁰ Ireland did not appear at the western cardinal point of the map, which corresponded to the Strait of Gibraltar; it was instead positioned to the northwest (the bottom left, in the common orientation with the east at the top). But Ireland (with Britain) lies near this western zone, and lies farthest out in the ocean that rings the map, with no land except sometimes Thule separating it from the outer frame. Cartographically, too, then, Ireland marks the terminus of movement toward the outside.



Figure 4. Britain, Ireland, and Thule, Mission T-O map. London, British Library, Harley MS 3667, f. 8v (detail). England, 12th century. *Brittannia* lies just inside the circle that bounds the map, while *Hibernia* and *Thule* are beyond the edge.¹⁹¹

King Horn does not place Ireland with nearly the precision that Gerald does. The word *west* clusters around Ireland in the poem's manuscripts, but the manuscripts fall short of placing Ireland unambiguously to the west even of the poem's other lands. Directional terms related to Ireland vary among manuscripts, and seem to have grown garbled in transmission; even where the manuscripts agree, Allen offers none of these lines unemended.

Certainly the poem's directional geography does not clearly conform to modern readers' expectations. Line 787 offers a representative example. Horn, under the pseudonym Cutberd, is explaining to Berild, son of King Burston of Ireland, how he came to be in this land. He is, he tells Berild, "icomen vt of bote / Wel feor her biweste / To seche mine beste" (786-88). Thus Allen. But none of the manuscripts offers this reading; in all three, Horn has come "feor fram biweste."¹⁹² From Allen's perspective, the idea that he comes from the west makes no sense, for in Ireland, he is already in the west. She goes through a complicated set of philological gymnastics in order to produce her preferred reading.¹⁹³ Allen's emendations are seductive,

particularly given the directional preoccupation I have uncovered in the text; they make the poem's geography much neater. But the fact that all three surviving manuscripts agree that Horn comes *from* the west to Ireland suggests that the poem's scribes, unlike Gerald, were not devoted defenders of Ireland as the western frontier.

The variation we have seen around the term for Westernesse suggests that scribes were at least intermittently interested in Ireland's geographic status. Allen cites OL's statement in ll. 965-66 that a messenger came "fram Westnesse" to seek "Horn of Estnesse" as a "more 'scientific'" reading of a line that in C might have appeared to misplace both Horn and Westernesse, and further notes that the L-scribe might have visited Ireland and probably served a family with Irish estates, and thus "knew that anywhere else should be located 'east' of it" (*King Horn* 318). But if Allen is correct that the L-scribe would think of Ireland as being located to the west of the poem's other lands, this conception has not proliferated throughout the poem; the scribe stands untroubled by Horn's having come *from* the west, from Westernesse, to Ireland in l. 787.

There is a certain circularity about many objections to manuscripts' treatment of the geographic relationship between Ireland and Suddene. Allen's emendations, against the evidence of all the manuscripts, depend on the assumption that Ireland is the westernmost point in the poem, and that lines that place other territories to the west of Ireland have become confused. My own attempts to explain the phenomenon likewise probably stem from a preexisting sense of Ireland as the westernmost point, a sense which fits well with my desire to read a pattern of westward movement in the poem. There are certainly good reasons to situate Ireland in the extreme west. One argument is historicist: Gerald de Barri expresses a cultural understanding of Ireland as the geographic western frontier of the world, while cartography certainly places it on the geographic periphery, if not at the extreme western point. A less persuasive reason, but a

powerful one in *King Horn* criticism, relates to notion that the romance's Saracens are really Vikings. Most of the space of *King Horn* has long been understood as fundamentally British—even English. If Westernesse and Suddene are mapped to the island of Britain, as they have been in the minds of many readers of the poem (at least in modernity), then our knowledge of geography dictates that Ireland *must* be to their west.

So there are reasonable explanations for the tendency Allen and I share to assume that Ireland is in the west compared to Westernesse and Suddene. But my project is to allow the romance to dictate the terms of its own geography, to see how it understands its own spaces while projecting our assumptions onto it as little as possible. Thus, we should be cautious about believing we know where Ireland *should* be found. Even if Allen's emendations happen to reconstruct the *Horn* prototype with perfect accuracy, the three surviving witnesses to the poem do not agree. Even if we had a copy of the original, these manuscript versions would still contribute to the spatiality—indeed, spatialities—of the poem. We cannot simply ignore their evidence by choosing a reading that appears more plausible to us. And the evidence suggests that *King Horn*'s scribes did not place a premium on laying out its territories neatly in a way that could be transferred into the external, mappable world.

In fact, this fraying of the mappable world itself has evocative potential that helps to bring out the marginality of the romance's territories, including Ireland. In l. 1200-01, Horn, disguised as a palmer, is speaking to Rymenhild. This scene occurs shortly before Horn leads an assault on Rymenhild's wedding feast; here, Horn is testing her fidelity to him by making her believe that he is dead. Describing how this palmer came to encounter Horn, he tells her, in Allen's version, "Ihc ʒede mani Mile / Wel feor ʒonde bi weste"—*ʒonde* meaning something like "at a distance," so the palmer is saying he traveled far off in the west. Thus, Allen's version of

the line places Ireland to the west of Westernesse: while he is in Westernesse, Horn describes his Irish journeys as having been in the west. L offers substantially the reading that Allen adopts. In O, the palmer says he traveled “Wel feor her by weste.” This version underscores Westernesse’s own western-ness; he has traveled widely in the west, which includes this very land.

But C offers the most surprising reading of all. In C, the palmer declares he has traveled “Wel feor bi 3onde weste.” Allen sees this as a simple transposition of the words *3onde* and *bi*. But this formula shows tremendous imaginative potential. C has Horn, in palmer’s guise, explaining to Rymenhild that he has traveled far *beyond* the west: he is literally off the map, past the western frontier of the world.

If we take this reading seriously, as more than a simple scribal mistake, it has a powerful imaginative tug. The line might simply refer to Horn’s stay in Ireland, expressing in some tortured syntax that Ireland is to the west of their present location. But the line’s clearest meaning—*beyond the west*—potentially resonates with other notions of Ireland. The Irish literary tradition of *immrama* sent its protagonists on a “rowing-about” among islands; behind this literary tradition probably lay actual “clerical sea pilgrimages” (Dumville 75, 77). The most widely known story of an Irish wanderer at sea was that of Saint Brendan, circulated widely in many languages and versions. In these stories, Brendan, together with a company of monks, sets off on a sailing voyage westward from Ireland and visits a number of fantastical islands.

Brendan’s voyage itself sits at a crux between abstract and referential geography. For Westphal, the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* is evidence that medieval geographic thought grounded space in a fully divine framework: “no attempt was made to account for the physical, *objective* world, but only for a world designed by God and recognized by men” (*Geocriticism* 57-58).¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, Brendan’s voyage certainly influenced the vision of the physical world, and it

endured as a geographic fact into ages that share a greater affinity with our modern notions of geography. St. Brendan's Isle (or isles) began appearing on maps as an Atlantic island in the thirteenth century and continued to be plotted for centuries; Brendan's isles were frequently associated with the Fortunate Isles (Burgess 9). Indeed, legends of St. Brendan's Isle may even have influenced Columbus's westward voyage (Burgess 10).

Nor was Brendan's Isle the only Atlantic place for which Ireland imaginatively served as a gateway. From the fourteenth century, cartographers located the island of Brasil not far west off the coast of Ireland. Brasil, as Roland Greene has traced, existed chiefly as an object of desire; it was a space for which Europeans longed, a place always just beyond their reach, which migrated ever westward with the penetration of the "New World" (ch. 2; see especially 87-89).

Ireland served as a gateway to islands such as these, lands beyond the known world—lands believed to exist, but which had to be sought, outside the capacity of the ordinary traveler. Hovering at the edge of the known, Ireland is an evocative space, both a terminus and a portal. Again, *King Horn* does not directly engage with this kind of geographic thinking, but C's notion of Horn's adventures beyond the west could resonate with these broader notions. After all, a period of seven years elapses in Ireland, during which we know nothing of what Horn is doing; all the romance tells us is that "Cutberd wonede pere / . . . / To Rymenild he ne sende" (937-40). In the Arthurian tradition, similar gaps were a site for fictional elaboration: two periods of peace described in chronicle accounts of Arthur's reign provided room for storytellers to invent the fantastical adventures of Arthurian romance.¹⁹⁵ Horn's seven years could well provide a similar space.

I do not mean to suggest that the poem actually veers in that direction; no surviving accounts of Horn embellish on that time. My point, rather, is that readers of C might well have

room to imagine Horn going beyond the western frontier of the world. Or, perhaps, Ireland itself might be “bi 3onde weste”—a realm so far removed from Europe as to exceed its geographic limits. We need not view the line as a scribal mistake—or, even if it was a misreading, it was one accepted by the scribe, and one that might have seemed reasonable to his readers. At this moment in MS C, Horn’s westward flow is so strong that it washes him right off the map.

Ireland’s broader cultural associations are deliciously suggestive when coupled with *King Horn*’s obsession with the west. Although the manuscripts do not unambiguously and consistently describe Ireland as being located to the west of the romance’s other territories, Ireland is a verbal locus for the west: of the six lines where, in some manuscript, the word “west” is used without being part of the name “Westernesse,” five of those come after Horn has traveled to Ireland, mostly referring to travel into/out of Ireland. While these lines sometimes actually *say* that someone has come from the west into Ireland, they continue the poem’s relentless emphasis on the idea of west—and, as I have already pointed out, the complementary term *east* rarely occurs. Ireland is not an arbitrary name, utterly replaceable within the poem’s referential framework. Instead, Ireland anchors the poem to the world in a way that enhances its overall geographic program.

The Meaning of the West

The relationship between *King Horn* and the “solid” world beyond the text is complicated and dialogic. By naming Ireland, I have suggested, the romance borrows some of its qualities from the world: invoking Ireland contributes to an overall textual impression of western space and western movement, which the text also develops by naming its territories and articulating movement among them. But what are we to make of this obsession with the west? *King Horn* is a spare, efficient text, and it seems unlikely that this preoccupation with a superfluous directional

detail is for mere adornment. Nor does the term situate the lands of the romance within a broader world; though Ireland anchors the poem to a particular geographic space, the directional terms are too imprecise and confused to help readers understand precisely where Westernesse and Suddene lie.

West acts in *King Horn* not to make these lands more believable, nor to tell us where to find them, but to tell us what *kind* of place they are. The places themselves provide a structure for the poem, but their western-ness, along with the familiarity of Ireland, provides a conduit between the system of places imagined by the text and the world beyond. The west is a zone charged with meaning, especially for the poem's insular audience. *West* is a marker of marginality: this English-speaking audience's own marginality. By appropriating this space, *King Horn* suggests that its political thought may spill out into the spaces its readers experience day by day.

We could be forgiven for equating *King Horn*'s west with our modern ideas of the "western world." The romance, after all, pits Saracens—the name associates them with the East and with contemporary eastern crusades, no matter who we might believe they represent—against Christians, a conflict that is for us the prototypical clash of East and West. It is in this sense that J. R. R. Tolkien understood the name of Westernesse when he appropriated it for use in his own Middle Earth mythology: "the meaning is vague, but may be taken to mean 'Western lands' as distinct from the East inhabited by the Paynim and Saracens" (*Letters*, no. 276, p. 361). If this were their meaning, the western lands of *King Horn* would stand in balance with the Saracen East; they would describe Christendom.

But the East/West dichotomy as we now understand it did not yet exist in the thirteenth century when *King Horn* was composed. The MED shows that *Est* could be used to designate a

discrete geographic portion of the world, used in the same way one might now use “Orient.” Thus, Trevisa can write of someone’s traveling into Syria in his aspiration to be “kyng of þe Est” (*Polychronicon* 3:413). (Murri, by contrast, is king *biweste*—king *in*, not of, the west.) The East was a zone of alterity and wonder, as exemplified by literary traditions like the *Marvels of the East*. But, as Suzanne Conklin Akbari has reminded us, the fact that the East is identified with the Other does not have to mean that “we” are then associated with the West. In fact, Akbari argues that our modern notion of “the West” first arose in the fourteenth century (“From,” 20, 31).

Prior to that point, the word *west* in English did not carry the same all-encompassing quality; crucially, it did not denote Europe as a whole, as it does today. Rather, when used in English as a territorial designation, *west* seems to have denoted peripheral places. The MED defines *west* as “the western part of the world,” but does not gloss this as “Occident.” West and East, for Europe as a whole, was not a matter of us versus them; most of Europe could not be referred to as *the west*.

Instead of the dominance of European Christendom, the word seems in the thirteenth century to have implied marginality. The earliest citations for “the west” in the MED designating a land are from Lazamon’s *Brut* and the *Gloucester Chronicle A*, and both refer to Britain. In both cases, the text adopts a mainland European perspective and looks toward Britain as a western border. In Lazamon, the goddess Diana directs Brutus that “Bi-ʒende France i þet west; þu scalt finden a wunsum lond” (*Lazamon* 618) while the *Gloucester Chronicle* describes “England” as “Iset in þe on ende of þe worlde · as al in þe west” (*Metrical Chronicle* 2) Though both texts were produced in England, in describing Britain they adopt a continental perspective, looking outward; being in the west, Britain is what lies beyond other lands. Similarly, Trevisa’s

translation of Higden offers a span “from þe est to þe west, þat is from Ynde to Hercules is pilers” (*Polychronicon* 1:45). Here, the term does not refer to Britain, but what the text places in counterpoint with “Ynde” is the Strait of Gibraltar, terminus of the Mediterranean world beyond which lay only the unknown ocean. When Trevisa uses the still-familiar stock phrase “from east to west” to define the expanse of the world, he glosses *west* as the boundary of that world. Thus, rather than emphasizing unity and centrality (the West is “us,” the West is the seat of civilization and culture), the term, into at least the fourteenth century, emphasized marginality. The places of the west were those that were on the very borders of civilization: Britain, Ireland, the Strait of Gibraltar.

This marginal west is oceanic, cut off from the mass of continental Europe. Britain, Ireland, and Iceland are all islands in the Atlantic; the Strait of Gibraltar, too, is an aqueous portal, which for Dante marks the passage of Ulysses beyond the proper boundary of the world.¹⁹⁶ On medieval mappaemundi, the world was ringed by an outer ocean, so the terminus of any direction was water. However, western islands often held a special prominence within that outer ocean. On some (English) maps, Britain, Ireland, and Thule were the only (or nearly the only) islands to appear in this ocean.¹⁹⁷ Even mappaemundi that feature a number of islands around the periphery of the world (like the the Hereford and Sawley maps) gave special visual prominence to Britain and Ireland because of their size.¹⁹⁸

In at least one category of spatial thinking, then, the most prominent western islands were those that constituted the Atlantic archipelago. The space being described in *King Horn* presents a similar impression, for all of its (western) territories convey an insular character.¹⁹⁹ Horn makes all his voyages by sea; never does he reach a new land in the poem without sailing. The Saracens, too, come from the sea. Thus the sea provides the main access to the lands, and is the

primary avenue by which they are connected. And Suddene is described by one of its inhabitants as an “ile,” though the word in Middle English could equally just mean “country.” On the whole, both from examples in the MED and from the poem’s own aqueous geography, this seems to be *insular* western space. As such, the poem’s lands resonate with the Atlantic archipelago, which formed the largest and most navigable and networked group of islands in the west.

The romance does not straightforwardly *depict* the archipelago, however. While the toponym *Ireland* serves to nail a part of the action to one discrete space in this Atlantic environment, its other toponyms resist reference to other spaces within the known political geography of these islands. Instead, the romance generates a cluster of spaces that act *like* the Atlantic archipelago: a group of Christian islands at the margins of the world in the west. The impulses that have led scholars to attempt to map the action of the poem onto Britain and surrounding islands are true to the sense of space cultivated by the romance, but the romance does not itself make that identification; it is the product of an interpretative act.

If the insular spaces of *King Horn* resonate with those of the Atlantic archipelago, they resist a common narrative seeking to empower the spaces of the west. The west, we have seen, is marginal space, far away from centers of power like Rome and Jerusalem. Nevertheless, western spaces could be loci for social power. The topos of *translatio imperii et studii* traces the flow of power and learning westward; in its most famous articulation, in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Cligés*, knowledge and authority pass through Greece and Rome to rest at last in France. British authors, too, tried to claim this authority; Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*, and the many chronicles that share its basic outline, begin the history of Britain in Troy in order to claim Britain (and, by sleight-of-hand, England) as inheritors of high-value Trojan culture. It has even been suggested that some mappaemundi represent the westward flow of power graphically,

though the notion of westward transmission is less certain in cartography than in literature (McKenzie).

The *translatio* topos is found most commonly in texts (both romance and chronicle) concerned with the Matter of Britain. However, so-called Matter of England texts also had ways of making England prominent within the broader rhythms of the world, often by using the very exile-and-return structure that shapes *King Horn*. For instance, the two most famous heroes of English romance, Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton, both travel and do combat in the lands of the East, where their actions in defending the Holy Land and subduing Saracens implicitly make English heroism integral to the defense of Christendom. Indeed, the end of *Bevis of Hampton* sees the hero and his wife Christianizing and ruling in one Saracen city, while Bevis's son rules in another—a situation which Kofi Campbell has interpreted as a fantasy of English colonialism.²⁰⁰

But *King Horn* does not concern itself with such issues of the transmission of authority. The romance does not look back to continental Europe (as do Chrétien and Geoffrey), nor to lands of the East (as do *Guy* and *Bevis*). Unlike the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*, which sets its story within the rhythms of continental politics and imagines the future conquest of Africa by Horn's son, *King Horn* does not think about lands that lie outside this network of spaces. The space of the poem is insular not only in that it appears to be made up of islands but also in that it is inward-looking. *King Horn* does not imply any geography beyond what it depicts. Its community of marginal islands come in the course of the poem to be more tightly connected with each other, but not beyond each other.

Notions of the value of marginality had a currency beyond Gerald's discussion of Ireland, as well. Kathy Lavezzo has explored the use of geographic marginality in medieval English

thought, arguing that from the days of Ælfric on English writers made their geographic marginality empowering, creating the English as an exceptional people and the spiritual elect (*Angels*). In a variety of ways, then, marginality could be a positive attribute, one worth claiming. The lands of the poem, situated so determinedly in the west, partake of this marginality. The Saracen assault on these lands makes their Christianity militant and makes them into allies. The Saracens may suggest that western Christianity itself is a force to be reckoned with, the polar opposite of eastern Saracens as Gerald's Ireland is to the well of poisons. If such notions are in the poem's geography, they are very subtle. But hanging the poem's geography primarily on a direction, on the word "west," opens the door to such patterns of association. In any case, the poem certainly uses its geography to imagine an insular Christian community self-contained and capable of asserting and defending itself. The west becomes not just a direction, not just abstract space, but a *place*, forced to define and assert itself in a way that makes it exemplary. The west as place becomes an element for articulating the world, available for readers to map themselves and their knowledge of the world.

Conclusion: Community without Place

The terms in which *King Horn* situates its spaces—its religious dichotomy, its western marginality—links its structural geography to the world. In the course of his travels, Horn is invented as a king by these territories, at the same time he draws them to himself by bonds of allegiance. That is, the romance suggests that a king's kingship emanates arises from the territories he protects, and that he is a central uniting figure for territorial relationships. By referring to Ireland and depicting spaces that resonate with the Atlantic archipelago, the romance emplaces these political notions of space in territory directly familiar to its readers.

In doing so, the romance approaches the political and historical worlds. The geographical changes that the romance depicts, from a cluster of discrete insular spaces to a network grouped hierarchically around a central king, resonate with recent events in the thirteenth-century Atlantic archipelago: the move toward centralized, English kingship. Unlike the dispersed, apparently independent kingdoms at the tale's opening, each territory at the end is ruled by a king who owes Horn specific allegiance, and holds his kingdom by virtue of Horn's grant of it. The shift toward centralization of rule would have had teleological significance for the poem's medieval audiences. R. R. Davies has noted how English observers saw the areas we call the Celtic fringe—Wales, Ireland, western and northern Scotland, and the western isles—as politically backwards because these territories possessed so many kings (*First* 94-98). (Indeed, literally chronologically backward, for William of Newburgh pointed out that England itself had once likewise had many kingdoms [*First* 94].) The political thrust of *King Horn* might have seemed a move toward political organization, imposing some degree of structure and hierarchy over what was once just a multiplicity of rule. Of course, the kings of these territories existed within hierarchies of their own, and Horn's creation of a group of kings certainly does not model a clear transition of power.²⁰¹

The thirteenth century, when *King Horn* was composed, was a time of increasing centralization in the Atlantic archipelago.²⁰² The century had opened with the collapse of the Angevin Empire under King John, made official by the Treaty of Paris in 1259 where Henry III renounced his claims to Normandy, Anjou, and Poitou. This fixed the monarchy and aristocracy firmly in England and thus, Davies suggests, made them “arguably therefore more likely to focus their attention, and the power at their command, on the relationship between England and the outer zones of the British Isles” (*First* 20).²⁰³ In the last years of the century, Edward I, who

styled himself as a new King Arthur, expanded his power throughout Britain and Ireland, particularly increasing his authority over Wales and Scotland (*First* 25-30). Authority in the archipelago was coming to rest more centrally and securely in the English crown. Thus, the idea of unity might have had particular resonance for the poem's early audiences. The way the territories of the poem grow might, at first glance, look like a reflection of what English monarchs were achieving by administrative and military course throughout the thirteenth century.²⁰⁴

However, the geographic hybridity of *King Horn* works against the force of history. We have seen that, although its sparse toponyms offer a hazy, obscure sense of their relation to the "solid" world, the romance nevertheless generates a *sense* of place: western and insular, unified through a shared Christianity crystallized by Saracen attackers. If the romance employed no toponyms at all, like *Gamelyn*, or if none of its toponyms were recognizable, it would act as pure fantasy—fantasy that might reflect upon the known world, but fantasy nevertheless. If, on the other hand, its toponyms were both recognizable and familiar—if they unambiguously identified known insular locations, for instance, as a number of commentators of the first half of the twentieth century tried to make them do—they would engage the romance fully in history: they would likely bestow upon it a strong sense of historicity, while at the same time causing it to reflect upon the recent history and current politics that surrounded these places. *Horn*'s hybrid toponymy suspends it between these two extremes. Through Ireland, the romance touches the world of solid places, but the absence of a broader toponymic context for Ireland opens avenues of thought that history might otherwise close.

Ireland and Conquest

The poem's hybrid geography allows it simultaneously to invoke and to distance itself from this history of conquest. Instead of the kinds of military action England was engaging in to assert dominance in Ireland and Wales, the poem fantasizes about peaceful connections within a group of territories.

Ireland is one of these places. Ireland was long marginalized in English political discourse for lacking proper Christian practice. Bede, in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, viciously castigated the Irish for failing to observe the proper Easter, and thus failing to submit to Rome. Gerald de Barri writes that they are "of all the peoples . . . the least instructed in the rudiments of the faith" (98),²⁰⁵ and asserts that in the twelfth century there are some who have never heard of Christ (110-11).²⁰⁶ And, indeed, this kind of religious failing was mobilized as propaganda to underwrite the English conquest of Ireland. English action in Ireland was underwritten by the papal bull *Laudabiliter*, said to have been issued by Englishman Pope Adrian IV. The bull granted Henry II the right to intervene in Ireland precisely because of its spiritual degeneracy: "we regard it as pleasing and acceptable to us that you should enter that island for the purpose of enlarging the boundaries of the church, checking the descent into wickedness, correcting morals and implanting virtues, and encouraging the growth of the faith of Christ."²⁰⁷ Alexander III's privilege ratifying Adrian's grant put it in even more condemnatory terms, describing Ireland as "this barbarous nation, Christian only in name" and hoping that thanks to the king's efforts "that race may in future really earn the name of Christian which they now profess."²⁰⁸ The Irish were frequently cast as spiritually degenerate, and the English claimed this as a spiritual endorsement for their interference in Ireland.

But *King Horn*'s Ireland carries none of this association. The threatened Saracen invasion puts its Christianity on display, and it forms part of the poem's peaceable Christian community: indeed, because Irish soldiers accompany Horn on the rest of his adventures, Ireland may take a more prominent role than Westernesse in the assertion of Christianity. And Bell has noted that Horn's pseudonym in Ireland, Cutberd, seems to allude to St. Cuthbert, a popular saint with both Irish and English associations, whose *vita* accompanies *King Horn* in the O-manuscript, and who might well suggest the existence of a sacralized geography incorporating both England and Ireland (264-66).

The figures who deliver the Saracen threat to Ireland further emphasize the way *King Horn*'s Ireland differs from other popular representations. As I have already mentioned, both the messenger who tells King Purston's court that the Irish have arrived and the pagan champion whom Horn fights are identified as *geaunts* (820, 870).²⁰⁹ Their physical monstrosity reflects their religious monstrosity—but unusual bodies also encoded many other kinds of alterity. In a number of other romances, which portray the Irish in a less positive light, the Irish themselves are depicted as giants; two examples, Lazamon's *Brut* and *Of Arthour and Merlin*, are roughly contemporary to *King Horn*.²¹⁰ Not only does *King Horn* offer a strikingly positive depiction of Ireland, but it also inverts one common fantastical representation of Ireland. Instead of Irish giants menacing the British, as happens in Arthurian stories from Lazamon to Malory, here the Irish are a typical Christian chivalric community, and giants come from the outside to menace this community.

The name Ireland thus carries with it an array of ideas that are not present in the poem. We might think of *King Horn*'s representation of Ireland as employing a strategy like what Brian McHale terms *misattribution*, ascribing to a particular place different qualities or attributes than

those typically associated with it. McHale remarks the conventionality of the features associated with a particular place (as an example, he cites the “Texan ranch” and “Vermont hills” instanced in Whitman’s “Song of Myself”) and suggests that these associations can be so strong as almost to possess a grammatical necessity: they cannot be transposed onto each other (47-48). While *King Horn* does not bestow on Ireland properties radically contrary to reality (like the Israeli jungle of one novel McHale cites), it does deviate from the conventions of representing Ireland precisely in the absence of such negative terms. The very normalcy of Ireland, its compatibility with the romance’s other kingdoms, its place as just another western territory, may itself hold geographic meaning.

The Harley Manuscript and Ireland

The idea of an inter-insular community of fluid movement that included Ireland in its vision of community might well have resonated in one of the romance’s known manuscript contexts. Relatively little is known for sure about the provenance of two of the manuscripts containing the romance—LALME locates C in West Berkshire (LP 6800); according to A. S. G. Edwards, “our sense of [O]’s original is almost wholly speculative” (26).²¹¹ However, we know a moderate amount about the context for manuscript L, and this context (and the manuscript itself) has connections with Ireland.

L, the renowned Harley Manuscript, was produced in the West Midlands, a region that opens geographically onto both Wales and (by sea) Ireland. John J. Thompson has looked to the textual environment of the West Midlands in seeking to complicate our notions of manuscript geography by enlarging our context for Hiberno-English literature. Thompson notes the engagement of West Midlands families like the Mortimers and the de Verduns in Ireland, and points out that scholarship on Hiberno-English has demonstrated similarities in dialect between

fourteenth-century English in Ireland and the south West Midlands (“Mapping,” 125-27). By pointing out both textual and contextual connections between volumes like London, British Library, MS Harley 913—an important Hiberno-English manuscript—and the Harley Manuscript, Thompson makes the case for a community of literary circulation that stretched across the Irish Sea, enabled by the movement of prominent families who held land in both England and Ireland, which would challenge our easy notions of “Englishness” and “Irishness” (127-28).

The L-manuscript is an important document for considering community and circulation across the Irish Sea, for the manuscript itself contains a physical token of this movement. The flyleaves of the manuscript contain a record of household accounts from Trim, Co. Meath, Ireland, probably from 1309 and likely associated with the Mortimer family.²¹² While Carter Revard has argued against Mortimer patronage for the manuscript on the grounds that the scribe’s work, both in L and elsewhere, would have been politically inappropriate for the Mortimers (28-29), this documentary fragment places L within a community marked by the easy movement of people and texts to and from Ireland, much as in *King Horn*.²¹³ In this environment, the promise of *King Horn* may be a vision of chivalric heroism that could look west as much as inland and imagine a community stretching across the sea as much as one bounded and confined to England.

The English Vacuum

The normalcy of *King Horn*’s Ireland has led Kimberley K. Bell to speculate that “it might be a fictionalized representation of one of the several Anglo-Irish colonies in Ireland.” For Bell, reading *Horn*’s Ireland as specifically Anglo-Irish “could explain its being, in essence, a replica of those [courts] in Westnesse and Suddene” (271). Bell’s suggestion comes in an essay

that reads *King Horn* in the context of the O-manuscript, and coordinates the romance with the interest in Englishness developed in the *vitae* of the *South English Legendary*, which constitute the bulk of the manuscript. Horn, she argues, is best understood in this context as an English saintly figure, much as Havelok (also found in O) has previously been read (252).

Bell's treatment of the romance and its geography are generally careful, and she pays close attention to its productive qualities. But, like many scholars, Bell is quick to make England a term in the romance, even as she acknowledges that Ireland is its only clearly recognizable toponym.²¹⁴ However, the examples Bell furnishes from the *South English Legendary* showcase how differently *King Horn* works. The *vitae* of insular saints that Bell cites often name England in their opening lines and refer by name to other English places: regions, kingdoms, towns and cities. Moreover, several Lives deictically align the English scene of the narrative with the space of narration, employing the construction *here of/in England* (255-56).²¹⁵ These insular *vitae*, which, Bell suggests, advance a sense of English Christian identity, display England verbally and claim it for both author and readers. Horn simply cannot be the same kind of English hero, for his romance does not furnish an England to which he can attach. The same characteristic undercuts any sense of *King Horn*'s Ireland as Anglo-Irish or Hiberno-English: Ireland is there, but England is not.²¹⁶

England's absence is vitally important to the way the poem works. *King Horn*, as I have already mentioned, has long been associated with England; in fact, the poem has appeared in most catalogues of the so-called Matter of England, a literary-historical groupings whose shortcomings have been abundantly demonstrated by Rosalind Field ("Curious").²¹⁷ But England is not a term in the poem's understanding of its space. In not pairing England with Ireland, the poem dodges a whole history of conquest. Instead of the military way England asserted

dominance in Ireland and Wales, the poem fantasizes about peaceful connections, enabled by what various places (including Ireland) have in common.

Of course, since England is not a term in the poem, we cannot say that it is actively eschewing England. Despite a long tendency of scholarship, there is no reason to presuppose that England *should* be a key term in *King Horn*. But it would have been an available one. In *England the Nation*, Thorlac Turville-Petre has traced the increasing prominence given to the expression of the concept of England from the late thirteenth century—around the time of *King Horn*'s composition, if we accept Allen's redating of the poem. *Havelok the Dane*, which directly precedes *King Horn* in the O-manuscript,²¹⁸ furnishes one example of how England might have colored *King Horn* were it present in the poem.²¹⁹ *Havelok* is a famously local romance, closely associated with Grimsby and Lincolnshire, both of which feature as settings within the poem. It uses the poles of Denmark and England to make the history and cultural diversity of the Danelaw present in the poem. As Havelok becomes king of Denmark and England, he becomes an embodiment of cultural mixture within the Danelaw, and thus an emblem of local pride. The twin poles of England and Denmark—discrete, quasi-national categories that construct history out of instances of violence and invasion—bring history into the poem, so that the history of the English and the Danes structure its readers' experience.

King Horn's Ireland could serve as a point in a similar configuration.²²⁰ However, rather than England, the poem furnishes Westernesse and Suddene. Whether or not the poem's original readers would have recognized them, Westernesse and Suddene did not have the national force that Turville-Petre has traced *England* accumulating at this period. As such, they lack any particular affiliations with Ireland. Where England would have asserted a gravitational force, inevitably implying tension with and domination of Ireland, Suddene and Westernesse have no

such weight. Thus what speaks most loudly in the poem is not a historical and contemporary experience of domination, violence, and suffering—as characterized the relationship between England and some of its outlying, peripheral territories—but a vision of mutually marginal kingdoms that have more in common than they have differences, best served by working together.

As I have argued, the romance sketches a space evocative of the Atlantic archipelago, and I think it likely that medieval English readers would have seen the archipelago in the poem. The modern critical tendency to associate the poem with England is not off-base; it responds to geographic indications that are really there. The poem carefully situates the places it describes in a part of the world that looks much like the space of the archipelago: insular, isolated, in the west of the world. Given this, English readers might well have seen England in the poem—might even have automatically understood one or more elements of its setting as English, as modern critics have so often done.

Yet, to such readers, the term *England* is surely conspicuous in its absence. *England* was an available term for English-language romances; of the eight romances dated 1300 and earlier, five employ it as part of their geography.²²¹ Moreover, *King Horn* dates to a time when historians and literary scholars alike recognize the existence of a distinctly English sense of identity.²²² England is a geographic term, and English an identity term (no longer ethnic, it had expanded to include the descendants of the Normans), that other documents suggest was prominent in literary culture and would likely have been prominent in the minds of the courtly audience of *King Horn*. Ireland drives the sense of England's absence from the romance through its starkly referential familiarity.²²³

To the extent that England is present in the romance, it can only lie behind its mixed, hybrid geography, which pairs the major spatial-political term Ireland with other names of less familiarity and significance. Kathy Lavezzo, in *Angels on the Edge of the World*, has studied the way the English over several hundred years deployed their geographic marginality as an empowering trope, depicting the English as the spiritual elect—but, she notes, they turned that same marginality against the Irish as a weapon, depicting them as wild and uncivilized. Lavezzo suggests that for writers like Gerald de Barri, emphasizing Ireland's marginality was “a means of suppressing their own geographic isolation and urging their crucial place within the international Christian community” (*Angels* 54). This schematization is impossible in *King Horn*, however, for the poem lacks any term like England which would stand as more central than the Irish periphery. Instead, *King Horn* offers a network of spaces that are able to be mutually peripheral, united and brought into contact by this very feature. The romance's hybrid geography enables a kind of geographic and political imagination that would be impossible if it depicted England, because of the force of history the term would bear.

Thus the uncertainty of Westernesse and Suddene is quite important to what the poem is doing. But the presence of Ireland, with all its political solidity, is equally important. As I have repeatedly emphasized, Ireland carries baggage: slanderous representations and a growing political suppression. Ireland's presence in the poem precludes its English readers from naturalizing its spaces and assuming that they are completely English—or, alternatively, from assuming that they are purely random. Having Ireland as a term creates a very specific kind of community, encompassing those places in the archipelago that might be seen as backwards or undesirable by English standards. This geography suggests that all such marginal, insular places have natural affinities, and that these affinities can bring them into productive contact. *King*

Horn's Ireland thus offers a rosy alternative to the Ireland of history, contested and marked by violence.

Language and Conquest

The way this geographic configuration denies the possibility of violence among islands is made dramatically visible in what seems like an offhand comment, made in passing. As he prepares to retake Suddene, Horn makes a boast that highlights the difference between the natives of the land and their Saracen occupiers: “We schulle þe hundes teche / To speken vre speche” (1401-02). Given the scholarly attention that has been paid to the status of the vernacular in the Middle English period, finding this assertion in one of the earliest English-language romances is striking. As the romance is written in the manuscript, the words represented as coming from Horn’s mouth are in the English language. This attitude appears to make a connection between land and language: it is a problem that the occupiers of Sudden do not speak the language of the territory.

This concern appears exclusively to be a rhetorical strategy, as concerns of language do not figure into the plot in any meaningful way: not only is Horn understood in all the territories he visits, but the Saracens who show up at each of the lands address the inhabitants in a language they understand. The romance, then, is not interested in dramatizing the difficulties of cross-cultural communication or international travel; for the purposes of the plot, the world is essentially monolingual.²²⁴ (There is one exception: a line found only in O might suggest the existence of linguistic difference between Westernes and Ireland, though this difference is not a factor on the level of plot. I discuss this line below.) But when seeking threatening language to direct at the Saracens, the romance—like American political discourse today—seizes upon

language as one basic way of marking the outsider, and suggests that linguistic difference deserves discipline.

The romance as a whole stages the alliance of its three Christian territories, Suddene, Westernesse, and Ireland. Indeed, directly before launching into his threats, Horn reminds us that he has come to Suddene “Wiþ mine *iris*se menne” (1398, my emphasis); the force that will reclaim his homeland from the invaders is largely made up of natives of another country. In casting the Saracens as linguistic others, then, the poem surely implies that the three Christian territories share the *same* speech; the ease with which Horn integrates into the other lands he visits implies that the three Christian countries share in general fundamental cultural similarities, set against Saracen difference. By othering the Saracens, *King Horn* claims a basic cultural unity corresponding with the religious unity of the territories in the west.

What, then, are the implications of the idea that the three lands share a language in common—that there is no need to teach the Irish men “vre speche”?²²⁵ It might be that common language and common religion match up precisely onto each other in this case; the Christian lands of the west, after all, shared in common the Latin language. As the language of the medieval Bible and the liturgy, it was something that could be expected to be in common among all Christian peoples, and at the same time something that was foreign to Saracen lands.

However, it seems unlikely to me that a Middle English poem like *King Horn* would mean for its reader to think of Latin when it says “vre speche.” A number of scholars have emphasized that to write in English was a political act, concerned with defining a community who could share in the English-language narration (Turville-Petre, *England* 11-22; Evans et al. 321-29). Latin, as the editors of *The Idea of the Vernacular* remind us, was not a language of emotionality or clarity even to those who understood it; writing in English was not only more

easily intelligible, but could “*signify* clarity and open access” (Evans et al. 325, italics in the original). Particularly in light of the striking simplicity of *King Horn*’s mode of expression, the narrative probably does not suggest Latinity on the part of its characters.

In a strictly imaginary geography, continuity of vernacular language might not be troubling, but the presence of Ireland among the poem’s lands raises the question. Irish, after all, is dramatically dissimilar to English and French, and, unlike English and French, would have been familiar to few of *King Horn*’s readers. To the extent that the Irish language was accessible to the Anglo-Irish, this was increasingly seen as a threatening form of assimilation, so that in 1366 the Statutes of Kilkenny declared that the English in Ireland and the Irish living among them must speak in English, not Irish, or have their property seized.

Bell suggests that two of the romance’s three manuscripts—in particular O—allude to Irish linguistic difference, depicting the (perhaps Anglo-Irish) *court* as sharing a mutual intelligibility with the poem’s other lands while quietly recognizing a native population that does not share in this linguistic community. (These lines and this sentiment are absent in C.) When Rymenhild’s messenger comes to Ireland, he complains of his difficulty finding Horn. He seeks Horn, he says, and adds (in O), “Ich neuere myzte of reche / Whit no londisse speche” (975-76; O 998-99).²²⁶ Bell glosses these lines, “I will never be able to find (him) / Without (knowing) the native language,” suggesting that the messenger speaks the common court language (English) but cannot attain the information necessary for his search because the land’s other inhabitants speak Irish (271). In this reading, a happy turn of events at last brings the messenger into contact with Horn, who shares in the common court language.

However, the language is not nearly so important in these lines as Bell indicates. The reading of L clearly does not refer to the Irish language, and this reading likewise helps

illuminate the sense of O: “ne mihte ich *him* neuer cleche / wiþ nones kunnes speche” (L 963-64). *Nones-kinnes* is an adjectival compound, attested in Middle English for two centuries before the L-manuscript, meaning *no* or *no kind*. In L, the messenger is not saying that he cannot find Horn because the language of the land is unintelligible to him; he says that he cannot find Horn with the help of any kind of speech.²²⁷ Language has proven useless in his search.

O’s use of *londisse* has suggested to Bell a particularity in the messenger’s problem: he cannot find Horn with the speech of *this* land. But the term *londisse* has broader resonances in the poem, invoking the land/sea = Christian/Saracen dichotomy we have already seen. *Londisse* has been applied elsewhere to each of the other main territories: the inhabitants of Suddene are “lond folk” (45), while the Saracens invading Westernesse are “none londisse men” (639). In fact, O adds an extra instance of the latter phrase, branding them “out londisse manne / Of sarazine kenne” in a couplet that no other manuscript shares at that point (after 604, O 612-13). Certainly the romance uses the term *lond* in its conventional sense, indicating a territory, but *landishness* is an attribute it chiefly invokes to differentiate Christians from Saracens. Given these associations, “londisse speche” could mean the communal speech of the romance’s marginal, Christian territories. The line could as well be glossed “with the speech of any land.”

Certainly, Bell’s interpretation of O as highlighting linguistic difference is possible for O (though not, I think, for L). Bell has argued that the O-manuscript cultivates a particularly strong sense of Englishness and of England as a place, and this heightened attention to England as a category relative to the romance’s other two manuscripts might plausibly have primed scribe and readers to be more conscious of Irish difference. Whether the scribe was thinking about the Irish language or not, the line might have reminded some readers that the native Irish spoke a separate language, and they might have seen that fact reflected in the romance. But even this vocabulary,

by invoking the concept of *landishness*, invokes the sense of western Christian community that has been set against the *unlandish* Saracens. Because of this recurrent vocabulary, even seeing the native Irish as “landish” (in the sense of “from this land”) recalls other Christian kingdoms defined by Saracen attacks. And even if O might subtly suggest that Ireland is linguistically divided, this suggestion is limited to one ambiguous line. The Irish court, locus of power and structural attention in the romance, remains a part of the romance’s community of common language.

The Statutes of Kilkenny (which date from almost a century after *Horn*’s composition, and after all the surviving manuscripts were copied) display the force of language both as a trait for differentiating between groups and as an instrument of hegemonic power. The correlation of language and power was evident across insular history and indeed across the insular landscape. The passages of dominion that characterized insular history were also marked by changes in language, a fact not lost on twelfth-century historians who dived eagerly into toponymic etymology. Each conquest of the island brought with it a new language. English expansionism of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had carried the English language along with it, spreading English across the isles, though this process may have been in decline by 1300 (R. R. Davies, *First* 155).

But, although Horn may be seen (perhaps like Edward I) to be uniting separate insular territories under a single rule, *King Horn*’s language politics are nativist rather than expansionist. In the romance, a hero prepares to throw off foreign invaders who are in administrative control of the country and speak a different language from the natives. Language, “vre speche,” is intrinsic to Suddene (in much the way I have suggested that religion clings to the land), and the foreign-speaking invaders must be “educated” at sword-point. This sentiment would side with the

Britons against the Saxons and with the English against the Normans. Horn's linguistic facility in other lands enfold them into the same nativist community; the English vacuum allows the romance to forget the exportation of the English language to Ireland.

King Horn, then, offers up a subversive geography. The romance's subversion does not operate by undermining or questioning the virtues of English power, or by contesting boundaries and ennobling fringe groups, as Michelle Warren and Patricia Clare Ingham have argued that a number of Arthurian narratives do. Instead, it is a kind of counterfactual geography, an abstraction of the Atlantic archipelago freed from the depredations of history.²²⁸ Thus I view *King Horn* as a real spatial realization of what Elizabeth Fowler has termed, in reference to *Sir Isumbras*, the "landscape of 'suppose'" (99). Fowler argues that the abstract qualities of romances, which have led readers to view them as simplistic, actually enable them to operate as "thought experiments" for political and philosophical issues. *King Horn's* "landscape of 'suppose'" allows the romance to imagine the kind of community that might form on the margins of the world, among lands pressed on by the sea, without the weight of historical domination.

The Fantasy of Placelessness

My interpretation has seemed to imagine *King Horn's* space in a rather positive light, as offering a daringly alternative way of understanding the Atlantic archipelago and the relationships its various places have to each other. However, for all that the poem attempts to embrace community and friendly cooperation, its fantasy of cultural compatibility fails to overcome the problems of history. In the end, *King Horn* redirects the kinds of violence that have been going on in the space of the Atlantic archipelago outward, toward the mutually acceptable enemy of the Saracens. But in doing so it ignores the reasons for that violence, and it is unable to provide a real framework for establishing new connections.

The poem's geographic fantasy works because it occludes cultural difference. In order for the network that forms in the course of the poem to function, Ireland really has to be interchangeable with its other places. Horn is accepted as quickly in Ireland as anywhere else, because of the quasi-magical token of his physical beauty. As Susan Crane points out, while the *Romance of Horn* described its hero as proficient in a variety of courtly social graces, *King Horn* eschews all that; Horn's beauty is described primarily in terms of natural images, which "demonstrate Horn's excellence by measures that lie beyond the social, even beyond the human" (*Insular* 31). That is, Horn does not have to fit into any particular social system to be accepted. And he can function within that court as well as he could in Westernesse, because these places lack particularity.

By imagining a western Christian monoculture, the poem is able to dodge the profound differences that have provoked a lot of violence across the history of the region, and that spark the racist diatribes against the Irish we find in many other works that discuss them. But this is not a solution to the problems that have marked the archipelago, for many of its conflicts stem from those very particularities *King Horn's* geography tries to imagine away. While we trust that the people of Ireland were not as prone to bestiality and incest as Gerald describes, there were certainly very real cultural differences between the Irish and other peoples within the archipelago—differences that made them appear barbarous and backwards to the English. The bull *Laudabiliter*, which underwrote the invasion of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans, was predicated on real religious differences between the Irish church and other Christian communities. The poem's Christian monoculture strives to suggest that such places have natural affinities because they share a common Christianity—but the history of England's engagement with Ireland belies that notion.

The geography of *King Horn*, then, is founded on placelessness. I use the term placelessness advisedly. For geographers, placelessness has become a particularly pressing concern in modernity, brought about by globalization, consumerism, mass culture, and mass transportation. E. Relph defines placelessness as “a weakening of the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike but feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience” (90). For Relph, placelessness depends closely on inauthenticity; he is thinking in terms of the built environment and of social planning, and describes a superficial, economically planned modern landscape lacking in “significant places”: “a flatscape, a meaningless pattern of buildings” (117). *King Horn*, which gives little attention to landscape, operates with a different spatial emphasis; the predominance of synecdoche and close-up in the poem acts against vistas like those Relph considers.²²⁹ But the gap in *King Horn* between close-up description and geographic space gives to the poem’s scene-spaces a sameness. This sameness accords with the poem’s broader geographic messages, as the idea of placelessness can help us see.

One characteristic of placelessness is homogeneity: places lose their local particularity and resemble each other. Thus the modern profusion of virtually identical shopping malls and high-rise hotels is a manifestation of placelessness. While this spare poem has little interest in the architecture or topographic layout of the places it describes, the courts in its various territories are placeless in that they all act in basically the same way. Any given court could be transplanted elsewhere without its making a difference; there is nothing local or particular about them. The poem envisions an aristocratic Christian mass culture where there is no specificity.

Relph discusses the ways in which placelessness is linked to mass transportation and mass culture. As he puts it, “mass communication appears to result in a growing uniformity of landscape and a lessening diversity of places by encouraging and transmitting general and

standardised tastes and fashions” (92). In addition, movement of people in the form of tourism promotes placelessness by encouraging “other-directed architecture,” which exists to appeal to be seen by the people who travel into it (93).²³⁰ Throughout this chapter I have emphasized Horn’s travels, and I suggest that the nature of those travels in fact necessitates the placelessness of the poem’s settings. Of course, any poem could simply be inattentive to the particularities of place and imagine a series of places with little or nothing to distinguish them from each other. But *King Horn* demands that state of affairs because it places so much emphasis on circulation. Horn must be able to move effortlessly among kingdoms. That is what enables his own accession, which in turn underwrites the fantasy that diverse spaces like those of the Atlantic archipelago are fundamentally compatible and could be easily brought together if they recognized their commonalities.²³¹

Thus, the poem’s geographic imagination amounts to a retreat from the real specificity of place. But that does not make the poem’s spaces unmappable, divorced from real territorial politics, or unimportant, as a number of scholars have assumed. Rather, placelessness is a geographic strategy the poem employs to imagine an idealized romance kingship, capable of overcoming traditional boundaries and uniting insular spaces. *King Horn* carefully situates its territories within the framework of the world; that it fails to differentiate among them is strategic. Its hybrid geography, combining the recognizable Ireland with the uncertain Westernesse and Suddene, helps it imagine a kind of space that appeals to the real world but does not have to bear the weight of historical specificity as a chronicle geography would.

Chapter 2

Stratigraphic Narrative: The Man of Law's Tale

In *King Horn*, we saw that geography took a highly functional role: the simple, schematic array of places functions as an engine of its plot, allowing its hero to define himself and in doing so to redefine the territories as mutually interconnected. As I argued, the romance's geographic lexis—insularity, the sea, western-ness, Ireland—generates a geographic system that resembles and recalls the space of the Atlantic archipelago without directly *representing* it. This spatial system might encourage its English readers to see their own contemporary insular space within the romance, but ultimately the text does not model the relationship between the virtual world of the text and the solid world; that connection must happen within the mind of the reader. The scholarly output provides ample evidence that modern readers have made such a connection (with varying degrees of consciousness), and the existence of *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild* may suggest that at least one medieval author encountering the *Horn* tradition had a similar reaction. But *reaction* is the primary model by which *King Horn* operates upon its readers; this minimalist romance does nothing to model for its readers their relationship to its spaces.

Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale operates very differently. Like *King Horn*, the Man of Law's Tale depicts three main territories and traces its protagonist's wanderings by sea among them—travels that define and articulate the relationships among these territories. But unlike *King Horn*, all three of these major territories are clearly recognizable: Rome, Surrye (Syria), and Northumberland, a term which the poem's late-fourteenth-century readers would have known both as an Anglian kingdom in the pre-Norman past and as a contemporary earldom, recreated in 1377 and held by Henry Percy. The familiarity of these terms puts the tale's audience on rather different footing than in the case of *King Horn*: while *King Horn*'s indefinite spaces might

resonate promiscuously with spaces in the world of its readers, the Man of Law's Tale's geographic fixity would seem to imbue it with legibility. We know where we stand, we might imagine English readers saying: Rome is the center of religious and secular authority; the Syrian Saracens are a menacing Other; Northumberland is English space, and that's where English Christianity gets its start.

Such a reaction is not untrue to the contents of the Man of Law's Tale; each of the tale's territories does carry something of the resonance that our hypothetical reader might expect. But Chaucer's text determinedly resists simple schematization. Instead, I argue, the tale uses the tools of romance to place the reader in a more complicated relationship to the past. While the *Canterbury Tales* is a collection deeply interested in group identity, I largely agree with Derek Pearsall that Chaucer's work shows little interest in constructing a unified, national sense of Englishness²³²—a conclusion borne out, I will show, by the geography of the *Canterbury Tales*. But while Pearsall is content to dismiss the Man of Law's Tale in a footnote as “set partly in an oddly antique Anglian Britain” (“Chaucer,” 90, n. 34), the tale shows a profound investment in the insular past, relating a story that Nicholas Trevet's *Cronicles*, one of Chaucer's main sources, presents as a foundational moment in English history. In divorcing this story from its chronicle context and turning it into romance (a narrative choice that may have been inspired by John Gower's treatment of the story in the *Confessio Amantis*²³³), Chaucer replaces Trevet's historical teleology with multiplicity. Although the spaces of the tale are all recognizable, geography in the Man of Law's Tale is far from a stable system. The tale uses narrative grammar and perspectival shifts to defamiliarize all its lands, but most especially Rome, the seemingly stable center that acts as the locus of authority in Chaucer's sources. It aligns its reader with the island at the same time it significantly complicates a sense of insular identity across time. The Man of Law's Tale, I

show, imagines its geography in terms of readers' relationship to the past. This relationship is multiple and sedimentary, piling up peoples and perspectives so as to suggest that political spaces act as containers for constructing communities far larger than those we would normally expect.

This chapter begins by considering the geography of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole in order to understand the achievement of the Man of Law's Tale. The tales, we know, are told over the course of a pilgrimage that carries the pilgrims through English geography, and Chaucer critics, following larger trends in the field, have been eager to explore how Chaucer imagines and contributes to shaping the nascent English nation. Yet, as I will explain, both the frame story and the individual tales have less to say about England as a geographical entity than we might imagine. The idea of England is present, but remains slippery and indefinite as the *Tales* seek to balance the local and the universal.

I propose the Man of Law's Tale as key to thinking about how the kinds of political communities constructed by the *Canterbury Tales* operate in the space of the world. This "most geographic of the *Canterbury Tales*" brings together multiple spaces in which Chaucer shows interest in the course of his work: Rome, the Orient, England (Lavezzo, *Angels* 94; Lavezzo, "England," 55). Moreover, the tale is reluctant to organize these spaces hierarchically, distinguishing firmly between what is "us" and what is other and defining clearly where authority and power are located. Instead, it experiments with the ways in which readers are to relate to the peoples and places it depicts. In particular, I show the lengths to which Chaucer goes to enable his audience to approach Rome as outsiders, aligned with the Saracens rather than the Romans, an alignment which anticipates the tale's later defamiliarizing approach to a pagan insular past.

The tale does not simply position its readers in relation to its subject matter with what it chooses to relate but in the very grammar of the telling. As I explain, the text generates pronominal communities, incorporating the reader into the action and articulating the reader's relation to the story using the first person plural pronoun. Rather than constant, the *us* of the text shifts, casting the reader at different moments in a variety of communities from the human race as a whole to a limited, insular community extending across time.

I turn to this last community in my final section as I explore how Chaucer's depiction of insular history imagines the space of the island. The central portion of the tale tells the story of how Custance, the heroine, helped convert pagan Northumbria to Christianity. The Constance story seems to repeat a familiar version of insular religious history by bringing Christianity afresh from Rome to the English people, much as in the definitive account of the origins of English Christianity offered by Bede. But the Man of Law's Tale complicates this process of transmission by making a Briton man and a Briton book, figures of a more distant insular past and also of the marginalized Welsh of Chaucer's day, instrumental to the conversion of the Northumbrians. This history undercuts the Bedan fantasy of an English new beginning, and indeed the whole scheme for periodizing insular history that emphasized the segmentation that occurred as each new group came into possession of the island. Instead, the Man of Law's Tale offers a vision of insular history as accretive, with the past inhering in ways that damage "pure" identity categories. But Chaucer does not foreclose upon the possibility of community with the past; instead, he seems to suggest a kind of community based on geography, rather than ethnicity, that brings an "us" of insular readers into productive contact with others who have shared a common space—a model for history that accords with the project of pilgrimage to Canterbury.

The Place of the Canterbury Tales

That the band of pilgrims who people the *Canterbury Tales* constitutes a political community is a commonplace of Chaucerian scholarship. Bringing together people of different (though not wildly divergent) social station, the frame-story of the *Tales* seems to offer a microcosm of a society. Critics have used a variety of terms to identify the nature of this body: Jill Mann treats them in terms of the Three Estates; for David Wallace they constitute an “associational form” resembling Guild culture; Paul Strohm sees in these tale-telling pilgrims “a mixed commonwealth of style,” modeling social heterogeneity by bringing together divergent voices within the same volume; Glenn Burger uses a term that resonates even more strongly with modern political structures when he entitles his study *Chaucer’s Queer Nation*.²³⁴ Uniting individuals who share neither kinship nor common interests, such a framework begins to resemble the “imagined community” that Benedict Anderson describes as the form for the nation.²³⁵ Indeed, while criticism has tended to focus on the constitution of such a political body instead of its referentiality, the political vocabulary of Strohm and especially of Burger seems to suggest (or at least to open the possibility) that the community on offer is a prototype of the English nation whose emergence medievalists have been so eager to locate within our own domain of study.²³⁶ I wish to consider the nature and extent of this community by examining the role of space in the frame-story; I will suggest that whatever the form of this community, it cannot be read as a *territorial* community, located within defined geographic borders; this will pave the way for my analysis of the Man of Law’s Tale, which I will argue explores the relationship between community and place in a way not undertaken by Chaucer’s project as a whole.

If the notion that Chaucer offers a vision of English nationhood may be suggested in some analyses of the pilgrims, John M. Bowers makes it explicit in a 2000 essay in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*. Bowers asserts that “the nationalist movement in late medieval England was an ‘inside job’ undertaken by members of the ruling elite itself, Chaucer included,” and suggests that the work of the *Canterbury Tales* is to imagine the commonality necessary to generate a nation from a diverse group of people (“Chaucer,” 57). Charting a process of “internal colonialism” by which London assimilated the rest of England, Bowers argues that Chaucer suppresses cultural and linguistic differences among his (regionally diverse) pilgrims in order to create a community through a London hegemony of language and urban life (59-61). For Bowers, the emergent England *is* London, and London is all but invisible in the *Canterbury Tales* because it is omnipresent: “every town is treated as if it were London, every household a London household, nearly every character a London speaker. London is nowhere but everywhere” (60).

Yet arguments from absence are risky. Do the pilgrims all speak in a London dialect because Chaucer wants to highlight their commonality, or because that’s Chaucer’s own dialect and the one to which he defaults when he does not have a specific reason to write otherwise? Do all cities resemble London (assuming we grant Bowers’s claim) to generate a national community through urban space, or is it because London furnishes a basic conceptual model for what a city might be like? In a sense, it may not matter: even if London is simply a default position for the narrative, that may well imbue it with hegemonic force to render it the standard for England. However, for all the geographic cues in the frame story, the *Canterbury Tales* does not make England a significant spatial tool for structuring its material. The collection might work to produce a sense of Englishness, which Ardis Butterfield has reminded us was a particularly complicated and capacious category of the Hundred Years’ War (“Nationhood”; *Familiar*, see

especially ch. 1).²³⁷ But as I hope to show in the next section, neither the deceptive precision of the frame story nor the large number of fabliaux taking place in towns in the English landscape constitutes an *England* to delimit the political body the pilgrims form.

The Geography Effect

My assertion that *England* is not a major spatial term of the *Canterbury Tales* may seem surprising given that the word is prominent in the celebrated opening lines of the General Prologue. Chaucer sets his own pilgrims' journey within a broader rhythm of pilgrimage. However, after alluding generally to the "straunge strondes" and "ferne halwes" where some pilgrims go, the Prologue narrows its focus to a particular body of pilgrims: "And specially from every shires ende / Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende" (I.13-16).²³⁸ That is, within the larger world of pilgrimage that he begins by describing, Chaucer focuses our attention on *English* pilgrims, going to a shrine located within England.

This move is so thoroughly familiar that it may seem unremarkable to students of Chaucer. But in fact it represents a deliberate shaping of the way the audience thinks about the material. Canterbury was a popular pilgrimage destination in England, to be sure, but its popularity stretched beyond the island, making it "the main pilgrimage center in northwestern Christendom" (Scully 583).²³⁹ One of the shrine's prominent early pilgrims was King Louis VII of France, who in 1179 visited Canterbury to pray for his son's health. Chaucer's account of pilgrims coming from all across *England* actually limits the reach of the cult of St. Thomas Becket and of the appeal of Canterbury. But in doing so it constructs pilgrimage to Canterbury as an English act. Not just the Canterbury destination itself, but Chaucer's construction of that site within the nexus of English geography, suggests the Englishness of Canterbury pilgrimage.

However, rather than setting a wholeheartedly English agenda for the collection, this pilgrimage passage dramatizes the tension between universality and particularity inherent in the social vision of the *Canterbury Tales*. Although it works its way around to England, the Prologue opens in the realm of the universal: the seasonal processes Chaucer describes stem from the progression of the year, signaled by an astrological progression. These seasonal changes also produce universal behavior: “Thanne longen *folk* to gon on pilgrimages,” the Prologue tells us, using a term that indicates human beings without qualification.²⁴⁰ The terms that Chaucer uses for the kinds of pilgrimage he names first—“*straunge* stronges,” “*ferne* halwes”—denote foreignness, calling attention to the geographic scope of pilgrimage.²⁴¹ And shortly after the lines that invoke England and initialize Canterbury as English, the breathtaking first sentence is over and we have moved within the confines of the Tabard Inn. The group that constitutes itself within the walls of that inn is undoubtedly a social and political group, but it is not *spatial*, and the quality of narration has changed with the introduction of the first-person pronoun *I* in line 20; pilgrimage to Canterbury is no longer a general concept, but “*my* pilgrymage” (l.21, *my* italics). Thus the opening lines of the *Canterbury Tales* have carried us from the universal through the English and into the particular, without fixing *England* as a level that governs the rest.

On leaving the Tabard and beginning the pilgrimage, of course, Chaucer’s pilgrims return to a broader geographic space, possibly a space that recalls the pilgrims cutting tracks across England to Canterbury that the Prologue has already given us. The tales themselves, according to the conceit of the frame story, are arrayed within this landscape: they are emplaced along the route from London to Canterbury. While manuscripts differ as to the arrangement of tales within this space (and Chaucer may never have produced a fully revised, authoritative arrangement), the

tale-links reinforce this sense of the tales as existing in space by providing periodic updates on where in the journey the pilgrims are.

Yet we should not overstate the significance of this emplacement, for the tale-links show little actual engagement with the space they are traversing. While tale-links sometimes indicate where the pilgrimage is at that point, many do not. Nor does it seem, among the tales in the middle of the pilgrimage, that it particularly matters where the tale is told. That is, there is no special relationship between Deptford and Greenwich, which establish the pilgrims' location in the Reeve's Prologue, and the tale that follows.²⁴² And while critics have attempted to use geography as a guide in ordering the tales, Chaucer does not seem always to have placed geographic precision at the fore, as when he ends the Summoner ends his Tale by declaring generally, "My tale is done; we been almoost at towne" (III.2294), without specifying the town in question.²⁴³ Indeed, the sheer array of manuscript orderings demonstrates that where particular tales fall along the route was not at all stable.²⁴⁴ More manuscripts than not contain some feature that troubles the "geographic realism" of the *Tales*, indicating that geography was not the main concern of scribes.²⁴⁵ That is not to say that scribes and readers were uninterested in geography; the Ellesmere ordering of the Tales may represent an effort by a medieval editor to produce an intelligible geographic progression, and one manuscript—Alnwick, Duke of Northumberland MS 455—undertook a substantial reordering of the tales with geography as a driving factor (see Appendix B). However, while the first and last fragments provide a relatively stable framework within which the rest of the tales fall (begin in Southwark, end at Canterbury), the way the tales fit into the route itself lacks stability.

I would suggest, then, that the references to specific places within the tale-links serve more to produce a geographic effect than to pin down exactly where specific tales are placed.

This effect, which uses place-names familiar to readers to index the literary pilgrimage against their knowledge of the actual pilgrimage route from London to Canterbury, imbues the *Canterbury Tales* with an overall sense of movement, and it is, indeed, movement that takes place within England. However, after the General Prologue, England is not one of the geographic terms of the frame narrative. The place-references are either specific, naming individual towns, or general, as in the “towne” at the end of the Summoner’s Tale. To the extent that the names do geographic work, they act like the entries on an itinerary map, which arrays geographic locations linearly and treats them in relation to a journey rather than to the geography that surrounds them.²⁴⁶

In fact, the *Canterbury Tales* as we have it concludes by undermining even the idea of a geographic journey: it seeks to rewrite this progression of real locales into timeless, spiritual place. The telos of the pilgrimage has been, from the very outset, Canterbury Cathedral and the shrine of Thomas Becket. And yet, within the surviving text composed by Chaucer, the pilgrimage never reaches this point. Rather, the compilation concludes by suggesting a change to the nature of the pilgrimage, as the Parson prefaces his tale by promising “To shewe yow the wey, in this viage, / Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage / That highte Jerusalem celestial” (X.49-51). The Parson’s Prologue thus attempts to reframe the entire pilgrimage. No longer are the pilgrims processing toward a specific structure in a specific town which sacred events occurred; instead, they are moving toward their spiritual perfection.²⁴⁷ In exegetical terms, the Parson’s Tale shifts the notion of pilgrimage from the realm of the literal to that of the moral or tropological.

The Parson’s Prologue does not, of course, undo what has preceded it. But the activity of some fifteenth-century continuators of the *Canterbury Tales*, who follow the pilgrims into

Canterbury and take up the return journey, suggests that some medieval readers, like many modern ones, thought the *Canterbury Tales* constituted a movement away from the world (see Appendix B). The failure of the pilgrimage to reach Canterbury has stood out to readers from the Middle Ages on, and even without the Parson's words, that failure weakens the connection of Chaucer's frame story with the space it traverses.

The frame of the *Canterbury Tales*, then, seems to question the very value of geography to thinking about community. While England offers one entry into the space of pilgrimage, it is by no means the overriding term for organizing space. Instead, it holds an uneasy position on a continuum between the universal and the particular, poles between which Chaucer's treatment of people and place oscillates. Beginning with universal human experience and concluding by invoking the Celestial Jerusalem, the *Canterbury Tales* uses the English landscape to produce the impression of movement, even as it entertains retreating from that geography altogether.

Fabliau Presentism

Just as the frame-narrative instances discrete locations within England without envisioning England as a category, so too do a number of tales unfold within localities within England while remaining remarkably reticent about imagining that space as part of an English collective whole. These tales are predominantly fabliaux, and their space, I suggest, is chiefly presentist: instead of participating in a broader system of territory, its job is to seem familiar to readers, and to present to them a recognizable portrait of daily life in a corrupt world.

A considerable proportion of tales have insular settings: of the 24 canonical Canterbury Tales, exactly one third (8) unfold at least in part in insular space.²⁴⁸ All but one (the Wife of Bath's Tale, set in Arthurian Britain) could be described as set in England.²⁴⁹ If we take the island to constitute a single space, it is the most frequent setting in the *Canterbury Tales*, outstripping

Italy which furnishes the setting for five tales, split between Rome and Lombardy.²⁵⁰ The proportion of *Canterbury Tales* set in Britain or England is roughly equivalent to the proportion of Middle English romances with insular setting through about 1400.²⁵¹ Insular space, and indeed space within England, is a prominent feature of the *Canterbury Tales* themselves, just as such space gives shape to the frame narrative.

The *Canterbury Tales* is unique in Chaucer's oeuvre in representing insular space. The term *England* appears only in the *Canterbury Tales* in Chaucer's corpus; *Britain* occurs once in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, where it is provided as the land of Arthur's origin.²⁵² For that matter, if we discount the openings of dream-poems (which exist chiefly to set up the dream), none of Chaucer's major works outside the *Canterbury Tales* take place in Britain.

But *terms* for insular geography as a whole are rare in the *Canterbury Tales* as well. In fact, of the seven tales we could describe as having English settings, only three use the term *Engelond* (Friar's, Man of Law's, Canon's Yeoman's), and only the Man of Law's Tale actually makes *Engelond* an element of its geographic system.²⁵³ Aside from the Man of Law's Tale, the other tales in question have a setting that can be called "English" only in that they employ toponyms instancing places within England or use other verbal measures to cast their space as local (the "my contree" of the opening line of the Friar's Tale).

These majority of these insular tales have not just a spatial but a generic affinity: the Miller's, Reeve's, and Summoner's Tales are all fabliaux; the fragmentary Cook's Tale's opening seems to mark it as the beginning of a fabliaux,²⁵⁴ and the Friar's Tale introduces itself like a fabliau and shares formal features in common with the fabliaux (H. Cooper 167-68). Moreover, these tales make up the majority of the *Canterbury Tales* fabliaux: only two fabliaux (the Merchant's and Shipman's Tales) are *not* set in England. The close association of the fabliau

genre and English setting are particularly remarkable given the scarcity of English fabliaux predating the *Canterbury Tales*.

The feature of the fabliaux that English setting seems most to facilitate is their presentism. Many of the *Canterbury Tales* belong to historical genres: history, hagiography, some forms of romance. Others belong to essentially timeless genres: moral exempla like the *Tale of Melibee*, sermons, fables. But the fabliaux of the *Canterbury Tales* have essentially contemporary, quotidian settings: the misadventures of Nicholas, John, Absalom, and Alisoun unfold within a basically domestic, familiar environment, and could be occurring at the present moment.²⁵⁵

It is only natural that proximal, familiar geography should promote presentist concerns. Indeed, England occupies this role even in one of the most explicitly historical, explicitly non-English tales. In the Knight's Tale, Chaucer heightens the lead-up to the tournament between Palamoun and Arcite for the hand of Emelye by appealing to the universality of the chivalric desire to fight for one's love. Modeling for his audience a connection between the present and the Theban past, he poses a hypothetical modern example: "For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas, . . . / Were it in Engeland or elleswhere" (I.2110-13), all knights would long to be there to fight for their ladies. Chaucer's speculative statement about such a case occurring *tomorrow* is explicitly presentist, and to accomplish it, he projects the case specifically within England.

Thus it is particularly appropriate that spaces within England should furnish the settings for fabliaux, which depict and comically punish fallen, worldly people in all their desires: lust, greed, arrogance, and foolishness. Local, insular towns like Oxford, Cambridge, and especially the London of the Cook's and Canon's Yeoman's Tales seem familiar and accessible; readers might well have recognized in the space around them the faults they lampooned in others. The

author of the Canterbury Interlude in the Northumberland MS recognized the natural connection between familiar, local space and the debased world of the fabliaux when he placed the Pardoner in the plot of a fabliau as part of his efforts to make Canterbury worldly (see Appendix B).²⁵⁶

It has often been observed that Chaucer *presents* fabliau as a low genre, even though fabliaux were popular among the noble classes. Presentism complements this sense of debasement; instead of the exemplary figures and deeds of the past, these tales imagine a daily life of dishonesty and deceit.²⁵⁷ The Friar's Tale perhaps adopts elements of fabliaux because it depicts debased morality, and the second part of the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, one of Chaucer's non-fabliau English tales, tells the story of a dishonest canon and his fraudulent alchemy. Instead of displacing their debasement into distant lands, these tales situate it within the relatively local and familiar space of England.

In contrast to the political work of the General Prologue, what Chaucer's presentist English geography does not do on the whole is construct broad communities. His characters deceive and mistreat each other, and the tales do not, on the whole, identify the elements that unify them. (The Reeve's Tale, for instance, highlights the antagonism between the two Cambridge scholars and the slightly more rural miller.) The world of the fabliaux is fragmentary, depicting dissolution rather than connection. Although the tales have settings we know to be in England, they do not work to generate an English community. As in the case of the tale-links, they remain a network of discrete localities: a network that, in depicting people at their most conniving (and by implicating their tellers in the exchange of "quyting") in some ways pulls in the opposite direction from the moral rewriting of the pilgrimage by the Parson.

Negotiating People and Places

The General Prologue, then, imagines how a diverse group of people might come together to constitute a new body. They do so within England, but their body is not territorial: it does not map onto a bounded space. They traverse space, but the specific places they pass seem to fade into an overall sense of propulsion toward a goal that the Parson represents as the end of earthly community in the form of the celestial Jerusalem. The *Canterbury Tales* contains the seeds of readings that reject this tropological version of space, which later readers developed, making even the *telos* of Canterbury a site of debased worldliness. And the stories the pilgrims tell pick up on this sense of debasement, representing the most dissolute behavior as that which they might see in their own land. If the pilgrims constitute anything like a nation, it seems on these grounds to be less a modern nation rooted in a defined space and more a *nacioun* as Chaucer uses the term: a group of people as ordered by common properties like blood, class, or religion (and above all family or lineage).²⁵⁸ At least when it comes to England, the *Canterbury Tales* does not seem to furnish a link between community and place.

However, I will argue in the remainder of this chapter, the Man of Law's Tale explores exactly this connection. A geopolitical tale, the Man of Law's Tale imagines both Syria and Anglo-Saxon Northumberland in relation to Rome, and imagines the circumstances in which the two pagan lands might or might not be able to be Christianized. In both cases, religious politics is fundamentally territorial: pagan or Christian communities form on the field of a given land, and the struggle is to determine the religious affiliation not of individual souls but of the land as a whole. Moreover, the historical Northumberland imagined by the tale serves as an originary point for English Christianity—a narrative foundation for Chaucer's own England. Historical subject matter furnishes Chaucer with a different way of thinking about what connects people,

allowing him to imagine a community that stretches across time to include both contemporary English Christians and their earliest predecessors. But the tale stages not a single kind of community, but many, obsessively trying on different perspectives and filling the geography of Northumberland with conflicting histories. Ultimately, where the collection as a whole resists spatializing its idea of community, the Man of Law's Tale suggests that a place can be a container for many communities, something that collects pasts and peoples and layers them together rather than acting strictly as the sovereign property of one.

Language and Space: The Man of Law's Tale

The one Canterbury Tale that foregrounds England is the Man of Law's Tale. While the tale was long ignored or treated with critical disapprobation, its capacious narrative weaves together many of the issues of community, reading, and space suggested by other elements of the *Canterbury Tales*. It is the only tale to take place in an England that is actually given that name (albeit not until the very end). And yet England is just one of its three main settings; it also treats two of Chaucer's other territorial interests as it depicts Rome and the East in the form of Syria. The conjunction of these territories gives the tale a promiscuous sense of belonging. If the fabliaux seem to fragment rather than to build communities, the Man of Law's Tale by contrast seems to try on community after community with almost dizzying rapidity.

Moreover, the Man of Law's Tale reflects upon the interface between the experience of the literal world and the realm of spiritual truth in ways that recall the work of the Parson's Prologue. One of the Man of Law's Tale's greatest modern admirers, V. A. Kolve, has characterized the tale and its introduction as "the first 'retraccioun' in a carefully articulated series within the pilgrimage collection itself," and explores how the tale's central image—Custance's ship and the sea on which it travels—"invite[s] us to think about the whole poem in a

fashion free of historical particularity, in ways that relate it to any human life, the history of the universal Church, and the immortal destiny of any human soul” (369, 302). Yet at the same time it parallels and anticipates the work of the Parson’s Tale, the Man of Law’s Tale, it is also determinedly historical, telling of events from the past that Chaucer and his early audiences likely believed to be true.²⁵⁹ That is, where the Parson’s Tale appears to overwrite the literal nature of the Canterbury pilgrimage because it replaces narrative with explicitly moral, sermonizing discourse, the Man of Law’s Tale perhaps more accurately reflects the work of the entire compilation by keeping the two senses together. Even if we largely restrict ourselves to the episode taking place in what was English territory in the fourteenth century (Northumberland in the sixth, when the tale is set), the Man of Law’s Tale is telling at least four stories: that of its heroine Custance; that of a specific region (Northumberland) at a specific moment in the past; that of English religious history and of an English community that stretches across time; and that of the Church and of Christian souls.

The situation, indeed, is even more complicated than that, for it is not at all clear that the community formed by the Man of Law’s Tale can be called “English” in any reasonable sense. We will see that Chaucer uses the toponym *Engelond* only once in the tale, in its final stanzas (II.1130); other terms define the space and its people before that point. Moreover, the tale plays insistently with group identities. A number of commentators over the last two decades have analyzed the tale through the lens of postcolonial studies.²⁶⁰ As Patricia Clare Ingham puts it, “The *MLT* apparently contains all the features necessarily to think postcolonially: an empire (Roman), an English author (Chaucer) and king (Alla), and a demonized view of Islam (a death dealing Syrian Sultanness)” (“Contrapuntal,” 59). While there may be other tools than these in the literary toolbox for “thinking postcolonially,” the features Ingham chooses to highlight

emphasize the complicated triangulation of alterity, hegemony, and identity at work in the tale. Custance, the princess of Rome, travels first to Saracen Syria, where she is to marry the Sultan before he and his followers are slaughtered by his mother for their willingness to become Christian, and then to pagan Northumberland, where she does marry King Alla before his mother objects to his union with this outsider and has her driven from the kingdom. Our modern expectations regarding the conventions of orientalism prime us to see the Syrians as Other but the Northumbrians as familiar—and that is not untrue to the tale, which claims the Northumbrians in ways it never claims the Syrians. But the distinction does not hold: *both* groups are pagans, and as readers have long realized, the Syrian and Northumbrian sections contain extensive parallels. The insular past and the Saracen past are uncannily parallel.

Instead of suppressing this parallel, Chaucer's version of the story seems to revel in it, privileging the Saracens in a way that neither of his two sources does. What distinguishes the Northumbrians from the Saracens, ultimately, is that the Northumbrians can be converted while the Saracens, evidently, cannot. Geraldine Heng, reading the Man of Law's Tale with its analogues, suggests that the difference is race: a single discourse of "race-religion," in which whiteness is both normative and Christian, and the proximal Northumbrians are amenable to conversions in ways the oriental Syrians cannot be (*Empire* 234). Heng's reading is valuable, particularly to the history of race and religion, but it is worth considering the mechanism of conversion in the Man of Law's Tale specifically. The Syrian Sultan pledges to convert out of desire for Custance; he has heard of her beauty and sees it as the only way to gain her hand. By contrast, the conversion of Northumberland is a two-step process, and both steps require the interposition of a figure from the Briton Christian past, before the Angles came to the island. While other cultural markers may differentiate Syrian from Northumbrian pagans, in narrative

terms the conversion of Northumberland is possible because of a deeper history of insular Christianity.

Though Chaucer inherits the story of Custance from two sources—Nicholas Trevet’s *Cronicles* and his friend John Gower’s adaptation of Trevet’s account in the *Confessio Amantis*—he gives the Britons a prominence they have in neither of the other versions of the story. In doing so, he punctures notions of the periodization of insular history like the definitive model of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, which separate the English from their insular predecessors and allow history to begin anew with the coming and Christianization of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Rather than segmented, Chaucer imagines history as accretive, with the geography of the island itself bringing its multiple pasts and its present into contact with each other.

When in the final stanzas the tale announces that Alla and Custance travel back from Rome “to Engeland” (1130), finally dropping the tale’s fastidious insistence on using the historically correct term *Northumberland* for the scene of its action, it feels like the consummation of the community-building process: with their reunion, the space has finally *become* England. But what has come before reveals that in some senses *England* is a nominal community only.

Space in the Man of Law’s Tale, I argue, works in much the same way language does, with multiple version coexisting and unable to be resolved into a single straightforward geography. The tale takes up the challenge of the broader Canterbury project, actively and continuously interrogating where readers stand in relation to the text and what communities language is able to form.

The Saracen View

Postcolonial criticism of the Man of Law's Tale has focused especially on the subject of the tale's orientalism. While Chaucer pays attention to the details of Islamic belief and sentiment in his depiction of the tale's Syrians, recent scholarship on the tale is united in the consensus that the tale employs orientalist strategies which present the Syrians as fundamentally Other and seek to contain them through a discourse of mastery and exclusion—a strategy that, in turn, produces English and European identities.²⁶¹ As Kathryn L. Lynch has observed, the tale's orientalism is not limited to Syria: “both the Islam of the Syrians and the paganism of the Northumbrians are made shockingly alien and ‘Other’ in the *Man of Law's Tale*” (410). In contrast, Rome has seemed a stable center: the tale's only perpetually Christian land and Custance's point of origin, it serves as a seat of authority both religious and cultural.²⁶² Such analyses have not typically observed the extent to which Rome, too, is orientalized in the way the narrative leads readers to approach it. By aligning the reader's perspective with the Syrian Saracens, the tale denies geographic stability from the start, allowing the reader instead to become imaginatively attached to multiple groups.

From its opening lines, the Man of Law's Tale complicates its presentation of the lands it depicts by aligning the narrative with the perspective of an outsider. In the case of Syria and Northumberland, readers enter the land along with Custance; she functions as the stable context for the tale's presentation of its territories, so we encounter their foreignness with her. However, Chaucer's tale eschews any stable center as it approaches even Rome from an outsider's perspective.

Both Trevet and Gower begin their accounts of Constance with Rome: Trevet speaks of Emperor Maurice before working back to his mother, while Gower begins with the emperor

Constance's father.²⁶³ Both texts begin with the Roman court, and tell how pagan merchants come into that court and are summarily converted by Constance.²⁶⁴ In framing the beginning of the story thus, Trevet and Gower emphasize Rome's centrality and authority. Constance, embodying Roman Christianity, demonstrates the irresistible influence of Roman religion as she converts the merchants. This authoritative Christianity furnishes a normative framework within which we encounter pagan lands in later episodes.

By contrast, Chaucer's story of Custance begins with a reverse-orientalist gaze: we encounter Rome through Saracen eyes. Most of the *Canterbury Tales* begin by establishing the setting promptly, typically in the first line.²⁶⁵ The very first words of the *Man of Law's Tale* are "In Surrye" (II.134), which echoes several other tales whose first words are a prepositional phrase denoting the setting.²⁶⁶ The first stanza describes the Syrian merchants themselves and their wares. Under the rules suggested by the openings of other tales, this stanza should have something of the effect of an establishing shot in film, letting us know where we are within a broader geographic framework before zeroing in on the smaller spaces within which the action will unfold. However, Chaucer does not add an all-new Syrian episode to open the tale; the crucial first action is still the merchants hearing of Custance in Rome. By devoting its first stanza to Syria, the *Man of Law's Tale* asks its readers to approach Rome from the outside, along with the merchants.²⁶⁷ Rather than the stable center it provided for Trevet and Gower, Rome is here a multivalent destination and a locus of desire: the tale reports that the merchants insist on traveling to Rome themselves rather than sending a message, but will not specify "were it for chapmanhod or for disport" (II.143). Rome (much like *Canterbury* in some of the continuations) is potentially reduced to a mere tourist destination.

The tale persists in treating Rome as a foreign site of spectacle even after the merchants have left Rome, explicitly aligning this view of Rome with Saracen perception. The merchants, “stode in grace / Of . . . the Sowdan of Surrye” (II.176-77). This ruler specifically invites the merchants to offer an orientalist account of the places they travel, including Rome:

For whan they cam from any strange place,
He wolde, of his benigne curteisye,
Make hem good chiere, and bisily espye
Tidynges of sondry regnes, for to leere
The wondres that they myghte seen or heere. (II.176-82)

The language of this passage echoes the geographic diversity envisioned by the opening of the General Prologue: the *strange place* and *sondry regnes* that intrigue the Sultan echo the *straunge strondes* and *sondry londes* that define the scope of pilgrimage before Chaucer zeroes in on England. Rome is certainly foreign (in the sense of distant) from both Syria and England; Rome might be viewed as foreign (in the sense of distant) from any number of vantage points. But the Sultan’s interest in hearing of *wondres* indicates that in the Man of Law’s Tale geographic distance corresponds to perspectival distance.²⁶⁸ Foreign places are not merely distant but exotic, and Rome, contrary both to the pattern of Chaucer’s sources and to our generic expectations, is such a place.

In adapting his sources, Chaucer also decentralizes Rome by allowing his Syrian merchants to retain their pagan religious identity. In the versions offered by both Trevet and Gower, the project of Roman cultural imperialism begins almost immediately as Custance converts the merchants to Christianity.²⁶⁹ Indeed, in Trevet’s account, the merchants themselves make the case for Christianity to the Sultan (and the pagans run out of arguments to rebut them) before they tell the Sultan of Constance.²⁷⁰ These Saracen figures are not allowed by the narratives of Trevet and Gower to remain Saracen for very long; they are quickly and easily

enfolded into the Christian polity, suggesting the superiority of Christianity and the comparative flimsiness of Saracen religion.²⁷¹

In contrast, Chaucer's merchants are never converted to Christianity.²⁷² They return to Syria as Saracens, address the sultan as such, and the narrative never returns to them. When they make their report on Custance's extraordinary beauty to the Sultan, they are doing so not as Christians but as Saracens. Their words to the Sultan become not a plea for conversion, as the merchants offer in Trevet and Gower, but an account of something marvelous: Custance herself begins as Other, for her beauty is the "wonder" they tell to the Sultan. Although this report sets in motion the Sultan's resolution to Christianize Syria, Custance's Roman Christianity has shown the same power to overwrite other cultural forms as in the tale's sources.

The tale's opening move, in which readers come to Rome along with the Syrian merchants, contributes to a larger ethos of perspectival openness in the tale, a feature that readers have long noticed. Morton W. Bloomfield cites the Man of Law's Tale as an example of Chaucer's unusually sophisticated "sense of history," which he connects with a sense of "cultural relativity" (305). Certainly, Chaucer portrays the details of Islamic practice with greater precision than many of his contemporaries. The tale is one of a small handful of Middle English texts to name the Muslim holy book as "Alkaron" (II.332),²⁷³ and in contrast to frequent romance depictions of Saracens as demonic polytheists who worship Mohammed as one of their gods, the Syrians of the Man of Law's Tale worship one god, with Mohammed as his prophet.²⁷⁴

However, Chaucer's particular achievement for Bloomfield is less in being aware of details of Islamic belief than in giving space in his tale to the pagan perspective: "Chaucer is aware of the variability of human habits and customs. He presents the Sultana's arguments in the *Man of Law's Tale* from the Mohammedan point of view" (309).²⁷⁵ Despite the tale's insistence

that the Sultanness is evil (including a famously excoriating apostrophe to this “roote of iniquitee” [II.358]), many readers have seen both real pathos and ethical sincerity in her desire to protect herself and her kingdom from the “new lawe” (II.337) that Custance represents.²⁷⁶ She expresses both her fidelity to her religion and her fear of the effects of conversion in a stirring speech to her counselors, whom she endeavors to unite against her son:

But oon avow to grete God I heete,
The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte
Or Makometes lawe out of myn herte!

What shoulde us tyden of this newe lawe
But thraldom to oure bodies and penance,
And afterward in helle to be drawe,
For we reneyed Mahoun oure creance? (II.334-40)

That this rhetoric sounds very much like what a Christian might say (for instance, in a martyrdom narrative) is precisely the point. The referents of the speech shift while the content remains the same, underscoring fundamental similarities between Christians and Saracens (Ingham, “Contrapuntal,” 65; Nakley 388).²⁷⁷ The Sultanness may be evil, but the *language* she employs is not so different from “our” language.

Pronominal Communities

As we have seen, the Man of Law’s Tale continually realigns its readers through geographic movement, but also through language: the Sultanness frames her defense of her religion in language not so different from that which a Christian might employ. Language is, indeed, an ambivalent signifier of identity in the tale; Custance famously speaks “A maner Latyn corrupt” (II.519), a language that at once encodes her similarity to the Northumbrians she encounters (“she was understonde,” II.520) and her difference (it is presumably not their native language, as the conjunction and adjective “But algates” perhaps remind us, II.520).²⁷⁸

I argue in this section that flexibility of perspective is a fundamental formal feature of the tale's narration. The tale uses the first person plural pronoun to construct a relationship for the reader both with the process of narration and with the tale's subject matter. Such a formal strategy is not particularly unusual; even today, putatively objective academic discourse (like this dissertation) often uses "we" to enlist the reader in the process of argument. But the "we" of the Man of Law's Tale does important work in negotiating among the varying territories, identities, and perspectives available in the tale. While "we" are most often addressed as a general Christian audience, I show that the tale constructs "us" geographically at the moment Custance enters Northumberland, implicitly linking geography and identity.

Before I examine the way the tale itself uses first person pronouns, I want to suggest that the tale's head-link, which the Riverside edition terms the Introduction to the Man of Law's Tale,²⁷⁹ prompts readers to consider the relationship between narration and subject matter. One of the greatest sticking points in linking the introduction and the tale has been the Man of Law's declaration, toward the end of his Introduction, that he intends to tell his tale in prose—the tale that follows, of course, being in verse. This statement has, quite reasonably, been interpreted as evidence that the Man of Law was originally intended to tell a prose tale, perhaps *Melibee*, and that the tale of Custance was originally assigned elsewhere.

However, particularly in the context of the introduction as a whole, we need not take this proclamation on the part of the Man of Law at face value. Prompted by the Host to tell his tale, the Man of Law announces that he can tell no tale that Chaucer has not already told, and proceeds to list those tales that Chaucer *has* told in the Legend of Good Women. Then he launches into a castigation of tales of incest—tales that Chaucer won't tell, he reports. Finally, the Man of Law gets around to commenting on his own tale, with a familiar modesty topos: "But

nathelees, I recche noght a bene / Though I come after hym with hawebake. / I speke in prose,
and lat him rymes make” (II.94-6).

The bulk of this Introduction is an extended in-joke, in which Chaucer has one of his characters go on and on about how great Chaucer’s corpus is.²⁸⁰ In light of the overall self-referentiality of the introduction, it is plausible that these infamous lines about the tale’s form register not the intention that a different (prose) tale should follow but instead an almost postmodern self-awareness on the Man of Law’s part of his status as a literary object. That is, we could read the Man of Law as saying, “I’m speaking to you now in prose, but Chaucer can come along and make it into rhymes when he writes it as the *Canterbury Tales*.”²⁸¹

I would not wish to insist on this reading, but I maintain that it is plausible. After all, the line in which the Man of Law declares that he speaks in prose is a line written in verse, albeit in couplets rather than the more elaborate rhyme royal stanzas that make up both the Prologue and the Tale itself. Furthermore, the Introduction’s reference to Chaucer rounds out the joke by slandering Chaucer’s technical poetic talents—“he kan but lewedly / On metres and on rymyng craftily” (II.47-8)—directly before the first poem in the *Canterbury Tales* to employ Chaucer’s complicated rhyme royal stanza instead of couplets. The Introduction, then, suggests that the pronoun *I* that identifies itself as the source of the narrative in the Introduction (“*I* speke in prose”) is not necessarily coterminous with the narrative itself. In doing so, it raises the question of the nature of the *we* in the tale: just who is being included in the group identified by the pronoun, and how is the group defined?²⁸²

If the grammatical foundation of the tale (who’s telling it) is thrown into question from the beginning, the status of its reader is in play throughout. The Man of Law’s Tale uses a number of technical strategies to carefully control the relationship its readers have to its matter.

The tale is known for its apostrophes and asides, which stage emotional reactions to the characters and events in the tale and form connections between the present and the events it depicts. It also makes frequent use of analogy, comparing Custance to a sequence of figures from religious history.²⁸³ But its efforts to position reader and matter in relation to each other exist at an even more fundamental level than these relatively showy devices. The tale repeatedly enlists the reader into the subject matter by using the first-person plural pronoun. Sometimes, the *we* of the text simply signals the architecture of narrative, announcing that readers will turn along with the narration to a new subject: “Now lat us stynte of Custance but a throwe, / And speke we of the Romain Emperour” (II.953-54). At other moments, however, it serves to stage reaction to the tale or to enlist readers as members of a larger body. The array of ways in which the tale uses the pronoun is striking. I count at least four different *uses* in the tale: humanity in general, Christians, Saracens, and a geographically limited group that seems to give a contemporary English audience special ownership over the Northumbrian past depicted in the tale.

The first two categories I have listed—humanity in general and Christians specifically—are closely related in a tale that can presume all of its readers to be Christian, and it would be difficult to draw a firm line between them. The tale enlists common experiences of the world to forge experiential and emotional connections between readers and the material of the tale. For example, the tale’s most famous stanza asks,

Have ye nat seyn somtyme a pale face,
Among a prees, of hym that hath be lad
Toward his deeth[?] . . .
So stand Custance, and looketh hire aboute. (II.645-51)

It would be relatively meaningless to ask whether the reader so addressed is Christian; the point is that this is an experience anyone might have, or at least imagine having. An overwrought stanza that begins as an apostrophe to the “Imprudent Emperour of Rome” (II.309) and deplores

his failure to predict the failure of Custance's marriage to the Sultan on the basis of astrological knowledge concludes, "Allas, we been to lewed or to slowe!" (II.315) Again, the function seems to be very general: humans are bad decision-makers. These incorporations of the reader have a function more than just technical or structural; they collate common experiences with what the tale relates.

At other moments, the tale does imagine a specifically Christian body. When telling of Custance's miraculous survival at sea, it declares, "God liste to shewe his wonderful myracle / In hire, for we sholde seen his myghty werkis" (II.477-8). Custance's story, it suggests, unfolds for a Christian audience, as a demonstration of God's power. Twice, the tale declares that Christ "starf for our redempcioun" (II.283, 633). This formulation inscribes the reader as a member of a community of Christians. The repetition of this phrase makes clear that the Christian community extends not only through space but through time; the phrase is used first by Custance, in a passage lamenting that she must travel to Syria, but the second time it occurs in the narrative voice. The tale affirms the trans-temporal logic of Christian community when it describes Custance's would-be rapist as "A theef, that hadde reneyed oure creance" (II.915): although the events of the tale are supposed to unfold more than eight centuries before Chaucer recorded them, the belief that this villain has foregone is *our* belief.

At times, then, the *we* envisioned by the tale is explicitly religiously marked; at other times it simply shares common human experience. For all its historical specificity, the *story* of Constance can serve as a kind of general sacred history, conveying messages to any of the faithful. This is the sense in which V. A. Kolve reads the Man of Law's Tale in *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*: though he does not doubt that Chaucer and Gower, as well as Trevet, saw Constance's story as utterly historical, Kolve sees Chaucer using the materials of history

(and romance) to tell a departicularized story about mankind and the Church (298-302). The tale's dominant forms of pronominal community further this process, situating the reader in a broader body of people stretching across both the past and the present.

But just as Rome does not remain the stable center of Chaucer's tale, this grammar of Christian belonging competes with alternative pronominal communities. As Patricia Clare Ingham notes, the Saracen perspective voiced by the Sultanness infects the grammar of narration itself, unsettling the sense of clear Christian alignment in the tale (Ingham, "Contrapuntal," 65). Of course, the Saracens/Syrians have their own community. The Sultanness invokes this Saracen "us" when she references "the hooly lawes of our Alkaron" (II.332) and fears the penalty if she and her religious fellows "reneyed Mahoun oure creance" (II.340)—a phrase that anticipates the text's later statement that the rapist-thief who attacks Custance in her boat "reneyed oure creance" (II.915). Although medieval Christian readers might have recognized in these words an echo of their own concerns about salvation, such statements are not formally troubling: these sentiments remain embedded fully in the voice of the Sultanness, who is speaking to her counselors.

However, similar concerns are elsewhere less reliably subordinated to a single voice. In the extraordinary opening section where the tale remains aligned with the pagans, before it has attached itself to Custance, the Sultan has decided with his counsel that he must marry Custance. However, his counselors note an impediment, in a stanza that I will quote as it is punctuated in the *Riverside*:

Thanne sawe they therinne swich difficultee
 By wey of reson, for to speke al playn,
 By cause that ther was swich diversitee
 Bitwene hir bothe lawes, that they sayn
 They trowe that no "Cristen prince wolde fayn

Wedden his child under oure lawe sweete
That us was taught by Mahoun, oure prophete.” (II.217-24)

Though what happens in the course of the stanza is perfectly comprehensible, the quotation marks provided by the editors are awkward, breaking in mid-sentence in order to rationalize the way the stanza works under our modern textual conventions. The stanza (and indeed the sentence) begins by reporting the speech of the council indirectly, in the third person, but has come around by the end to direct speech. In manuscript, of course, the stanza would not have used quotation marks. The flexible syntax of medieval narration, which does not insist on precisely delineating direct from indirect speech, allows “us” to slip into the Saracen voice. Echoing the way the tale’s opening orientalizes Rome, it flirts in this moment with the possibility that the reader might own the Syrians’ law and their prophet.

The text thus offers a wide-ranging *us*, positioning the reader within a broad Christian community, and then expands the possibilities even further by suggestively aligning the *us* with the Saracens. However, at one of the most geographically and historically significant moments in the tale—Custance’s arrival at the shore of Northumberland—the narrative articulates a much more precise and restricted *us*, using the pronoun to spatialize its audience. After explaining how God watched over Custance at sea, the narrative brings her meandering voyage to an end by specifying her geographic position: “She dryveth forth into *oure* occian / Thurghout *oure* wilde see” (II.505-6, my italics). Once more, the tale involves its readers in a community that crosses the borders both of time and of the text, but this time that community is defined by its geography. The word *our* takes on a narrower function than the universal *us* found elsewhere, for the ocean crossed by Custance cannot be claimed by all Christendom. The *we* behind the *our* is an British *we*, or something like it, a *we* that can lay claim to the waters around the island.²⁸⁴

One way to interpret this possessive move is to consider the pronoun in terms of the frame story. In the scene of communication imagined by the head-link, the Man of Law is repeating this story (which he heard from a merchant) to his fellow pilgrims. If we envision a fictionalized pilgrim-narrator, then *we* is the Man of Law and the other pilgrims. However, A. C. Spearing has persuasively argued against understanding the tale as the verbal product of any “speaker” (*Textual* ch. 4). The tale may be consciously associated with the Man of Law, Spearing explains, but we cannot reasonably interpret it as “spoken” by the Man of Law. Spearing is attacking modes of interpretation that read against the tale while ascribing this counter-reading to Chaucer himself, effectively interpreting what modern critics see as political or artistic “failings” of the tales as indicating Chaucer’s subtle criticism of their tellers.

While Spearing is interested chiefly in foreclosing upon readings that seek to recuperate what some scholars see as a “bad” tale by arguing that it really criticizes what it seems to express, if he is correct, we surely ought to be wary of circumscribing the pronouns with the putative narrative situation suggested by the framing of the *Canterbury Tales*. If the Man of Law’s Tale is an autonomous tale set within a framework, rather than the imagined verbal production of a specific fictional personage, then the pronouns inside it presumably do not take their referents strictly from that supposed narrative situation. On the whole, the text of the *Canterbury Tales* is reasonably clear about when it is representing speech directed between pilgrims, and it does nothing to signal such a context here.²⁸⁵

Nor does it seem likely to me that the pronoun would have had that effect on readers. When the tale refers to “our occian” in l. 505, it is more than 400 lines since the text last rehearsed direct speech assigned to the mouth of the Man of Law (at the end of the Introduction) and more than 350 lines since the rubric that began the Man of Law’s Tale. Since then, the reader

has witnessed the transition from *prima pars* to *pars secunda*—a scheme of division that Spearing reminds us is explicitly textual, not verbal (*Textual* 112-13).²⁸⁶

Instead of the other pilgrims, the *our* seems to imagine a community of readers. A geography—the sea that Custance enters, “this ile” (II.545) where the Britons used to live—is being claimed as the common property of the textual voice and its readers. As Spearing puts it:

It is the British and Christian elements in the story that are claimed as ours, and I see no reason to think of the ‘I’ underlying that implied ‘we’ as belonging to an unreliable narrator or referring specifically to the Man of Law. What is claimed is not legal ownership of an ocean, an island, a religion or a belief, but simply that poet and audience are associated in feeling themselves members of a British and Christian community with its roots in a distant past. (*Textual* 128)²⁸⁷

We need not even think of the poet as involved in this relationship, any more than the Man of Law. The function of the *we* here is to incorporate the readers into the tale by insisting on their connection to the pagan kingdom of eight centuries before that it depicts.

Spearing, focusing on technical aspects of the Man of Law’s Tale’s narration (particularly its use of deixis), treats the tale’s first-person plural possessives together: the *oure* of “oure creance” and that of “oure occian” function together to generate a community that is, as he puts it, “British and Christian.” In fact, however, the British and Christian communities do not arise at the same moment in the tale, and they are not coterminous. On the basis of the other *ours* that preceded this one, the readership could be aligned with Christendom as a whole. This seemed appropriate for the subject matter. Custance is a Roman princess whose story would feel at home in the *Gesta Romanorum*.²⁸⁸ Her tale has also been frequently compared to hagiography, a genre whose exemplary figures belong to all Christians.²⁸⁹ This *our* of “oure occian,” on the other hand, is as much exclusive as it is inclusive: it narrows the scope of the narrative’s imagined community to those who can claim British water (and later land). Instead of the open Christian

story possible at the beginning, the tale at this moment closes down, defining its sphere not as those who share religion, but who share geography.

This moment at which the tale most precisely defines its community of readers does not simply turn on geography, however; it produces an assertive geographic claim for insular space through the participation of its readers. At this point in the tale, Custance is moving out of a Mediterranean sphere, a zone of circulation whose interconnectedness is exemplified by the Syrian merchants with which the tale began, into a remote corner of the world. When Custance is set to sea by the Sultanness in a rudderless boat, her journey is long in both distance and time: “Yeres and dayes fleet this creature / Thurghout the See of Grece unto the Strayte / Of Marrok, as it was hire aventure” (II.463-5). In these lines, Custance is swept to the very edge of that Mediterranean world—indeed, to the geographic feature (the Strait of Gibraltar) that forms its physical boundary. This is a key barrier, a liminal space. For Ulysses in Dante’s *Inferno*, the strait marks the western boundary of the known, permitted world; beyond it, he and his shipmates sail through the unknown, barren ocean to their deaths. And as we saw in Chapter 1, the Strait of Gibraltar was a key point in defining the west of the world.

The transitional quality of this moment is reflected in Chaucer’s narration. After announcing this geographic fact about Custance’s voyage, the Man of Law’s Tale pauses for five-and-a-half stanzas to dwell on Custance’s plight, comparing her to Daniel, Jonah, and Saint Mary the Egyptian. While she must have been drifting for some time to have reached the Strait of Gibraltar from Syria, leaving the Mediterranean is what generates the pathos of her predicament.

The tale introduces its geographical possessives, a new form of spatial vocabulary, when it returns from this aside to tell of Custance’s travels: “She dryveth forth into *oure* occian, / Thurghout *oure* wilde see” (II.305-06, my emphasis). As we have seen, these simple pronouns

register a massive shift in emphasis, implicating the reader in the story in a way that none of the other extant versions do. But at the moment when the community of readers manifests itself as much more specific than the general community of Christians, the text turns to language that looks back toward that originary Mediterranean context. Chaucer's formulation of *our* ocean or sea seems clearly to echo the famous Roman name for the Mediterranean: *mare nostrum*. By repeating roughly the same formula in two success, he emphasizes it. This formulation, imagining an English *mare nostrum*, seems to ennoble insular land and position insular Christianity as an object of particular status, on a par with that of Rome. The Mediterranean zone of connection has failed, the tale suggests; Custance has been unable to link Rome and Syria. Now, at this pivotal moment, she is entering *our* sea, our own Mediterranean, and so is connected with our community of readers.

Britonizing the English Past

The "us" of the Man of Law's Tale, once aligned with the sea to the west of continental Europe, seems almost inevitably to be an *English* us. Scholarship on vernacularity has emphasized the exclusivity of choosing to write in English within the trilingual environment of medieval England.²⁹⁰ As the composer of *Of Arthour and Merlin* put it in the thirteenth century, "Freynsche vse þis gentil man / Ac euerich Inglische Inglische can" (*Of Arthour* A 23-24). Those who knew the English language tended to be English, and therefore, writing in English was presumably *for* the English. Writing in the English language may allow Chaucer to feel confident in imagining all of his readers as members of an insular community; while texts written in French were highly portable, English language and English community were imaginatively much more coextensive.²⁹¹

Yet, as was the case with *King Horn*, “English” is a problematic term to apply to the tale. Unlike *King Horn*, the Man of Law’s Tale does actually name England, but only once, at the very end of the text. Unlike Trevet, Chaucer typically refers to the kingdom to which Custance travels using a historically precise term: Northumberland (II.508, 578). In insisting on the alterity and particularity of this historical past, Chaucer handles his material quite differently from his two sources.

Trevet uses his chronicle structure to create a transtemporal idea of England.²⁹² In relating the history of the island, Trevet constantly reminds his audience that Britain is England, using formulae like “Brutaigne, q’est Engleterre” (R 47), creating continuity between past and present. In Trevet’s Constance story, *Engleterre* is the primary name for the space that Constance occupies in the insular episode; Trevet uses the historically more particular *Northumbre(land)* chiefly to cross-reference the events of the Constance story with other moments in insular history.²⁹³ Even though Trevet is aware that the island has carried another name historically, *Engleterre* unifies insular geography across time, grounding the present in continuity with the past. And Trevet’s history positions Constance, the first person to bring Christianity to the English, as a foundational figure in that story.²⁹⁴ The space that Trevet produces suggests a national community stretching across time to encompass the whole of the insular past under the umbrella of *Engleterre*—an identity category partially enabled by Constance.

Gower, turning Trevet’s historical narrative into an exemplum, deemphasizes both history and geography. Gower emphasizes the moral action rather than historical.²⁹⁵ While Trevet names insular space frequently, Gower refers by name to the land to which Constance travels after being driven from the Sultan’s court only twice, once as *Northumberlond* (717) and once as *Engelond* (1581). He likewise downplays the role of the Britons, the island’s original Christian inhabitants,

in the story.²⁹⁶ His noted tendency to reduce and streamline trims away most of the sense of Alle's kingdom as a particular place; it is difficult to dispute John Frankis's sense that in his adaptation of Trevet "the historical setting is no longer an important part of the tale" ("King Ælle," 89). Space in Gower becomes more moral than historical.

Chaucer, in recasting Constance's story into the Man of Law's Tale, particularizes historical space as neither of his sources does. Chaucer's scene-setting is more historically precise—the disparate kingdoms of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes had not yet been united under common rule—but in insisting on the historical particularity of Northumberland, he employs a term that distances the subjects of his narrative from their readers in his own era. Although Chaucer follows Trevet in giving narrative shape to the life of Custance (Nicholson, "*Man of Law*"), his tale remains engaged with the world of history, and he plays up the complications and multiplicities of the insular past in ways that Trevet does not. Chaucer's romancing of the Constance story extends his play with identity to his audiences' relationship with the insular past.

Despite Heng's sense that the Man of Law's Tale functions (much like Trevet's Constance story) as a "myth of re-foundation . . . the Christian counterpart, for fourteenth-century England, of Geoffrey of Monmouth's classical foundation myth of Britain from Troy, in twelfth-century Anglo-Norman England" (*Empire* 209-10),²⁹⁷ this new beginning is shadowed by the existing insular Christianity of the Britons.²⁹⁸ While Trevet's chronicle represents an England continuous across time from the beginnings of English Christianity to the fourteenth century, Chaucer imagines a much more complicated insular space, in which different strands of history coexist and cross.²⁹⁹ Chaucer's geographic vision in the Man of Law's Tale is almost geological, suggesting that even as a stable space like the island endures across time, it accrues layers of history and identity that exist atop one another.³⁰⁰ If the *English* past exists in the Man of Law's

Tale, it exists as an outside referent, something to which the geographic and historical logic of the tale suggests an alternative.³⁰¹

This Briton past enters the tale in the form of two elements instrumental to Custance's conversion of Northumberland: a blind Welshman and a Briton book. These figures are out of their proper time and place in a Northumberland on the cusp of Christianity. By the historiographic logic of the passage of dominion, the age of the Britons is over by the time Custance washes up on the shores of Northumberland and the Germanic peoples we collectively call the Anglo-Saxons have gained control of the island.³⁰² Chaucer's text invokes the conventional story of how the Britons (who were Christian) lost the island and were exiled to Wales. Soon after Custance arrives on the shore of Northumberland, the tale rehearses the familiar story of the Britons' loss of the island, with an emphasis on its religious significance:

In al that lond no Cristen dorste route;
 Alle Cristen folk been fled fro that contree
 Thurgh payens, that conquereden al aboute
 The plages of the north, by land and see.
 To Walys fledde the Crystyanytee
 Of olde Britons dwellynge in this ile;
 Ther was hir refut for the meene while. (II.540-6)

Though the tale does not name these *payens* as Saxons, it points out how later insular identity is predicated on the exclusion of the Britons. By this logic, Britons lived in the past, and they live in Wales, over there, but they are not *here*.

Chaucer's sketch of the insular religious past follows the paradigms of historical writing. The periodization schemes adopted by medieval chronicles tend to emphasize the ruptures in insular histories caused by invasions of the island, and no rupture was more fundamental than the transition from Briton to Germanic dominance. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* imagines that both ethnic and religious history began anew with the Saxons, who got their Christianity directly from Rome through Augustine of Canterbury, not from the Britons.³⁰³ In

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, the break caused by the Saxon conquest is so great that it literally ends his book when the Britons degrade into the Welsh, and from that point on Welsh and Saxon history are subjects for different historians (11.208).

This break is so significant for Trevelot that though he has already recounted the passage of dominion, he cross-references it shortly after Constance's arrival: "car les Brutons avoient ja perdue la seignurie de l'ysle, come avant est counté en la fin de l'estoire l'emperour Justinian le Grant" ("for the Britons had already lost control of the island, as is related above in the end of the story of the Emperor Justinian the Great," C 303). The break caused by the passage of dominion explains the present situation and structures the unfolding of history. The model of Trevelot and others uses such breaks to create a linear history for the island. By periodizing, such chronicles make the insular past intelligible as narrative, so that one people succeeds another as insular history marches forward. By reminding readers that the Britons lost the island to the Saxons, the Man of Law's Tale seems at first to ratify the notion of a linear, compartmentalized history, in which one group succeeding another is precisely what constitutes historical continuity. But Chaucer's Briton remnants spark across the gap, creating a conduit between the Briton and English eras. In doing so, they produce an insular space containing and combining multiple temporalities. Chaucer's Britons complicate and undercut the periodization that enables Trevelot's linear unity, recasting space as containing pasts that accrete, almost geologically, rather than succeed each other.

Though Chaucer invokes the passage of dominion and the traditional periodization of insular history, the Man of Law's Tale actually references this model in order to undercut it immediately. Directly after the stanza in which the Britons lose the island, Chaucer adds,

But yet nere Cristene Britons so exiled
That ther nere somme that in hir privetee

Honoured Crist and hethen folk bigiled,
And ny the castel seiche ther dwelten three. (II.547-50)

The point of the periodizing passage, then, is not merely to establish the state of insular religion: it exists in order to highlight exceptions, and Chaucer in a few lines zooms in from a general community of Briton crypto-Christians to specific individuals living in a defined area.

The existence of these Britons in Northumberland contradicts a standard historico-geographic narrative according to which the Britons may have lived *here* in the past but are now *there*. Of course, the actual presence of figures like these Britons is quite likely.³⁰⁴ But historical narratives, stories of particular groups, are often built on models of purity that are driven by exclusion and absolute separation: the English come to be through the absence of the Welsh.³⁰⁵ Chaucer extends a conventional account of the exclusion of the Britons and promptly tempers that exclusion.

The reinclusion of the Britons has important consequences for insular religious history. Chaucer's repeated references, in these two stanzas, to the Britons as Christian are not idle detail. The Britons of the Man of Law's Tale are an authorizing condition of Northumbrian—and perhaps implicitly future insular—Christianity. The blind Briton plays a foundational role in the Christianization of Northumberland by rendering public the Christianity privately shared between Custance and Hermengyld. As Chaucer tells it, one day, Custance and her adoptive family (Hermengyld and the constable) are walking on the beach—that liminal zone that David Raybin has shown to be Custance's particular sphere (68-72)—when they are approached by the blind Briton. He interrupts the group, exclaiming, "In name of Crist . . . Dame Hermengyld, yif me my sighte again!" (II.561-62). At Custance's encouragement, Hermengyld complies, but rather than telling whether the requested miracle is successful, the tale turns to the constable, who seeks an explanation of what has happened. Custance tells him he has seen the power of

Christ and declares “oure lay” to him; before evening, the text says, she has converted him. The interposition of the blind Briton enlarges the Christianity Custance has brought to the land beyond the strictly private, female community where it began. Hermengyld’s act of healing is a public act, one that incorporates her husband into the Christian community.³⁰⁶

Though Raybin argues that Custance’s association with the shore makes her peripheral to society and history (68-69), this seaside encounter propels history forward: the Briton is instrumental in the public emergence of Northumbrian Christianity. The religious history of the Britons makes this Briton uniquely able to recognize Hermengyld’s newfound holiness despite his physical blindness. This recognition produces the conditions that allow Custance to move beyond her affective bond with Hermengyld and declare the faith to the constable, and sets up the conversion of the kingdom through another trace of the Briton past: a book.

In Chaucer, as in Gower, the encounter on the beach is a self-contained episode: the blind Briton drops out of the tale, never to be heard from again. In Trevet’s original account, however, the Briton is part of an arc of events that leads directly to the conversion of the kingdom. After the miracle on the beach, the household of Olda (the constable) converts. Trevet repeats the cross-reference to the passage of dominion, this time in order to establish where the Britons *are*, and the family dispatches the newly healed Briton to Wales to retrieve a bishop who can baptize the household. He succeeds: “Puis cist povre Bruton, retournant de Wales, amena ovesqe lui Lucius, un des evesques de Wales, q’estoit de Bangor” (“Then this poor Briton, returning from Wales, brought with him Lucius, one of the bishops of Wales, who was from Bangor,” C 307). Although Lucius comes from Wales, he signifies more than Welshness. As a bishop, Lucius represents the institutional authority and hierarchy of the Church. Though located in Bangor, Lucius is perhaps almost as much as Constance a figure of Rome. In Trevet, it is Lucius who

advises Alla to travel to Rome at the tale's conclusion, and the bishop accompanies him there.³⁰⁷ Even Lucius's name underscores his Roman connection.³⁰⁸

Chaucer, however, resolutely eliminates the centralizing authority of the Roman Church from the Northumbrian episode by removing the Briton bishop entirely, replacing him with an artifact of the Briton past as the authority that ratifies Custance's innocence and precipitates the conversion of the kingdom.³⁰⁹ When Custance is accused before King Alla of Hermengild's murder, the king sends for a book for Custance's accuser to swear to her guilt on, and "A Britoun book, written with Evaungiles, / Was fet" (II.666-67). The knight accusing Custance makes his oath on this "Britoun book," and is struck by a miraculous hand. Because of that miracle, the tale informs us, the king and many others are converted. The knight is summarily executed, and then the newly Christian king and Custance marry (without mention of any ecclesiastical figure to solemnize their union).

In Trevet, the book the knight swears on belongs Lucius, linked to the same institutional structures that characterize the bishop himself. Gower, dramatically paring down historical detail, reduces the object to "a bok" with no other identifying characteristics (868). But Chaucer gives us an object embodying the Briton past, shorn of personal or institutional affiliation but a material witness to earlier insular Christianity.³¹⁰

The nature of this book has been the subject of some speculation. Both views—Breeze's sense that it is a Latin gospel-book with Celtic decorations and Skeat's that it contains the gospels written in the Welsh language (perhaps, as Robertson and Bowers suggest, recalling Lollard translation programs)—share a sense of the book's alterity, whether of language or of decoration: Chaucer's adjective *Briton* marks the book out as something Other to the court.³¹¹ Like the blind Briton, this book is associated with pre-Germanic, Briton Christianity and encodes

the truth that the island, under the rule of the Britons, was Christian before the Saxons came. But unlike the Briton man, the book is not a living agent, *practicing* behavior that was also practiced in the past. Instead, it is an artifact, a physical object preserved and put to use outside its original context. Despite its appropriation by the Northumbrians, the book, too, carries something of the insular past into Alla's court, showcasing the power of that earlier religion, and through the holy book, the touch of the Briton past sparks the mass-conversion that makes Northumbria Christian. Though Chaucer reminds us of the period division that marks the end of the Briton epoch, traces of the Briton past enable both of the major phases in the conversion of Northumberland depicted in the Man of Law's Tale.

The historical transgression caused by the central role accorded to the Britons gives the insular space within which the Man of Law's Tale unfolds an archaeological character. The land is marked by a kind of sedimentary accumulation, in which the past inheres in the present. The Briton man appears here as a kind of living fossil: as a Christian Welshman remaining in a Northumberland now pagan (and English?), he persists unchanged across the barrier that ought to divide past from present, and thus disrupts the periodization of insular history. The book is a kind of archaeological artifact, an object surviving in a context where it no longer possesses its original meaning. Like the Briton corpse unearthed in London in *Saint Erkenwald*, attesting an insular pagan past unrecorded by chronicles, man and book bind past and present through their materiality. What ties them object to Alla's court is *place*: where these Christian Britons once were, their pagan successors now are. As continuity characterized Trevelyan's treatment of insular space, and generality held sway for Gower, so accretion and archaeological survival are key characteristics of Chaucer's approach.

The same persistence of space that embeds the Briton past at the beginning of Northumbrian Christianity of course connects the events of the Man of Law's Tale to Chaucer's insular present at the end of the fourteenth century. As we have seen, Chaucer's pronouns seem to imagine a community of readers, a community that lays claim to "this ile" (II.545). But by withholding the term *Engelond* until the tale's end, Chaucer leaves the terms of this community relatively unspecified. Readers are aligned with the topography, the land itself, rather than any particular group. And indeed, Chaucer departs from Trevet and Gower in declining to name the Britons' successors as Saxons, which would place them within a clearly defined ethnic history of the island. They are merely generic pagans, less explicitly identified than the Syrians of earlier parts of the tale. Readers are aligned with the island broadly rather than with particular groups within its history.

The relationship that Chaucer establishes is not one of pan-insular unity, in which a generalized Britishness of "this ile" replaces a more narrowly focused English nationalism. At the same time the tale embeds the marginalized Welsh at the origins of Northumbrian Christianity, it reaffirms another conflicted border: that to the north, with Scotland. Alla's opposition to the Scots is as much a part of introducing his character as is Northumberland itself: "Alla, kyng of al Northhumbrelond, / That was ful wys, and worthy of his hond / Agayn the Scottes, as men may wel heere" (II.578-80);³¹² later, "he is gon / To Scotlond-ward, his foomen for to seke" (II.717-18). While Trevet encode's Alla's campaign as a response to Scottish incursions against his territory, Chaucer offers no explanation of the conflict, leaving Scots an uneasy Other. R. James Goldstein (writing before the floodgates of postcolonialist and nationalist criticism of the tale had opened in earnest) describes Scotland as "virtually outside his [Chaucer's] imaginative horizons" (33). While Goldstein suggests that in light of fourteenth-

century Anglo-Scottish relations, Chaucer's approach "is fully consistent with the project of English imperialism" (39), Chaucer leaves the relative status of these two countries unspecified. Far from universalizing England, Scotland's presence in the tale serves rather to highlight another (never resolved) category of insular subdivision. Alla's Scots represent not a timeless historical continuity but another category of difference that disrupted insular unity even to Chaucer's own day.

In light of these proliferations and subdivisions of insular space, the appearance of *Engelond* at the tale's end represents not a final concretization of the nation in the mode of Trevet but simply a single perspective on insular space. It would be tempting to interpret it as the consummation of England, as though England has been brought into being by the course of the tale.³¹³ But the arrival of Custance and Alla in *Engelond* in the tale's final stanzas hardly realizes a stable national community that retroactively organizes the space that preceded it. As Susan Nakley points out, *Engelond* appears in the tale only at a moment of fragmentation: Maurice has remained in Rome, never to be mentioned in conjunction with Northumberland or England again (392). Moreover, the tale explicitly aligns their return to England with instability and impermanence. Their life in the newly-realized space of England is happy for all of one line before Chaucer begins to muse on mutability:

To Engelond been they come the righte way,
 Wher as they lyve in joye and in quite.
 But litel while it lasteth, I yow heete,
 Joye of this world, for tyme wol nat abyde;
 Fro day to nyght it changeth as they tyde. (II.1130-34)

The first appearance of England as a category is thus associated with transitoriness and disintegration, not the ideal context for imagining a trans-temporal community. The collapse of the England in the tale continues, for these lines (and over a stanza more of the same) preface the announcement of Alla's death after the couple has lived in England for just a year. At this point,

Custance departs permanently for Rome. *Engelond*, appearing for the first time when almost all of the action is over, lasts for about 20 lines, most of which are dedicated to impermanence—a reminder, perhaps, that England is just one form of insular space, a forward-looking counterpart to the tale’s preoccupation with Northumberland’s (and the island’s) Briton past.

The multiplicity and accretion that characterize insular space and group identities in the Man of Law’s Tale, layering past and present and blurring cultural boundaries, correspond with the broader work of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. In a broader sense, bringing together a multiplicity of perspectives and positions within one space, and indeed layering them atop one another, is in a real way the central project of the *Canterbury Tales*, which assembles narratives into a single volume. While I dispute the suggestion that the *Canterbury Tales* is centrally concerned with Englishness, Chaucer’s collection is concerned with representing a diversity of experience, of telling different, conflicting stories within a common spatial boundary (both the book and the pilgrimage route).

As an instance of multiplication and layering, however, the Man of Law’s Tale is particularly striking precisely because of its representation of insular space. The Man of Law’s Tale is Chaucer’s only work to give serious consideration to insular history, and it is likewise alone in treating insular political geography. If this historical exploration did constitute a national imagination, the tale would offer the most significant counterexample to Derek Pearsall’s claim that “Of national feeling or a sense of national identity—whether it has to do with ideas of national or racial history, with England as a land, with ideas of national character, or with opposition to some hostile national other—I find little or nothing in Chaucer” (“Chaucer,” 90).

Ideas of history, racial and perhaps quasi-national, do clearly enter the Man of Law’s Tale, but the tale refrains from singularizing them. Rather than an “imagined community,” as

Benedict Anderson famously described the nation, the tale produces a kind of insular thirdspace. As elaborated by Edward Soja, thirdspace is an expansive concept (“the space where all places are . . . *Everything* comes together in Thirdspace” [56 , italics in the original]). As Soja puts it in his subtitle, thirdspace is “real-and-imagined”: neither the strictly material space of the world nor the “imagined” or “conceived” space that is planned and dominated through representation, but *lived* space that encompasses both while remaining distinct from them. Significantly, Soja aligns thirdspace with openness: it is suited to resisting both conventional ways of thinking about space and centralizing political power. The Man of Law’s Tale describes a space underpinned by the physical reality of the island, but exceeding both that topographic reality and its fourteenth-century organization into a centralizing England with more or less resistant environs. This space refuses singularity through its archaeological layering of the past.

To tell this story of insular thirdspace, Chaucer turns to the tools of romance. Unlike Trevet’s chronicle account, Chaucer tells the story of Custance without a framework to shape its geography and guide its history. No *Engleterre* preexists Custance’s arrival to give Northumberland meaning; it arises only belatedly, as part of an unstable conclusion. This same freedom from context enables the tale’s perspectival play. In Trevet we *must* begin with Rome, for Rome is a part of the story Trevet is telling, while the Saracen lands are not. But Chaucer makes us experience first Rome, then the island, as outsiders, even as the tale flirts with aligning its readers with Syrian pagans. By retaining the links to history that Gower jettisons in making the story into an exemplum, Chaucer’s version claims a power to interact with insular space, to rewrite its meanings and force audiences to reconsider their relationship to it.

The Man of Law’s Tale thus attaches the Canterbury project to insular space in a way that the bulk of the collection never does. What the tale produces is not a transcendent Englishness, a

space whose common foundation in topography or ethnicity unites the diverse pilgrims and their stories into a national body. Instead, the tale causes the multiplicity of the pilgrimage to echo back in time, inscribing insular space itself as diverse, discontinuous, and conflicted. To imagine the meaning of space across time, it's no wonder that Chaucer uses romance. Volumes of the *Canterbury Tales* hold striated visions of forms of community piled on top of each other in the leaves of a book. The Man of Law's Tale, with its sedimentary view of history, makes that book the land itself.

Chapter 3

Modular Geographies: *The Awntyrs off Arthure*

The worlds of chronicle and romance, we have seen repeatedly, overlap. Characters and materials pass back and forth between the genres; historical events may be memorialized in a romance, while traditions surrounding romance heroes can carry such a sense of weight and solidity that chroniclers must make room for them amid the progression of history. Romance heroes like Havelok the Dane and Guy of Warwick appear in the accounts of chroniclers, who treat them with more or less credulity; Pierre de Langtoft, for example, invented a second invasion of England by the Danish king Anlaf in order to accommodate a legendary battle between Guy and the giant Colbrond, which Langtoft evidently believed to be historical (Rouse, *Idea* 56-58). Yet, as we have seen already, important differences distinguish these kinds of writing. The more restricted scope of romance relative to chronicle enables romances to experiment with the representation of place in ways that chronicles generally cannot. We saw in the previous chapter how the space of Northumberland, which in Trevelyan's *Cronicles* forms a legible part of the sequence of the English past, is able to become a much more complicated enfolding of space and time in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* when divorced from the narrative drive of a chronicle.

So far, the romance texts we have examined demonstrate their geographic creativity through defamiliarizing strategies like minimalism (*King Horn*) and anachronism (*The Man of Law's Tale*). These romances, I have argued, retain strong connections to the world of the everyday and act as a tool for thinking about it. But they reshape this world through a distancing effect, rendering it in unfamiliar terms before prompting readers to track these back onto familiar terrain—quite the opposite of a chronicle for which familiar terrain must be the starting point.

Yet not all romances construct their narrative geographies in such minimalist, distanced manners. Texts like *Athelston* and (as we shall see in the next chapter) *Bevis of Hampton* are famous for depicting insular geography with localizing precision, naming even the roads on which their characters move. The fifteenth-century romance about Sir Gawain known as *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* (The Adventures of Arthur at the Tarn Wadling, a lake in Inglewood Forest, Cumbria) is likewise redolent with precise geographic detail, locating its plot in the topography of Cumbria, near the city of Carlisle, and also invoking specific places in Galloway (in the south of Scotland) and in Wales as part of a territorial dispute discussed in the romance.³¹⁴ These texts, with their recognizable, everyday locales seem to belong to a world more solid and closer to the spatiality of chronicle than the texts we have examined so far.

However, the detail and specificity of the geography depicted by the *Awntyrs* should be understood neither as a simple move toward spatial realism nor as the wholesale adoption of a historical mode of spatial detail into a romance plot. The *Awntyrs*, I argue, unites multiple modes of space typically aligned with different genres—chronicle, romance, moral discourse—in order to explore the processes by which land is possessed and controlled and to consider their validity. The poem links these modes of space through a framework we might almost describe as modular: like many romances, it is multiply subdivisible, rather than possessed of a single, fixed structure, and these flexible modules suggest different paths through the poem that bring different concepts of space to the fore in different readings. The island (embodied in the poem chiefly in Cumbria and Scotland) emerges as a site at once real and virtual: a very real historical and political topography, but one that equally serves abstract notions of space and power.

Arthurian romances as a whole hold a particularly intriguing position in relation to chronicles—a position that the *Awntyrs* embraces enthusiastically. Popularized by Geoffrey of

Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, Arthur's reign proceeds according to an arc defined by chronicle history: after uniting the island and conquering many foes on the continent, Arthur loses his kingdom to his nephew and regent Mordred; both perish in the final battle. Arthurian romances fill periods of peace in Arthur's reign with chivalric adventures.³¹⁵ Such adventures might at times have been perceived as historical—one manuscript famously inserts the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes within Wace's chronicle *Le Roman de Brut*³¹⁶—but these gaps in the chronicle history also furnished a site for narrative creativity that D. H. Green has identified as the birthplace of fiction (191-93).³¹⁷

The *Awntyrs* calls attention to the juncture between the romance and chronicle traditions. The text is most often described as consisting of two episodes (although, as we shall see, that is but one way of articulating its structure). The first episode draws on familiar elements of romance along with elements from moral and historical writings. Like many Middle English Gawain romances, it begins with a hunt: Arthur and his courtiers are hunting at the Tarn Wadling, in a wood near Carlisle.³¹⁸ Gawain and Guinevere have separated themselves from the hunting party to rest when the weather turns alarmingly dark and a hellish figure approaches them. This specter turns out to be Guinevere's dead mother, condemned for a sin known to Guinevere alone.³¹⁹ An encounter with a strange figure in the forest is also a familiar part of romance, and the encounter of Gawain and Guinevere with a ghost has a specific parallel in *Sir Amadace* (a poem that circulated with the *Awntyrs*), in which the titular knight encounters a figure who turns out to be the ghost of a man whose burial he paid for.³²⁰ But the ghost of Guinevere's mother carries other, stronger associations as well: the episode parallels *The Trentals of Saint Gregory*, and, as David N. Klausner has shown, is related to a broader tradition of exempla in which the

damned visit the living (309-17). The ghost outlines Guinevere's duties both to the poor and to the dead, exhorting her to charity and asking that she arrange masses for her mother's soul.³²¹

Next, Gawain asks her about the fate of Arthur's knights, and she prophesies the destruction of the Round Table, declaring that Arthur is "to couetous" (265) and describing the campaigns on the continent that will precede the kingdom's usurpation by a knight who is as of yet a child in the hall. But Gawain's interview with the ghost emphasizes the historical framework within which the *awntyrs* related by the poem unfolds. Guinevere's mother tells Gawain of the inevitable end of Arthur's rule: these events are set against the foreknowledge that Arthurian civilization is doomed. While this broad arc is familiar from any chronicle account of Arthur, details including references to Fortune's Wheel and the geographic particulars both of Arthur's European conquests and of insular conflict indicate that the *Awntyrs* is indebted to the account of Arthur's fall in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* (another poem that circulated with the *Awntyrs*) (Matthews 160-61; Hanna, *Awntyrs* 39-43). The *Morte* offers an epic account of Arthur's fall that recounts his campaign as he marches on Rome and his subsequent battles with Mordred. While not itself a chronicle, the *Morte* offers a dramatic account of the historical version of Arthur's end in the heroic mode of texts like the *Siege of Jerusalem*, coupled with a degree of philosophical introspection. The prophecy in the *Awntyrs* incorporates precise geographic references to the chronicle version of Arthur's European campaign (and to the *Morte* in particular), which invoke the historical foundation of the fate that hangs over the poem. At Guinevere's inquiry the ghost requests that masses be sung for her soul, and then departs.

The second part of the poem is composed of conventional scenes from chivalric romance, all familiar from Arthurian tradition in particular.³²² An outsider knight, Sir Galeron, enters Arthur's court to offer a challenge that requires Arthur's knights to defend the court's ideals and

thus initiates the action, a pattern stretching back in Arthurian romance to Chrétien de Troyes. Galeron and his lady arrive while Arthur is feasting and declare that Arthur has unjustly taken Galeron's lands and granted them to Gawain; Galeron will fight for this grievance. The king replies that they are outfitted for hunting rather than fighting, but promises a fight the next day and hosts Galeron splendidly. On the morrow, Gawain and Galeron engage in a vicious battle in which Gawain's horse is killed and both knights severely wounded. Gawain maintains the upper hand and Galeron submits, but at the same moment Galeron's lady persuades Guinevere to have Arthur intervene. Arthur calls a halt to the proceedings and restores Galeron's lands, granting new holdings to Gawain to replace what he has lost. Both knights recover and Galeron marries his lady and joins the Round Table; the poem ends with Guinevere ordaining masses for her mother's soul. Chivalric single combat to determine control of a land occurs frequently in romances, both Arthurian and not, and it is an Arthurian commonplace for a defeated knight to join the Round Table in a move of social integration.

The *Awntyrs* is thus an aggressively composite text, built broadly on romance patterns but drawing on material from multiple literary forms and calling attention to the different traditions that lie behind it. These materials can seem so disparate that the parts of the poem have often been treated separately: in 1970, Ralph Hanna revived an earlier suggestion by Hermann Lübke that the *Awntyrs* is a composite of two different poems, which can be distinguished on prosodic grounds as well as those of subject matter ("*Awntyrs*: An Interpretation," 277).³²³ However, since A. C. Spearing demonstrated that the *Awntyrs* as we have it is structured around a "sovereign mid point" at the exact center of the poem, most critics have recognized that, however it attained its present form, the poem is the product of a coherent and purposeful design (*Medieval* 127).³²⁴

But the existence of a clear shape does not completely smooth over the divisions within the story: in source, in subject matter, in plot. Rather than viewing the *Awntyrs* as a unified, progressive whole, or as a responsive system in which the second episode mirrors or answers the first, I suggest that the poem is best understood as possessing a modular structure, composed of elements which do not fit together out of necessity, but which offer forms and ideas that can be invoked again by later parts. Even the division of the poem into sense-units is not a predetermined absolute (we start a new section *here*), but something that arises through presentation and reading.

The modularity of the *Awntyrs* allows the poem to collide multiple models for space. Arthurian chivalric romance and chronicle—and yes, the moral exemplum, too—offer distinct geographic models: space as the terrain and subject of adventures, as the object of conquest, as the social world that the individual soul inhabits in life. The possession of land is a concern of many of the poem's segments, from the towns, parks, and palaces that Guinevere's mother once owned to the countries whose conquest will spell the end of Arthur's reign to the lands on the Scottish border that Geron claims. The recurrence of these issues among the poem's component parts bring questions of territory to the fore: who gets to control a land, and why? The complex of intersections that produce the poem's space—intersections between setting and subject, between parts of the romance, between text and context—raise the question without answering it definitively. The *Awntyrs* demonstrates how the geographic and structural flexibility of romance enables the genre to explore political issues and navigate among models for understanding the world, models that can at once comment on real issues facing insular space and abstract that space from its immediate georeferential concerns.

Indeed, the modularity of the *Awntyrs* allows its geography to resonate differently in the varying contexts in which it survives. The *Awntyrs* is a relatively popular romance, preserved in four manuscripts with a wide geographic spread: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491 (MS L: 1420s-30s, London);³²⁵ Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91, known after its scribe Robert Thornton as the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript (MS T: s. xv^{2/4} North Riding, Yorkshire);³²⁶ Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 9, known after its former owners as the Ireland manuscript (MS I: s. xv², Lancashire);³²⁷ and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 (MS D: s. xv^{3/4}, in a North West Midlands dialect but perhaps copied in the southeast).³²⁸ These manuscripts share no texts in common, suggesting the suitability of the *Awntyrs* to a wide variety of contexts in the eyes of medieval compilers. The emphases of various components of the *Awntyrs*—conquest, knightly comportment, right rulership—are mainstays of medieval literature. The texts with which the *Awntyrs* circulates include both romances and historical texts, and they continue the threads that bind various parts of the *Awntyrs* together. Just as the *Awntyrs* brings multiple modes of spatiality into contact with each other, manuscripts likewise act as repositories for different kinds of space that can gain significance through their proximity.

The *Awntyrs* brings together multiple modes of space that support different kinds of thought, realizing these spaces in different bodies of toponyms. These forms of space are rooted in the multiple genres that unite to produce the poem. Setting these spaces next to one another and linking them through narrative allows them to interact to produce meaning, but the poem does not relate them in a single, stable structure; rather, the formal multiplicity of the text allows a variety of configurations in which these spaces interact to support different meanings.

Setting and Subject

The *Awntyrs* has been much noted for its precise locality and toponymic precision, internal features so prominent that they have served to justify explanations about the text's external situation: its (widely accepted) place of composition, its date, and its patron or recipient have all been argued on the basis of the places it names. Despite widespread interest in these place-names, however, their differing functions in the poem have not been adequately explained. The named places of the poem constitute at least three distinct groups (the setting, the subject of contention, and the foundation of history/prophecy), which serve distinct purposes: as structuring agents for the challenges that face Arthur's court; as markers of the precision and solidity of the land contested among Galeron, Gawain, and Arthur; as signs of the tenuousness of territorial claims and the ease with which land can be lost. These places certainly would have held clear associations political, historical, and generic for their readers, but it is important to recognize that their function is not just referential; these names serve the ends of the narrative and its thematic concerns. The poem uses a real geography to achieve a geographic effect allowing it to explore issues that resonate beyond that context.

The toponymic density of the *Awntyrs* is extreme, particularly in comparison to the topographically sparse romances I have already examined. Even more remarkable, with regard to the *Awntyrs*, is the locality of its names, both in establishing the setting and in the three major toponymic catalogues: two detailing the holdings Galeron claims (in the area of Galloway), one listing the lands that Arthur bestows to Gawain (apparently chiefly centered in Wales). *Bevis of Hampton*, as we shall see in the next chapter, offers a bravura catalogue of places where Bevis claims to have traveled, but these are universally recognizable places: the three continents of the world; countries; major cities of the Levant. By contrast, the places that the *Awntyrs* enumerates

are specific and insignificant enough that it seems unlikely that anyone without significant involvement in the region would recognize them. Rather than universalizing the poem, they localize it, chiefly in the area surrounding the Anglo-Scottish border.³²⁹

Indeed, so difficult to recognize have these place-names proven that in the already compact world of *Awntyrs* criticism, we find a cottage industry devoted to untangling their referents and explaining their significance.³³⁰ The case for the scholarly usefulness of decoding these place-names is much stronger than with *King Horn*. The poem gives us sufficiently transparent toponyms in both catalogues that we can plausibly locate them from the perspective of the poem. That is, the poem tells us to look for Galeron's lands in a specific area (southwestern Scotland); this isn't another project of trying to choose an appropriate region based on the poem's rather dubious and abstract depictions of topography and travel time. And in some cases the problem isn't a lack of appropriate referents, but an abundance: onomastic scholarship has offered multiple plausible readings for several of the sites listed.

Given the fifteenth-century northern context for the poem's composition, these place-names have suggested historical associations, which have both suggested political contexts for understanding the poem and offered tantalizing hints about its composition. Several critics have considered the poem in the political context of the Anglo-Scottish border: as a potential model for improved Anglo-Scots relations (Manion, "Sovereign"); as an exploration of border families' anxieties about efforts to demilitarize the border and shore up national distinctions (Schiff); as a displacement of anxieties about the erosion of northern regional identity by centralizing English "internal colonialism" (Ingham, *Sovereign* 180-91). Rosamund Allen, joined by Andrew Breeze, has gone further, tentatively connecting the places named in the poem to the Neville family and to Richard of York, Ralph Neville's ward and son-in-law; on the basis of these and other possible

political references, Allen dates the poem rather precisely to 1424–25 and suggests that the text was written for the Nevilles (and possibly even by a member of the family), perhaps to celebrate the marriage of James I of Scotland and Joan Beaufort and the hope of peace that it brought.³³¹

While northern issues would likely have been in the minds of most readers of the *Awntyrs*, a leap to thinking about the poem as concerned chiefly with the space of the Scottish march occludes the distinction among the kinds of space present in the poem. The topography of the setting is Cumbrian; the events related in the *Awntyrs* unfold in the area of Inglewood Forest, near Carlisle. Galloway, meanwhile, forms part of the territory disputed in the poem. They play structurally distinct roles.

Cumbrian Setting

Inglewood Forest, the Tarn, and the area around Carlisle generally constitute the romance's setting. (The Lambeth manuscript, as we shall see, is less specific but still sets the poem around Carlisle.) The romance action unfolds within this space: Arthur's hunting party begins by the Tarn, which is where Guinevere and Gawain encounter the revenant; the feast occurs at Rondolsette Hall, which is where Galeron arrives to challenge Arthur; they fight at Plumpton Land.

These locations possess a primarily associative force. While Rondolsette has proven difficult to locate with complete certainty,³³² the Tarn belongs to the larger Gawain tradition, appearing in both *The Avowing of Arthur* and the Percy Folio ballad "The Marriage of Sir Gawain." Inglewood Forest, named in one manuscript of the *Awntyrs* (and adopted by both Gates and Hanna as an archetypal reading) is also mentioned in the *Avowing*, as well as *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, which is related to the "Marriage." In the folklore of the region, the Tarn has supernatural associations; it was believed to contain a drowned village, from which

bells were daily heard to ring.³³³ The Tarn is a site of encounter and challenge in the Gawain romances: in the “Marriage,” Arthur meets the accursed and monstrous baron who threatens to kill the king if he cannot answer his question (just as Arthur encounters Gromer Somer Jour in Inglewood in the *Wedding*), while in the *Avowing* Gawain pledges to keep watch for the night at the Tarn, and it is at the Tarn that he ultimately fights Menealfe after the stranger knight has bested Kay. Opening at the Tarn, then, gives the setting of the *Awntyrs* a functional quality.³³⁴ Within the broader tradition of Gawain stories, the point is not to place the events of the story at a specific location within Cumberland, but rather to place Arthur and his retinue—and especially Gawain and the queen—in an environment where an Other will mount a challenge to the stability of the Arthurian system, a spatial embodiment of the condition that initiates the Arthurian romance narrative.³³⁵

Although Rondolsette Hall and Plumpton Land are not attested in the wider Arthurian tradition, they, too, serve a role that is at least as much structural as referential. Andrew Walkling argues that the poem’s places undergird a tripartite structure for action, whereby the Tarn Wadling / Rondolsette Hall / Plumpton Land = ghost / feast / battle = instruction / repose / instruction (120).³³⁶ Put another way: Rondolsette Hall is a space of pause between the poem’s two main challenges by Others, a location where the opulence of the court is realized, not just through the feast itself but through Arthur’s lavish reception of Galeron. The movement among places, then, parallels the progression of the courtly narrative, whereby two challenges to Arthur’s court, which take place within the forest, are anchored by a scene of Arthur’s court in its majesty, located on the border of the forest (Walkling 119-20).³³⁷

Within this framework, it is significant that Plumpton Land is virgin land: “By þat on Plumton Land a palais was piȝt, / Were neuer freke opon folde had fouȝten biforne” (475-76).

The ground on which Galeron's claim to Galloway will be contested is marked as land that has never itself been a site of conflict. Gawain and Galeron bring to Plumton Land a fresh violence, complete with newly constructed lists and structures for viewing the combat. Plumton, newly realized as a romance space, is in some ways the flip side of the traditional Tarn. Gawain and Galeron mark this ground with their blood as they work out the control of the separate lands that Galeron claims. Plumton's previously conflict-free nature marks it as a ground for contestation through chivalric single combat, not itself the object of territorial dispute.

While these places probably code for a recognizable Cumbrian topography, recognizable to the romance's early audiences, this land itself never comes into question in the course of the *Awntyrs*. The Cumbrian areas are not subject to negotiation or challenge, but serve as a framework in which challenges and negotiations are carried out. The invocation of Carlisle in the opening and closing lines stabilizes the action of the romances within the sphere of Arthur's political authority; Carlisle serves as a central city for Arthur's rule, grounding the adventures of the *Awntyrs* in insular political geography. The movement from place to place within the romance, meanwhile, registers different stages within the courtly progress of the plot without itself being open to questions of political control. Although the names are more local and precise than customary for Middle English romances, the space of the setting is still largely a familiar romance space, with forest and halls and battleground defined by their narrative function.

Disputed Lands

The lands subject to dispute are distinct from the topography that forms the romance's setting. The many names included in this list produce an impression of very precise spatial delineation, an impression that may in fact be more significant than the exact space they describe. The lands Galeron claims are likely all in Scotland, though scribal corruption renders

some of their referents uncertain. The poem lists these claims twice, once when Galeron asserts his claim before Arthur, again when Gawain restores them. In Galeron's initial catalogue, he begins with a major geographic unit, Galloway, then lists a string of specific holdings, and finishes with his accusation to Arthur. Here is the passage as edited by Gates:

þe greatest of Galwey, of greues and gyllis,
Of Carrake, of Cummake, of Conyngame, of Kile,
Of Lonwik, of Lannax, of Laudoune hillus.
þou has wonene hem in werre with a wrange wile
And geuen hem to Sir Gawayne. (418-22)

Galwey (Galloway) is constant, but the two lines devoted simply to cataloguing place-names vary. It may be that the lines in the second catalogue are meant to repeat those from the first³³⁸—both sections have a set of lines alliterating on *c/k* and on *l*—but in no extant manuscript are the two lines from the catalogue offered by Galeron repeated verbatim in Gawain's list.³³⁹ Allen, after working out extensively the likely referent of each toponym, sums up Galeron's holdings thus: "The bounds of Galleron's lands as he and Gawain name them encircle Ayrshire and Galloway, moving north either from Lochar Moss or the Lowther (or Lothian) Hills through South Lanarkshire to Lennox (? Lomond) as the outer limits" ("Place-Names," 188). The land, thus delineated, comprises specific political holdings, and would (Allen notes) be familiar to residents of Cumbria from both trade and raids.

When persuading Gawain to make peace with Galeron, Arthur promises him new lands to replace those he will cede. This list, too, is dense with named places, though in some ways they are less clear and cause greater editorial problems than the lands that Galeron claims:

Al þe Glamergane londe with greues so grene;
þe worship of Wales, at wil and at wolde,
With criffones castles curnelled ful clene;
Eke Vlstur halle, to hafe and to holde,
Wayford and Waterforde, wallede I wene;
Two baronies in Bretayne, with burghes so bolde,
þat arne bat ailed abouȝte and bigged ful bene. (665-71)

Wales is clearly the key possession here; Gawain will receive Wales in full, but the grant also singles out Glamorgan. Attempts have been made to associate the other lands in this list with Wales as well, though on the whole scholars have reached no agreement about them. Some of these places might be Irish—“Vlstur” most obviously (though Breeze believes the original reference was to Oysterlow, Wales), along with Waterford and perhaps Wexford, as Breeze interprets “Wayford”—but all these place-names have also been fit to British referents. “Bretayne” (T: “Burgoyne”), meanwhile, is a general term which could refer either to Brittany or to Britain (the word is used in both senses in the poem); Thornton’s substitution of Burgundy might suggest that at least one scribe wanted to place the land in question clearly on the continent.³⁴⁰

These lists of land, with clearly identifiable references to areas in Scotland and Wales, as well as possible references to Ireland and even Brittany, trace with alarming neatness the “Celtic fringe”; Thomas Hahn has observed the tendency of Gawain romances to depict Arthur mastering Celtic territories, and the *Awntyrs* is no exception (31). However, the *Awntyrs* is yet another poem in which England is absent—a pattern notable in the Gawain romances as a whole.³⁴¹

The poem mobilizes an almost redundantly large number of place-names, delineating both broad areas of control and very specific holdings. But while those names may have held very precise meaning for the poem’s author and first audiences, their function when the romance is understood more broadly, within the total context of its circulation and medieval readership, seems much less precisely referential than the level of detail would suggest. Galloway, Glamorgan, and Wales delineate broadly the map of assigned and contested territories, but some of the more specific place identifiers would likely have been less accessible or meaningful to

many readers outside the original context, as the amount of scribal variation in these lists indicates. Some manuscripts even appear to substitute more familiar place-names, which might equally suggest that they understood the names to be without specific referential importance, and that a local place could be substituted for the sake of familiarity without hampering the sense.³⁴² Some of the place-names undoubtedly have a strongly referential function, though which ones vary with the reader (and with the manuscript); the overall effect they produce is of a dense, solid, granular geography of possession and political control. These names give a density to the questions of control contested by Galeron and Gawain; unlike the relatively schematic versions of space as the subject of control that characterize many romances, they produce the impression of a carefully delineated and contoured area in the space of the world, even if all the contours of that space are not always obvious.

Spaces of History and Prophecy

The text carries one further body of toponyms, which are also related to questions of authority and conquest, although at a greater remove from Cumbria. The places involved in Arthur's wars—both the successful European war he has already waged and the failed assault on Rome that will precede his failure to regain the island from its usurper—allow the text to consider Arthur's success at holding land, and the mechanisms by which he obtains and maintains it, over the long arc of his military career as considered by the chronicles.

The four stanzas of the ghost's warning to Gawain are themselves redolent with toponyms. These accounts of Arthur's past and future campaigns bring land into focus as both the object of control and the site where that control is contested. The ghost first focuses on those lands Arthur has already won, depicting him as a successful conqueror both of people and of land. She outlines the sphere of his control in terms of regions within France:

Fraunce had ye freely with your fight wonnene, . . .
 Bretayne and Burgoyne es bothe to 3ow bounden, . . .
 Gyane may grete þe were was bigonene. (274, 276, 278)

Between these lines sketching the space of Arthur's conquest, she outlines the people associated with them: "Frollo and his folke" (275), "al þe Dussiperes of Fraunce" (277), the lords of Guyenne, now all dead (279). Mid-stanza she switches to foretelling the future: "Yet shall þe riche Romans with 3ow be aureronene, / And with þe round table þe rentes be reued" (280-81). Arthur will overcome the Romans and take their rents, emphasizing (as in France) his dominance over both people and the places with which they are associated. And Tuscany will later factor into this geography; aside from the ghost's exhortation that Gawain turn to Tuscany, she elaborates in the next stanza that after Mordred usurps Arthur's throne, "Hit shal in Tuskane be tolde of þe tresone" (291). Yet while the *Morte* covers area with dense toponymic detail, the *Awntyrs* speaks of it in terms of broad zones of control.

More specific, local terms emerge as Arthur's control slips. The first more specific place comes in the stanza delineating Arthur's sphere of continental authority. The line, which follows the declaration that Arthur will overrun the Romans, is corrupt in the surviving copies, but the Douce and Thornton manuscripts both refer to the Tiber, which seems to be an original feature of this line. The general sense of all the copies is that harm will befall Arthur, with the copies mentioning the Tiber either placing Arthur's harm at the Tiber (Thornton) or making the treacherous Tiber itself the cause of harm (Douce).³⁴³ The place of the Tiber in the poem's topography is a bit uncertain; it might refer to the Italian Tiber, which perhaps stands synecdochally for Rome, but it could equally be an allusion to the "Tambire" in Cornwall (the River Tamar), which serves in the alliterative *Morte* as a place where Mordred goes to work treachery.³⁴⁴ The ambiguity might produce for some readers (particularly any recognizing the allusion to the *Morte*) a telescoping effect, whereby verbal similarity collapses the Roman

topography within which Arthur attempts to exert his annexing imperial prowess with the insular topography in which his own reign disintegrates.

If the local specificity (and lexical ambiguity) of the Tiber facilitates the transition from Arthur the conqueror to Arthur the dispossessed, the succeeding stanza drives home the collapse by returning with specificity to insular space. It opens with the coronation of the traitor, whom we know from the chronicle tradition to be Mordred: “at Carlele shal þat comely be crowned as king” (288), the poem continues, though the Thornton manuscript places Mordred’s coronation instead at “Carelyone,” distancing it from the space of the main plot of the *Awntyrs*, while the Ireland manuscript offers a term with no obvious referent, “Carlit.” This detail is apparently unique to the *Awntyrs* (Hahn 212, n. 288), and it grounds Mordred’s treachery within the geography of British power; two of the manuscripts make Carlisle, the central point of authority on which the setting of the story rests, the site for this development. But the variation suggests that connecting Arthur’s fall to the topography of authority that begins the poem matters less than making a localizing gesture, with the apparent solidity of a geography-effect.³⁴⁵ Later lines pin the events of Arthur’s campaign against the usurper to specific spots: Ramsey, Dorset (where Gawain will die in a slake), the coast of Cornwall.

Arthur’s European successes are treated in terms of broad spaces and groups, both conceived of as subjects of control or power, while the disintegration of his own kingdom unfolds within more specific insular spaces: counties, cities, and towns, their comparative solidity registered by more precise topographic descriptors (“Cornewayle coost,” the “slake” in Dorset, the events to unfold not in but “Beside Ramsey ful rad at a riding”). The prophecy gives attention to continental space only as an object of control, without having much solidity as a site of action in its own right, while British soil is marked by troop movements, martial action, and

death. (The *Morte*, by contrast, describes movements and clashes both continental and insular with precise detail.)

This treatment of continental spaces appears to ascribe to Arthur a nearly unquestioned ability to annex other lands. And, indeed, historical writings (not to mention the *Morte*) depict his European campaign as extraordinarily successful, up to the moment when he is recalled to the island to deal with Mordred's treachery—a model carried to its logical conclusion in Malory, where Arthur conquers Rome, ruling there until he tires of it and returns to England.³⁴⁶ The *Awntyrs* obviously does not give Arthur such triumphant success, but Arthur fails not because of ineffectual conquest but because of his inability to retain control of the lands he already possesses. Although if we take the Tiber as a synecdoche for Rome the poem may briefly refer to a successful Roman challenge to Arthur's advances, the prophecy largely confines its description of Arthur's specific actions, his movements and losses, to insular space, and to land described in specific detail rather than the broad regionalism of the continental section. In short, the political situation that produces Arthur's fall—internal usurpation—corresponds to a distinct mode of spatiality, concerned with specific points of conflict rather than broad swaths of land. (A similar phenomenon shapes the resolution of *Bevis of Hampton*, as I will argue in the next chapter.) The message we might draw from this section is that land is easy to acquire but difficult to maintain.

The places of the prophecy, named and unnamed, are not simply points on a map. These spaces are defined by their relationship to government and possession; as Helen Phillips puts it, "The landscape of Europe here is seen in terms of lordship" (72). These spaces are the spaces of history, but their presence in the poem does not simply recall past events. It furnishes a model of space that is the subject of authority and control.

Moral Abstractions

A final catalogue of spaces, in a segment of the poem unconcerned with Arthur's expansionism or military activities, provides an abstract form of space whose function is explicitly moral. The ghost, in her address to Guinevere preceding her words to Gawain, lists an array of spaces that constituted her holdings in life. The density of spatial references positions these spaces clearly as their own spatial group, but they are unnamed; they are *kinds* of space, serving their moral function by eschewing the georeferential specificity that marks all the places named in the poem.

Guinevere's mother brings up the possession of land in the course of a longer comparison of her former life to that of her daughter. After comparing their beauty, she declares that she was once

Gretter than Dame Gaynour, of garson and golde,
Of palaies, of parkes, of pondes, of plowes,
Of townes, of toures, of tresour vntolde,
Of castelles, of contreyes, of craggess, of clowes. (147-50)

Though she begins with Guinevere's liquid riches, she quickly turns to property, enumerating all that she once had in detail. The catalogue includes both structures that the queen once inhabited and areas she simply possessed, from social and political units like "townes" and "countreyes," as well as managed and agricultural areas with clear use like "parkes" and "plowes," to topographic features like "clowes." This rehearsal of owned spaces constitutes a significant portion of the ghost's account of her state in life, and plays a significant role in defining her.

This account of Guinevere's mother's former holdings, as a few critics have noted, embeds the poem's broader concerns with the possession of land in her exchange with Guinevere: for Patricia Clare Ingham, it "foregrounds the spaces of her sovereignty" and thus "signifies both the glorious wealth of aristocratic privilege and the unbelievable breadth of a

realm” (*Sovereign* 181); for Lee Manion, it “reveals the poem’s concern with rule and lordship because of its extensive interest in territory and signs of authority” (“Sovereign,” 87). Both Ingham and Manion are concerned with the exercise of sovereign power in the poem. Manion focuses his attention on the second half of the tale,³⁴⁷ but for Ingham, the ghostly figure does play a significant role in the poem’s exploration of sovereignty. Ingham draws on the work of Louise Olga Fradenburg to connect the revenant of the *Awntyrs* with the figure of the Loathly Lady, found in other stories (most famously the Wife of Bath’s Tale) and a figure for working out issues of sovereignty.³⁴⁸ While Loathly Lady stories usually end with the transformation of the lady into a beauty, signifying the transformative, redemptive powers of right rule (the transformation, indeed, is the point of the story), Ingham notes that Guinevere’s mother experiences no such transformation but retains her hellish form. For Ingham, the absence of any transformation suggests that the text is “pessimistic about the possibilities for a well-ruled sovereignty in the Arthurian borders,” a pessimism that flows into the prophecy and ultimately informs Ingham’s understanding of the encounter with Geleron (*Sovereign* 184).

But at its most straightforward level of signification, concerned with religious matters, the ghost’s message to Guinevere serves a rather different function. The attitude toward possession conveyed by these lines interacts oddly with the more overtly political episodes that follow. These holdings appear in the ghost’s speech in order to highlight what she has lost in death: all that we learn about her high status in life serves the *Now* of line 151, which turns to her present torments. The overriding message of her invocation of worldly comfort is that such things are fleeting: *sic transit gloria mundi*. Thus Guinevere’s mother enacts a pattern of inevitable loss parallel to Arthur’s: none who hold land will retain it, for all, ultimately, are mortal. But in its place in the speech of Guinevere’s mother, this land also has a moral function.

The opulence of these holdings forms a backdrop to her insistence that Guinevere must be meek and charitable to the poor. The chief idea is that these great holdings are impermanent despite their seeming security, and are now lost to the ghost due to insufficient attention to matters of the spirit.

In other words, this passage that Manion sees as one of the first clear signals of the poem's interest in rule serves to deemphasize land, and power over it, as an area of importance. The ghost was greater than Guinevere and possessed many holdings—but they are gone now, just as they will inevitably be gone from Guinevere, so she must focus instead on her duty of charity towards the living and the dead.

In unfolding this moral message, the poem uses a form of spatial representation it does not employ elsewhere. Unlike the solidity of the other textual geographies, dense with toponyms and local detail (even for such typically romance spaces as a field of combat), the ghost reels off a list of *kinds* of space—topographies and structures at multiple levels of precision—that are utterly abstract. They are not even scene-spaces, for they do not contain action; they are simply categories, but categories emphasized by being joined into a catalogue. Rather than outlining her former holdings with the detail accorded to every other representation of geographic space in the text, the ghost reels off categories of space that fall within the possession of a queen without definitively emplacing them. This abstraction serves the exemplary value of the speech (we focus on the idea of former possessions without being tempted to politicize them), but the lack of referential specificity also underscores the message: these possessions, having passed away with her death, in some sense exist no more.

Though both the setting and the land that forms the subject of the dispute and exchange are connected through a common proximity to Carlisle and familiarity to the inhabitants of

Cumbria, these two bodies of land remain distinct. Put schematically, the *territory* in question is not the *terrain* of the dispute. Galeron's combat with Gawain represents an abstraction of a territorial claim into the romance mode: the land itself disappears into a ritualistic combat in the environment of the setting.³⁴⁹ The setting of the romance is a functional space, one whose associations and structural role condition the possibilities of the narrative. In the *Awntyrs*, it differs from the space that is the object of the struggle for control.

And the ghost's prophecy introduces additional modes for contested space: distant space, easily mastered by a leader of Arthur's caliber, and home space, more intimate and riskier. In some ways, the prophecy resembles the abstraction surrounding the issue of Galeron's lands: in a sense, Arthur both loses Britain on the continent (his absence allows Mordred to usurp his reign) and loses Rome in Britain (Mordred's treachery aborts Arthur's successful campaign). The telescoping potentially available in the ambiguous referent of the Tiber, which can be at once the familiar Roman river and (allusively) the Tamar in Cornwall, a key site in Arthur's fall, drives home this interdependence. At the same time, the continent is clearly a space of political control and the British space of the prophecy is insistently a geography of armed clashes, both rather different from the abstract space of the poem's setting.

Carlisle itself offers a conduit between these two spaces. A key Arthurian city, Carlisle serves as a political anchor for the romance setting, and literally frames the poem: named in the opening stanza as well as the two penultimate stanzas (which it links), it is the only place-name of the setting that is repeated. Carlisle serves both as the city to which Arthur is traveling and as that to which he repairs to hold the Round Table in the poem's conclusion. It also serves in two manuscripts as the city where Mordred crowns himself in the ghost's prophecy, bringing his treachery close to home. This coincidence perhaps serves a similar role to the poem's reminder

that the traitor who will spell Arthur's downfall is even at that moment a child in his halls: the seeds of future loss already inhabit the poem's seemingly stable topography. Carlisle brings the instability of history into the structural world of the romance fiction. But this impulse (which was not important enough to be retained in half the poem's surviving copies, assuming it was indeed the original reading) remains bracketed, within the context of a historical and prophetic discourse that is set apart from the main action of the poem. After all, Carlisle is as authoritative a site of power for Arthur at the poem's close as at its opening.

To understand how those various geographic bodies fit together, we must turn to the poem's structure. In my initial summary I largely followed the consensus view that the poem is essentially in two episodes, one devoted to the ghost and one devoted to Galeron. But the poem's multiple geographies point to other divisions that structure the poem, and I will suggest that a sliding understanding of structure best helps us make sense of how these elements come together.

Structure and Spatiality

While the Cumbrian, Inglewood-area setting holds the poem together and provides the structured space that carries forward the romance plot, the other collections of geography in the *Awntyrs* are separated into different portions of the text, primarily occurring in blocks that emphasize a particular model of space. The lands disputed in Scotland and those granted in Wales frame the chivalric combat, listed both in Galeron's accusation of Arthur and Arthur's dispensation of lands to both Galeron and Gawain after the fight. The sites related to Arthur's own military campaigns appear much earlier, in the ghost's address to Gawain, where they are further split between history and prophecy. And the unnamed spaces whose loss the ghost bemoans occur in a markedly distinct portion of her speech, wherein she is addressing Guinevere rather than the knight. These separate parts produce the conditions through which the poem's

models of space interact and give rise to meaning, and this section will consider how ways of understanding the poem's structure suggest readings of its spatial system.

Structure has been a major preoccupation of *Awntyrs* criticism because of the poem's apparent disunity. Most readers have found the episode of the ghost and that of Galeron's challenge rather disjunct, and have been drawn either to justify or to condemn this division. As I've already mentioned, Hanna, following Lübke, viewed the surviving text as a composite of two two separate poems, one an adjunct to the other, while Spearing has demonstrated that it functions as a well-structured whole organized around a "sovereign mid point." Though the diptych has proven a tremendously influential model for understanding the poem, some readers, notably Helen Philips, have questioned this two-part structure, drawing in part on the evidence of manuscripts that appear to inflect it differently.³⁵⁰ In this section, I will first use the two-part structure to show how different bodies of space in the poem might respond to each other despite their separation. Then, I will outline a different way of thinking about the text's composition and structure, which I term modularity, which links these elements in more complicated ways.

Land across the Diptych

Most scholars, both those who see the *Awntyrs* as fundamentally disunified and those who argue for its cohesion, agree that the poem divides naturally into two episodes: one in which Guinevere and Gawain speak with the ghost of Guinevere's mother, followed by a second in which Galeron challenges Arthur for seizing his lands and does combat with Gawain.³⁵¹ In an analogy that has proven extremely influential to criticism of the poem, Spearing compares it to the diptych, suggesting that the two parts come to have meaning through their juxtaposition: "It is precisely the discontinuity that makes possible a creative gesture in which the spectator or reader himself participates. Sparks leap across the gap between the two parts, and the onlooker's

mind is set alight by them” (*Medieval* 129). Spearing, objecting to Hanna’s interpretation of the poem as dramatizing a failure of Guinevere and Gawain to learn from their experience, argues that “the purpose of the diptych structure is to show change as well as repetition. . . . The two parts together compose a meaning more complex and less rigidly compelling” (Spearing, *Medieval* 137).

The diptych structure provides an explanation for the poem’s pervasive interest in land, linking together the discourse of the ghost and the battle with Galeron. Galeron’s challenge to Arthur takes up the very issue of the misappropriation of land that begins the ghost’s prophecy of Arthur’s downfall. Gawain questions the ghost in terms that already seem to convey a strong interpretation of the actions of Arthur and his followers:

“How shal we fare,” quod þe freke, “þat fondene to fighte
And þus defoulene þe folke one fele kinges londes;
And riches ouer reymes with-outene eny righte—
Wynnene worshippe in werre þorȝhe wightnesse of hondes?” (261-64)

The ghost appears to affirm the negative charges implicit in Gawain’s question, responding, “Your king is to couetous, I warn þe sir kniȝte” (265). While the ghost then moves on to prophecy, similar language to Gawain’s occurs when Galeron arrives with his accusation. After listing the lands that he claims have been misappropriated, Galeron declares, “Þou has wonene hem in were with a wrange wile / And geuen hem to Sir Gawayne—that my hert grylles” (421-22). The language of winning echoes between the two passages, and Galeron’s “with a wrange wile” seems to recall “with-outene eny righte,” the lack of “right” perhaps carrying moral overtones. Thus, though the text does not actually explain the circumstances by which Gawain came into possession of the lands Galeron claims (the text only gives us Galeron’s report), earlier criticisms provide the warrant for condemning Arthur. Galeron’s accusation seems to confirm the charge leveled by Gawain and the ghost. The similarity both of language and of the accusation

more broadly suggests that the holdings Galeron catalogues are a more local repetition of the conquered European spaces of the ghost's prophecy, seized through unwarranted violence.

This linkage, in turn, has the potential to echo forward. Near the close of the poem, Arthur resolves the conflict by providing Gawain with fresh lands, including "Be worship of Wales" (666), an act that for many critics becomes suspect under the pattern of the preceding treatment of Arthur's land seizure. These lands are contaminated in part by their textual similarity to the lands Galeron has lost. The two spatial catalogues, in which Arthur grants Gawain his new lands and Gawain restores to Galeron his old ones, occur at the heads of two adjacent stanzas (52 and 53) and begin in parallel fashion: "Here I give thee . . . all the land . . ." ³⁵² This formal approach to cataloguing regional spaces of possession links the lands taken from and restored to Galeron with those given to Gawain in compensation, so that if structural connections taint one group of spaces, the other becomes potentially suspect as well. While both the characters' logic and narrative structure seem to posit giving Gawain new land as a solution, interactions with preceding moments where land is an issue potentially suggest that this solution may itself be a problem. Arthur, this reading suggests, isn't really solving anything, just giving away yet another tract of land. ³⁵³

Relationships between parts of the text do not just develop geometrically, in considering the poem at a distance; they develop in time in the course of reading. Brett Roscoe has recently questioned the metaphor of the diptych, noting that in visual art the diptych form is defined by the absence of the center, in contrast with Spearing's account of the *Awntyrs* as organized around a "sovereign mid point" (51). Although he accepts the division of the poem into two episodes, Roscoe emphasizes the linearity of the reading experience and thus the role played by memory in connecting the parts of the poem. Roscoe characterizes the poem as

simultaneously plural and singular (60); the ghost and her moral discourses vanish from the poem at the end of the first episode, but, because of verbal echoes between the two episodes, “She remains at the edges of the text, continually haunting it” (57). Roscoe’s model of “haunting,” a simultaneous remembering and forgetting, shows how the ghost’s discourse can inform readers’ understanding of the events that follow.

Such meanings arise from an interplay among spaces defined by the relationship among parts of the text. Consequently, interpretations attached to these spaces echo throughout the text, the meanings that attach to the spaces of one portion informing the other. The sense that Arthur’s later actions ratify his ethical failures arises from an understanding of the ghost’s address as criticizing Arthur and his court. Other approaches yield different results.

The control of land first explicitly becomes an issue with the exchange between the ghost and Gawain. Although the terms the interlocutors employ seem to modern ears to carry a ring of strong disapprobation, Manion remarks that the vocabulary of “righte” in Gawain’s seeming self-condemnation “subtly raises the English practice of proving sovereignty through past recognitions of ‘right’,” as in Edward I’s appeal to Arthur’s authority over Scotland in justifying his own claims to the country (“Sovereign,” 87). And as Helen Phillips points out, while to call Arthur “couetous” seems to our modern ears to label him as guilty of one of the Seven Deadly Sins, the word could have neutral and even positive connotations in Middle English; although the phrase “to couetous” clearly signals that his behavior is negative in its excess, she suggests that we might gloss the line simply as “Your king is too greedy for land” or “wants too much” (76-77). While wanting too much land could still certainly look forward to Galeron’s accusation, understanding that these terms may not carry the tenor of strong moral disapprobation that they

initially appear to somewhat weakens the sense that over-acquisitiveness is the king's primary moral characteristic.

Both Manion and Phillips, with these more nuanced approaches to the words of the ghost and Gawain, view Arthur's actions at the end of the poem as successful. For Phillips, the main evil dramatized by the poem is not conquest but mutability; the recurrent image of Fortune's Wheel highlights the transitory nature of power while continuing to appreciate Arthur's might (77-82).³⁵⁴ Manion, reading the *Awntyrs* as a vehicle for thinking about the problem of sovereignty, suggests that the poem dramatizes "sovereign recognition" as a successful (if temporary) solution for producing order and limiting violence. As Manion explains, Galeron's "initially unjust claim is transfigured through this sovereign recognition of the king's judicial supremacy . . . and through Galeron's later sovereign recognition of Arthur's military supremacy . . . which achieves peace and inclusion, according to the poem's argument, only because Galeron's lands are then restored" ("Sovereign," 89).³⁵⁵ For Manion, the point is not that might makes right, but that all parties' acceptance of the process of combat, which produces Galeron's recognition of Arthur's sovereignty, renders Arthur's actions legitimate. While Manion does see Gawain and the ghost as problematizing Arthur's conquests, his reinterpretation of their vocabulary toward the land in a legalistic vein paves the way for a recuperative understanding of Arthur's actions.³⁵⁶

Spearing offers a third model for the interaction between the parts of the poem and their associated forms of space: the second episode is reactive, not simply demonstrating and concretizing the charges laid by the ghost but allowing the characters to move beyond them. Guinevere's intercession in Galeron's case demonstrates the kind of mercy to which the ghost exhorts her, while by ceding land to Galeron, Arthur shows that he is free of the covetousness of

which the ghost accused him.³⁵⁷ Other critics have seen the second episode as instead affirming the charges of the first; though Spearing suggests that “we are left to decide for ourselves whether the formal completion of the pattern, marked by the ending of the poem with the words with which it began, does or does not correspond to a psychological and spiritual fulfilment” (*Medieval* 141), many critics impose their decisions as readings, seeing in the second half a negative response to the first. But, as I hope to show, the *Awntyrs* offers a more robust framework for meaning than mere binary response; its agglomeration of different kinds of material allows meaning to emerge differently according to multiple structures or contexts.

Critical Fictions

Criticism since the turn of the century has demonstrated how strongly the logic of land and power in the text depends upon the interrelationships among its parts by effectively imagining a new episode. Critics since 2001, especially those influenced by postcolonial studies, have especially tended to see Arthur’s redistribution of lands at the poem’s end as a sign of his guilt. In their analyses, they have become contributors to the fiction themselves—small-scale continuators, as it were, of the *Awntyrs*. Patricia Clare Ingham was the first to suggest in print that the tale implicitly stages cyclical violence:

Arthur’s sovereign arrogance extends so widely that he simply grants another region to Gawain by royal writ. The apparent solution displays the problems of annexation and promises the recurrence of battle. Of course, those who hold the title to these lands in Wales will likely travel, as Galleroun has done, to reclaim their lands from Gawain’s possession—thereby suggesting that Arthur’s court will witness the same tournament battle over and over again. (*Sovereign* 186)

Similar points have been made subsequently by Christine Chism (255), Richard J. Moll (140), Krista Sue-Lo Twu (121), and Leah Hauht (16-17).³⁵⁸ Twu makes the imaginative projection underlying this reading explicit: “Somewhere in Wales, we can imagine another displaced lord arming himself for another trial by combat.” These critics are responding to what seems like a

contradiction in the tale: they understand its ethos to be anti-imperial, drawing in part on the vocabulary established in the ghost's prophecy, but the end of the tale seems to present a successful resolution and reintegration which neatly resolves the contention by pleasing both Galeron and Gawain. This state of affairs seems to lack narrative justice, but imagining that the violence will be repeated solves the seeming contradiction: the apparent resolution of the poem is no resolution at all, but merely a confirmation that the Arthurian way is without justice.³⁵⁹

This is an eminently logical unpacking of the consequences of the tale's end. We are primed to see land as a key issue; the king has been accused of granting land to Gawain unjustly; he now offers him new land without apparent concern for any who might hold it already. However, this criticism not an element of the text itself. Nothing in the narration hints at conflict to come except the conflict that will eventually destroy the Round Table, which has different causes. Nothing problematizes Arthur's grant of Wales to Gawain. The text gives no sign that the lands Arthur now gives to Gawain have another owner; it seems beyond the consideration of the scene. The *logic* of the text might produce the likelihood of such a challenge, as critics since Ingham have argued, but if so it remains entirely beneath the surface, something to be filled in and excavated by readers.

Indeed, even understanding Galeron's challenge as a demonstration of Arthur's acquisitiveness requires less an act of interpretation than one of narrative expansion. Randy Schiff, situating the poem in terms of Anglo-Scottish border politics, offers us a vision of how Galeron was dispossessed of his lands: "Edward I's imperialist policies in Scotland involved forcing marcher lords into the ambit of English power through destructive raids, which we might imagine as similar to the invasion through which Arthur had dispossessed Galeron before the action of the *Awntyrs*" (620). Schiff's vision of the backstory of the *Awntyrs* is vivid: an invasion

featuring destructive raids. This episode, however, is of Schiff's construction. Not only does the text not report the details of what Arthur does in Galeron's land; it is silent as to whether he does anything at all. *Galeron* asserts that "Pou has wonene hem in werre with a wrange wile / And geuen hem to Sir Gawayne" (421-22), but the second-person pronoun makes clear that this is the character's direct speech, not the narration itself. Critics have almost uniformly assumed that Galeron's allegation is accurate. Those who see the end of the tale more positively suggest that in restoring Galeron's lands, Arthur has learned from the ghost's warning, while the more recent trend is to suggest that he repeats his initial fault. But, as J. O. Fichte observes, the text does not endorse Galeron's claim, merely reports it.³⁶⁰ Indeed, Fichte suggests that Arthur defends his claim to Galeron's lands because he believes he is in the right (*"Awntyrs,"* 134). What actually happened to occasion the situation at the start of the tale is entirely occluded.

The tale, then, has a core interest in land and its possession and dispossession that arises in its different parts. These parts string together, but they do so loosely, allowing readers the imaginative freedom to find their connections. In this framework, even in as tightly composed a text as the *Awntyrs*, interpretation blends with composition, so that critics find themselves projecting episodes forward and back as they attempt to explain the poem's ethical and political message. As these imagined episodes show, the ability of the poem's spaces to produce meaning together is not simply a property of diptych structure; similarities of action, vocabulary, and formal presentation of space all offer paths through the poem, putting its spaces in contact.

Modularity

The poem itself, episodic in the mode of romance and composed of materials drawing from multiple genres and forms, manifests multiplicity. In some senses, the poem in its platonic ideal is less structured than modular: a collection of greater and smaller units capable of being

activated in particular readings. Individual copies of the poem, and indeed individual acts of reading, bring different elements of the text to the fore in ways that inflect its thematic concerns very differently. The distinct models of space found in the poem layer atop one another differently in different instantiations.

If we understand the *Awntyrs* as a modular text, than rather than unity we might talk about looking for a thread, an interest or pattern that pulls through multiple sense-units without necessarily being expected to pull all possible pieces together. Though Spearing's model of the diptych has had the greatest impact of any explanation on how critics have thought about the poem for the last thirty years, it is not the only analogy he used to characterize the poem. In trying to explain how its parts work together to produce meaning despite apparently standing separately, Spearing compared the *Awntyrs* to filmic montage, and his discussion of how juxtaposition creates meaning quotes from Eisenstein; strikingly, this comparison goes uncited among critics who discuss the poem's dual structure (*Medieval* 129-30).³⁶¹ But the comparison is important, for montage is a system for relational meaning not restricted by the sense of symmetry inherent in the diptych.

In belaboring this point I don't intend to suggest that the *Awntyrs* has radically different interests than previous critics have seen. The features of the poem I emphasize—sovereignty and territory—are categories that nearly all readers have noticed, categories central to the work of the poem. But I suggest that the poem does not operate solely on principles of symmetry in which the second half picks up the challenges as the first. Rather, the repetition of issues like land and war in different contexts creates a variety of paths for readers to take among parts of the poem. Not all of these paths are necessarily active on any given journey through the text; different acts of reading (and different contexts for reading) may bring different connections to the fore. But

they exist in potential, enabling the romance as a space of inquiry, and (as we will see in the next section) the evidence of the manuscripts suggests that medieval readers saw multiple ways of relating the components of the poem.

All literary criticism, of course, depends on the sense that ideas, patterns, language, images, structures, and symbols recur within a work. And romance has long been seen as a genre more than usually subdivisible into distinct (and repetitious) narrative units. Indeed, if we chose a single adjective to characterize romances, that word might well be “episodic,” a term often applied pejoratively to narratives that seem to lack organic unity or clear internal logic. In talking about the *modularity* of romance, I wish to emphasize the conjunction of these two features: romance narratives consist of a sequence of segments, more or less defined and interlinked, that allow the romance to raise related issues repeatedly. In *King Horn*, for instance, Horn’s martial actions as a knight serve both the love plot (Horn insists that he must be knighted, and must prove himself as a knight, before marrying Rymenhild) and the restoration plot (Horn’s repeated battles with Saracens culminate in his invasion and reclamation of Suddene). And, as we saw in the first chapter, both plots are necessary to realizing Horn as King Horn. These differing contexts give different significance to knighthood, while knighthood itself unites these strands of mutually essential components of Horn’s realizing his social personhood. The marked generic hybridity of the *Awntyrs* makes the effect even more pronounced; the issue of control of land recurs in the poem in contexts conditioned by different forms, which enables a conceptual investigation.

In this, modularity serves a function similar to the structure of interlacing, identified by Vinaver as an essential mechanism of thirteenth-century French prose romances. In an interlaced narrative, strands of story recur intermittently: the text will pursue one line of action only to turn

away from it (perhaps by focusing on different characters, perhaps simply because new events provide a distraction), and then onto something else, until, some time later, the first line of action returns, and so on. As Vinaver shows, this kind of intermittent recurrence makes the reader's memory an integral part of the reading experience: "the exercise of such memory is in itself a pleasurable pursuit which carries with it its own reward" (83). But interlacing can also play a key role in the construction of meaning: Vinaver shows how intermittent recurrences interwoven into other strands of narrative can exemplify an emotional transformation or to layer causality, uniting multiple (even redundant) strands in the explanation of Arthur's downfall (83-85, 89-90).

Interlacing is a narrative technique, describing the construction of events into one textual narrative. And the interlace structure is rare in Middle English romances; even Malory significantly reduces the interlacing of his French sources.³⁶² The massive scope of interlaced romances like the Arthurian Lancelot-Grail Cycle is certainly far from the compact *Awntyrs*. But I suggest that the *Awntyrs*, in its treatment of issues relating to the possession of land, displays something rather like interlace, at a thematic, rather than narrative, level.

Interwoven repetition of ideas or structures is indeed a deep and substantive element of Middle English verse romances. Susan Wittig, in her structuralist analysis of the verse romances, suggests that their narrative logic is largely linear, but that component narrative structures may be repeated, obsessively in some cases (125-26, 135).³⁶³ Frequently repeated sequences of scenes or episodes encode social meaning, Wittig argues; the association between plot elements that put the hero's paternity into question and those that exile him from the land of his birth suggests that questionable paternity *should* produce exclusion from community.

But repetition, particularly of smaller narrative components, also produces meaning through variation. Wittig primarily works from specific to general in her analysis, beginning at

the level of the construction of the phrase or line and building to the sequences of linked episode that make up a narrative. But scenes and episodes also shape the motifs and other smaller elements that occur within them. Land possession recurs throughout the *Awntyrs*, but the intervening action and different contexts in which it is raised shape it, giving it different meaning. Rosemond Tuve has argued that narrative interlacing effects change: “Events connected by entrelacement are not juxtaposed; they are interlaced, and when we get back to our first character he is not where we left him as we finished his episode” (Tuve 363). Although Vinaver has qualified this view,³⁶⁴ a similar phenomenon shapes the recurrence of issues like land: intervening events, other discourse, and changed context push the issue forward.

Again, this way of understanding the text’s construction is not so different from any reading practice: we all know that recurring elements develop meaning across a text through a pattern of repetition and change. But in linking the recurrence of such elements to textual structure, I hope to emphasize the multiplicity of ideas of textual structure as inflected by the manuscripts. The marked modularity of the *Awntyrs* means the same elements can accrue a number of forms of meaning depending on the divisions and connections that manuscripts—or readers—supply.

Wittig acknowledges that there may be some imprecision in defining the boundaries of narrative units, and argues against treating them too dogmatically:

rigid segmentation [is] both undesirable and unlikely to yield useful results . . . the criteria for segmentation and unit definition must be correspondingly flexible . . . The analytical segmentation of these large structures, then, is based primarily on the poet’s actual segmentation in the process of composition—as far as we can reconstruct it—rather than on some theoretical system of parts imposed from outside the narratives. (136)

But much of Wittig’s language in her analysis is heavily intentionalist (“the poet selects . . .”), and assumes an absoluteness of structure many medieval texts in a diversity of manuscripts

simply do not have. Scribes and readers are co-contributors to meaning, and the manuscripts of the *Awntyrs* show that they found multiple grounds for segmentation.

Elements in a modular romance, instead of possessing an immovable fixity that renders their role in the narrative and ideas of the text certain, serve as anchor points, available for connection with other narrative moments. These points operate on the basis of memory, much as Roscoe has suggested that the memory of the ghost “haunts” the encounter with Gleron (57). Specific performances may make certain connections more or less likely by articulating the structure differently, but ultimately the specific patterns are realized only in a specific reading. But these are not (or need not be) mere free associations of subjects coincidentally appearing. Rather, the poem’s multiply divisible structure provides a framework for the active exploration of key issues. Land, with its various forms and generic associations, is one such topic, interrogated by the texts’ deployment of it in a variety of contexts.

Paths Among Spaces

In applying the term “modularity” to the *Awntyrs*, I am attempting to highlight two main features of the poem: its separate but recurrent display of different kinds of space and the different ways of connecting them depending on the structure the reader perceives in the poem. We are fortunate to possess three manuscripts that divide the poem in different ways, none of which correspond exactly with the diptych division that has preoccupied modern scholarship.³⁶⁵ While the text of the poem is relatively stable compared to romances like *Bevis of Hampton*, and all copies include the same forms of space and raise similar issues, the different articulations of the poem show that the poem’s instantiations of space allow it better to raise questions and open possibilities than to provide answers.

The evidence of romance manuscripts (those of the *Awntyrs* included) suggests that their scribes and perhaps their authors understood them as possessing less clear structure and less stable subdivisions than we might expect. In an important article analyzing the manuscript evidence for the structure of Middle English romances, Philippa Hardman shows that the division of romances into parts may be much less stable than we tend to assume of literary works (“Fitt Divisions”). She studies internal subdivisions of romances in manuscripts: the declaration of “a fitt” or the presence of a large decorated initial. These features sometimes seem to show scribal carelessness at best and complete incoherence at worst; a text may mark the end of only its first fitt, or decorated initials may occur far too often to mark reasonable stopping places. However, Hardman shows that such phenomena signal their texts as multiply divisible, capable of being split (whether by private readers or in performance) at many points for a variety of narrative, stylistic, and even thematic purposes. (Hardman likens the process to locating suitable stopping points when reading to children at bedtime.)

Hardman’s evidence, in short, suggests that in contrast to texts like *Piers Plowman* that circulated with relatively stable and well-defined division into parts, romances were malleable in their formal structure. And, indeed, we see evidence of this in *Awntyrs* manuscripts. Three of the four surviving manuscripts subdivide the poem in some way, whether by marking the ends of fitts (the Ireland manuscript) or featuring decorated initial letters (Douce and Thornton);³⁶⁶ Thornton divides the poem into two sections, while Ireland and Douce include three each.³⁶⁷ At only one point do any two manuscripts place a division in the same place—stanza 40 begins the final section in both Ireland and Douce—and from the perspective of most accounts of the poem’s narrative structure, it is arguably the least important division. Regardless of how we understand this correspondence, there is no evidence that these divisions are authorial or

inherited from a common ancestor; wherever they originated, the manuscript divisions suggest that multiple ways of subdividing the poem were possible.³⁶⁸ The table that follows illustrates these structures by recording the number of the stanza that begins a unit in each manuscript, as well as a summary of the plot to the next break found in any manuscript.³⁶⁹ After summarizing the divisions in these three manuscripts, I will discuss how varying structures might guide us through the poem's spaces differently.

Table 1
Summary of The Awntyrs off Arthure with Section Breaks by Manuscript

Stanza	I	D	T	Summary
1				Gawain and Guinevere are in the woods at the Tarn Wadling with Arthur's hunting party when a sudden storm separates them from the rest of the group. They are approached by a grisly specter who reveals herself to be the ghost of Guinevere's mother, suffering for an unspecified sin. She warns Guinevere that life is fleeting and admonishes her to show charity to the poor. Guinevere asks what she can do to aid her mother, who requests masses for her soul.
21	f. 6v			Gawain asks the ghost to tell what will become of Arthur's knights who seize the lands of others. The ghost declares that Arthur is too covetous, outlines his past military victories in Europe, and foresees his future failure and the destruction of the Round Table, including the deaths of Arthur and Gawain; that the child who will cause this destruction is playing even now in Arthur's hall. The ghost repeats her request for masses and departs; the weather lifts, and Gawain and Guinevere ride back to Rondolsette Hall.
27		f. 6r		At the hall, Arthur is dining when a lady enters the hall leading a knight. Arthur welcomes the knight, whose appearance is described in detail.
30			f. 158r	The description of the knight's appearance continues; his name is Galeron. Arthur asks him what he wants, and the knight declares that Arthur has unjustly seized his lands and given them to Gawain; he demands to fight with Gawain, or indeed with any knight. Arthur tells him that no knights are prepared for battle due to the hunt, but that they will host him tonight and the combat will occur the next day. They entertain the knight well, and Arthur expresses to Gawain his apprehensions about the battle, but Gawain is eager to defend his right. The two knights are dressed and prepared and come to lists built at Plumpton Land for battle.
40	f. 11v	f. 8v		The two knights fight, striking vicious blows and wounding each other significantly. Gawain's horse is slain, prompting an outpouring of grief. After some more combat, lavishly described, Gawain beats Galeron to the ground. Galeron's lady begs Guinevere to have Arthur intervene, and the queen appeals to Arthur to stop the combat. Meanwhile, Galeron submits to Gawain and yields his claim. At this point Arthur orders the fight to stop and restores Galeron's lands to him; he promises Gawain new lands if he will cede his former lands to Galeron. Gawain agrees on the condition that Galeron remain with them at the Round Table for a time. The party returns to Carlisle where the knights recover from their wounds and Galeron weds his lady and joins the Round Table for the rest of his life. In a final stanza, Guinevere has masses sung for her mother's soul, and the poem concludes with an echo of its opening lines.

Variations on the Diptych

Two manuscripts—Douce and Thornton—appear to register the switch between the two episodes observed by most critics. Douce places its first break precisely between these episodes, following the stanza in which Guinevere and Gawain take their leave of the ghost and before the stanza that sees Arthur seated in his hall when Galeron and his lady enter. The Thornton manuscript does not observe its lone division in the text until three stanzas later. Since Thornton seems not to have been fully familiar with the text when he began copying, his decision to place a large initial letter at the beginning of stanza 30 might represent a belated recognition that the story has entered a new phase.³⁷⁰ Regardless of why the break comes exactly when it does, the Thornton manuscript's section break coincides with the beginning of the description of Galeron and occurs before the text names him, serving roughly to articulate the diptych structure noted in criticism that makes the Galeron episode a response to the ghost's admonitions. While the delay in beginning this new section weakens the effect of the division between the two episodes, Thornton's treatment of the poem segregates the lands involved in the dispute—both those Galeron claims and those Arthur gives to Gawain—from the lands involved in Arthur's European campaign, inviting the connections outlined in my discussion of the diptych structure above.

While Douce marks the point of the two-episode division even more precisely than Thornton, its initial letters actually divide the poem into three units, separating discourse about land from action in seizing that land.³⁷¹ A second two-line capital, hierarchically identical to the first, heads stanza 40, a break Douce shares with Ireland, which begins a new fitt at the same point. From the perspective of ways in which the poem's structure has been studied, this break is more challenging to account for. Stanza 39 sees the Gawain and Galeron begin their combat; they couch their weapons and spur their steeds, and the stanza concludes by describing their arms

("There encontres the kniȝte / With Gawyne one grene," 506-07). Stanza 40 picks up from this description ("Gawyne was gaily graped in grene," 508) and includes some knightly trash-talk and their first blows, including a stroke that wounds Gawain significantly. This moment, where the two knights move from their initial charge to their initial blows, does not seem to correspond with a structurally significant transition in the story.

Hardman notes that large initials frequently serve to mark moments of heightened intensity, like fight scenes, where they serve not to indicate a break in the narrative but may suggest to the reader (whether private or public) that a different delivery is needed ("Fitt Divisions," 72). The initials in the two manuscripts, and the accompanying fitt break in Ireland, might simply call attention to this, the poem's one scene of chivalric combat. But in the case of the *Awntyrs*, the combat corresponds with a narrative development, moving from abstract or displaced consideration of the poem's central issues to direct action. While the opening of the poem is framed by a hunt, the key figures, Gawain and Guinevere, do not appear as participants but instead withdraw themselves from the hunt. They encounter the ghost, who speaks of the past (her life), the future (Arthur's fate), and the general actions that humans (especially the well-born) should take for the preservation of their souls. Galeron arrives at Arthur's court and complains of an unjust distribution of land in another place. As Galeron and Gawain crash together, we have characters taking action for the first time, engaging in a combat that will resolve the issue of Galeron's complaint; Guinevere's subsequent actions also respond to the warnings the ghost offered her, whether more or less successfully.

In spatial terms, Douce's second division separates the catalogues of disputed and granted lands. Part 1 furnishes in the ghost's prophecy the collection of places Arthur conquers and insular locations where his rule is undermined. Part 2 seems to pick up the association of

conquest and land as Galeron lists the places of which he has been unrightfully dispossessed. Part 3 repeats this catalogue as lands are dispensed to Galeron and Gawain. The action of the combat separates Galeron's initial complaint about the land from its contestation, articulating the relationship between these spaces in a way that seems sympathetic to Manion's sense of the combat as a productive mechanism for resolving sovereignty. Whereas the division after the episode of the ghost emphasizes the similarity between two different bodies of space, that of Arthur's conquests and the lands Galeron claims, the second division interrupts the action in a way that emphasizes the difference it makes. This structural arrangement does not tell us how successful Arthur's solution is, but it does emphasize the separateness of the actions that precipitated Galeron's claim from the processes through which the claim is recompensed. Where Thornton's articulation of the text's structure poses the whole Galeron episode as a response to the ghost's speech, Douce juxtaposes Galeron's accusation with the spectral warning, leaving Arthur's final actions as a unit that might continue the claims of imperial injustice but might equally correct the situation.

A Section for Conquest

The Ireland manuscript also divides the text into three parts and shares its final division with Douce, but its articulation of the text separates the text's concern with unjust acquisition of land even more markedly from the actions Arthur takes to resolve the plot. The second fitt in Ireland begins with stanza 21, where the ghost switches from speaking to Guinevere to addressing Gawain. In separating the ghost's dialogue with Guinevere from that with Gawain, Ireland registers a division that few critics have noted (though Rosamund Allen, offering one of the most detailed and complicated theories on the poem's composition, suggests that they were composed in separate stages³⁷²), but one that registers a stark distinction in the poem

nevertheless. In separating the ghost's conversation with Guinevere from her conversation with Gawain, the Ireland manuscript carves out a central section dedicated to the forceful acquisition of land—Arthur's campaigns in Europe, prefaced by the ghost's charge that he is "to couetous"; his dispossession of Galeron—framed by a concluding battle and an introductory conversation between Guinevere and her mother. By separating out the conquest section, the Ireland *Awntyrs* embeds a concern with territory and rule in the heart of the poem, but also fits this concern into a broader moral framework.³⁷³

The ghost's statements to Guinevere and to Gawain, separated in the Ireland *Awntyrs*, operate in different registers and stem from different sources. The dialogue with Guinevere—based on *The Trentals of St. Gregory* and a tradition of exempla—operates in moral terms, prescribing and proscribing behavior for the salvation of the soul; this discourse deploy the abstract, nameless form of land. The ghost's prophecy to Gawain, meanwhile, employs historical logic, particularly the cyclical fall of kings, and its chief identifiable source is the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.³⁷⁴ Perhaps more significantly, they suggest different modes of action. The ghost's speech to Guinevere is exhortatory and reformist, her contrast of her past splendors and present torments peppered with imperatives.³⁷⁵ By contrast, her prophecy to Gawain offers little in the way of instruction or reform, despite the impression of critics that her accusation of covetousness can be addressed (either successfully or not) by Arthur's actions in the second half of the poem. She speaks in the imperative mood only twice, explicitly addressing Gawain personally (as opposed to her imperatives to Guinevere, which serve as good precepts for the court in general):

Gete þe, Sir Gawayne,
Turne þe to Tuskayne;
For ye shul lese Bretayne. (283-85)

Gete þe, Sir Gawayne,
The boldest of Bretayne;
In a slake þou shal be slayne. (296-98)

Gete þe has the sense of “guard yourself,” but exactly how this should translate into action is unclear. She follows each *gete þe* not with a warning of possibility but a declaration of a certain future: not “guard yourself lest you lose Britain” or “lest you be slain” but “guard yourself, *for* you will lose Britain”; “guard yourself—you will be slain.” And her exhortation to “turne þe to Tuskayne” furthers this logic. The downfall she outlines could perhaps be avoided if Arthur and his followers remained in Britain instead of engaging in their continental war, but she urges Gawain on to the place where the fatal news will be delivered. Her commands in stanza 25, where she takes her leave of both Guinevere and Gawain, are all for Guinevere: feed the poor; have masses sung for me. The ghost’s warning to Guinevere, found in the first fitt of the Ireland *Awntyrs*, offers instruction in the proper social behavior to achieve salvation, while her words to Gawain, found in Ireland’s second fitt, simply lay out the grim fate to come—perhaps as a result of the ethical inclinations of Arthur and his knights, but without a sense that real reform is possible (as, indeed, it is not, for the end of the Arthurian story has been known for at least 300 years).

The second fitt of the Ireland manuscript not only separates the inevitable future from the possibility of personal and social ethical reform; it links the ghost’s prophecy to Galeron’s challenge, treating them as a single narrative unit. While both Douce and Thornton separate the prophecy from Galeron’s complaint with a decorated initial, in Ireland, they form a fitt together. While in the two-episode structure Galeron’s accusation that Arthur stole his lands has been seen to echo the accusations of the ghost and Gawain in the first episode, Ireland highlights this connection even more firmly by treating them as continuous. This second fitt concerns conquest and the acquisition of land: Gawain asks what will befall the knights who relentlessly invade other lands; the ghost labels Arthur as covetous, uses his past conquests as warrant for his

inevitable downfall, and outlines how his land will be seized from within while he is making war against Rome.³⁷⁶ Then, Galeron arrives at Arthur's court, explaining that Arthur has seized his lands unjustly and bestowed them on Gawain. This section thus outlines problematic land seizures, past, present, and future: Arthur conquered France; he even now holds the lands of the knight who stands before him; he will make war against Rome, which will cause his fall.³⁷⁷

Linking the two challenges to Arthur's expansionism—the ghost's and Galeron's—places great weight on the third and final fitt. The second fitt builds to the clash of knights, but the battle does not begin until the third fitt. While the Douce division positions this segment of the narrative as a resolution to Galeron's challenge, the structure of Ireland sets it against all of Arthur's conquests. Noting the formal legal language that governs the disposition of land at the end of the poem, Hardman suggests that in this fitt, "Unrighteous conquest is replaced by honourable combat and proper knightly settlement" ("Unity," 53). Military campaigns involving large numbers of knights are reduced to heroic single combat, a frequent romance strategy for avoiding the ambiguity and ugliness of war.³⁷⁸ The glory of this lavishly rendered fight allows the tensions that governed the previous fitt to be resolved. Galeron, who proves his prowess in the fight, is able to submit to Gawain with honor.³⁷⁹ The single combat also permits the familiar romance topos of the woman's plea for clemency, as Galeron's lady asks Guinevere to intercede before Galeron is killed and Guinevere carries her case to Arthur. Arthur then resolves the problem by redistributing lands again, leading to the conclusion that incorporates Galeron into the Round Table. The romance mechanism of the knightly combat offers a resolution to the problems posed in the previous section, as individual figures submit to and behave mercifully toward each other. The Ireland manuscript's articulated structure poses this as a resolution to the whole problem of unjustly seized territory, not simply Galeron's specific case; the role of the

third fitt as resolution of preceding problems is confirmed by the final stanza, which sees Guinevere ordering the previously-promised masses for her mother's soul.

The three-part division of the Ireland text also embeds the ghost's abstract vision of land in the specific, politicized geographies that follow it. Hardman has suggested that the Ireland *Awntyrs*, along with the other romances in the manuscript, was consciously edited to give it a moral focus, a process in which its structure plays a role.³⁸⁰ The ghost's message to Guinevere suggests that in her life she placed too much stock in worldly things, including lands and property, ignoring the inevitability of death. This message, too, has the potential to echo forward. Her message to Gawain in the next fitt is likewise a message of inevitability: Arthur will fall, as all kings fall, as France fell. "Your king is to couetous" (265), she warns Gawain: his focus is in the wrong place. The two exchanges work together to constitute an extended *memento mori*, elaborating their message both in courtly terms (to Guinevere) and in martial terms (to Gawain), adopting corresponding appropriate modes of spatial representation.

What would it look like to carry this vision of land, as something that must be consciously deemphasized, forward into the third fitt? There is no one clear answer. It has been suggested that the death of Grisselle, Galeron's horse, marks the truest moment of progression in the second half of the poem, sparking in Gawain a cognizance of his own death to come (Hanna, "*Awntyrs: An Interpretation*," 295). We might think of the initial dispute over land as fading from view, replaced by a chivalric ritual oriented toward producing a community; after all, Galeron joins the Round Table by the end, and the disposition of land is not tied to the outcome of the battle except insofar as both knights fought with valor. Or, more cynically (and reading against the poem's aesthetic celebration of the violent combat between the two knights) we might see the characters violently emphasizing the very thing the ghost urged the court to deemphasize, at the

cost of blood. Even bringing the moral instructions of the ghost to Guinevere to the fore does not solve the problem of the text's attitude toward land and conquest, merely thickens it.

The question is so difficult to answer and so rich because of the way it collides different forms of space: the structure invites us to collate the abstract spatial categories of the ghost's recollection with the more densely political forms of space that follow, within the space of a setting that guides the action according to generic convention. The poem's modularity makes these spaces into an associational network, layering versions of space atop each other and producing meaning through their interaction.

This indefinite exploration of how land is acquired, and the ethics and stakes of the process, is an understated consequence of episodic, modular narrative. Rather than a clear message about land and power, this multifaceted text—marked by both repetition and variation—unfolds an exploration of the status and character of land, the circumstances under which it can be acquired and the relationship among claimants, woven into a narrative that highlights multiple contexts and concerns. The marvelous appearances and heroic combats that dot romance and other forms of medieval narrative actually embody and emplace key political and geographic issues. The poem is a productive mechanism for raising questions about these issues, but its flexible structure and many generic components mean it arrives at no one clear answer.

Coda: Manuscript Geographies

So far, I have suggested that the spatial issues raised by the *Awntyrs* exist within a framework that allows for them to be activated and associated in multiple ways, not simply in a responsive framework whereby the second of two episodes exemplifies (and either resolves or fails to resolve) the moral charges raised in the first, but within a loose, subdivisible, multi-

generic system. As I've shown, the formal techniques employed by different manuscript copies can encourage particular readings and connections, though ultimately multiple ways of threading the pieces of the romance together endure, and it is a mechanism that does more to ask questions and raise issues than to offer neat resolutions.

Despite my attention to manuscript variations, I've attended largely to a single-text framework, examining the possibilities opened by multiple instantiations of a single text. But the single text, of course, is a model for reading imposed by modern critical and reading practices. Only one manuscript contains the *Awntyrs* by itself, and Kathleen L. Smith has persuasively demonstrated that this manuscript—Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324—originally formed part of a larger volume, although the *Awntyrs* was an independent booklet, perhaps prepared on special request.³⁸¹ There is no reason to assume that the land issues raised by the *Awntyrs* are restricted to that text; given the persistent interest the *Awntyrs* shows in the control of land, we might well expect that it would have appealed to compilers with similar interests in other texts.

In this final section, then, I will consider how these moments might have resonated with the other texts with which the *Awntyrs* is collected. I approach the manuscripts in which the *Awntyrs* is collected with due awareness of Derek Pearsall's caution that "it is possible, and all too possible, to overestimate the activity of the controlling or guiding intelligence of the scribe-compiler in the making of late medieval English secular miscellanies" ("Whole," 29). In invoking the manuscript contexts of the *Awntyrs*, I do not mean to indicate that the compilers of these manuscripts assembled them programmatically, consciously collecting them to emphasize particular spatial features. There is evidence that at least two of the manuscripts I discuss were the products of a purposeful shaping hand: as I discussed above, Hardman has argued that all

three Ireland romances were edited by the same individual, possibly their scribe, and we will see below what evidence exists for Thornton's activities as a compiler. But, regardless of how much compilers might have recognized the spatial features of their texts, and of whether these collections were assembled with purpose or through the happenstance of exemplar availability, they do present arrays of text and space that would have been available to the volumes' readers. Moreover, even miscellanies assembled by chance as texts became available attest to a broader literary environment. The *Awntyrs* circulated with texts of the kinds that lie behind its component parts—texts that share elements of its geographic interests. This section considers how the *Awntyrs* might read with some of these other texts in order to show how the geographic concerns embedded in the text resonate in a broader literary context and might become activated by that context.

While the term “manuscript geography” has been applied to codicology, expressing the idea that manuscripts are produced by processes and relationships that are spatial as well as historical (see Scase), I would suggest that manuscripts have internal geographies as well. By this I do not necessarily mean that a manuscript systematically focuses on depicting a single place or group of places.³⁸² Rather, miscellany manuscripts bring together texts using different kinds of spaces, and representing them to different purposes, just as the *Awntyrs* itself incorporates multiple spatial models rooted in different genres. In repeating and varying plot elements and forms of space, such collections, taken as a whole, can demonstrate their own kind of modularity, tying together their represented spaces with shifting links.

Much of the peculiar power of the poem to raise issues of land control from so many angles, I have suggested, has to do with the way its modular structure links elements with such diverse generic affiliations. Though the poem is always found with other works generally

identified as romances, suggesting a loose sense of generic affiliation, the nature of these works varies greatly, from classical histories, to heroic epics to traditional knightly adventures, and it shares space with other works like chronicles and religious histories besides. This array of contexts resonates with different elements within the poem, and may suggest that medieval compilers, like modern critics, recognized the many generic affiliations of parts of the *Awntyrs*.

Surviving in four manuscripts, and read actively (at least in Scotland) for a century after its composition,³⁸³ the *Awntyrs* was evidently a popular poem. This popularity demonstrates plainly that the poem held interest beyond local concerns: none of the surviving copies was produced in Cumbria, where the *Awntyrs* is generally have thought to have been composed.³⁸⁴ Two of the manuscripts are relatively northerly—the North Riding of Yorkshire (Lincoln Thornton) and Lancashire, perhaps Merseyside (Ireland)³⁸⁵—but the Lambeth manuscript, likely the earliest surviving copy, was produced in London, and despite a Derbyshire dialect, the Douce manuscript appears also to be a product of the south-east, with the *Awntyrs* perhaps faithfully copied from a Derbyshire exemplar.³⁸⁶ Thus, despite the clear interest that Rosamund Allen and Randy Schiff have shown the *Awntyrs* to hold for Cumbrian families and inhabitants of the Anglo-Scottish border more generally, what evidence we possess of the poem's circulation suggests that its primary appeal lay elsewhere.

For my discussion, I must set aside the Douce manuscript; in considering the texts of the original volume as reconstructed by Smith, I cannot discern a pattern or programmatic emphasis in this “collection catholic enough for the missing half to have included almost anything,” as Doyle puts it (97).³⁸⁷ But in each of the other three manuscripts I do discern suggestive connections among texts and patterns in their distribution. Reading in this manner is necessarily somewhat speculative: we have little evidence for how these volumes were actually used by

medieval readers. But, by paying attention to how different works deploy space, we can see lines through these compilations that would have been available to readers and in some cases show some evidence of being planned.

I suggest that something like the notion of modularity I outline for thinking about the construction of texts can also be applied more broadly, to relationships across texts. Scenes and interests recurring across a manuscript provide points that can be threaded together, regardless of the precise relationship among the texts themselves. Their recurrence in various plots can emphasize or shape these elements in different ways.

This kind of recurrence opens particularly interesting approaches to manuscripts' imaginative geographies. While recent research, spurred by the burgeoning interest in medieval nationalism, has found a marked concentration of depictions of England within certain miscellany manuscripts, such manuscripts rarely exhibit a clear and delineated geographic focus. The principles of romance collection were not such as to produce a miscellany focused on the Scottish border or even the Carlisle area, for instance. But such diversity itself enables forms of geographic thought among texts: texts in a compilation pile up geographic models much as the segments of the *Awntyrs* themselves do.

Such diverse frameworks, we shall see, also highlight the generic diversity and modular construction of the *Awntyrs* itself. The poem, enlisted in different systems of textual geography, resonates in ways that pull forward different aspects, from the moral-historical focus on kings' ethical behavior developed by the Lambeth manuscript to the hybrid tragico-romantic approach to the problem of losing and acquiring land in the romance booklet of the Thornton manuscript.

Lambeth

The Lambeth manuscript, on the whole, emphasizes the spaces of history. The geography it takes in stretches to the Holy Land and beyond; within this geographic scope, the manuscript emphasizes places as they are subject to governance and aligns the virtue of the ruler with the ordering of place in history. The collection gives pride of place to the space of the island itself; it opens with a copy of the Middle English prose *Brut* to 1377, one gathering lost at the start.³⁸⁸ *The Siege of Jerusalem* follows, and then *The Three Kings of Cologne* (the less popular of two Middle English prose translations). The *Awntyrs* follows, and finally, Juliana Berners's *Book of Hunting* (incomplete at the end).

The inclusion of the *Book of Hunting* may have been prompted by the opening hunt of the *Awntyrs*. (While hunting has a variety of symbolic and social associations, the *Book of Hunting* is an intensely practical text, and does not give space to elaborating the resonances of its subject.) The *Awntyrs* and the *Book of Hunting* are physically the most closely associated texts in the manuscript: together they form the beginning of what was presumably a longer booklet, Booklet 3.³⁸⁹ Booklets 1 and 2 are bridged by the *Siege of Jerusalem*. Nevertheless, Booklets 2 and 3 appear to have been worked on around the same time (they use a common paper stock), perhaps in the early 1420s, while Booklet 1 could have been begun in 1414 or earlier (Mooney and Stubbs 33). Despite the links between the *Awntyrs* and the *Book of Hunting*, the historical texts of Lambeth's other booklets provide a more pervasive and compelling context for reading the *Awntyrs*.

The Lambeth manuscript has long been known to have been written by the same scribe who wrote San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 114—an important copyist of Middle English verse, particularly alliterative poetry. He has recently been identified by Linne R.

Mooney and Estelle Stubbs as Richard Osbarn, who served as clerk of the chamber, or controller, of the London Guildhall from 1400-1437 (ch. 1). His output includes immensely popular works—*Troilus and Criseyde*, *Piers Plowman*, *Mandeville's Travels*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and *Susannah*—but also a unique Middle English prose translation of *The Three Kings of Cologne* (included in the Lambeth manuscript and excerpted in the Huntington manuscript). Osbarn seems, in short, to have had access to and interest in major Middle English works. Both of Osbarn's major compilations, the Huntington and Lambeth manuscripts, are eclectic, mixing poetry and prose as well as texts of diverse geographic origins. Huntington is divided into three booklets. The first contains *Piers Plowman*; the second, classified by Hanna as "orientalia" ("Scribe," 129), contains *Mandeville*, *Susannah*, and the excerpt on Egypt from *Three Kings*, and the final contains *Troilus* as well as a translation of Peter Ceffons of Clairvaux's *Epistola Luciferi ad Cleros*. By contrast with this extremely diverse manuscript, the Lambeth manuscript demonstrates more sustained, coherent interests.³⁹⁰

The *Brut* and the *Awntyrs* together suggest an investment in insular history somewhat similar to that suggested by the pairing of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and the *Awntyrs* in the Lincoln Thornton manuscript. The *Brut*, organized around the sequence of kings who ruled the island (in Lambeth, running heads identify the current king and govern the chronology), interlinks land and rule: the chronicle is grounded in insular space, and unfolds the actions of rulers within that space that have brought it to the present day. In examining whether Arthur has acted justly in acquiring and holding land, the *Awntyrs* takes up a question that resonates with the concerns of the chronicle. In the context of the Lambeth manuscript, the ghost's invocation of the historical-prophetic space of Arthur's European campaigns is doubly retrospective, recalling a fate that a reader navigating the manuscript in sequence has already read. The *Awntyrs*, looking

back at the chronicle account of Arthur's rule earlier in the manuscript, reflects the processes by which Arthur acquires power, a significant concern of the *Brut*.

The Lambeth *Awntyrs* delocalizes its action in ways that distance slightly the precise setting of the romance, perhaps in a move toward more chronicle-like space. Most startlingly for readers accustomed to reading the *Awntyrs* in modern editions, the Lambeth version strips away the setting of the Tarn Wadling that, following the Thornton manuscript, we treat as part of the poem's title. Compare the opening edited by Gates to that found in the Lambeth manuscript:

In the tyme of Arthur ane aunter by-tydde
By þe Turnewalthe lane—as þe boke
telles—
Whane he to Carlele was comen, that
conquerour kydde.
(Gates, ll. 1-3)

In the tyme of Arthur an aunter bytid
In talking of his turmentis þe tale of hym
tellis
As he to carlill was comyn conquerour y
kyd
(MS L, f. 275r)

Both openings quickly establish the chronology of the story and Arthur's renown, claim an outside source for this particular "awntyre," and set the immediate scene in relation to Arthur's arrival at Carlisle. But where three of the poem's four manuscripts place the action very specifically within the Cumbrian topography (next to the Tarn Wadling), the Lambeth manuscript eschews this precise placement, offering instead a generic statement that this adventure is found among accounts of Arthur's "turmentis" (tournaments, here used to mean something like "feats" or "challenges"). And while the Ireland manuscript also identifies the scene of the adventure as "Ingulwud forest" in the final stanza (709)—a reading that both Hanna and Gates adopt as archetypal despite its absence in Douce, their base text—Lambeth avoids any specificity in this line as well.³⁹¹ Lambeth also exhibits a delocalizing tendency in the *Awntyrs*' account of the lands to be granted to Gawain (a notoriously messy editorial problem), rewriting one ambiguous toponym to refer to Ulster and suppressing another place completely.³⁹²

The Lambeth manuscript's delocalizing tendencies have long been connected to its southern provenance. As A. G. Hooper suggested in the first serious editorial consideration of the Lambeth manuscript, "Apparently the Scribe also had difficulty with some of the unfamiliar northern place-names," leading him to suppress or substitute them (39).³⁹³ Yet, "difficulty" seems an insufficient explanation for the delocalization of the Lambeth *Awntyrs*, for the function of the names does not actually require the scribe to identify them.³⁹⁴ Any explanation must be somewhat speculative; we cannot firmly attribute these changes to Osborn, who, Hanna notes, appears to have copied other alliterative texts with some attention to fidelity ("Scribe," 124-25).³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the delocalization seems appropriate to the context afforded by the manuscript.

Unlike the Ireland and Thornton manuscripts, where the *Awntyrs* appears in the company of other romances, the Lambeth volume seems broadly concerned with the rhythms of history, both insular and global. These narratives frequently concern the establishment and transfer of space. This concern is brought home by the annotations present in the Lambeth *Brut*, which contains a system of rubricated annotations in Osborn's hand. In addition to the headings and marginalia tracking the *Brut*'s kings, other marginal notations take note of place. Many pieces of marginalia consist simply of place-names. These annotations note the foundations of varying places: for example, on f. 7v, next to the chronicle's account of the foundation of the city of Cambridge, a marginal inscription reads "Caumbrigge." As Nicole Eddy argues in her dissertation, this system of marginalia is unlikely to have been intended to serve as a navigational aid; instead, it calls readerly attention to certain elements, highlighting them as categories deserving of attention (69-70).³⁹⁶ The Lambeth *Brut* signals that it is in part a story of insular places, and though the portion of the *Brut* that tells of the foundation of Carlisle by King Leil is

lost, there is every chance that a reader perusing the Lambeth manuscript when intact would have found in its early leaves a marginal *Karleil*, which might have been recalled by the opening lines of the *Awntyrs*.³⁹⁷

Moreover, the northern border area that is so famously the spatial center of gravity for the *Awntyrs* is a region that comes in particular to preoccupy the later portion of the *Brut*. Conflicts with the Scots play a particularly prominent role in the *Brut* from the reign of Edward I on, events which obviously anticipated the continuing clashes of the fifteenth century.³⁹⁸ The *Awntyrs* addresses these conflicts in multiple spatial modes, its abstract, nameless spaces, structuring setting, and hyper-local catalogues differing from the large-scale history of the *Brut*. But backing away from several of the precise spatial details that characterize other texts brings the text of the *Awntyrs* more in line with a chronicle vision of insular space. Carlisle places the romance in the world of insular political space: an important city in the history of insular political geography. The localizing detail of the Tarn drops away to leave Arthur in the context of a royal approach to this city. The text retains many of its northern toponyms—chiefly those that pertain to land disputes and possessions, also a subject suited for chronicle.

However, in the context of the Lambeth manuscript, the *Awntyrs* is not simply a direct outgrowth of the *Brut*. *Jerusalem* and the *Three Kings* interpose between the texts representing insular space.³⁹⁹ Both texts are also historical in character, but they expand the geographic scope of the manuscript considerably, into the Holy Land, and in the case of the *Three Kings* much farther into the East. Both depict well-known historical accounts, and the *Three Kings* in particular offers a far-ranging view of the world reminiscent of travel writing. Yet both, in their treatment of their subject, join the *Brut* in giving special attention to the establishment of rule and the conditions in which a place passes under a ruler's authority.

In tracing the legendary history of the Magi, *Three Kings* takes in a significant range of spaces, combining stories of the Magi (both living and posthumous) and Saint Helena with accounts of the lands, sects, and peoples of the East. The description of Egypt from the poem's account of Flight into Egypt is sufficiently detailed that Osborn excerpted in in HM 114 to supplement the description lacking in the Defective Version of *Mandeville's Travels* found in that manuscript (Hanna, "Scribe," 122).⁴⁰⁰ *Three Kings* shares many features with travel narratives, even cross-referencing Mandeville at one point.⁴⁰¹

But although the text appears simply to collect Christian and Eastern sites, some narrativized, some merely catalogued, the *Three Kings* links much of this material by imagining it as governed space. At a key moment, just after the account grounded in the gospels concludes, *Three Kings* (like the *Brut*) turns to the foundation of a city—Sculla, greatest city of India and the East and seat of Prester John.⁴⁰² This foundation leads in turn to the kings' establishment of the office of Prester John (the name to be assigned to a temporal governor, rather than king or emperor⁴⁰³) and to the princes of Vaus, rulers of diverse lands. In his dissertation, Matthew Clifton Brown analyzes *Three Kings* as a work of narrative political theology, linking the story's popularity in fourteenth-century England with the imperial aspirations of Edward III or his followers (ch. 2). Brown shows how the *Three Kings* narrative employs the story of the Magi to offer a model of sacral imperial kingship that carves out temporal and spiritual authority for the ruler independent of the Church. Sculla, and the political institutions it introduces, recasts much of the space of the text as specifically governed space, grounding regnal sovereignty in the kings' early recognition and worship of Christ (Brown 134, 146).

Jerusalem, meanwhile, is precisely the story of how a place notable from religious history comes under the legitimate rule of empire. The future Emperor Vespasian and his son

Titus (both miraculously cured of unusual ailments through their conversion) visit the vengeance of Christ upon the Jews in a bloody display that has made the poem infamous to modern scholars. The city is removed from the Jews and affixed to the empire—for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a fantasy of recovery that crusade had failed to deliver.

Both *Three Kings* and *Jerusalem*, then, join the *Brut* in thinking about how places become governed or ruled, and both offer visions of political power sympathetic to imperial kingship. The acceptability of such modes of authority is not absolute, but defined by virtue. Titus and Vespasian stand in stark contrast to Nero, and the authority of the Three Kings is defined in large part by their recognition of and submission to Christ.

Such modes for thinking about rule resonate likewise with the model of historical space on offer in the *Brut*. In its sequential account of British kings, from the ancient first kings of Britain to the monarchs of recent history, the *Brut* necessarily offers a range of assessments; among the memorial functions of medieval historiography was to preserve deeds both praiseworthy and blameworthy, for emulation or for censure.⁴⁰⁴ The Lambeth recension of the *Brut* ends with just such a moment of moral judgment; in a passage shared with several other manuscripts, the text concludes with an account of the character of Edward III.⁴⁰⁵ The chronicle does not blame Edward for his imperial tendencies; it tends to praise the gains he has made in his campaigns against Scotland, for instance.⁴⁰⁶ Rather, he is chastised for sexual immorality, and the description notes that his lechery has wrought harm upon the realm.⁴⁰⁷ This charge in particular resonates with the *Awntyrs*, for the secret sin to which Guinevere's mother alludes has typically been understood as a sexual sin, probably adultery, in turn suggesting the role that Guinevere's own sexual misconduct will play in Arthur's fall, whether through adultery with Mordred as is typical in the chronicle tradition (and the more likely context for the *Awntyrs*) or with Lancelot as

in the tradition of French romance. The ruled historical spaces of the Lambeth manuscript are susceptible to the moral states of their rulers.

The Lambeth manuscript thus presents a broad array of cities and countries, mostly in the form of place-names recognizable as the sites of major historical events, in addition to a few lands and peoples introduced for geographical or cultural interest. This context emphasizes these spaces as ruled, and particularly emphasizes the human figures who rule them. Underlying these representations is a notion of an ethics of landholding. These texts embrace the possibility of imperial kingship and expansionism, like that practiced by Arthur, traced across maps of major locations like those that mark Arthur's European and British campaigns in the *Awntyrs* prophecy. At the same time, they underscore the role that personal virtue plays in the possession and control of such spaces.

The other texts in the Lambeth manuscript thus activate both the portion of the *Awntyrs* concerned with ethical behavior and that concerned with territorial control. Certainly, the texts with which the *Awntyrs* is grouped are concerned with how rulers establish authority over particular places and what grounds entrust political control to specific groups or individuals. But the texts' general line on the subject is reasonably friendly to the idea of imperial kingship. In *Jerusalem*, Titus and Vespasian have warrant to capture Jerusalem because of the Jews' execution of Christ forty years earlier—a purgatorial model of history that has also been applied to insular invasions, going back to Gildas. Rather than standing opposed to imperial kingship, territorial acquisitiveness, or annexation, this group of texts seems to insist broadly that rulership, and the spatial order it provides, must be grounded in virtue. The context in which the *Awntyrs* is presented in Osborn's compilation, then, tends to place the weight of emphasis on Guinevere's exchange with the ghost. This emphasis resembles the questions most commonly asked of the

poem before the year 2000: does Arthur's court learn from the warning? (Unfortunately, since the Lambeth manuscript is the only manuscript entirely lacking internal subdivisions, we have no evidence for how the scribe might have articulated its parts.)

Ireland

The Ireland manuscript shares with Lambeth a concern for moral behavior. One of the few manuscripts to contain exclusively romances,⁴⁰⁸ the collection begins with the *Awntyrs*, followed by *Sir Amadace* and the unique copy of another romance situated in Inglewood in which Gawain plays a major role, *The Avowing of Arthur*. All three manuscripts are profoundly concerned with proper behavior. But a different model of space leads morality in these texts to be inflected rather differently: not as a basis for rule over land, but as an obligation for knights of any station. Both romances that accompany the *Awntyrs* employ relatively abstract forms of space. The *Avowing* features a setting similar to that of the *Awntyrs*, in Inglewood and at the Tarn, but with less geographic detail; *Amadace* names no places at all, unfolding entirely in scene-space. The markedly non-historical space of these romances recalls similar spaces in the *Awntyrs*, acting as a support for moral action that tends to affirm heroic virtue.

The *Avowing* repeats the setting of the *Awntyrs*, firmly establishing it in the context of the manuscript as a topography for Arthurian adventure, and in particular testing. While Lambeth suppresses the Tarn in the opening lines of the *Awntyrs*, bringing the poem more closely in line with historical Britain, Ireland pairs it with another Arthurian text set at the Tarn. In the *Avowing*, Arthur and his knights go to hunt a great boar in Inglewood, and Gawain pledges to stand a night's watch at the Tarn, the spaces filling the same function of hunting and *aventure* as in the *Awntyrs*. (The Ireland manuscript is the only extant manuscript that actually names Inglewood in the closing stanza of the *Awntyrs*, possibly to echo the *Avowing*.)

But despite a shared setting, the *Avowing* does not exhibit the same spatial concerns as the *Awntyrs*. While the *Awntyrs* is extraordinarily rich in toponymic detail—setting aside the lands claimed and granted, events of the plot unfold at Plumpton and at Rondolsete Hall—the Tarn, Inglewood, and Carlisle itself virtually exhaust the toponymy of the *Avowing*.⁴⁰⁹ No other place is named in part because no lands are contested in the course of the poem, which is not at all concerned with ownership or conquest.

Inglewood and the Tarn serve in the *Avowing* as spaces of proving, somewhat similar to their role in the *Awntyrs* but lacking the structuring function that Rondolsete and Plumpton serve. At the opening of the *Avowing*, a hunter comes to Arthur at Carlisle to tell him of a ferocious boar in Inglewood forest. After going to see the boar together, Arthur, Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin make vows, knightly boasts of their future action. The vows of the first three knights all treat Inglewood as the canvas for their fulfillment: Arthur will slay the boar alone; Gawain will stand a night's watch at the Tarn Wadling; Kay will ride through the forest and kill any who bars his path.⁴¹⁰ The Tarn itself features particularly prominently in the performance of these vows; after Kay loses the battle that fulfills his own vow, he asks the knight to ransom him to Gawain at the Tarn; in doing battle with the knight, Gawain achieves the implicit challenge of his vow to stand watch at the Tarn. Though Arthurian commentators often cite the Tarn as a space with specifically supernatural associations, the *Avowing* treats it instead as a space of challenge and proving. The three knights perform their vows and demonstrate their prowess (less than successfully, in Kay's case) within a setting whose associations support such action. The function of the setting of the *Avowing* echoes that of the *Awntyrs*, which uses the space of the forest to furnish both a ghost to challenge the moral legitimacy of Arthur's court and a knight to challenge

his right to land he has taken, and then sees Gawain fight to prove both his chivalric legitimacy and that of the court.

Baldwin's vows are different in character and consequently require a different, still more abstract kind of space. The performance of the knights' vows concludes with their return to Carlisle in the first stanza of the second passus (492).⁴¹¹ Carlisle is named twice more, an additional time in their return journey (535) and once as Baldwin journeys there to attend the king (627), but no further places are named in the setting of the romance.⁴¹² The action of the remainder of the poem unfolds between Arthur's court and Baldwin's as Arthur systematically tests the three vows that Baldwin made: he will not fear death; he will refuse hospitality to no one; he will not be jealous of his wife. While Arthur, Gawain, and Kay make typical heroic boasts of deeds to be performed, Baldwin's vows are instead proscriptions outlining a code of behavior that ought, in the view of Baldwin and the poem, to be universal. Generalized scene-spaces of road, hall, and bedchamber support the realization of these behavioral norms. The stories Baldwin tells to explain how he arrived at these precepts, which conclude the romance, also tend toward spatial generality.

The events Baldwin recounts take place during the campaigns of Arthur's ancestor, King Constantine, "into Spayne" (916), a broad setting that may serve to furnish Baldwin's military career with an epic backdrop reminiscent of *chansons de geste*.⁴¹³ But the stories Baldwin tells deemphasize the acquisition of land. All three of Baldwin's stories are set at a castle granted to him by Constantine; Baldwin establishes his acquisition of the castle by reporting that "all his londus we wan" (918), and goes on to report that "He [Constantine] gafe me a castell to gete, / Wyth all the lordschippus grete" (925-26). However, the location and name of the castle go unspecified, and the stories Baldwin tells concern not his lordship but the actions of individuals:

a group of jealous women who murder each other and sexually service the soldiers; a coward who hides from battle in a barrel and is killed by a stray projectile; Baldwin's ruse to trick the enemy into lifting their siege by lavishly feasting their messenger. These actions unfold within the generalized spaces of the castle: beds, just beyond the walls, the hall. Just as the spaces of Arthur's and Baldwin's courts allow Baldwin to demonstrate the norms of good behavior, so the architecture of the castle supports exempla that justify these principles. While the Inglewood setting supports performative displays of prowess in the face of outside challengers, to deal with the matter of daily life, the *Avowing* adopts an even less specific form of space, one that sits largely outside the spatial modes of the *Awntyrs*.

Amadace carries the spatial simplicity of the Baldwin portion of the *Avowing* to an extreme. *Amadace*, like *Gamelyn* and *Sir Degrevant*, is among the few Middle English romances not to employ any place-names: Amadace possesses lands, as does the king he later meets, and in the course of his journey he passes through a forest to a chapel and a town, but all are merely referred to as romance stock-spaces: none are named.⁴¹⁴ The romance, a spendthrift-knight story in the vein of *Sir Cleges* and *Sir Launfal*, tells how its titular hero loses his property through over-generous, excessive spending and then gains even more property and power by continuing to spend freely, using his last pounds to settle the debts of a deceased bankrupt merchant and pay for his burial; the merchant's ghost later instructs Amadace in how to become a king.⁴¹⁵ The romance advances intertwined messages of munificence and the repayment of debts.⁴¹⁶ None of the places in this story of loss and restoration have names: not Amadace's own lands, nor the town where he sees to the merchant's burial, nor the land where he becomes king. Amadace's exemplary story of munificent behavior unfolds in a romance anywhere, a pure "landscape of 'suppose'," in Elizabeth Fowler's phrase (99).

Yet *Amadace* also offers a powerful framework for connecting the moral message of the first fitt of the Ireland *Awntyrs* to the acquisition of land. Although Amadace ultimately regains all that he lost and more, he still feels his deprivations deeply. At rock bottom, after he exhausts all his money and has to dismiss even the servants who have accompanied him in his exile, Amadace looks back on his former holdings, just as Guinevere's mother does when she is explaining the transitoriness of life:

Quen he thoghte on his londus brode,
His castels hee, his townus made,
That were away evyrichon,
That he had sette, and layd to wedde,
And was owte of the cuntray for povrté fledde.
Thenne the knyghte wexe will of wone. (Foster 111-45, ll. 391-96)

The knight's former life of opulence, just like the queen's, is embodied in places, now gone. Whereas Guinevere's mother's extensive holdings were portrayed using a different spatial terminology, *londus*, *castels*, and *townus* correspond with the already general, already moral mode of spatial representation that *Amadace* employs. But while Guinevere's mother's dispossession highlights the necessity of charity (property is transitory, the soul is not), Amadace loses his lands in part because of charity. Though the romance especially emphasizes Amadace's generosity to his social equals, he also spends his wealth on the poor.⁴¹⁷ Christine Chism argues that the *Awntyrs* makes a socially incisive point in highlighting the duties of the rich toward the poor (and, Chism argues, the failure of the rich to perform these duties) (254-60).⁴¹⁸ But Amadace offers a conservative reminder that wealth and charity are not contradictory: land supports munificence; generosity expends property.

Most significantly, this reminder of loss supports the romance trajectory of reintegration, and indeed suggests that reintegration is founded upon ethical consistency. It is by adhering to a principle of uneconomical generosity, even though such behavior has cost him all his holdings,

that Amadace prospers in the end.⁴¹⁹ The romance emphasizes that Amadace's gains at the end of the romance reverse and recompense his losses by repeating the formulaic language of "thi londus brode, / Thi castels hee, thi townus made" (721-22) near the end to describe the knight's new holdings.⁴²⁰ Unlike the heroes of exile-and-return romances like Horn and Havelok, Amadace is not destined by innate nobility and hereditary right to accrue lands, but the trajectory of the romance indicates that his ethical actions lead to his recompensation for the land he has lost. Amadace positions land as a reward for good behavior.

While the *Avowing* does not end with the acquisition of land—Baldwin is already lord of his hall—it also emphasizes moral consistency. After Baldwin's final exemplum, the poem ends abruptly, but not before Arthur has praised both Baldwin's vows and his constancy.⁴²¹ The abstract space of Baldwin's exempla demonstrates the consequences of moral failure,⁴²² but both the relatively abstract space of the second half and the more solid testing-space of Inglewood showcase characters who are completely faithful to principle; all fulfill their vows. This produces a celebratory, if brief, final stanza in which everyone "madun myrthe in that halle" (1134). Together, *Amadace* and the *Avowing* employ spatial modes that allow their texts to explore moral duties, and offers models of romance reintegration whereby characters remain true to their precepts and are the text accordingly reaches a happy conclusion.

Because the three texts, as presented in the Ireland manuscript, share a common structure, the weight of the collection suggests that we should attend to the same trajectory in the *Awntyrs* (Hardman, "Unity"; Hardman, "Fitt Divisions," 76-78).⁴²³ Thus, for Hardman, considering the poem in the context of the Ireland manuscript, "the last fitt shows how the ghost's advice is heeded. Unrighteous conquest is replaced by honourable combat and proper knightly settlement" ("Unity," 54). In Arthur's resolution of the case, virtues of charity and moderation triumph over

the sheer militarism that the ghost's prophecy threatens—an arc that, for Hardman, characterizes the manuscript as a whole. The relatively abstract spaces of the *Avowing* and *Amadace* resonate both with the forest area within which the ghost and Galeron challenge Gawain and with the possessions whose loss Guinevere's mother bemoans. The other romances' use of these spaces suggests that romance action can provide a mechanism through which the ghost's ethical precepts are carried out, and endorses a reading of Arthur's dispensation of land at the end of the romance as a part of a conventionally happy ending.

The Ireland manuscript's overall text-world offers less firm historical space than either of the other manuscripts I consider. Place is where moral actions are carried out, and can serve as a reward for such actions; these characteristics seem to matter more than the political passage of a place among people. Next to the other manuscripts collected here, the georeferential specificity of the *Awntyrs* can seem something of an aberration. But it also serves to emplace the kind of moral behavior explored by the manuscript's poems, to anchor it not just in a world of romance abstraction but in a political and territorial world familiar to readers. One of the manuscript's readings may underscore this point. In the reference among Gawain's lands to Vlster Hall, discussed above, the Ireland manuscript instead offers "Hulkers home" (668 I). This appears to be a reference to Holker Hall at Cartmel Priory, which may have been a familiar location for the scribe and his original audience, perhaps situated in northern Lancashire.⁴²⁴ While the proximity is uncertain—Cartmel is closer to Carlisle than to parts of Lancashire—the scribe could have replaced what seemed a distant name with a more familiar one precisely in order to suggest the anchoring work of the geography of the *Awntyrs*: the poem fastens its moral concerns to people's lives. As a collection concerned with "the rôle of civilian knights," in Hardman's terms, the

Ireland manuscript uses its relatively abstract spaces to stress not conquest but how to behave in the world (“Unity,” 59).

Thornton

The Lincoln Thornton manuscript finds a middle way between the historical solidity of the spaces showcased by the Lambeth manuscript and the relative abstraction of the Ireland manuscript’s moralized spaces, combining elements of both. While the romances with which the Ireland manuscript associates the *Awntyrs* are idiosyncratic—the *Avowing* is unique and its exemplary second half makes it a generic hybrid like the *Awntyrs*, and *Amadace*, preserved in only one other manuscript, has been described as an unusual, even debased, “commercial romance” (Foster 114)—the Lincoln manuscript connects the *Awntyrs* with some of the most popular Middle English chivalric romance texts, romances that place a particular emphasis on winning and protecting land holdings. But it also famously includes the unique copy of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the epic of Arthur’s final campaign and death that served as a source for the prophetic section of the *Awntyrs*. Both the serious, toponymically dense space of Arthurian history and the diverse, often non-specific, easily mastered space of romance condition the *Awntyrs* in the context of the manuscript.

The Lincoln Thornton manuscript is one of the most famous and most studied Middle English miscellany manuscripts, particularly among scholars of romances. Written along with London, British Library MS Additional 31042 by Richard Thornton in the North Riding of Yorkshire, probably during the 1430s, the Lincoln manuscript is an expansive collection. One of its most distinctive characteristics is its construction out of individual booklets organized generally on generic grounds. Booklet II contains all the romances in the manuscript, and is an important witness for the circulation of Middle English verse romances.⁴²⁵ Thornton’s booklets

constitute semi-autonomous units with their own fields of emphasis. The popular romances of the Thornton romance booklet, in the order of their appearance, are *Octavian*, *Sir Isumbras*, *The Erle of Tolous*, *Sir Degrevant*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, the *Awntyrs*, and *Sir Perceval of Galles* (unique).⁴²⁶ They are preceded by the Alliterative *Morte*, and several other texts, generally regarded as fillers, occur among the romances.⁴²⁷ Here, I will consider the *Awntyrs* specifically within the context of the romance booklet, for the *Morte* and the other romances provide an array of spaces that conditions that resonate with different components of the geography of the *Awntyrs*.

The Lincoln romances vary in their level of spatial detail, but share a common concern with gaining control over land. Ranging from *Degrevant*, set in two unspecified estate and (like *Gamelyn*) naming no places at all, to *Octavian*, which catalogues the topography of Paris in some detail, these relatively typical romances focus primarily on the exploits of a chivalric hero within a broad separation–restoration pattern.⁴²⁸ In nearly every case, the hero attains at the end of the romance personal control over land beyond what he possessed at the start, whether through marriage (*Eglamour*, *Degrevant*), martial prowess (*Isumbras*, *Tolous*), or both (*Perceval*).⁴²⁹ Land is a major, repetitive concern of the romance booklet.

John Finlayson argues that this sequence of romances shows a progression, demonstrating Thornton's generic consciousness and his desire to collect multiple romance subtypes. The booklet begins with the *Morte*, a historical-heroic account of Arthur's Roman campaign and downfall at the hands of Mordred. *Isumbras* and *Octavian* show romance features, but are more closely aligned with *chanson de geste* and Christian ordeal tales; they look both backward to the martial *Morte* and forward to the chivalric/adventure romances. *Tolous*, *Degrevant*, and *Eglamour* are chivalric romances in a standard adventure pattern, and showcase

available variations on the separation–restoration pattern. *Awntyrs* and *Perceval*, the final set of romances, “involve the kind of ‘unreal’ fantasies of adventure which are frequently considered the model of the genre,” and are accordingly “the polar opposite” of the *Morte* (“Reading,” 644, 666).⁴³⁰ The broad trajectory of the collection, in Finlayson’s view, is from the heroically epic to the fantastically romantic, with several of the most popular Middle English romances (members of the *Isumbras*-group identified by Evans⁴³¹) in the middle.

Finlayson’s scheme of progression, however, obscures the affinities that the *Awntyrs* has with other texts in the collection. Two of the other romances are stories of unjust dispossession. In *Tolous*, the emperor, Sir Dyoclysyen, has stolen 300 pounds worth of land from the Earl Barnard. In *Degrevant* (possibly derived from *Tolous*), the Earl, Degrevant’s neighbor, invades and despoils Degrevant’s estates while he is fighting in the Holy Land. Dyoclysyen and the Earl are territorial aggressors, guilty of the very thing of which Galeron accuses Arthur. Indeed, Dyoclysyen is an unjustly acquisitive emperor in general—“He dysherytid many a man, / And falsely ther londys wan, / Wyth maystry and wyth might” (Laskaya and Salisbury 309-65, ll. 19-21)—a description whose pattern resembles Gawain’s declaration that Arthur’s knights “defoulene þe folke one fele kinges londes; / And riches ouer reymes with-outene eny righte— / Wynnene worshippe in werre þorghe wightnesse of hondes” (262-64). Though the *Awntyrs* exhibits a structure quite different from the other romances, its concern with dispossession and acquisition picks up recurring issues in the booklet.

Land issues might indeed have been a central issues for Thornton, for they would not have been a purely fictional interest, but a part of Thornton’s daily life. Susan Crane outlines the significant role that the barony’s concern with landholding and inheritance played in the development of a distinctive body of continental romance (*Insular*, esp. ch. 1 and 2); as romance

came in the later Middle Ages to be aligned in particular with the gentry (a class defined, after all, by property), it is unsurprising that the genre continued to be preoccupied with land.⁴³²

George Keiser notes the Thornton family's legal dealings concerning local land holdings, and suggests that knowledge of land law would have been an important part of Thornton's education—the education that led, ultimately, to his scribal activities (“Robert Thornton,” 68).⁴³³

Romances could be a way of fictionalizing concerns with landholding and land disputes, and perhaps even of introducing such issues to child readers, for whom Thornton may in part have intended his collection.⁴³⁴

Degrevant, with its dispute between two neighboring estate owners, seems especially to engage the concerns that might have occupied members of the gentry. Indeed, the romance's avoidance of place-names seems a representational strategy designed to promote identification: the titular hero becomes a kind of every-gentry-man onto whom any landholder can project himself. Yet while we are most likely to imagine Thornton aligning himself with the hero, it might be more accurate simply to understand the romance as raising—and resolving—the kind of issue that might mark gentry life. A commission of oyer and terminer of May 2, 1398 records a charge that Robert Thornton's father was one of the perpetrators of a property invasion similar to that described in *Degrevant*.⁴³⁵ Thornton himself was the defendant in a case brought in the Court of Chancery by one of his relatives, William Thornton, who accused him of withholding documents proving a land claim (M. Johnston, “New”). Michael Johnston, in discussing this case, has emphasized the prevalence of land disputes in gentry life (“New,” 309-11). Thornton and his immediate family might as easily find themselves in the position of the accused as the accuser in land affairs.

Romances abstract these quotidian concerns, reimagining such disputes in a form conducive to solutions. Johnston is certainly correct to point to romances in Lincoln's romance booklet—*Isumbras*, and especially *Eglamour* and *Degrevant*—as “gentry fantasy,” offering narratives in which members of the gentry could assert family interest and escape economic dependency through martial activity (“New,” 311-12). While *Degrevant* (like those who accused Thornton and his father), upon discovering the despoliation of his estates, “thoghte to wyrke be þe lawe / And by no noþer schore” (Casson L 151-52), the romance explodes into violent action when legal overtures fail. But sheer military force is no more universally effective a method of policing land than the “lawe” that fails. The two romances most directly concerned with this kind of land dispute, *Tolous* and *Degrevant*, both view the cyclical violence precipitated by land disputes as a serious problem.⁴³⁶ In both romances, it is not ultimately violence but women who resolve the conflict, and indeed in each case the aggressor's wife advocates reconciliation throughout.⁴³⁷ Thus while land is the pretext for the plots of *Degrevant* and *Tolous*, these are not stories of a knight proving his right by defeating an aggressor; they develop love-plots that lead to restoration and peace.⁴³⁸

Other romances are wider in scope, and offer more models by which the hero can interact with land. Raluca Radulescu suggests that other romances in the collection are connected to those focusing directly on gentry land disputes through a shared interest in rule and order: “Thornton's experience of local and national politics made him reflect not only on local strife over property as a result of the breakdown of the king's peace in the localities, but also on kingship and governance” (70, n. 81). Land provides a strong link between local conflict and a more general concern with governance. *Isumbras* and *Perceval* both lose their lands and, through their heroic deeds, acquire new lands to replace them.⁴³⁹ In *Octavian*, the exiled sons of Emperor

Octavian ultimately reunite with their father and return to Rome, but only after defending Paris from a Saracen army. These texts make their heroes' violence productive and decisive by making their enemies into an archetypal religious Other, the Saracen.⁴⁴⁰ *Eglamour* abstracts the conflict in a different fashion: Cristabell's father, Earl Prynsamour, sets for Eglamour a series of increasingly difficult ordeals to win her hand; once Eglamour has completed the tasks, the romance treats him as earl, even though the pregnant Cristabel is banished and presumed dead. Though Eglamour is never reconciled with the old earl, who dies at the end, the romance produces a mechanism for Eglamour to gain control of the land without direct confrontation.⁴⁴¹ These texts negotiate their heroes' ability to obtain, defend, and manage lands by displacing their martial actions onto culturally safe opponents.

The romances that form the core of Thornton's romance booklet differ in their level of spatial precision and in the plot through which their heroes acquire land, but their repetition of scenes and issues generates a kind of modularity of the manuscript, linking these stories through a common concern with spatial mastery. The story-patterns collected in these texts furnish a framework for understanding the relationship between character and mastery of place in the Galeron episode. Galeron is not an othered figure like the giant of *Perceval*, or even the Green Knight, to be overcome and silenced by violence. Instead, he is a recognizable courtly figure, challenging a superior's appropriation like Degrevant and Earl Barnard. But even if the charge is accurate, the plot-pattern seeks a non-violent resolution to the dispute. The *Awntyrs* echoes the role of women in producing the resolutions of *Degrevant* and *Tolous*: Galeron's lover asks Guinevere to intercede, and the queen in turn asks the king to stop the fight. Galeron's incorporation into the Round Table is a form of integration that may echo the intermarriages and

family reunions that mark the end of other romances. In short, romances offer mechanisms beyond both law and violence for resolving problems of possession from the gentry to the king.

But this success is counterbalanced by the role of the *Morte* in the collection. The *Morte* begins, and perhaps even inspired, the romance booklet. The *Morte* begins the collection with historical events that stamp the consequences of rule on insular geography, much like the *Brut* in the Lambeth manuscript. But where the *Brut* is broad and long-ranging, the *Morte* is both spatially and philosophically dense, depicting in detail Arthur's downfall through fortune and overexpansion. In contrast to the positive trajectory of increasing spatial mastery that marks the romances, the *Morte* sees a king losing control of the lands he has gained, and the ghost's grim prophecy specifically recalls the *Morte*'s account, embedding this grim vision of insular space even as it repeats the patterns of success from the other romances.

While the intervening romances now separate the *Awntyrs* from the *Morte*, they may once have been closer together in Thornton's program of collection. Physical evidence suggests that the *Awntyrs* may have been among the first texts that Thornton copied when undertaking his compilation project, around the same time as (and perhaps before) the *Morte*, which begins the romance booklet of the Lincoln manuscript as it currently stands, and the *Previte off the Passioun*, which begins the subsequent devotional booklet.⁴⁴² (The latter two texts were copied from a common exemplar.) Copying the *Morte* and *Previte* each at the head of its own booklet both anticipates the much-noted generic plan of the manuscript and simultaneously, as Thompson notes, defers organizational decisions by preserving options for the future. But, although the *Awntyrs* begins in the middle of Quire 9 as we have the manuscript today, John J. Thompson has offered compelling evidence that the *Awntyrs*, like the *Morte* and *Previte*, originally stood at the head of its own quire ("Compiler," 121-24).⁴⁴³ The quire was refolded when Thornton found that

he needed additional paper to complete *Eglamour*, adding filler texts to make up the intervening space. George Keiser has recently disputed this account, arguing on the basis of Thornton's changing letterforms that the *Awntyrs* was not copied until after *Eglamour* and the other romances and was acquired around the same time as *Perceval* ("Robert Thornton," 82-83).⁴⁴⁴ But it remains possible that in addition to being textually and spatially associated, the *Awntyrs* and the *Morte* came into Thornton's hands around the same time and helped shape his vision of his collection.⁴⁴⁵ We cannot know whether Thornton had begun to think even provisionally about how he might arrange his booklets when he copied these early texts, but if Thornton did copy the two texts around the same time, it suggests that Thornton might initially have understood the *Awntyrs* as reiterating the *Morte*'s concerns with imperial overreach and pride.⁴⁴⁶

By separating the *Awntyrs* from the *Morte*—copying them into separate booklets if they were copied at the same time, and ultimately positioning them far apart in the romance booklet—Thornton simultaneously embeds the *Morte*'s fatalistic model of historical space in the *Awntyrs* and challenges the historical trajectory it implies with a romance strategy of reintegration. Thornton arrays the multiple kinds of space that characterize the *Awntyrs* across the booklet. The *Morte* anchors the treatment of rule, violence, and acquisition in a kind of historical space otherwise banished from the Lincoln romance booklet.⁴⁴⁷ While the level of spatial precision in the Thornton romances varies, the texts typically classified as popular romances tend toward abstraction; the spaces that are crucially contested in *Degrevant* are unnamed, identified only with their holders (though they are in some ways the most familiar spaces, invoking English estates), while the only place named in *Perceval*, Maydenlande, draws its conventionally abstract name from the state of being owned by a maiden.⁴⁴⁸ Even *Octavian*, with its relatively detailed representation of the environs of Paris, sets the final battle between Octavian the Young and the

Saracen army at an unspecified location in France near a nameless city. The *Morte* offers geographic precision and military violence in a tragic mode incapable of producing the kind of reintegration and resolution that characterizes popular romance structure. If the Lambeth and Ireland manuscripts suggest two poles for understanding the *Awntyrs*—historical conquest narrative and romance concerned with personal behavior—the Lincoln Thornton manuscript places it in both contexts, keeping the tensions that make the poem so rich brilliantly alive.

Thornton's compilation, collecting the *Awntyrs* both with the materials of history and romance, alliteration and tail-rhyme, highlights the density and variability of the poem's hybrid space. The various pieces of the compound text resonate with different materials among those Thornton has collected. The *Awntyrs* incorporates concerns of the *Morte*, and with it a detailed, localized version of geography. But where the *Morte* treats these spaces as historical terrain, sites in a military campaign first to capture Rome, then to defend Britain from internal dissent, the *Awntyrs* uses romance narrative vocabularies to resolve the issues raised by its lands. And the moral discourse that frames the poem resonates with the concern with Christian life that is a pervasive interest of Thornton's, both in the "devotional booklet" of the Lincoln manuscript and in the London manuscript as a whole. The text's compound geography enables the union of these multiple manuscript geographies in the *Awntyrs*, and its multiplicity of associations is enabled by its episodic modularity, letting different inflections of the textual space bubble forth periodically and independently.

The four manuscripts that contain the *Awntyrs* highlight the poem's versatility and remind us of the sheer array of contexts that literary works could have in the Middle Ages. In different contexts, the concerns of a poem like the *Awntyrs* might appear more historical or more ethical, and different episodes may come to the fore. While this is hardly a surprising observation, the

role that space plays in supporting particular modes of reading is striking. Differing levels of spatial abstraction support a generalized moral discourse and enable texts to articulate structural messages. Precise geography helps to link the events of a story to the rhythms of history and to particular political concerns. Manuscript collections build up forms of spatial thought by collating and juxtaposing different forms of space, just as textual modularity allows ideas to emerge through different ways of articulating the makeup of a story.

The *Awntyrs* uses the geography of the island itself as a foundation for the multiple modes of thought it enables. The space of the island grounds the present in a long history, a history so meaningful to its medieval English inhabitants that the *Brut*, which accompanies the *Awntyrs* in the Lambeth manuscripts, survives in more copies than any other Middle English work except Wycliffite Bible translations (Matheson 8). So great was Arthur's role within this past that he was counted one of the Nine Worthies; Arthur may have suggested to Thornton the idea of adding a prose romance of Alexander the Great at the head of the Lincoln manuscript (Keiser, "Lincoln," 177-78). As Robert Allen Rouse and Cory James Rushton observe, Arthurian traces embedded this extraordinary past in the insular present: "The countryside of medieval Britain was littered with reminders of the past presence of Arthur and his knights, relics of a time of perfect chivalry and overwhelming imperial power" (218). In enlisting so many specific, named sites and layering them with different forms of space, the *Awntyrs* not only imbues the landscape with the chivalric past but also turns it into a tool for emplaced thought.

Chapter 4

Articulating England: *Havelok* and *Bevis of Hampton*

Place, as elaborated by human geographers, is a subjective phenomenon, given its significance by humans—a phenomenological underpinning for the discipline (Henderson 539). Yi-Fu Tuan, for instance, grounds place on experience—a place is realized through our experience of it (17-18)—while others like Tim Cresswell emphasize meaning: a place is a grouping of space that a person finds meaningful, from the corner of a room to the whole Earth (2-7).

But this generality and perceptual foundation don't mean places don't have any rules. In what he terms a "geophilosophical inquiry," Edward S. Casey asks, "Do places have edges?", and concludes that they must: that places, indeed, are defined and constituted by their edges. These edges are porous boundaries, not the sharp borders that demarcate sites, but places end, and open onto each other, their experiential nature blending with concreteness in a quality Casey compares to an event. In short, without boundaries and contours, places are not thinkable.

This chapter examines places as they are concretely realized, as they are thought into existence in texts, and considers the rules that govern their existence and interrelationships: what makes large-scale geographic places thinkable? The analysis in this dissertation has focused heavily on toponymy: we have seen how abstract toponyms allow forms of spatial meaning that resist the dominant political organizations of space, how historical toponyms add a temporal dimension to spatiality and complicate the existence of communities within space, and how different groups of toponyms interface with each other and with generic patterns to explore real political issues of land-holding, annexation, empire, and sovereignty. This chapter, too, attends to named geographical and political spaces: Mombraunt, Lincolnshire, England.

In previous chapters, I have argued that the category of England has been overstated in much criticism of Middle English romances. *King Horn* and the *Man of Law's Tale*, I showed, deliberately eschew that term to imagine different political and temporal arrangements of insular space. But the texts I turn to here—*Havelok the Dane* and *Bevis of Hampton*—both employ and embrace England as part of their spatial system. Indeed, rendering England thinkable is an important part of their work. While we saw that *King Horn* was at best ambiguously part of the “Matter of England” (and the *Man of Law's Tale*, as a Chaucerian text, is never tested against that schema at all), these two romances are arguably among the most central Matter of England romances.⁴⁴⁹ *Havelok* is among the earliest Middle English texts considered to be romances, surviving uniquely in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108, where it follows one of the three copies of *King Horn*. It tells the intertwined stories of Prince Havelok and Princess Goldeborw, rightful heirs to the thrones of Denmark and England respectively, who are dispossessed of their lands by unfaithful regents; the two marry and regain both their kingdoms, over which Havelok rules as king. *Bevis*, produced slightly later, is one of the most popular romances within (and indeed beyond) the Middle Ages, surviving in six mostly complete copies as well as several fragments and excerpts. *Bevis*, too, is a story of dispossession: when his mother takes a foreign lover and has his father murdered, Bevis is exiled to the lands of the Saracens, where he is raised in a Saracen court, makes a name for himself, and falls in love with a Saracen princess, who converts for him. In a series of adventures, he reclaims his lands from his step-father, rescues his bride from repeated attempts at forced marriage, prevents the English king from seizing his ancestral land, and ultimately retires to rule the lands belonging to his father-in-law. In both cases, England is an important term in both the geography and the politics of the story.

While I have suggested in previous chapters that romances often offer up deliberately, provocatively destabilizing geographies, the *England* of these two romances seems to put us on reassuring, familiar ground. I have suggested before that the term, so familiar from centuries of political discourse, appears seductively solid and definite. When we read about England, we know where we're meant to be: a spatial and political realm that appears to bridge the past and present (just as it did for Nicholas Trevet), connecting the world we know with the world of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries.

And *England* brings with it a comfortingly recognizable set of political questions. Is Havelok a national hero, or does he assert the strength of the region against the centralizing nation? Is Bevis a crusader for Christendom, or is he an English imperialist, exporting an overpowering Englishness into the east?

So familiar and logical is the category of England that the question of how it is constructed is seldom raised. But *Havelok* and *Bevis*, in dwelling insistently on English space, express an interest in how England is constructed as a category. Both romances blur the borders, showcasing England's political affiliations with spaces beyond the island in ways that flirt with stretching England itself across the sea (as, indeed, the holdings of the English crown *were* extended), all while considering England in terms of the problems of insular governance. This chapter focuses on England as an object. How do these romances instance England? What are its contours? In focusing not just on England's political implications but on how the text generates it, I show that different textual strategies for generating a place produce very different results, even at a narrative level.

Havelok produces a space that can fairly be called national: the romance unites multiple regions and communities in a common realm, defined geographically, under a single emblematic

ruler. To explain how *Havelok* generates this singular England, I focus on a particular moment in the story, one that expressly sets out to render geographies of power concrete and tangible: the dream that reveals to Havelok his royal destiny. This dream reimagines the romance's geography, reducing its spaces into tangible objects that Havelok can render meaningful through his royal embodiment.

Bevis eschews such visionary pyrotechnics. Episodic and dotted by improbabilities and wonders, the poem does not have a particularly good critical reputation, despite its enduring popularity. *Bevis* himself operates within an apparently straightforward narrative world of a kind that seems reasonably typical; in his adventures, he travels among specific places, most of which have recognizable, familiar names. An exile-and-return story with a more sprawling scope than the compact *King Horn* and *Havelok*, *Bevis* sees its hero travel widely, gaining authority over some Saracen lands, with intermittent returns to England in order to secure his ancestral claims.

These spaces, too, are governed by narrative rules—rules that are closely intertwined with the resolution of the story. While *Havelok* uses the dream to shape its spaces into thinkable conceptual objects, *Bevis* makes no effort to produce a singular England. The geography of the romance, which unites a wide array of global spaces with a dense concentration of English sites, highlights the internal subdivisions and dangers of England: *Bevis* is in some ways more securely at home in the Saracen world than in his own country. The nation is not a key category for *Bevis*; the romance's geography is more concerned with the global distribution of power. Placing *Havelok* next to *Bevis* shows that the national is not an essential category in romance, always available and ready to be instanced through a country name: instead, it is something that must be cultivated and constructed by the text. The world of romance narrative is not fundamentally a world of nations; where it exists, the nation is but one available category, in

competition with other ways of imagining the relationships between places. The spatiality of the narrative conditions what possibilities the romance makes available.

Flat Space and Nested Space

The analysis of the romance spaces that follows depends on a distinction between two kinds of geographic space, which I term “flat” and “nested.” Both *Bevis* and *Havelok*, I argue, reveal their ideas about what spaces are subject to control and how characters gain mastery over them by representing different places within the textual geography in a nested or flat manner. These two varieties of space interact in a kind of spatial grammar that governs their relationships to each other and conditions what kinds of action can take place within them.

By “flat” spaces, I mean named sites in geographic space that neither contain nor are contained by any other named space present in the text. In the textual geography, flat spaces are not part of a nested hierarchy of places; they stand alone. I write these words in Charlottesville, in the commonwealth of Virginia, in the United States. My city, as I have just described it, is nested within my state and my country. But let’s imagine that, in telling the story of my dissertation, I named only my state—I write these words in Virginia—without ever naming any place within it (no city or county in the state) or larger (the country, continent, etc. where it is found). I might name other locations as well in telling my story—England, Kalamazoo—just not places in Virginia or that Virginia is itself within. Then, I would be giving an account of my writing in flat space: Virginia is a singular place, the place in which I write, without any sub- or super-sets, as are Kalamazoo and England. The spaces are “flat” because they are not part of any structure of depth, in contrast to nested spaces that are constituted in part in relation to each other. It makes no difference that the places I have named belong to different geographic categories: a city, a state, and a country. Because they are not nested but exist discretely, they are

flat. Flatness gives a place a singular identity, so that a place is comprehensible not as a collection of internal parts or sites but as a thing in itself.

Spatial flatness is not a perfectly absolute property; flat space can display properties that begin to approach nestedness. In my account, we can judge flatness based on naming: one *named* place must contain or be contained by another for them to be nested. In practice, of course, most named places in narrative contain more specific, smaller-scale unnamed places. A country visited by a romance hero is likely to contain towns, castles, or forests. A city might have churches, palaces, or streets. These need not be specified; we are as likely to read simply that characters “com to a chepeing [market] toun,” as in *Amis and Amiloun* (Foster 1-88, l. 1700). Unnamed, unspecified places do not disrupt spatial flatness because, in their lack of specificity, they tend to act as something more like scene-space than geographic space. An unnamed town or street is generic, a container for a certain kind of action lacking the sense of georeferential specificity that a name imparts. But in practice, flat spaces can be articulated differently: we will see that in *Bevis* the country of Ermonie sometimes acts as a self-contained place that characters can enter directly, while at other points the action is dispersed into castles and towns. In these latter cases, Ermonie is acting in a less perfectly flat manner, and indeed one city disrupts Ermonie’s flatness in most manuscripts.

Havelok and *Bevis* share a common spatial dynamic. In both, England is a nested space, while foreign spaces are flat. The difference between flatness and nesting, then, might simply seem a matter of spatial detail. It is a critical commonplace that places familiar to the author and audience are depicted in greater detail, while unfamiliar places are treated with less precision.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, the nested space of England in both romances might occur simply because places in

England are familiar to English audiences, while the names of cities in Denmark or Armenia would mean little to these audiences.

But to accept this explanation would be to miss how these very spatial assumptions support the ideological work of the texts. English space *is* particularly important in both texts; their stress upon England serves political goals, and the apparent familiarity of their English spaces masks the technical work that their nesting performs. Both texts, it is now recognized, engage the relationship between nationalism and regionalism, and their dual focus on these frameworks requires them to dramatize both England and areas within it. But they use this technical framework for markedly different purposes. *Havelok* offers a nested, detailed view of England, against the simple flatness of Denmark. But Havelok's dream of his kingship, a key moment in the poem, works to undo this complexity and make England a comprehensible object, to virtualize England's nested space as flat.

Bevis uses the dynamic of flat and nested space differently. Like *Havelok*, *Bevis* begins in England. But where *Havelok* ultimately tells only the story of the relationship between two countries separated by a sea, *Bevis* opens onto a global geography of adventure. This global space is predominantly flat space, and *Bevis* lacks anything like Havelok's dream to attempt to reconcile these spaces. Instead, the romance's flat global space highlights the problem with conceiving of England as a singular, stable entity, a problem the text ultimately fails to resolve. The difference between these kinds of spaces is not just a question of detail or accuracy; it is an important element of spatial structure that supports and shapes the notions of place and governance that the romances produce.

Grasping Place in Havelok

Havelok, critics have argued, consolidates England into a nation spatially and politically, by uniting the whole of England under the rule of a common king: Goldeborw's father Apelwold rules "Engelond"—a toponym used so frequently it occurs in more than one out of every ten lines (Speed, "Construction," 149-50). As Diane Speed remarks, "This whole, single kingdom is in marked contrast to the petty kingdoms featured in earlier versions of the Havelok story" (150): Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (c. 1135-40) and the *Lai d'Haveloc* (c.1200), derived from Gaimar, both in Anglo-Norman. The relationship among these versions remains a subject of debate,⁴⁵¹ but the geographic contrast between *Havelok* and the earlier Anglo-Norman accounts is revealing: the Middle English version gives us not one among several minor kingdoms (as the *Man of Law's Tale* was careful to do) but a powerfully realized England, encoded in its name. As Thorlac Turville-Petre shows, this version of England is built up geographically: after initially establishing Apelwold's kingship over "Engelond," the poem gradually defines the boundaries and contents of this kingdom, including nobles from far-flung places like Cornwall and Chester to give a sense of national scope ("*Havelok*," 126-28; *England* 148-49).⁴⁵²

Yet *Havelok* also exhibits a marked regionalism, giving strong prominence to Lincolnshire and especially the town of Grimsby, whose foundational legend the romance relates. Indeed, the work of the poem, Turville-Petre suggests, is to situate this region within the nation ("*Havelok*," 125-26; *England* 146-47). One of its functions is to integrate people of Danish descent—who were common in the Lincolnshire population—into the community of the English nation ("*Havelok*," 132-34; *England* 152-55). Denmark, Havelok's native land, helps to produce this community: "Denmark functions as a kind of *Doppelgänger* to England, its nationness an echo and occasional amplification of England's nationness" (Speed,

“Construction,” 151).⁴⁵³ However, although Denmark is mentioned by name as often as England is, Speed argues that the romance clearly makes England, not Denmark, its nation of central concern by delineating and naming a number of the places that make up England’s geography, while Denmark remains internally undifferentiated, defined only by its people (“Construction,” 150-51). Thus, for Turville-Petre and Speed, nationhood in *Havelok* is spatial, and Havelok himself—the dispossessed Danish prince who marries the English princess, recovers both their kingdoms, and goes on to rule England—produces England as a nation by uniting its parts under his rule.

My primary interest in *Havelok* is not in the geography of the narrative as a whole, but in a specific spatial technology the poem uses to render the spaces of England and Denmark thinkable in the form of a dream. The romance puts together two bodies of space—flat Denmark and nested England—as it imagines a past in which a Danish ruler protects English right rule.⁴⁵⁴ But in order to conceive of these spaces, the romance turns to the dream in order to produce them as legible objects of control.⁴⁵⁵

Many characters in *Havelok* perceive Havelok’s royal destiny as a sign inscribed on his body, both as a cruciform king-mark (“kynemark,” *Havelok* 605) on his shoulder and as a light shining from his mouth. By contrast, Havelok himself has a prophetic dream that renders the scope of his future authority rather literally, represented in terms of space rather than his body. This remarkable dream, which Havelok shares with Goldeborw upon awakening, is worth quoting in full:

Me þouthe Y was in Denemark set,
 But on on þe moste hil
 þat evere yete kam I til.
 It was so hey þat Y wel mouthe
 Al þe werd se, als me þouthe.
 Als I sat up-on þat lowe

J bigan Denemark for to awe,
 þe borwes and þe castles stronge;
 And mine armes weren so longe
 þat I fadmede al at ones
 Denemark with mine longe bones.
 And þanne Y wolde mine armes drawe
 Til me and hom for to haue,
 Al þat euere in Denemark liueden
 On mine armes faste clyueden,
 And þe stronge castles alle
 On knes bigunnen for to falle—
 þe keyes fellen at mine fet.
 Another drem dremede me ek
 þat ich fley ouer þe salte se
 Til Engeland, and al with me
 þat euere was in Denemark lyues
 But bondemen and here wiues,
 And þat Ich kom til Engeland—
 And closede it intil min hond,
 And, Goldeborw, Y gaf it þee.
 Deus, lemman! hwat may þis be? (*Havelok* 1287-1313)

Havelok's king-mark is a straightforward sign of authority: he will rule Denmark. But in his dream, which Michael Faletra has called "the central hermeneutic episode in the narrative" (378), Havelok experiences the process of future rule dynamically. This process of mastery begins with the visual.⁴⁵⁶ Havelok believes himself to be in Denmark, but not just anywhere; he is on an exceptionally high hill. (That Denmark is a remarkably flat country whose highest elevation is around 500 feet seems not to matter for the purposes of the vision.) The initial parameter of Havelok's vision is irresistibly cartographic in character. Havelok can see the whole world from his vantage point, a perspective that can only be achieved through the technology of the map; while maps are sometimes said to lay out the world from a "god's-eye view," an elevated vantage point was the closest any human could come to a cartographic view before the age of flight.⁴⁵⁷ The elements of the landscape that Havelok sees as comprising Denmark are also cartographic: "the borwes and the castles" are precisely the elements depicted iconographically on medieval mappae mundi as keeps or buildings ringed with walls.⁴⁵⁸ *Havelok* as a whole leaves

Danish space relatively unspecified; while the characters obviously encounter towns and castles, and travel among them, none are named; Denmark is a flat space in the romance. Havelok's cartographic vision fills out the flatness, imagining Denmark in a way that looks nested.

Havelok's command of this newly elaborated Danish space does not remain visual; it becomes bodily. Havelok begins "to awe" Denmark—to possess it—a rather abstract term to indicate his controls over its castles and cities. But that possession quickly turns bodily: Havelok's "longe bones" enfold the whole country in an embrace. From that point bodies proliferate. The whole of Denmark's populace, past and present, clings to Havelok's arms, drawing themselves to the king's body. Next, the castles make a gesture of bodily submission, falling to their knees in an echo of the young Havelok's submission to his usurper. Further signaling his control over these structures—geographic as much as architectural—the castles' keys fall at his feet. Havelok's visual command of the country yields to reach and touch, expressing his control over Denmark not merely as bare political fact but as a sensory and bodily process.

Havelok's visionary control of England is encapsulated in images at once strikingly similar and noticeably distinct from those depicting Denmark. Havelok relates this to Goldeborw as a second, separate dream, though it is more accurately understood as a new episode in the same dream, for Havelok's Danish hangers-on accompany him. Once again, he finds himself elevated, and once again, he attains control of a land through his bodily action. He dreams that he "fley over þe salte se / Til Engeland"; the verb *fley* could indicate that he fled, but given his elevation in the previous episode and the fact that the previous installment of the vision has foretold his martial success in Denmark, it is more likely that we are to envision him flying.⁴⁵⁹ While his command of Denmark begins with stasis—Havelok surveys the land, maplike, from

above—he approaches England dynamically, in motion. His perspective on England is at once less stable and more active.

He assumes visionary control of England in a gesture that underscores the vision's bodily significance. As Faletra describes, Havelok's grasping England "serves to reduce England almost algebraically into a single object" (378). Havelok establishes his control by interacting physically with this concrete, reduced, objectified England. England is nested space in the romance, its cities and regions densely detailed as we have seen, but the vision reduces it into something singular and manipulable. Havelok's flight extends until he "com til" the country, the preposition preserving the ambiguity of his journey as straightforward overseas travel and a special visionary posture, as it could signify that he enters England but, in this visionary mode, could also simply denote his approach to it. The subsequent line, in which he assumes control, preserves a similar ambiguity: Havelok "closede it [England] intil min hond." To close or hold a country in one's hand is a common expression denoting possession or control,⁴⁶⁰ and is used in that sense elsewhere in the poem. But the rich physical imagery of the dream of Denmark brings attention to the body beneath the metaphor and invites us here to imagine a (flying?) Havelok as enclosing England, like an object, in his hand, just as he stretched out his arms around Denmark. Both countries are objectified in this vision, rendered visually comprehensible in their entirety as well as tangible and manipulable. Denmark and England are in reality significant areas of land with boundaries that are not always visible and that shift with history: areas, too, that are internally subdivided, as the regional impulses of *Havelok* seem to register. But the dream employs a spatial technology that reduces all these complications in order to make them subject to control.⁴⁶¹

Havelok's different postures toward these two lands—stable stasis in the case of Denmark, dynamic reaching for England—reflect a political and temporal difference not registered in the simple prophecies made elsewhere in the text that Havelok will rule the two lands.⁴⁶² Most straightforwardly, the sequence of the two dreams registers the chronology of the remainder of the text: in Denmark Havelok and Goldeborw are sheltered by an earl, who reveals Havelok's identity to the Danes to general acclaim; they then try and execute the usurper Godard. Havelok leads his new followers to England, where they help him defeat the usurper Godrich's force so that Goldeborw's identity can be made public. The dream figuratively represents this sequence of events when the Danes grab onto Havelok's arms and their castles bow to him, and then they accompany him to England, which he seizes.

But this visionary representation of the rest of the story is also a reduction. The secretly royal couple is not in Denmark (on the highest hill or otherwise) when Havelok dreams his dreams; they are at Grim's house in Grimsby, Lincolnshire. They begin the process of reclaiming their lands by sailing to Denmark, along with Grim's sons, at Goldeborw's suggestion. So, while the dream appears to contrast Havelok's relatively static control of Denmark with his dynamic journey to England, in narrative terms the two episodes are close parallels: Havelok and Goldeborw recruit followers and cross the North Sea to Denmark/England; they fight a battle, but eventually the rightful ruler is recognized, which puts a stop to hostilities and results in a trial in which the usurper is convicted and executed. The dream ignores this structural parallelism, contrasting Danish stillness with English movement: Havelok's control of Denmark takes the form of mutual submission while England is brought under control by Havelok's unilateral movement—movement both across the sea and in seizing the land.

The dream's approach differs from the account of the episodic parallels that I gave because it approaches the issue of the disposition of land in the text as entirely focused on Havelok. Havelok's static, elevated location and commanding view of Denmark register his status as rightful ruler of the country. This rightful status is registered by the way the Danes hang onto Havelok and by the submission of the castles to him. While Havelok does have to fight off a large group of attackers in Denmark, his command over Denmark is realized by his status as trueborn heir. On the other hand, Havelok himself has no claim to England: that authority belongs to Goldeborw, who was appointed by her father as his heir, and she, like Havelok, is ultimately recognized as such by the people. But Havelok's vision, focused on Havelok himself, ignores this recognition. England is represented as something Havelok gains himself, and the image of seizing England in his hand imparts a forceful impression very different from Havelok's embrace-like stretching out of his arms around Denmark. The final line of Havelok's account of his dream, in which he addresses his wife directly, confirms this interpretation of the events to come: "And, Goldeborw, Y gaf it pee." England is represented by the dream not as Goldeborw's rightful kingdom recognizing her innate authority, but rather as a gift to the queen achieved through Havelok's force. And even Goldeborw herself is half a place; her name, "Golden city," aligns her with the geography Havelok controls.⁴⁶³

Thus, while the romance is built on a two-episode structure paralleling and intertwining the stories of Havelok and Goldeborw in ways previous Havelok narratives in French did not, the form of spatial representation employed by the dream tells a different story, one in which the male warrior-hero is the central point on which landed authority turns.

Havelok's dream is a simplification and reemphasis of the heroic narrative that results in his possessions, but most significantly it marks a concretization that attempts to render visible

and easily legible the models of possession and control that animate the poem. Both England and Denmark have proven susceptible to internal threats as usurpers have seized control, denying the heirs to both kingdoms of their rightful inheritance. These heirs find themselves now in the local, politically trivial space of Grimsby, outside their centers of power and in an area whose significance in other versions of the Havelok story is chiefly local. But the spatial technology of the dream reframes these realms and refocuses the efforts of the heirs by objectifying the two kingdoms, rendering them as discrete, intelligible spaces that can be seen and touched. Such a spatial model returns the body of the king to the realm of control over space.

Havelok's dream, with its objectifying spatial technology, accomplishes the romance's goal of integrating the region and producing a unitary kingdom by reducing England to a single word that can be passed from Havelok to Goldeborw. As Faletra explains, this visionary moment *produces* England and Denmark: "Despite the audience's excursions through England and Denmark, the two countries do not exist as unified entities until their instantiation within Havelok's dream" (379). But the differing character of English and Danish space means that, in order to mediate these spaces, the technology of the dream must envision them differently. The nested spaces of the romance's geography of England recede in the vision into a single, flat object. The image offered by the dream, meanwhile, endeavors virtually to reverse the flatness of Denmark. By visualizing Denmark's *borwes* and castles under Havelok's quasi-cartographic gaze, the dream produces the impression of a more fully articulated Denmark lacking in the romance's plot. The objectifying impulse of the dream pulls the two countries toward each other, makes them more alike.

Bevis's Flat World

Nothing as sophisticated as Havelok's dream marks the textual space of the Middle English *Bevis of Hampton*. *Bevis* is perhaps *the* Middle English romance, with all that that entails, good and bad. Its presentation of its spaces is straightforward and typical of romance, lacking both the kinds of play on place-names that characterize *King Horn* and the Man of Law's Tale and the careful display of space as specific object found in Havelok. The final set of spaces I examine in this dissertation is in many ways the simplest and most straightforward of all.

But even the relative simplicity of *Bevis's* textual space is ultimately meaningful. The romance envisions a world: Bevis moves, acts, and ultimately rules on a global stage, and he visits a number of lands in the course of his travels, western and eastern, Christian and pagan, European and Middle Eastern. Despite the sheer array of places named in the romance (he claims to have visited even more than he actually has), the world as presented by the poem is structurally simple, composed essentially of flat space. While Bevis visits places of different kinds, both cities and countries, these places stand alone, independent, only themselves. The spaces through which he travels exhibit a clear center of gravity, making Jerusalem a focal point of his actions, but, within the geographic system of the romance, each space stands alone.

Not so with its English spaces. The Middle English *Bevis* depicts a famously dense insular geography, naming numerous regions and towns and even depicting a battle in London down to the level of the street. The difference in character between insular space and the space of the rest of the world, I argue, registers underlying political elements; England is in many ways a more difficult space for this English hero to master than the foreign spaces over which he extends an arguably English control. *Bevis* thus shows the potential narrative power of what we

might term a kind of spatial grammar: the naming of places alone can encode geographical structure into a poem, the space taking on meaningful character through simple reference alone.

The romance opens with a local crisis that quickly thrusts Bevis into a global world. Bevis is emplaced in the opening stanza (“Beues a hiȝte of Hamtoun,” 5), and the location of Southampton is ratified several times in subsequent stanzas as we learn that Bevis’s father, Sir Guy, is the Earl of Southampton and has married the daughter of the King of Scotland and conceived Bevis.⁴⁶⁴ Guy’s wife is the lover of the emperor of Almaine, and together they arrange Guy’s death; after Bevis accuses them (branding his mother a whore), she has him sold to Saracens bound for Armenia, where he is raised. Thus begins a career that sees Bevis travel widely across Europe and the Middle East. Many of these spaces, including Armenia, are under the control of Saracens, but Bevis himself is an aggressively Christian hero, even as a teenager picking a fight with his Saracen peers simply for impugning his knowledge of the Christmas holiday. Ultimately, he extends his own native culture over these lands, including that where he was raised, in what Kofi Campbell has labeled colonialist nation-building.

Like the *Awntyrs*, *Bevis* features multiple groups of place-names that serve markedly different functions in relation to the narrative. Bevis’s travels in the course of the romance are extensive, but the places he claims to have traveled are more extensive still, and do not correspond neatly with the places that actually feature in the romance. Both groups list similar kinds of places, but the contrast between them shows important facets of how textual space functions; they exhibit different centers of gravity, which reveal textual preoccupations of the romance tradition.

World Spaces

In the *Bevis*, the flatness of the world at large encodes an ease of control: these places are closely identified with their rulers, are won and lost easily, without the pressures of broader political systems, and are on the whole available for Bevis's mastery. In his travels beyond England, Bevis visits a number of different places. His early adventures unfold chiefly within Saracen lands. He is raised in the country of Ermonie, ruled over by King Ermin. His travels take him to Damascus, where he is imprisoned for seven years; to Jerusalem; and to Mombraunt, greatest of Saracen cities, where he rescues his lover Josiane from forced marriage to Mombraunt's king, Yvor. They flee to Cologne, where Bevis fights his famous dragon-battle, before he returns to England to reclaim his heritage in Hampton. When an unfortunate accident leads to his exile from England, he and Josiane set off for Armenia (traveling through France and Normandy, the Auchinleck version informs us, l. 3618), but Josiane is kidnapped. Bevis, meanwhile, arrives at a city known as Civile (Seville) in *Boeve de Haumtone* (the poem's Anglo-Norman source) and Aumbeforce in the Auchinleck version, where Bevis wins a tournament and marries the lady of the city. They live in chaste marriage for seven years until Bevis and Josiane are reunited (the lady marries Bevis's cousin Terry), and go to the aid of Josiane's father Ermin, besieged by Yvor within the town of Ambeford (most MSS, with substantial variation). Bevis defeats Yvor twice, slaying him the second time and becoming king of Mombraunt; he also Christianizes Ermonie, and his son Guy becomes Ermin's heir. All return to England once more to fend off the English King Edgar's attempt to seize Hampton from its current holder, and then Bevis, Guy, and Terry depart to rule in their respective kingdoms.

This summary does not do full justice to the poem's geography. It omits the places named as origins for specific characters and sets aside the travels of a messenger at the very beginning

of the romance. And it focuses only on Bevis—but, with the exception of the messenger scene at the opening, almost all the named places of the romance involve Bevis; only Saber’s crossing of the “grikische se” (3859; that is, the Mediterranean), exclusive to the Auchinleck version, adds a place-name not associated with Bevis. And this world of Bevis’s is remarkably flat. He visits several prominent cities (Jerusalem, Damascus, Cologne) as well as several that are unknown to us, in addition to the kingdom of Ermonie. The only one of these places that appears to be nested inside another is Ambeford, which is presumably inside Ermonie (Ermin is besieged there), although the text never specifies. And even Ambeford vanishes in at least two versions, flattening the world geography completely. (I will discuss this city in detail below.)

Nor does the situation change much if we take into account the extensive catalogue found in several manuscripts of places Bevis claims to have traveled.⁴⁶⁵ Bevis’s account of his own travels comes in an audience with King Yvor, who holds Bevis’s betrothed, Josiane, captive in the city of Mombraunt. Bevis needs to lure Yvor from the city so he can rescue Josiane. Boniface offers Bevis a solution for doing so: “Sai, þat þow hauest wide i-went, / And þow come be Dabilent” (2225-26)—the home of King Yvor’s brother, four days’ journey distant. Bevis should tell the king that his brother is in danger of being slain, so that Yvor will rush with all his host to his brother’s aid. Bevis comes to the king, disguised as a palmer, and delivers this story with gusto:

Sire, ich come fro Iurisalem
 Fro Nazareþ and fro Bedlem,
 Emavns castle and Synaie;
 Ynde, Erop and Asie,
 Egippte, Grese and Babiloine,
 Tars, Sesile and Sesaoine,
 In Fris, in Sodeine & in Tire,
 In Aufrik and in mani empire,
 Ac al is pes þar ichaue went,
 Saue in þe lond of Dabilent. (2261-70)⁴⁶⁶

This bravura display of geographic prowess is plainly meant to express that Bevis has traveled throughout the world. It names the three continents of the medieval world—Europe, Africa, and Asia—along with cities and countries in each. This list, too, conforms to the rule of spatial flatness I have described for the romance as a whole: excepting the fact that every place Bevis names is found on one of the continents, none of these places is contained inside any other, even though this list introduces a number of country names.⁴⁶⁷ Nor, with scant exception, are they containers for or contained by places that occur in the plot. Bevis's claims trace a large array of flat, simple, immediately recognizable places.

Dorothee Metzlitzki, in her monumental work *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, devotes some amount of space to untangling the geography of *Bevis*. Carefully excavating spatial details, Metzlitzki brings these places into relationship with each other, situating Mombraunt and even proposing identities for a river Bevis follows and a sea he swims. She argues that, once we discard the places included merely to create geographic scope, the itinerary Bevis offers to Yvor corresponds rather closely with what we can infer about his actual travels (131-32). But, valuable as Metzlitzki's work is, it requires an active effort of decoding, and I find it unlikely that most medieval audiences of this popular poem would have recognized the topography she sees in the narrative.

Certainly, many of the names in the list would have been familiar, invoking a variety of cultural knowledge and associations, particularly with pilgrimage and crusade—appropriate associations given that Bevis is disguised as a palmer.⁴⁶⁸ But these toponyms are ordered by loose associations, and sometimes seemingly at random; they do not occur in a sequence that would permit a reader to contemplate them as a virtual pilgrimage, as when reading a text like *Mandeville's Travels*. Instead of an itinerary, visited in sequence, they act as raw, undifferentiated

geographic space: more a *mappamundi* than an itinerary map. (This formal difference is one reason it is difficult to map the space envisioned here onto Bevis's wanderings, despite Metlitzki's careful work.) While this list incorporates major Christian sites, it does not offer a narrativized, meaningful journey so much as an array of flat sites—sites that are, the context of Bevis's conversation with Yvor reminds us, potentially subject to conflict and rule. This catalogue invokes the idea of travel, crusade, and pilgrimage while encapsulating the kind of flat, global space that characterizes his activities in the romance as a whole.

Ermonie and Control

The location that best exemplifies the singularity of *Bevis's* representation of foreign space is the kingdom of Ermonie, where Bevis is brought up and falls in love with the king's daughter Josiane. Ermonie is a very slightly ambivalent referent. It most transparently signifies Armenia, and is nearly always read as such. However, this is a change in setting from *Boeve* (which otherwise tends to correspond closely in geography to *Bevis*): the Anglo-Norman poem makes the land Egypt ("Egipte," Stimming 362).⁴⁶⁹ (And only spatial cues like the kingdom's Saracen inhabitants and its proximity to places like Damascus and Jerusalem solidify it as Armenia; elsewhere in Middle English literature, the same place-name signifies Brittany, also called Armorica.⁴⁷⁰) The change in the land of Bevis's *enfance* serves in part to heighten the identification between the land and its ruler: the king is named Ermin (*Boeve's* Hermine), and the sonic connection between king and kingdom emphasizes his person as ruler, an association that paves the way for the conversion of the kingdom late in the romance based on the personal relationship between Bevis and Ermin.⁴⁷¹

Ermonie is for the most part a flat space in *Bevis*, with the brief exception of the city of Ambeford, to which I will return shortly. The kingdom contains a typical collection of scene-

spaces: a forest, a beach, at least one castle with private chambers where Bevis recovers from his wounds and he and Josiane woo. But, Ambeford aside, we find in Ermonie no named cities or castles. These spaces are characterized by their indefiniteness: Bevis rides “to water” (587; what body of water is unspecified) and encounters a boar at “þe forest” (818; as though there is only one); Josiane lies in “a castle” where Bevis goes (889; so undefined are these spaces that it’s impossible to say whether the Ermonie episodes involve one castle or several). When places do gain specificity, it is in relation to their occupants: Bevis returns to “his chaumber” (648) and we hear about “þe castel þar þat lai Ermin” (819).

Moreover, Ermonie tends toward extreme flatness, at times losing even the appearance of these indefinite scene-spaces. The land is a space that can be occupied by individuals, even though, logically, it is topographically large. When King Brademond arrives to sue for Josian’s hand, the poem reports, “A king þer com in to Ermonie” (911). This does not simply mean that Brademond has penetrated the borders of the kingdom en route to the seat of power. Having entered Ermonie, Brademond has immediate access to King Ermin: “Brademond cride, ase he wer wod, / To King Ermin, þar a stod” (915-16). A few lines later, Ermin descends from his tower in order to speak with his knights (929-30), but no movement in geographic space or scene-space beyond simply entering Ermonie is necessary to bring Brademond to Ermin. A similar facility of movement brings Bevis himself into Ermonie in the first place. As the merchants who have bought him depart from England, the romance pauses to tell us about the royal family of Ermonie: “Whan hii riuede out of þat strond, / Þe king hiȝte Ermin of þat londe” (515-16), the romance announces, before going on to tell of the king’s late wife Morage and to describe the beauty of their daughter Josiane. Then, it continues, “Þe marchauns wente an hizing / & presente Beues to Ermyn King” (527-28).

Indeed, variation in two manuscripts calls attention to the directness of access on the others. SN extend the tail-rhyme scheme past the point where all other manuscripts change to couplets, in part by introducing a scene describing the merchants' efforts to sell Bevis in Ermonie.⁴⁷² While other texts focus on Bevis's emotional reactions to his plight and on the family of King Ermin, devoting a single couplet to the sea journey and bringing the merchants directly to the king, the Sutherland text gives attention to their preparation of Bevis in part by introducing movement within Ermonie:

They solde him for suche auȝt:
 To þe Saryzyne þey him betauȝt,⁴⁷³
 Ryȝt hastely.
 Þe childe was foundaunt ouer þe floode;
 Wynde and weder þey had good
 To Ermonye.

With her ship þere gon þey londe;
 Þre marchautes gan þen founde
 To þat citee.
 With hem þey toke childe Beuon,
 Ffor to selle him in þe toun
 Ffor gold plente.

With seluer cheynes þey him gyrt;
 To lede him þey were aferde;
 Eche helde on him honde.
 Ffor him to haue grete byȝete,
 Þey lad him þrouȝ-out euery strete,
 On his hed a roos-garlonde;

And þey ne myȝt no man fynde
 To bye þe child of Cristen kynde—
 So dere þay gan him holde—
 Tyl þer com a kinges stewarde,
 Þat was hende and no negarde;
 An tyl him þey him solde. (Fellows II 548-89 S)⁴⁷⁴

After this interpolation, the text joins other versions in couplets; the addition of Bevis's sale is the last gasp of a redactor's effort to continue using tail-rhyme. In searching for material to add, the redactor notices a lacuna both practical and geographic: Bevis is sold quickly, directly to the

king, a process that warrants further exploration, and that exploration is achieved by a fuller consideration of Ermonie's geography. These stanzas introduce a *citee* or *toun*, not named but a fuller realization of Ermonie as actual space than we otherwise see in the romance. Moreover, they actually move within the space of this city, navigating its streets in a manner that perhaps anticipates the famous London street battle of the end of the romance—again, without toponymic specificity, but nevertheless with a spatial density not found in other versions of Bevis's arrival.

The spatial embellishments of SN make clear the simplicity of space in the majority of texts. While Ermonie is not reduced to a tangible object in the manner of England and Denmark in *Havelok*, it possesses something of the same simplicity: the romance envisions it not as a large topography with important internal subdivisions and courses to navigate but rather as a realm, a space of government, immediately providing access to the king and capable of holding romance scene-spaces for the unfolding of specific episodes.

It is important to emphasize that *Bevis's* model of undifferentiated, flat space, even on a large scale, is not unusual for romance. Indeed, we have already seen a version of the same spatial strategy in *King Horn*, with its named kingdoms full of scene-space but showing little internal subdivision in its geographic space. In *Bevis*, as in *Horn*, part of the reason for the simplicity of the spatial system is that these named kingdoms exist primarily as objects of control. But in contrast to *Horn's* schematic simplicity, *Bevis* unfolds across a broad, dense world.

Ermonie's simplicity, and its close identification with its ruler, correspond with a facility of control. Bevis's mere arrival in Ermonie while Ermin is under attack from Yvor brings about an accord with the king, who had earlier sent him from the land and into imprisonment in Damascus. Their new friendship produces a religious conversion: "Thy wrath for-geue me, /

And, for þy loue, y wyll crystenyd bee” (Fellows II 5087 C).⁴⁷⁵ This apparently settles not only the state of Ermin’s soul but the religion of the kingdom; most manuscripts never address the issue of Ermonie’s religious status again, but the Auchinleck text, which omits Ermin’s conversion, feels compelled instead to supply a military conversion after the king’s death:

Panne sire Beues and sire Gii,
 Al þe lond of Ermony
 Hii made cristen wiþ dent of swerd,
 3ong and elde, lewed and lered. (4017-20)

Even when Bevis must take the conversion into his own hands, two (chillingly understated) couplets, of which one line is formulaic filler, suffice to change the land’s religious identity.

Bevis’s defense of Ermonie against Yvor quickly enfolds the land into his familial authority. Once he has made peace with Ermin, he quickly defeats Yvor and sends him as a prisoner to the king, who ransoms him. Almost immediately thereafter, Ermin “clepede to him sire Gii / And wiþ is croune gan him crouny / And 3af him alle is kenedom” (4011-13). While the naming of Guy as Ermin’s heir is appropriate, given that the boy is his grandson, the poem does not stress this relationship, and Guy’s accession seems more naturally to follow from Bevis’s defense of the land.⁴⁷⁶ Ermonie, a land defined with its near-identity to the king, passes easily and securely to Bevis’s family.

The other lands that Bevis’s family accrues are acquired in a similarly direct and secure manner. The final confrontation between Bevis and Yvor stages the ease of attaining absolute control over these spaces. Yvor assembles a great army and marches on Bevis. Once he has arrived with his host, he hails Bevis and proposes a single combat in lieu of the slaughter that would follow if their armies met. These are his terms:

3if þow slest me in bataile,
 Al min onour, wiþ outen faile,
 Ich þe graunte þour3 and þour3,
 Boþe in cite and in bour3! (4133-36)

“Onour” might carry an implication of reputation here, but its primary meaning is Yvor’s feudal holdings, which, as far as we know, consist exactly of the city of Mombraunt; his references to *cite* and *bourz* confirm this spatial understanding.⁴⁷⁷ Once Bevis has slain Yvor and (together with his family) massacred Yvor’s followers, his new authority is accomplished easily: “Po crowned þai Beues king in þat lond, / Þat king Yuore held in hond” (4253-54).⁴⁷⁸ And the easy control that Bevis can exercise over the spaces of the world through his valor in combat is equally apparent in the city that is *Boeve*’s Civile and Auchinleck’s Aumbeforce. Bevis and Terry arrive to find a tournament about to commence for a lady of the city, daughter either of a king (AT) or a duke (SNECM), with all that entails summarized by the Auchinleck version: “He schel haue þat maide fre / And Aumbeforce, þe faire contre” (3771-72). Bevis, of course, wins the tournament, and despite maintaining a chaste marriage with the lady is “a king” (SM) or “lord & master” (T). All the lands that Bevis accrues are easily and securely attained by a single victory.

The tournament or single combat to decide who will rule a land or wed a lady is a romance motif, and I do not mean to suggest that the process depends upon flat space. But the technical simplicity of these spaces and the confident facility with which Bevis exercises control over them reflect each other; flat space is a mode particularly suited for lands that the hero can unilaterally and in an instant gain without consideration of their internal composition or broader political existence.

The Puzzle of Aumbeforce

The redactor who produced the Auchinleck version of *Bevis* appears more than any other scribe to have recognized the underlying flat-spatial logic of the romance.⁴⁷⁹ The Auchinleck version shows throughout a particular interest in geography, uniquely naming Normandy and France as elements of Bevis and Josiane’s travel to Ermonie and providing spatial details in its

unique passages. But the Auchinleck redactor also edits the romance's geography, removing a place-name that disrupts Ermonie's existence as flat space and supplying a name for another space that functions as an object of control.

The city that Bevis wins in a tournament will be familiar as Aumbeforce to most readers, encountering the Middle English romance in editions that take Auchinleck as their base texts. But this name for the city is unique to Auchinleck. In the Anglo-Norman version, it is Civile (Seville). Most Middle English versions do not name the city. However, the Auchinleck text names this land *Aumbeforce* or *Aumberpe*. The central role the Auchinleck manuscript has played in studies of *Bevis*, and its presentation in Kölbing's edition, have resulted in confusion regarding the significance of Aumbeforce. Almost universally, summaries of *Bevis* give the city's name as Aumbeforce. Even A. C. Baugh and Laura Hibbard Loomis, both considering the textual tradition of the romance, misleadingly universalize Auchinleck's Aumbeforce to be the name of the city across the tradition,⁴⁸⁰ and the editors of *Bevis* for the TEAMS series (undoubtedly the form in which most readers now encounter the poem) comment that "it is not clear whether *Aumbeforce* is a real or an imagined place from the text" (Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury 338, note to l. 3772). But the name, although certainly not found in the Middle English original, helps demonstrate the underlying spatiality of the romance; the process through which Auchinleck's *Aumbeforce* arose suggests that at least one English redactor recognized the underlying spatial logic of *Bevis*'s simple, flat foreign spaces.

Aumbeforce is not a name invented on the spot for the purpose of identifying this otherwise nameless city. The name originates in *Boeve* as *Abreford*, a city (evidently in Egypt) where King Yvori lays siege to King Hermin (first mentioned in l. 2782, when Saber and Josiane ride there in search of Boeve).⁴⁸¹ Boeve and his family ride to Abreford to reinforce Hermin,

which ultimately leads to Gui's becoming Hermin's heir. This city passes into the Middle English romance where various manuscripts record it as *Ambyfort* (SN), *Amford* (C), *Hampmynforde* (E; all from Fellows II 5064), and *Ambyfforthe* (Fellows IV 3512 M). Abreford, named 13 times in *Boeve*,⁴⁸² plays a more significant role as a named place than in the Middle English *Bevis*; the manuscripts of *Bevis* name it only twice. But, although *Bevis* significantly reduces the use of this name (which we might regularize to *Ambeford) in comparison with *Boeve*, its presence slightly disrupts the flatness of the romance's Ermonie, embedding in it a named town that becomes a minor spatial focal point.

However, the Auchinleck manuscript omits the place-name entirely, the first line equivalent to that which names the city in other manuscripts calling it simply "þat oþer side" (3972; earlier, it is "þat toun," in a line unique to A, 3970), and replacing it in the second instance with "Ermonie" (4114, Fellows II 5267). Instead, it uses the name, in the form *Aumbeforce*, to supply the name of the place identified in *Boeve* as *Civile*. It seems quite certain that the translator of *Bevis* (or at least the common archetype of the surviving versions) omitted the name of *Civile* (which is named in no manuscript besides Auchinleck), and that Auchinleck corrected this omission. Nor is *Aumbeforce* a simple, accidental substitution, for the name occurs three times, twice in the *Civile* section, once (in a different form, *Aumberthe*, perhaps because the redactor is recalling it from a few thousand lines earlier) in the concluding lines.

Given the uncertain evidence for the Auchinleck branch of the *Bevis* tradition, the process through which *Boeve*'s "Abreford," which might have entered the Middle English romance in a form like *Ambeford, came to attach to the city that *Boeve* identifies as *Civile* is unclear. It is of course possible that the change followed a misidentification on the basis of a seriously defective exemplar, or even supplied on the basis of the poem known orally and misremembered.⁴⁸³

However, the overall interest that the Auchinleck text takes in geographic precision raises the intriguing possibility that the reappropriation of the place-name could have been deliberate.

There are good reasons the Auchinleck redactor might want to attach a name to the tournament city. Some key places, even in the Auchinleck *Bevis*, go unnamed; perhaps the most significant is the castle of King Grander's brother, the unnamed giant whom Bevis slays, in order to get a meal at his castle, between his escape from Damascus and his arrival at Jerusalem.⁴⁸⁴ But even this castle is no more than the site of a brief adventure en route; once Bevis has received refreshment from the lady of the castle, he is off again, the adventure entirely forgotten by the romance. This is pure scene-space, a break in Bevis's travels to have a fairly conventional adventure. By contrast, *Boeve's* Civile is a place of significant importance: it is the first land that Bevis wins, aside from his liberation of Hampton, and Terry's marriage to the lady of the town secures the land for someone who is a significant character in his own right and Bevis's cousin besides. Why the Middle English translator omitted the name is impossible to determine. But facing this fault in his source, the Auchinleck redactor, who appears to have supplied toponyms to nameless places elsewhere,⁴⁸⁵ seems to have borrowed a name that was relatively nearby and otherwise unnecessary and attached it to the nameless city. That the redactor saw identification of the city by name as important is clear: the Auchinleck text names it three times, recalling the name at the end of the romance in a passage shared by no other manuscript. The passage at the end need not have been added in the same redaction that attached the name to the city, but one way or another, Aumbeforce came in the Auchinleck manuscript to have a density of existence concretized in its existence as a toponym.

The migration of a place-name might well seem especially troubling and difficult to understand by modern standards. We can understand how a place-name might be invented or

omitted, and even how a place-name could be changed, whether to advance a topical reference, or in rationalization, or simply through the exigencies of transmission. But to borrow a name assigned to one place and attach it to another seems a fundamentally strange move—one, indeed, that falls outside the scope of Richmond and Nicolaisen's explanations for the presence and perseverance of place-names in ballads, as discussed in the introduction. However, this impulse, if it is indeed what happened to produce the Auchinleck reading, shows a canny awareness of two truths about the text. (1) The referentiality of *Ambeford* is at best quite tenuous. Even the original *Abreford* has an uncertain signifier, its referent unclear.⁴⁸⁶ The plethora of variations that arise in the various Middle English copies shows either that the place to which scribes understood the name to refer had varying appellations or that the name lacked a clear meaning. And, indeed, though the city-name remains constant between *Boeve* and *Bevis*, its field has shifted: *Boeve* locates it in Egypt, while *Bevis* places it in Ermonie. Thus the Auchinleck redactor appears to realize that the name is a mere signifier of place-ness, serving to identify a site within the text rather than to pin the events to a particular location in the world. (2) The redactor takes the further leap of noticing that the name is unnecessary: where *Boeve* names Abreford several times in tracking the movements of characters among the city, the battlefield, and Mombraunt, *Bevis* uses it only twice, for a space about which we need only to know that it's Armenian. The P-redactor, producing the text that lies behind the early print versions, reached a similar conclusion, for we read in the print versions that Bevis and his force "Went forth to Armonye" (Fellows III 3582 P), rather than (as in M, closely related to P) that he "went forth with his meyne / To Ambyfforthe, that feire cite" (Fellows IV 3511-12 M). Rather than fabricating a name from scratch, the Auchinleck redactor appears to seize upon a name without clear meaning and with no essential function and to reappropriate it.

Stripping *Boeve's* Abreford of its name and restoring a name to *Boeve's* Civile serve to carry the textual-spatial logic developing in the text to a logical conclusion: Ermonie is emptied of its last piece of named internal division, what some copies make a city transformed into the kingdom as a whole (as, indeed, happens in the ancestor of the print versions independently of A). And a nameless place that nevertheless functions as a locus of Bevis's power is given a name and incorporated into the romance's system of geographic representation. The Auchinleck text, more read than any other version of *Bevis*, is not representative of the tradition; its presentation of these spaces is clearly aberrant and probably creative. But it does represent most purely a spatial logic already inherent in the text. Aumbeforce is a site to be won and controlled on its own, and it needs a name; *Ambeford/Civile is merely found *within* a kingdom that's an object of control, and doesn't need one.

England's Nested Spaces

England does not adhere to the flat logic that characterizes the rest of the romance's spaces, and its spatial nesting is related to the kinds of challenges that face Bevis in England. Within *Bevis's* spatial system, England holds a particular prominence. While the romance's English sections have always attracted particular critical attention, they form only two episodes in a rather vast story. But the places named in the plot (as opposed to the list of places Bevis claims to have gone) cluster most densely in and around the island. That insular space takes pride of place is hardly surprising for most readers; for Speed, early English-language romances (before 1340) are particularly characterized by "national" settings, attesting to the role of the corpus in constructing the English nation ("Construction," 146). But the pull of insular space does serve to emphasize Bevis's groundedness in a specific geography and history. Though Bevis engages in heroic actions in a number of spaces within the world, engaging in combat against

Saracens that suggests the universalized type of the crusader-knight, the force of the exile-and-return structure keeps his homeland always in focus.

This insular space, which contributes so significantly to the romance's geographical lexis, operates according to different rules than other spaces. In contrast to the flat, simple, mutually exclusive spaces that characterize the rest of the romance, England and its environs operate as a series of nested spaces—a spatial system that exists particularly due to the umbrella term of England. England is a country, the equivalent in category of Ermonie within the space of the plot or Grese in Bevis's faux-pilgrimage. But inside the umbrella of England exist other named spaces: Southampton, Bevis's homeland; Nottingham, at least in the Auchinleck manuscript; London, where we get an even greater level of nested embedding of named places as a street battle unfolds in streets that the text identifies explicitly. Bevis's uncle Saber mounts an opposition to the various forces opposing Bevis from the Isle of Wight, a marginal space at the edge of the container-space of England. And while English geography, too, acts as a container for conventional scene-spaces, such as the king's palace in London, at least one structure is very well defined: when Bevis wins a horse-race astride his steed Arundel, he commemorates the victory by commanding the construction of Arundel Castle, furnishing a legendary origin for a real structure. (No scenes take place at Arundel Castle. The romance invokes it in order to establish a mutual relationship between text and world, at once providing for the actual structure a heroic history and authorizing the romance narrative by linking it to a solid landmark.) In PM, Cornwall becomes significant, both as the home of the king's steward Brian who opposes Bevis and as the land granted to Miles once Bevis and Edgar have made peace. So densely nested are insular spaces that, depending on the manuscript, almost as many places significant to Bevis's story are named in England as outside of it.

This nested array of insular places also encodes the political crisis of the text: the struggles between Bevis and the king of England. Bevis ends his initial exile when he returns to Southampton to throw off the Emperor, his father's usurper, with the help of Saber's men. The crises of the rest of the story are propelled by a hierarchical conflict: Bevis twice clashes with King Edgar of England, clashes that threaten Bevis's connection to the lands he has won back. These conflicts, which stem from the king's usurping his rights, effectively fracture insular space. The internal division of England relates to political conflicts the romance takes up: Susan Crane sees in *Bevis* tension between the interests of the barony and those of the king (*Insular* 59-62), while Robert Rouse sees in the romance a tension between the centralized nation and the region (*Idea* 88-91; "For King"); the nested space of England is both an expression and a precondition of the tension.

The first exile is simpler. Bevis's initial loss of his land is due to an outside force, like Horn's, although this outsider appears in a more intimate fashion. His mother, unimpressed with his aged father Guy's sexual performance, summons her lover, the emperor of Germany, to execute Guy and rule in his stead. When Bevis castigates his mother as a "Vile houre [whore]" (302), she attempts to have him killed, and after he returns to the hall and knocks the emperor unconscious, she sells him overseas. This overdetermined exile is grounded in the desire of Bevis's mother but imports a foreign ruler to do the actual deposing.⁴⁸⁷ Furthermore, as Kofi Campbell points out, Bevis's mother is herself tagged as a foreigner, the daughter of the King of Scotland (221). The army that defends Southampton, too, is markedly foreign: Bevis's mother had Devoun call for his host from Germany and summon her father, the King of Scotland, to their aid with his knights. The text emphasizes the racially Other origins of the force opposing Bevis, at one point encapsulating this force as "al þat oþer, siker aplizte, / That were ensembled in

pat fiȝte, / Of Scotlonde and of Al-maine” (3441-3).⁴⁸⁸ Much like Horn throwing off the Saracens, Bevis retakes his kingdom from foreign occupiers.

However, Bevis’s second exile and return involve the whole of England in more complicated ways. Both pit Bevis against the English king, Edgar, who makes no appearance before Bevis has regained Southampton. While his relations with the king are initially quite warm, Bevis is soon forced to leave his hard-won lordship when his horse, Arundel, accidentally kills the king’s son. The furious king seeks first to have Bevis executed; when his barons restrain him, he calls (with stronger legal foundation⁴⁸⁹) for the execution of the horse, which Bevis will not abide. He thus leaves England, bestowing his lands on his tutor, Saber: “Ingelonde ich wile for-swere; / Min eir ich wile make her / Þis gode kniȝt, min em Saber” (3578-80). Having previously declared that he will not give Arundel to the prince for “Al þe hors of Ingelonde” (3548), he now entirely forsakes his native kingdom for a horse.

This confrontation illustrates a problem of the hierarchical structure in which Bevis finds himself in England. Edgar has authority over Bevis because he controls a broader space that contains Bevis’s lands. The king seeks to exercise his royal prerogative viciously, leaving off his desire to have Bevis executed only when his barons insist that the structures of the law prohibit it. The interposition of the barons and the law shows that Edgar is less closely identified with England than Ermin is with Ermonie. Nevertheless, he wields great authority. While the king does not banish Bevis from the land himself, his actions force him out, leading him to remove himself from England permanently.⁴⁹⁰ This exile acts as a form of social death, so that in departing Bevis must name a new heir. His land thus passes out of his direct succession, for he has no children (though his wife, Josiane, is pregnant when they leave), but remains within the sphere of his alliances, for he entrusts its care to Saber, his tutor and uncle. Bevis cannot remain

within his own land, Hampshire/Southampton, because the king's control over the larger space of England drives him out of the nested space.⁴⁹¹

But the clashes between the king's broader sphere of control and the more limited space under the authority of Bevis/Saber are not limited to *indirectly* separating Bevis from his land. The crisis of Bevis's second exile comes to a head after he has slain King Yvor and won the kingship of Mombraunt (with the aid of Saber, who has come to his aid warned by a prophetic dream). A messenger arrives in search of Saber, and reports that Edgar seeks to claim his holdings: "'Sire,' a sede, 'þe king Edgare / þe driveþ to meche te bismare, / Desereteth [SNC: destroyeth] Robaunt, þin eyr!'" (4263-65; Fellows II 5450 S) They race back to Southampton, where they learn from Saber's wife and son "Þat Edgar hadde here londes be-nome" (4284). Edgar, then, has become himself a territorial aggressor, disinheriting Saber's son, whom he has left in control of his lands while he is away aiding Bevis. He has, in effect, taken on the role of Emperor Devoun, but as a figure from higher in the hierarchy of authority rather than as a foreigner. The romance never gives any clear sense that the king expresses a legally justified claim to Hampshire; he appears here as a territorial aggressor.

The awkwardness of Edgar's dual role, both king and invader, manifests itself in a bizarre scene that follows Bevis and Saber's return to England in which Bevis attempts to secure the restoration of his lands. Having crossed the sea to Southampton, Bevis vows vengeance on the king for his actions,⁴⁹² and they depart for London, Bevis (perhaps sensing trouble) leaving Josiane at Putney along the way. He then comes to the king and asks that the king recognize his claim to his lands in almost the same language the poem used earlier when he sought the restoration of his lands after his defeat of Devoun:⁴⁹³

þe king wel hendeliche a gret
& bad be-fore his barnage,

þat he him graunte is eritage.
 “Blepeliche,” a seide, “sone min,
 I graunte þe, be seinte Martin!” (4298-302)⁴⁹⁴

The king, depicted not fifty lines ago as a territorial aggressor slandering Saber in order to seize his lands from his son, now easily cedes the lands to Bevis (whom he earlier tried to execute) using the same formula with which he earlier undid the usurpation of a foreign invader.

The repetition of this formula is an innovation of the Middle English version; in *Boeve*, Edgar is sick and close to death when he hears that Boeve is approaching London with an army, and he sends emissaries to Bevis to propose that they settle the matter through a marriage between Bevis’s son Miles and the king’s daughter. In *Boeve*, Edgar offers a canny diplomatic solution (which Boeve initially distrusts), but *Bevis* teases us with the possibility that such matters can be resolved formulaically, with simple and direct words and behavior.

But the poem raises the formulaic solution only to undercut it. While the king (incredibly) accedes to Bevis’s request, his steward (“the worste frend of alle” [4306], we hear in typically romance-superlative fashion) intercedes, reminding the king of Bevis’s outlawry (and, in Auchinleck, of the death of the king’s son⁴⁹⁵):

þis for-banniiste man
 Is come to þe land aȝan,
 And haþ þin owene sone slawe.
 He haþ y-don aȝenes the lawe,
 And ȝif a mot forþer gon,
 A wile vs slen euerichon! (4309-14)

While *Boeve* sees the king offer a resolution to the conflict that Boeve almost declines out of distrust for the king, the Middle English version sees Bevis attempt to resolve the situation by taking back his ancestral land, only to have a voice within the realm rebuff his attempt by recalling his own self-imposed outlaw status. The steward’s words offer a powerful rejoinder to Bevis’s efforts, framing him as transgressor (he enters a land legally interdicted to him) and

consequently as aggressor—that is, exactly the role in which the king has been placed by attempting seizing Bevis's/Saber's/Robaunt's lands. The nesting of places hampers even Bevis's ability to assist Saber in reclaiming the lands he has bestowed upon him, for Bevis can neither enter Southampton, nor come before the king, without penetrating England, the sphere of the king's control from which the king's authority has caused him to be banished.

But the romance itself does not take the steward's claims seriously. Bevis, angered by his words, briefly presents exactly the image the steward has offered of him: he leaps upon his horse and rides for London, accompanied by his knights, a picture of military aggression. However, it is the steward who orchestrates the violence to come, locking Bevis into the city so his force cannot escape.

Indeed, in the action that follows, the romance tries to return to a model of imagining Bevis as threatened by foreigners. Robert Rouse has noted that *Bevis* deploys London's Lombard population to construct the city as "a cosmopolitan, immigrant city, full of the kinds of foreigners that are dangerous to Bevis and to his regional Englishness" ("For King," 123). Rouse further notes that P makes the steward himself a Cornishman, grounding the treachery against Bevis in the figure of a well-established internal Other for English romance (*Idea* 86-88; "For King," 124). For Rouse, the conflict between Bevis and Edgar reads initially as a conflict between Bevis's Southampton regionalism and the king's London-seated centrality, but the foreignness embedded in the defense of London itself displaces the city from the center to the periphery, registering "a communal anxiety regarding the increasing influence of London's immigrant populace over affairs of state, and of the very identity of the city" ("For King," 124).

Yet for all that the romance may attempt to recast London as outside (thus in part representing a triumph of regionalism as the site of a more authentic Englishness), hierarchy,

both spatial and political, remains the key spatial concern. For all that the romance may try to align Edgar with “foreigners,” the king remains inextricably associated with the larger container space of England. London is the terrain of the battle, its streets famously represented in some detail, but this street combat to some degree just represents another fragmentation of English space, a further subdivision that highlights the precarious contestability of space within England. Battles for Ermonie and Mombraunt, as well as the tournament for Auchinleck’s Aumbeforce are fought on unspecified, generic fields of scene-space, where the lands can in an instant be won or lost *in toto*. In contrast to the ways in which these simple spaces can be decided easily and all at once, in scene-spaces marked by their non-specificity, England is a container for specific, local, historically dense spaces that can all be sites of conflict, in the case of London down to the very street. England’s nestedness renders it an unstable, challenging space as no others in the romance are.

Sexuality and Land

The stakes of England’s subdivisibility are clearest in light of a metaphor for thinking about the control of land that’s embedded in the text’s structure. Bevis, like many romances, uses marriage to think about political issues. As actions that have the power to reshape space by uniting the holdings of different families, marriage and sexuality emerge as powerful metaphors for thinking about the control and possession of land in the romance. The flat spaces of the world lend themselves to exogamy; as much as Bevis gains land by military prowess, marriage is an important avenue by which he expands his family’s holdings. But England’s nestedness troubles this model for consolidating holdings.

Josiane, Bevis’s Saracen-convert wife, brings new land to Bevis’s family: her father Ermin makes Bevis’s son Guy his heir, so that Guy becomes the king of Ermonie. But Josiane’s

role in the romance is equally related to Bevis's native holdings. While my analysis has emphasized Bevis's deeds in acquiring and defending land, this is only one of the two major strands of his action. He is equally concerned with rescuing Josiane from her other would-be suitors. In fact, the repeated thefts of Hampton echo men's repeated attempts to take Josiane by force. King Yvor and a count named Miles both actually marry Josiane against her will in the romance. While Josiane is in both marriages able to preserve her virginity through her cleverness, Bevis has to rescue her to ensure her freedom.⁴⁹⁶

Susan Wittig has posited that the romance genre in Middle English emerges from the conjunction of two plots: the separation–reclamation plot and the marriage plot (175-79). While this approach excludes significant works considered romances by both medieval and modern readers, *Bevis* is certainly a strong example of the kind of narrative Wittig is focused on. In *Bevis*, as in a number of romances of this type, the two plots are not simply interrelated but mirror each other. Just as rescuing Rymenhild is part of Horn's project of reclaiming his land, when Bevis twice rescues Josiane from forced marriage, it echoes his two liberations of his kingdom from unrightful usurpers. Men's attempts to marry Josiane against her will seem to echo the usurpation of Hampton, Josiane's incredible virginity after two marriages perhaps echoing Bevis's fundamental, inviolable right to Hampton. The romance even takes pains to highlight the importance of Josiane's virginity *for Bevis*: in Jerusalem, the patriarch tells Bevis he must only marry a virgin, a demand that seems to provoke a crisis for the lovers when Bevis is reunited with Josiane and learns that she is married. She assures him that she is still a virgin despite seven years of marriage, and the manner of her response underscores the connection between her bodily integrity and Bevis's native land: once they have reached his land, she tells him, if she is examined and found not to be a virgin, he can send her home naked save for a

smock; her non-virginal body would remove her from the land. So Josiane's body, like Hampton, is the exclusive property of Bevis and, like Hampton, he must defend her from those who would take her by force.⁴⁹⁷ The final rescue of Josiane affirms her fundamental connection with Hampton: captive to Yvor a second time, but having evaded his sexual interest by means of an herb making her resemble a leper, Josiane is rescued not by Bevis (who is living chastely with his second wife in Auchinleck's Aumbeforce) but by Saber, whom Bevis's exile has placed in authority over Hampton.

Josiane's symbolic body is not the only way the romance uses sex to explore the possession of land. While Bevis and Josiane's licit, monogamous sexuality encodes Bevis's innate claim to his land, sexual perversion stands for unjust conquest. It's no mistake that Devoun's occupation of Hampton is associated with sexual perversion. Bevis's mother grows dissatisfied with his father Guy and has her lover Devoun kill him because Guy's old age has led to impotence and he "may nouȝt werche" (58).⁴⁹⁸ Although the romance does not depict Guy negatively—rather, it is his wife's sexual voraciousness that the romance criticizes, labeling her (in Bevis's mouth) a whore—his impotence, which precipitates his death, seems also to symbolize his inability to protect his land and his son's rightful claim. Devoun, by contrast, shares the lustful appetite of Bevis's mother. As Saber and Bevis prepare to mount their campaign to reclaim Hampton from Devoun, a messenger visits the emperor to taunt him with the knowledge that Bevis has visited his court in disguise. The furious emperor hurls a knife in an effort to kill the bearer of such unwanted news, but instead strikes and kills his own son. The messenger then memorably taunts him:

Pow gropedest þe wif aniȝt to lowe,
 Pow miȝt nouȝt sen ariȝt to þrowe;
 Pow hauest so swonke on hire to niȝt,
 Pow hauest neȝ for-lore þe siȝt. (3105-09)

The association of sexual excess and blindness was a medieval commonplace, and, especially in England, formed part of a “religious model of disability.”⁴⁹⁹ In this essentially superfluous scene (the emperor’s son plays no role in the romance otherwise), the text ascribes to the emperor an excessive sexuality to match that of Bevis’s mother; his accusation that Devoun has groped her “to lowe” does double-duty as an anatomical reference and a charge of the emperor’s debasement. Both the characters who together seize Bevis’s birthright are notable for desiring and having too much sex. And in both cases, sexual excess is, ironically, linked to the loss of succession: the emperor inadvertently kills his son, while Bevis’s mother commands the death of her son before ultimately having him shipped overseas. In this pair of lustful usurpers, the desire to hold a land not one’s own is aligned with overactive sexuality. Hampton must be protected from these sexually voracious lovers, just as Josiane requires protection against men too eager to have sex with her.⁵⁰⁰

So, both through structural parallels and through direct characterization, the romance links unrightful conquest and occupation with sexual excess, whether of the kind that produces forced marriage and attempted rape or desire that exceeds marriage and precipitates murder.⁵⁰¹ Bevis is positioned as the defender of Hampton’s integrity in the face of this transgressive sexuality.

But unlike the other spaces of the romance, Hampton, as we have seen, does not stand alone; it is a component of another spatial body. England’s internality is also troubling, because (if we extend the metaphor beyond what the text really invites) it raises the threat of incest, for the second occupier of Hampton is King Edgar, the very king of England who was supposed to ratify Bevis’s right to Hampton when he won it back the first time. In contrast, because Armenia

is a singular unit, lacking internal subdivision, King Ermin could not violate its integrity; their alignment, we have seen, is encapsulated in Ermin's name.

King Edgar's quasi-incestuous misappropriation of the territory of Hampton leads to the romance's endogamous marriage, a marriage that we might correspondingly conceptualize as almost incestuous. Once Bevis's forces have prevailed in the Battle of London, King Edgar at last arrives at the solution he reaches much sooner in *Boeve* and decides to resolve the situation by marrying his daughter to Bevis's son Miles. This marriage within England is an aberration in an otherwise exogamous text; like Havelok and Horn, both Bevis and his friend Terry marry out of their country, and these marriages help extend their family's scope of influence within a global sphere. Miles's marriage, by contrast, remains internal to England. Variation in the wedding's location emphasizes the inward orientation of this solution: while in most manuscripts the location of the wedding is unspecified, presumably London, Auchinleck sets it in Nottingham; Rouse suggests that this setting is intended to return focus to the level of the region rather than the nation, but it is striking that this somewhat arbitrary location is not in Bevis's family's scope of local control.

Moreover, two details around Edgar himself invite us to align him with the sexually deviant conquerors of other portions of the romance in ways that trouble the resolution. In the Auchinleck version, when proposing the union of Miles and the princess, Edgar tells his subjects that the marriage is because "icham now so falle in elde / Pat i ne may mine armes welde" (4545-46)—a reasonable explanation, but one that might uneasily recall that Bevis's mother began her treachery because her husband was too old to wield arms of a different sort. Moreover, Edgar, like Devoun and Bevis's mother, has lost a son. The death of the English prince is not due to sexual misconduct, but it *is* due to excessive desire, albeit on the son's part rather than his

father's. Although Bevis has refused to give Arundel to the prince, he is determined to have the horse and is attempting to steal him when he is killed. Arundel, perhaps the most famous horse of Middle English literature, parallels Josiane in many ways: Bevis loves the horse as intensely as his wife, so intensely that Arundel is also included in the conclusion (dying on the same day as Bevis and Josiane), and just as Josiane must remain a virgin apart from Bevis, the romance repeatedly emphasizes that the hero alone can ride Arundel.⁵⁰² The prince's attempt to seize Arundel forcibly echoes the attempts to take Josiane, and both anticipates and enables his father's later seizure of Hampton.⁵⁰³ He involves Edgar even more thoroughly in a pattern of theft, and his death may echo the death of Devoun's son. And the prince's death enables the marriage that concludes Edgar's misdeeds, for in most texts Miles, in marrying the princess, becomes the heir to England, a role that would presumably have fallen to the prince were he still living.⁵⁰⁴

Bevis thus uses marriage in an effort to mediate between two levels of nested space. Exogamy represents the power of marriage to forge connections, bring new areas under control, mark a family's influence across a large, flat map. Endogamy, by contrast, serves as a troubled effort to smooth out hierarchical conflicts.

Retreat from England

What's most striking about Miles's marriage is that, in some sense, it doesn't appear to work. *Bevis* subverts our expectations of the exile-and-return romance by having Bevis leave his native lands a second time. While the marriage does bring an end to Bevis's conflict with the king, and Saber's son resumes control of Southampton, Bevis himself does not remain in the place he has worked so hard to win. Ultimately, nested England seems to be too unstable a space for the romance hero to remain in.

We might expect that, having finally rescued his homeland from all those who would try to usurp it, Bevis would remain there, exercising his ancestral right, as does Horn in the conclusion of *King Horn*. This is not an essential component of the exile-and-return structure. Havelok, for instance, rules in England, the land of his exile, after recovering his ancestral Denmark. But the romance version of Havelok's story is careful to signal that England, not Denmark, is its primary subject,⁵⁰⁵ and this construction might suggest that the romance accordingly violates what might ordinarily be the audience's expectations. Moreover, the exile-and-return narrative of *Havelok* is doubled not through repetition (as in *King Horn* and *Bevis*) but through dispersal into two characters: while Havelok ultimately takes up a position outside his native land, ruling in England concludes Goldeborw's exile-and-return narrative, a plot emphasized much more in the Middle English romance than its analogues. Though Bevis's departure from Hampton, from England altogether, at the end of his romance breaks no narrative rules, it does merit explanation.

I suggest that the troublesome nature of England's nested spaces provides the formal explanation for Bevis's departure from England. Though Bevis is able twice to overcome occupiers who seize his land, the nested, fragmented nature of English space makes it difficult to master. Rouse and Crane have both observed that the despite *Bevis*'s sense of nationalism, England does not emerge as a unified whole. Crane notes the tension, particularly in the Middle English version, between the text's increasing nationalism and the baronial ideals that pit barons against king; Bevis's actions, Crane argues, always align with the interest of the barony, despite the rhetoric of a nationalism that seeks to smooth over these conflicts (*Insular* 61-63). Rouse has noted that this conflict manifests itself geographically: the romance's regional focus on Hampshire collides not just with the king but with London—marked by a significant foreign

population, increasingly influencing English governance—as an English center that fails to represent England (*Idea* 88-89; “For King,” 124).⁵⁰⁶ For Rouse, “Bevis’s death and burial in the exotic East act only to reinforce his own troublesome relationship to English identity” (“For King,” 125). In another sense, the instability of England is produced spatially, enabled by the nesting that defines English space.

Campbell, reading *Bevis* as a colonialist text whose agenda is a pedagogy of Englishness, understands Bevis’s martial actions differently: Bevis expands and annexes other lands for England. Thus Aumbeforce “is land gained for England,” and, “while Bevis himself never becomes king, his actions allow for a unified England to emerge, an England which has now taken land from the Saracens to enlarge its own kingdom and sphere of influence” (225, 231). Campbell observes that Bevis continues to accrue land as he moves through the romance, simultaneously converting Saracens and exercising his cultural force in a variety of ways, and decides, given the national character that he sees in the hero, that these acquisitions must accrue to the nation. Bevis becomes a figure like Arthur, stretching the tendrils of Englishness far across the sea.

But the situation is necessarily more complicated than the expansion of England into geographically far-flung areas, even at the bare level of plot. While Bevis demonstrates ample knightly prowess during his first exile, he does not actually win any lands until after King Edgar has driven him out of England for the second time. While his first exile saw him merely dispossessed, expelled from his native land by his mother who would usurp his inheritance, in his second, he is an outlaw, having formally pledged to leave the land to save Arundel. His initial exile existed in a combination of spatial displacement and powerlessness, but his second is legal in character and self-imposed. While Edgar’s initial demand that Bevis be executed appears to

position him as a bad, overreaching king (*Idea* 117), he is well within his rights to have Arundel tried,⁵⁰⁷ and Bevis's departure represents a flat rejection of the legal process of justice. When he acquires Aumbeforce and Mombraunt, and Christianizes Ermonie, Bevis is (at least from a legal perspective) firmly cut off from England.

Nor does the romance suggest that these spaces acquired by Bevis are incorporated into a hierarchy descending from England. The lands that Bevis acquires seem to attach to him personally rather than to be enfolded into England; as Bevis's son Miles marries King Edgar's daughter, England seems almost to become another land attached personally to Bevis and his family. The Auchinleck manuscript offers a unique passage in its conclusion that drives home the personal association of these lands with Bevis. The conclusion of the Auchinleck version rather resembles that of *King Horn*, as the hero and his family make a tour of the lands the hero has won.⁵⁰⁸ It is thus around Bevis himself that the final geography of rule takes shape, following the wedding of Miles and the English princess:

Beues tok leue, hom to wende,
At king Edgar & at Sabere,
And Miles, is sone, a lefte here
And kiste and ȝaf him is blessing,
& wente to Mombraunt, þer he was king;
And his erldom in Hamte-schire
A ȝaf to his em Sabere
And schipede at Hamtoun hastely,
And wiþ him wente his sone Gii,
And Terry wiþ is barnage.
þe wind blew hardde wiþ gret rage
And drof hem in to Ermonie,
þar be-lefte his sone Gii
Wiþ his barouns gode & hende;
& Terry to Aumberþe gan wende,
And Beues wente wiþ oute dwelling
In to Mombraunt, þar he was king. (4570-86)

This ending recapitulates Bevis's gains, and does so through movement: Bevis, like Horn, makes a kind of royal progress through the lands he has won. He passes from London to Hampton

(where he reaffirms Saber's earldom), then into Ermonie (where he leaves his son Guy, already confirmed as the kingdom's heir). Aumbeforce is next, although it is somewhat out of the way, a fact the poem acknowledges by not having Bevis travel there; his cousin Terry at this point breaks off to travel to the land alone. Finally, Bevis and Josiane return to Mombraunt, the land of their rule.⁵⁰⁹ This tour suggests that the Auchinleck redactor wishes to emphasize the extent of Bevis's gains. As we've noted, the Auchinleck manuscript has been noted for its emphasis on Englishness, and the Auchinleck text offers unique levels of insular spatial detail, offering a particularly dense treatment of the London scenes. But here, the text places particular emphasis on Bevis's movement away from England, detailing his extra-insular holdings in the scene that carries him away from England forever.

The Auchinleck text's concluding tour, in carrying Bevis through all the spaces over which he has control, takes him back into the non-insular world of simple spaces. Bevis's native land, in this representation, attests to the nested nature of insular space: in the course of a few lines, the romance relates how Bevis transfers to his uncle his earldom in Hampshire, then takes us to a more specific space—Hampton—to begin his journey itself. Although Bevis has already putatively given Saber authority over Hampshire, on the occasion of his exile, he repeats the grant here, perhaps because King Edgar's usurpation of the land has brought the chain of authority into question. But only in this space must control be specifically considered. Ermonie, Aumbeforce, and Mombraunt are simple spaces that can simply be visited by their rightful authorities.

While this sequence is unique to Auchinleck, the processional return only serves to reiterate Bevis's command of the romance's simple spaces. He withdraws from the contestable, internally subdivided realm of England to a world over which he has exerted control by military

force. Bevis's motivations for his withdrawal from England are not laid out in the romance, but his experiences in England suggest that it constitutes a movement from space that he can control only on a temporary and contingent basis to space where he can exert absolute control. The difference between these two forms of space—the twice-usurped Hampton that must be confirmed by royal grant, as opposed to Mombraunt, Ermonie, and Aumbeforce—is deeply grounded in the formal instantiation of these different places by the text. The simple spaces of the world at large beget a simplicity of control. By contrast, nested insular space, the geographic center of gravity for the romance, is contestable not only from without (Devoun), but from within (Bevis's mother), and, most crucially, from above (King Edgar).

The two kinds of space—insular and nested, foreign and simple—thus in certain senses seem to support different kinds of narrative. Geraldine Barnes makes this claim explicitly: “Creating an impression of competing narrative modes, *chanson de geste* and ‘political romance’, this last part of *Beves* presents a striking contrast between the lurid and fantastic nature of those episodes which take place abroad, mainly in ‘Armenia’, and the more ‘realistic’ tenor of those set in England” (85).⁵¹⁰ But a distinction between the space of England and that of the rest of the world is implicit in other analyses as well. For Crane, the Middle English *Bevis* helps to demonstrate that even as insular romances begin to value national concerns and identities separate from the needs of individual baronial families, baronial values (like the centrality of heritage) continued to predominate (*Insular* 59-62).⁵¹¹ In making this argument, Crane focuses in particular on Bevis's conflicts with Edgar; his adventures abroad, which take up considerably more space in the romance, play little role in her analysis. Hierarchical conflicts, the center of Crane's analysis, unfold entirely across nested spaces, and Bevis's actions in simple spaces do not play a role.⁵¹² Rouse, contesting readings (particularly that of Kofi Campbell) of

Bevis as a nationalist romance, likewise distinguishes Bevis's insular adventures from those he undertakes in foreign lands as exploring separate aspects of identity. While his conflicts with Edgar pit English nationalism against regionalism, in Rouse's analysis his adventures overseas, in particular his interactions with Saracens, are instead related to anxieties of cultural hybridity, exploring the fear that Christian and Saracen identities are too similar and that Christians might be converted as easily as Saracens. (Rouse identifies the identity in question as "Christian English identity" ["For King," 119], yet there seems to be little reason to understand the identity being probed by the figure of the Saracens as English rather than European, or simply Christian.⁵¹³)

However, to insulate these two kinds of space from each other ignores their common concerns in ways that over-privilege the category of England. Most of the geographic spaces in *Bevis*, both nested and not, are sites for the exercise of territorial control. Within and without England alike, Bevis gains, defends, and contests cities and kingdoms. Both in England and beyond it, marriage is a way both of thinking about and of gaining control of political space. The world according to *Bevis of Hampton* is a field of sites for the exercise of power, where a strong family can exert its influence, gain control, and generate a network—a network founded not on common culture, as in *King Horn*, but on sheer might.

In this, we might well think of the romance as following from a much broader political situation than that of England alone. Robert Bartlett, writing of the waves of expansionism by the western European noble classes from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, has described the result as an "aristocratic diaspora" in which members of noble families were widely dispersed across the fringes of Europe, far from their ancestral homes (ch. 2). As Bartlett notes, some of this expansionism was a result of crusading activity, but elsewhere it was not: for instance, the

Normans “established themselves in their south Italian base by being ready to fight everyone—Latin, Greek or Muslim—not excluding the pope himself” (24). The social pressures that drove the changing rule of Europe produced neither consolidation nor contestation of nations, but a spread of power rooted in strong dynasties that could stake their claims by strength.

Bevis and his family look like just such a family. Bevis is strong, and his strength manifests itself in kingships not just for himself, but for his sons and cousins. His family spreads its branches widely on a world stage rather like the space that he outlines in recounting his faux pilgrimage. Flat space provides the canvas for this expansion, enabling him to establish his political control through the innate strength of the romance hero.

In such a world, a nested space like England is a danger. In contrast to a world that can be shaped by dint of Bevis’s sword, England is a contingent, incoherent, nested complex of historically unstable power relations whose layers and fluxes threaten Bevis’s ability to consolidate his power. While in *Havelok* the embodied king produces community by rendering internally diverse English space as a nation, in *Bevis* such a king is threatening, for the idea of the nation threatens the exercise of global power. *Bevis*’s England is not merely internally riven by regional identities and baronial agendas; its corporate existence threatens the free exercise of the power and political potential inherent in Bevis as hero.

The narrative possibilities of the world of *Bevis* are conditioned by the kinds of space that compose it. Bevis plunges into a world of flat space in order to prove himself and to establish his holdings and authority. He is pulled back into the nested space of his point of origin in order to probe the boundaries and potentials of that space. *Havelok* uses these spatial tools to envision a nation; the poem seems carefully cognizant of the relationships of the flat space of Denmark with the nested space of England, and it uses the dream to mediate between them and produce a

vibrant statement of geographically rooted unity. But in *Bevis*, England acts mainly as a tangle within a global power network forged by Bevis's far-reaching travels, and the romance ultimately retreats from it. The space of England does not the nation make: nationhood is something that must be produced, and the same narrative forms that support it can be used to very different ends.

Conclusion

The Coming of the Fairies

In the opening lines of the Wife of Bath's Tale, Chaucer situates his lone contribution to the massive body of English Arthurian writing in a time and place that are really no time or place at all: "In th'olde dayes of Kyng Arthour, / Of which that Britons speken greet honour, / Al was this land fulfild of fayerye" (III.857-9). In the Ellesmere tale-order, this tale follows directly on the geographically and historically rich Man of Law's Tale (separated, of course, by the Wife of Bath's "long preamble of a tale" [III.831]); they are also found side-by-side in London, British Library, MS Harley 1239, a late fifteenth-century collection of Chaucerian romances. In contrast to the careful historical layering of the Man of Law's Tale, the Wife of Bath's Tale gestures broadly at a vaguely defined past, a space that belongs to folktale, and sometimes to romance.

While in Chaucer's biting account it is the friars who drove out the fairies, blessing everything they can find and dishonoring the women the fairies were wont to take, in terms of literary history they survived Chaucer's lascivious mendicants to be canonized by Edmund Spenser. The ascendancy of the fairies in Spenser's nostalgic romance epic corresponds with political and technical developments that solidified the English nation as a territorial state and increased skepticism toward the legendary insular past that provided such rich material for medieval romance.

Although medievalists have repeatedly demonstrated medieval English literature possessed and cultivated a sense of national identity, I have attempted to show that romances, the predominant form of medieval imaginative literature, offered numerous other ways to arrange the world, sometimes resisting, sometimes ignoring, and sometimes coopting the ways of understanding and organizing their island that politics and history provided. But changes both in

representation and in political thought around the close of what we identify as the Middle Ages altered the meaning of the island and the ways in which it could be represented.

Richard Helgerson, in *Forms of Nationhood*, writes of a generation that self-consciously set out to write a national community into being, employing a variety of forms that produced and emerged in conjunction with the political nation-state. Most significant for my purposes are the spatial technologies that Helgerson describes: the atlas and the genre of chorography. Both forms visualize the nation as grounded in and made up of space. As Helgerson describes the underlying logic of chorography, the systematic poetic description of places (as opposed to chronicle, which defined England by its kings), “Loyalty to England here means loyalty to the land; to its counties, cities, towns, villages, manors, and wards; even to its uninhabited geographical features” (132). Atlases of Britain, like chorography, both offered up parts of the island and integrated them into a whole. Christian Jacob remarks on the accumulative mastery offered by this cartographic form: “Every atlas is a summa that monumentally sets in place the current condition of the world or one of its regions” (67). The Middle Ages possessed representational forms that emphasized insular space—chronicles typically began with descriptions of the island,⁵¹⁴ a tradition stretching back to Gildas, and a few maps depicted the entire island⁵¹⁵—but these technologies gave geography a new prominence. At the same time, the rise of printing distributed these representations (particularly the maps) more quickly and widely than was possible before.⁵¹⁶ England, Helgerson suggests, was increasingly taking communal form through its space, in ways that had not been possible a few centuries previously.

It was in the throes of these transformations that Edmund Spenser penned the famous opening of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*: “A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine” (I.i.1). The first line of Spenser’s narrative presents us with an immediately familiar image of romance.

It is an image drawn from scene-space, which is the characteristic spatial mode of *The Faerie Queene*, set after all in Fairyland and built on allegorical logic; as Helen Cooper puts it, “Quest requires a landscape that follows the co-ordinates of adventure rather than mappable space—which is why attempts to map the *Faerie Queene* are doomed to failure” (*English* 71). Yet Spenser’s poem is “historical” not merely in its imitation of classical and Italian epic; Spenser engages with the insular past, drawing on romances from the Matters of Britain and “England” and providing an ancestral narrative for the contemporary nation and its monarch.⁵¹⁷

The romances I have examined in this dissertation also deploy the insular past to explain and comment on the present, although none share the lofty, systematizing aspirations of Spenser’s magnum opus. They do so not in the fashion of chronicles, presenting the past in a long sweep that makes its geography and communities intelligible in light of the present, but by deploying insular narrative at a particular, isolated moment in time. By offering narratives that negotiate insular space without a clearly defined context, these medieval romances are able to use the shared space of the island, its regions, cities, and sites—a material foundation that bridges past and present—to challenge dominant forms of community and ways of understanding the world.

I showed in Chapters 1 and 2 that naming offers romances a powerful tool for re-presenting familiar spaces and so narratively reconfiguring the world. *King Horn* avoids naming England, or any recognizable place on the island, instead using its plot to imagine the unification of a group of marginal western islands through common culture—an outcome very different from the militant consolidation practiced by Edward I and other English rulers. The *Man of Law’s Tale* combines an insistence on the historically specific Kingdom of Northumberland with a wide-ranging play of perspective that invites the tale’s audiences to identify with many

historical groups in order to construct for the island a history as plural and conflicted as the group of Canterbury pilgrims themselves. In Chapter 3, we saw that over a century before Spenser's allegorization of the matter of the insular past, the landscape of the island itself was deployed as a tool for abstract, open-ended thought about issues of power, acquisition, and government; *The Awntyrs off Arthure* uses the flexible narrative framework of romance to juxtapose bodies of space belonging to different literary modes, setting places that appear to refer to specific local issues in an open-ended semantic framework drawing on the past and the present, not to mention the eschatological future, to give them their meanings. My final chapter showed that even such apparently natural and stable categories with England possess internal tension and must be stabilized rhetorically. *Havelok*, I demonstrated, uses the technology of the dream to envision England as a singular, graspable concept. But *Bevis of Hampton* registers the problem of England in its formal spatial grammar, presenting other world spaces as simple and available to the hero's mastery while England remains fragmentary and unstable. While voluminous scholarship has shown that romances played a role in establishing and articulating a sense of medieval national identity in England, romances possessed their own sophisticated tools for engaging with the geospatial world, and these tools allowed them to explore the problems of consolidation and unity, posing challenges to cultural and political norms for understanding space.

Not all medieval English romances shared these concerns or these strategies, of course. The Wife of Bath's Tale reminds us (if it were possible to forget!) that the spatial mode of "fairy," of a narrative world cut off from the geography of everyday experience, formed part of the corpus of Middle English romance, but *The Faerie Queene*, which in a sense brings the story of medieval romance to a close,⁵¹⁸ enshrines this withdrawal of romance from everyday

geographic thought. Although Spenser does not represent the whole of the English Renaissance romance tradition, his interest in the insular past and knowledge of native romances align his work especially closely with the tradition I have discussed. But despite Spenser's knowledge and use of medieval English romances like *Bevis*,⁵¹⁹ *The Faerie Queene*, in adopting from French and Italian romance the geographic conceit of Fairyland as a main setting for chivalric action, represents a departure from this tradition of geographical creativity. The Middle English romances I have considered rely for their geographical effect on their engagement with the space of the solid world. Although Wayne Erickson has emphasized that the the solid world of geography and history do appear in the poem's narrative,⁵²⁰ Spenser retreats to an abstracted, allegorized world removed from actual insular spatiality in order to explore issues of British and English identity and history.

The Faerie Queene seems in some ways emblematic of the later fate of romance. The question of what happens to romance beyond the Renaissance is complicated, in part because of terminological imprecision that may even outpace the imprecision in medieval usage that we observed in the introduction. While the details of romance's development are beyond the scope of this conclusion,⁵²¹ it seems safe to suggest (with due acknowledgment that the term romance was not used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the consistency with which modern critics apply it⁵²²) that the category of romance was increasingly positioned against truthfulness or realism and aligned with fantasy. Such an alignment does not mean that romance is cut off from the world of the familiar, but it does suggest a certain relationship to that world. Arthur Johnston, describing the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquarian sense of medieval romance as "synonymous with magic, with the incredible and the impossible," recalls a redolent phrase applied to romances: "enchanted ground" (7-9). Nathaniel Hawthorne, outlining

an idea of romance as offering “a certain latitude . . . which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel” (*House* iii), describes the experience of the romance imagination in language related to Spenser: “the floor of our familiar room has become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other” (*Scarlet* 33). The antiquarians invoked by Johnston view romance as deeply fantastical, while Hawthorne articulates a much more hybrid form of writing (Hawthorne’s romances are redolent in sense of place and history), but both turn to geographic language to describe the non-realist potential inherent in romance. Romance is not just a genre; it’s a place, one that lies outside the geographical world.

Yet, despite this separation, romance has never fully lost its long-running investment in the imaginative reworking of place. Brian McHale has noted the tendency of postmodernist writing to experiment with space, employing an anti-realist, heterotopian mode of representation he labels “the zone” (44-45). Science fiction and fantasy, modern lineal descendants of the long romance tradition, engage enthusiastically in this kind of spatial play. These genres have long been associated with world-building, imagining self-contained narrative spaces (or temporalities) with their own internal geographies and rules. But some works do not withdraw from the world of everyday geography in that manner. In closing, I will cite just two examples of recent works that continue romance’s lineage of spatial experimentation.

The novels of Neil Gaiman frequently represent a familiar world throbbing with unseen power. Novels like *Neverwhere* (1996) and *American Gods* (2001) depict London and the American roadscape in spatially precise and familiar ways: a reader could map and visit many of the locations represented there. Yet this geography is enchanted. *Neverwhere*’s London overlays

London Below, an invisible (and subterranean) realm of fantastical beings who attach to particular locations in the city. *American Gods* treats the American countryside's roadside attractions as places of mythic power, and associates them both with the gods of the old world and with those of modern media. I had the pleasure of reading *Neverwhere* for the first time while in London doing research for this dissertation, and experienced the uncanniness of taking the District Line back from Angel Station at night and thinking of Gaiman's Angel Islington, and having the feeling, even more so than usual, of London as a city built up out of stories.

China Miéville's *The City & the City* (2009) takes a markedly different approach to the world. Miéville's novel unfolds a mystery across two (fictional, but very believable) Eastern European cities—Beszél and Ul Qoma—which exist in the same geographic space, but whose citizens must “unsee” each other: they may not notice or interact with the people and places in the other city that are “grosstopically” close.⁵²³ Miéville calls attention to the ways in which what we see is learned and conditioned, and highlights our willing blindness to elements of the world around us. While Beszél and Ul Qoma are not georeferential locations—no reader expects to be able to travel to these extraordinary cities—the novel treats them seriously, and the geographic effect they represent can lead us to see the spaces of our everyday lives in new and different ways.

The work that these novels—and others like them—accomplish is not the same work as the medieval romances I have discussed in this dissertation. One significant difference is the solidification of the category of fiction. For all that contemporary novels may play with geography and ask us to experience the world afresh, we know from the start that Gaiman is not making factual claims about London and realize immediately that we will not locate Miéville's two cities on a map. Because of the readily accessibility of mapping, a clearer consciousness of

fictionality, and the development of modern forms of nationalism, the world has solidified in ways it had not for medieval English romances, taking on authoritative forms that can only be challenged at an explicitly fictional fictional remove. However, although the tools and expectations are different, the romance impulse to challenge conventional spatialities and ask readers to reconsider the world remains alive and well.

APPENDICES

Appendix A What Romance Readers Thought of Places

How much did medieval audiences of romance interest themselves in the places that their romances depicted? Reception remains an extraordinarily difficult problem in studying romances; even much about their audiences remains uncertain, except to say that they were heterogeneous. To the extent to which we are able to recover what medieval English audiences thought of their romances, we tend to know more about the reception of romance *heroes* than of particular texts. In discussing the genre of romance, I cited studies by Melissa Furrow and Yin Liu that attempt to identify what works would have constituted a corpus of romance for English medieval audiences using Lakoff's theory of radial categories. The lists both scholars work with are in fact lists of romance *heroes*: Isumbras, Guy, Arthur, etc.⁵²⁴ Many heroes featured in such lists—Guy, Bevis, Havelok, Tristrem, Lancelot—featured in romances written both in French and in English (the Middle English version often derived from the French), and there is often no way to tell which might be intended. And even the heroes of non-cyclical romances cannot necessarily be linked to a single Middle English text: Horn, for instance, is the hero of two rather different (though distantly related) romances, and *Octavian* exists in two independent translations from French, now called the Northern and Southern *Octavians*. Romances we know as singular texts could likewise once have existed in alternative renditions, now lost.⁵²⁵ While references in other texts and other media attest the popularity of characters and the knowledge of particular narrative episodes, we should be wary about assuming we know what text any particular mention refers to, and the writers who produced lists of romance heroes were not concerned with conveying that information.⁵²⁶

The evidence offered by Melissa Furrow in her recent and valuable study of the medieval reception of romance, *Expectations of Romance*, supports the sense that characters and their actions were the central points of interest for readers and the culture at large. Furrow cites familiar debates about the ethical effects of romances on their readers, noting that most medieval commentators agree that this is the essential question even if they disagree on the answer (41). Furrow notes various psychological reactions to romance, but most of the reading praxes she notes among medieval commentators are fundamentally grounded in reactions to characters. Romances, for instance, can model right behavior for those of knightly rank, or seduce readers into sinful behavior, especially through their eroticism. She demonstrates the broad exemplary capacity of romance by juxtaposing a series of medieval readings of the story of Tristan and Isolde, which see in the story of the two lovers everything from sexual sin to unfaithfulness to utter fidelity in love and even (in a slightly different direction) an exemplum of self-deception; John Gower alone offers at least four different takes on their story (ch. 4). Furrow's wide-ranging work takes in everything from the usefulness of diversion to debates over the historical factuality of romance narratives. But, fundamentally, romance emerges in her study as a way to learn about people and what they do, accumulating *mores* for imitation or refutation, and to shape one's own behavior.

Yet there are reasons to believe that readers did attend to the places in which the action of romances, or at least of the kinds of stories told in romances, unfolded. *Bevis of Hampton* offers a particularly striking example, making itself the origin for a real-world space by embedding the foundation of Arundel Castle in the story.⁵²⁷ As Jennifer Fellows has shown, traces of the story of Bevis came to mark the landscape of Southampton and Arundel Castle, as well as further afield; a site in London is said to mark Bevis's battle against the citizens of London ("Bevis in Popular,"

141-44). The ascription of Arundel Castle produced a more solid artifactual reality; from at latest 1662 a sword was shown as Bevis's at the castle (143). While most of Fellows's examples of the spatializing of the Bevis legend are post-medieval (though they could conceivably have begun well before they appear in print), a "Boefs Chastel" in Southampton is attested as early as 1331 (142); around the same time his Middle English romance was copied into the famed Auchinleck manuscript, the story of Bevis was influencing toponymy. Similarly, Robert Mannyng of Brunne reports in his 1338 translation of Peter Langtoft's *Chronicle* that the physical traces of Havelok are visible, both artifact (a stone he hurled) and architecture (the church where he married).⁵²⁸ The romance *Havelok* itself incorporates this kind of link between past and present, describing how the treacherous Godrich is burned at the stake in Lincoln at "a grene / Þat þare is yet, als Y wene" (*Havelok* 2829-30). The Grimsby Borough Seal, which dates from the thirteenth century, also famously depicts its legendary founder Grim together with Havleok and Goldeborw, further tying the story to civic space.⁵²⁹ Such archaeological attitudes to romance stories could even exert a direct physical influence on landscape architecture; as Robert Rouse notes, "the later Earls [of Warwick] . . . reshape[d] their own estates to fit with the internal topography of the narrative," in a process Rouse terms "'textualising' the landscape" (*Idea* 145).

Perhaps no other literary figure left such significant spatial traces as King Arthur. Caxton, indeed, turns to land as a specifically authenticating detail for the story of King Arthur.⁵³⁰ The printer reports being asked why he has not printed the story of Arthur, "a man borne wythin this royaume," when he has treated other, less pertinent narratives like that of Godfrey of Bologne. Caxton cites the widely-held opinion that Arthur (unmentioned in some chronicles) never lived at all, and that all books of his life (presumably including French romances, for the "hystorye of the Saynt Greal" has been twice invoked) are nought but "fayned and fables" However, Caxton's

interlocutors object that it is foolish to believe that Arthur did not exist: “in dyvers places of Englonde many remembraunces ben yet of hym, and shall remayne perpetuelly, and also of his knyghtes.” Caxton offers a catalog of places that confirm Arthur’s existence: his tomb at Glastonbury; his seal at Saint Edward’s shrine in Westminster Abbey; Gawain’s skull and Craddock’s mantle in the Castle of Dover; the Winchester Round Table; Lancelot’s sword and other “thynges” elsewhere; the ruins at the town of Camelot in Wales.⁵³¹ As the framing emphasizes, Arthur has a special status, a greater claim to be printed than other rulers, because he is tied to the space of England, and that space carries the traces of his existence. Caxton goes on to discuss the exemplary use of the book in the manner suggested by Furrow. But the warrant he offers for printing the most significant collection of Arthurian romance material assembled in English is the existence of Arthur in space.

All these traces, it’s important to remember, would not have seemed to people in the Middle Ages to be projections from romances onto a real terrain. Arthur, Gawain, Havelok, Bevis, Guy: all were understood as historical figures, people who had actually lived and moved within Britain in the past, so it was only natural that traces of their physical existence should endure. And the traditions behind these spatial identifications come from multiple kinds of sources, not necessarily merely romance. Most of the Arthurian relics might have been suggested by the chronicle tradition of Arthur’s life (though Lancelot’s sword, at least, presumably has its origin in writing we would identify as romance). Nancy Mason Bradbury has argued that Mannyng’s knowledge of the Havelok story came from local oral tradition that not only predated *Havelok the Dane* but was itself a source for the Middle English romance (120-21).⁵³² Nevertheless, these traditions show people tying specific places on the island to the geographic space created by romance. Whether reading about them in chronicles or romances, Arthur and

Bevis are figures who were *here* on the island, and who have left their traces across the landscape of Britain.

By far the most famous example of a medieval person's encounter with the place behind a story is the historian Wace's account of his travel to Brocéliande. In his *Roman de Rou*, Wace enumerates the troops rallying from many regions to support Duke William as he prepares to cross the Channel and seize England from King Harold. When he mentions the troops from Brocéliande, "donc Breton vont sovent fablant" ("about which the Bretons often tell stories," III.6374, p. 237), particularly the forest "qui en Bretagne est mult loee" ("which is highly praised in Brittany," III.6376, p. 237).⁵³³ Wace reports on the marvels to be found there, especially the fountain of Barenton, where hunters would pour water onto a stone to bring rain, as well as the fairies once seen there. Drawn by such stories, Wace reports, he himself traveled there:

La alai jo merveilles querre,
vi la forest e vi la terre,
merveilles quis, mais nes trovai,
fol m'en revinc, fol i alai.
(III.6393-96)

I went there in search of marvels; I saw the forest and the land and looked for marvels, but found none. I came back as a fool and went as a fool. (p. 237)

Wace represents his imagination of Brocéliande as being informed by the stories he has heard about the land, and expresses a poignant disappointment at not finding what he expected. Wace is also not writing as a reader of romance; he makes reference to Breton folklore rather than to literary narratives. But with Wace's experience, we are within the sphere of romance; slightly after Wace recorded these recollections, Chrétien de Troyes adopted similar legends in incorporating Brocéliande into the topography of his romance *Le chevalier au lion*.⁵³⁴ While Wace does not provide direct evidence for the understanding of romance, he articulates (and

rejects) a model for experiencing stories, a model in which insufficient distinction between “fable” and truth expresses itself in seeing a place through the lens of story.⁵³⁵

None of these accounts of medieval spatial experience constitutes direct evidence for how a romance reader understood the connection between text and world, for we cannot confidently trace any of these references specifically to a romance; the heroes of the Matters of Britain and “England” had independent lives in historical and legendary narratives, and both people and places might be incorporated into romance on the basis of preexisting folk traditions. Nevertheless, they strongly suggest that readers in such an environment would be primed to connect romance places with the solid geospatial world, to connect such narratives with landscapes that bore the traces of stories. Perhaps the strongest evidence for the spatial interest of romance readers is the insistence with which romances themselves name places. There seems little reason for the Auchinleck manuscript to rewrite classical tradition in *Sir Orfeo* by suggesting that Traciens (Thrace) was an old name for Winchester if the redactor did not expect that readers would connect the story with the place, linking its king with an important Anglo-Saxon royal city while simultaneously endowing the city with a new veneer of fairy.⁵³⁶ The purposeful changes in place-names between the Anglo-Norman and Middle English accounts of Bevis of Hampton (discussed in Chapter 4) likewise indicate that names carried meanings and associations, and authors expected audiences to respond to them. Medieval audiences seem to have been prepared to accept the mutual impress of texts and the world.

Appendix B Quyting the Parson

As we saw in Chapter 2, the Parson's Prologue reorients the trajectory of pilgrimage away from the geospatial world of the English landscape and toward the spiritual. Many modern readers of Chaucer have been uncomfortable with the way the spatial transformation of the Parson's Prologue seems to reject what has gone before, and even early readers did not consistently accept this retreat from topology to tropology. The evidence of two prominent fifteenth-century continuations of the *Tales*, John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* and the reworking of the *Canterbury Tales* in Alnwick, Duke of Northumberland MS 455⁵³⁷ (which introduced the Tale of Beryn preceded by an interlude in Canterbury itself), demonstrates that the worldly, geographic notion of pilgrimage continued to exert a powerful draw for at least some of Chaucer's early readers. Both tales begin with the pilgrims in Canterbury, having presumably arrived at the end of Chaucer's work. Indeed, the "Canterbury Interlude" preceding the Tale of Beryn shows an investment in geographical precision, imitating Chaucer's beginning of the *Canterbury Tales* at the Tabard Inn by situating the action in Canterbury at the "Cheker of the Hope" (14).⁵³⁸ To provide a license for telling further tales, both the *Siege of Thebes* and the Tale of Beryn imagine the beginning of the journey home from Canterbury. The ways in which these continuations deploy geography are instructive, for they can tell us something about how readers who rejected the Parson's efforts to spiritualize Canterbury away understood space to work. They suggest that geographic space is fundamentally worldly space, in some ways antithetical to the spiritualizing aims of the pilgrimage that must cross it.

Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, which simultaneously furnishes a sequel to the *Canterbury Tales* and a prequel to the Knight's Tale, explicitly brings the pilgrimage back into the solid, quotidian, geographical world after the spiritualizing abstraction of the Parson's Tale. It

circulated largely independently of the *Canterbury Tales*, though it is appended to the *Canterbury Tales* in five manuscripts (Bowers, “*Tale*,” 39). A slavish (though not, Bowers suggests, particularly attentive) imitator of Chaucer,⁵³⁹ Lydgate adopts his master’s framework for linking tale-telling with progress along the road, even pausing to give geographic indicators as he transitions between parts of the tale.⁵⁴⁰

While Lydgate does not make as much imaginative hay of the frame-narrative as does the Beryn-poet, his act in taking up the return journey reattaches the end of the *Canterbury Tales* to the world (Canterbury is just another place with an inn, where the pilgrims are “wel logged on and all” [67]). Indeed, Lydgate’s text turns away from the Parson’s ending, or at least to celebrates more what came before. Though he includes among his list of material in Chaucer’s collection tales “of parfit holynesse” (24), his greater affection seems to be for tales “also in soth / of Ribaudye” (25), and the pilgrims he actually names in his prologue—the Cook, the Miller, the Reeve and the Pardoner—are among the lively characters celebrated by modern readers, including all three fabliau-tellers of Fragment I (but not the Knight), while the pious Parson is utterly absent.⁵⁴¹ Lydgate’s main object of admiration in his prologue is “hym þat was . . . [/] Floure of Poetës / thorghout al breteyne” (39-40), but while he speaks briefly of “Voyding the Chaf” (55, borrowing from the pseudo-moralizing conclusion to the Nun’s Priest’s Tale, VIII.3443), his chief interest seems to be in Chaucer the poet and storyteller (exemplary in the *land*), not the prose moralist.

Even Lydgate’s own entry into the conceit of the pilgrimage undercuts the efforts of the Parson’s Prologue to replace the *Canterbury Tales* with a spiritual journey. Lydgate writes that he has just entered Canterbury, “After siknesse / my vowës to aquyte” (72),⁵⁴² when he “of Fortunë / took myn Inne anon [/] Wher þe pylgrymes / were logged euerichon” (77-8). The Host urges

Lydgate to dine with him, tempting him with descriptions of sumptuous food, drink, and the comforts of bed, and declares, “And ȝe shal home ridē with vs to-morowe” (106). And Lydgate agrees! The promise of inclusion in the return journey to London, of remaining within the framework of the world and joining the tale-telling competition, cuts off Lydgate’s pilgrimage.⁵⁴³ When the Host declares, “Thow shalt be boundē / to a newē lawe” (130), he refers not to a law of religious devotion but to the equalizing law of tale-telling.⁵⁴⁴ Lydgate’s adoption of the geographic conceit of the Canterbury frame-narrative thus corresponds with the broader relationship between his text and Chaucer’s: he adopts Chaucer’s interest in play while rejecting the moralizing rewriting that comes at the end of the Canterbury project and seeks to move its journey from the world into the spiritual realm.

If Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes* negates the Parson’s Prologue by extending the Canterbury project into the return from Canterbury, as originally projected by the Host in the General Prologue, the reworking of the *Canterbury Tales* in the Northumberland manuscript represents an even more dramatic reconsideration of the role of Canterbury and of the geography of the pilgrimage. The manuscript is most famous as the sole witness for the Merchant’s (non-Chaucerian) *Tale of Beryn* and for the “Canterbury Interlude,” or Prologue to the *Tale of Beryn*, a narrative episode in the frame-story that sees the pilgrims into Canterbury and recounts their deeds there.⁵⁴⁵ But the Northumberland MS represents a much more dramatic reworking of the Canterbury collection than merely adding a tale: rather than furnishing a sequel to the *Canterbury Tales*, as does the *Siege of Thebes*, the Interlude and *Beryn* provide a new middle for the pilgrimage, for the redactor has restructured the *Canterbury Tales* to distribute the tales over both the journey to Canterbury and the return trip to London.⁵⁴⁶ (*Beryn* is the only new tale added; the rest are rearranged.) While critics concerned with Chaucer’s canonical arrangement of

tales have seen the Northumberland MS as disorderly and unplanned, others have recognized care and skill in the rearrangement. Bowers notes that the new ordering of tales serves the interests of geographic verisimilitude, making sense of some of Chaucer's apparently conflicting spatial indicators ("Tale," 33-35). Andrew Higl, meanwhile, suggests that dividing the pilgrimage into two journeys—one from London to Canterbury, one returning to London—is thematically useful; he argues that the journey to Canterbury is more associated with tales of *solaas*, while the return trip contains more tales of *sentence* (83).⁵⁴⁷

The arrangement of tales as they now stand in the Northumberland MS is the product of an unknowable number of individuals.⁵⁴⁸ One of the few certainties is that scribe of the manuscript did not author the *Tale of Beryn*, which antedates the manuscript by about forty years. But we cannot be certain in what form the Northumberland scribe encountered this text, although it has generally been assumed that its prologue was attached in the exemplar. Nor do we know for certain whether the prologue and tale were written by the same person. And we have no way to determine whether the Northumberland manuscript's scribe is responsible for the innovative arrangement of the tales or whether they were arranged so in his exemplar—although Higl has argued that other manuscripts in his hand show him to be capable of rethinking and reworking his material in the manner we have here. This version of the Canterbury pilgrimage is almost certainly a compound product combining multiple narrative innovations, irreducible to any single intention.

The Interlude resonates with Lydgate's rewriting with the end of the *Canterbury Tales* in transforming Canterbury from an unreachable objective, a goal for which the Celestial Jerusalem may become a substitute, into a solid, earthly city that can be not only entered but also left again.⁵⁴⁹ It sees the pilgrims into Canterbury and describes their doings in the town: devotions at

Becket's shrine, certainly, but also sightseeing and amusement. This Interlude does not restrict itself to matters holy, but imagines Chaucer's pilgrims behaving much as historical pilgrims might well have behaved on a visit to an unfamiliar town. As if to quash any notion that Canterbury is strictly a destination for holiness and not a worldly town, the Pardoner engages in fabliau-style sexual misadventures in which he attempts to bed a woman named Kit. The Interlude gives more room to devotional consideration than did Lydgate—we actually hear how the pilgrims “Kneled adown tofore the shryne, and hertlich hir bedes / They preyd to Seynt Thomas, in such wise as they couth” (164-65)—but the text almost immediately undercuts this pious scene as the Miller and Pardoner steal pilgrim-badges and the Summoner attempts to get in on their racket. Like Lydgate's continuation, the Interlude glories in Chaucer's least savory pilgrims, and their behavior affirms the status of Canterbury: a site for devotion, yes, but a city of the world, and one very fully realized in the Interlude, including its own inn to complement the Tabard.

The Northumberland MS does not appear to subvert Chaucer's plan for the tales completely. If Higl is correct, the pilgrims' time in Canterbury has not been without merit, and they return to London telling more somber and sententious tales. In fact, the Parson's Tale still ends the collection, but it is now told as the pilgrims are approaching London, rather than Canterbury. Unfortunately, the end of the tale is lost, so we cannot know whether the manuscript would have ratified the moralizing of the Parson by concluding with the Retraction.⁵⁵⁰ But, with his statements placed on the return journey, the Parson eclipses the geography of pilgrimage much less. Canterbury itself has proven to be a place where the worldly and the holy coexist, and the pilgrims are returning to the urban, worldly space whether the game began. Even as it retains Chaucer's final tale, the Northumberland MS works to privilege the world of geographic space.

In imagining the return journey, both texts offer a very different spatial model than that of the *Canterbury Tales* as we have it today.⁵⁵¹ By valuing the geography-effect and insisting on the literal worldliness of Canterbury as a place for amusement as much as holiness, these continuations reveal that the Parson's Prologue does not necessarily succeed in *rewriting* pilgrimage for readers of the *Canterbury Tales*. Instead, it offers another model for pilgrimage, layered with the prevailing sense of movement within the world; the two coexist, one atop the other. Just as the General Prologue wavers between imagining the pilgrimage as general and specific, so too does the collection as a whole waver between worldly (geographic) and spiritual, without definitively settling on one. But the fact that authors and compilers felt the need to make such adjustments suggests that audiences in the fifteenth century recognized the tendency of the Parson's discourse to pull away from the geospatial world.

Notes

¹ I refer to the writing of the history of the nation in multiple senses. As students of medievalism have demonstrated, the projects of historical and philological scholarship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were rooted in nationalism and served as tools of nationalist ideologies. More recent work has turned to a critical study of the formation of nationalist attitudes and the ethnic biases and historical exclusions that support them (see for example Geary ch. 1 on Europe and Warren, “Medievalism” on its colonies). The study of the medieval nation has things to contribute to both histories. On the one hand, by establishing the existence of national communities in the medieval past, it extends national history, projecting an impression of continuity, linking national communities and ideologies of almost a millennium ago with those still existing today; a long tradition of comments like those by Madden in the epigraph link the cultural products of the past to the national present in ways that make the nation seem timeless and necessary. On the other hand, by focusing on the processes that produce these communities (within the culture at large, through specific administrative policies, and under the pens of individual authors), studies of medieval nationhood reveal the nation as a construct, not a natural phenomenon, and call attention to the mechanisms (often including exclusion and violence) that underlie this construct even in the premodern era. The influence of postcolonial methodologies on medieval studies has been particularly productive in this regard.

² See Ingham, *Sovereign*; Lavezzo, *Imagining*; Lavezzo, *Angels*.

³ See also Crofts and Rouse: “As more work has been performed upon the romances of English heroes, a clearer—or perhaps murkier—picture of the nature of medieval Englishness has begun to emerge: one that is complicated by ties between England and the continent, regionalisms within England itself, and even worrying similarities with the Saracen Other” (82). I doubt, however, whether nation in the modern era has ever actually been uncomplicated or “homogenous,” the adjective Crofts and Rouse apply to characterize Benedict Anderson’s notion of the nation as “imagined community.”

⁴ This particular comment applies to the composition of the prominent 2001 essay collection *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (Cohen), but Gaunt extends similar criticisms to other work taking monolingual and monocultural approaches to “postcolonial” medieval literatures, particularly singling out monolingual Anglo-centrism.

⁵ Turville-Petre’s analysis of *Havelok* as interested in the construction of the nation preceded *England the Nation*, first published in “*Havelok*.”

⁶ For Anderson’s comments on the novel, see 24-36.

⁷ See Ingham, *Sovereign*; Heng, *Empire*; Rouse, *Idea*; this is only a sampling of the books that have appeared on the subject, and does not count numerous essays. The nation has become a sufficiently central critical issue that chapters on the nation have become *de rigueur* in introductory guides to Middle English literature: see for example Butterfield, “Nationhood”; Crofts and Rouse; Lavezzo, “Nation.” The studies of Ingham, Heng, and Rouse, along with

Turville-Petre and others, highlight the relationship between romance and historical writing; I discuss this relationship below.

⁸ On the romance genre as offering freedom from the demand of absolute veracity even when dealing with historical subject matter, see Strohm, “*Storie*,” 355. On the notion that repeated patterns in romances encode social messages, see Wittig 125-26, 134.

⁹ Speed says of the “Matter of England,” “most of its constituent texts create myths of origin for the emergent nation” (“Construction,” 145). However, Rosalind Field, in a valuable essay outlining the history of the term, argues persuasively that the “Matter of England” texts do not possess any coherence as a group, and that there is no reason to believe medieval audiences thought of them as such (“Curious”). The existence of several lists of of romance heroes that group English heroes together offers some evidence that audiences associated these stories (see the lists reproduced in Liu 348-50: Bevis and Guy are always listed together, and Havelok, Horn, and Wade constitute a trio in the *Laud Troy Book*; the association of Bevis with Guy and Wade, as well as Lancelot, in the dragon-fighting scene of *Bevis of Hampton* offers another example [Kölbing 2603-08]), but Speed’s broader point that the “Matter of England” does not constitute a corpus as do the traditional three matters should make us cautious about assuming these texts function together in any programmatic manner.

¹⁰ It is worth noting, however, that Bly Calkin grounds her argument in part on the widely acknowledged English focus of the Auchinleck manuscript; her project is to explain the preoccupation with Saracens in this markedly English context. The Auchinleck manuscript itself marks the end of the early, spatially focused era of Middle English romance for Speed. These romances still emerge from a context that Speed identifies as self-consciously national. While Bly Calkin’s methodologies could be applied to other romances, it would be significantly more difficult in a context not already marked by Englishness to establish that Saracens figure problems of English, rather than Christian or European, identity.

¹¹ See Sparke. As Sparke explains, nation is a product of nationalism that is nevertheless imagined by nationalists to precede and underwrite national community; geography often plays a foundational role in producing the idea of the nation. The facility with which “nation” and “country” can be substituted in everyday speech underscores the extent to which nation is today a spatial (and political) concept.

¹² “In the search for definitions of Englishness that takes place in these works, writers pick out three principal criteria, representing the nation in terms of its territory, its people, and its language. We are English first because we inhabit England, second because we are the descendants of the first English settlers, and thirdly because we speak the language of England” (*England* 14).

¹³ On the emergence of the term *England* (or *Engla lond*) and its negotiation of ethnic and geographic identity, see Wormald; Foot 129, 132; Beech. The ambiguous function of *England* is visible in the contrast between the titles of two important books medieval English nationalism: Turville-Petre’s *England the Nation* and the essay collection edited by Kathy Lavezzo, *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*. Lavezzo’s title deploys *English* adjectivally: a nation of English character, or perhaps of the English people. By contrast, Turville-Petre’s title has an authoritative

solidity. But what *is* Turville-Petre's England? A geographical space? A political entity? A people? Something of all of those, which is exactly his point. The name England most obviously invokes geography, but that geography acts in support of something more complicated and compound.

¹⁴ Consider, for instance, Kofi Campbell's postcolonial analysis of *Bevis of Hampton* as a nation-building text instructing its audience in the contours of Englishness; Bevis himself is an English colonizer. Campbell first argues that the narration of the tale constructs an English audience by addressing them collectively in the English language (210-14). However, he adds, "what we are about to hear is not a tale only about Christianity, but specifically about *English* Christianity, a fact made more apparent by the tale's English hero, and its beginning and concluding in England" (213-14); the tale's geography and the origin of its hero confirm the community established by language as an overt concern for the tale. *Bevis* is, in fact, more explicitly concerned with England as a spatial and social category than many of the texts examined in this dissertation. But even in *Bevis*, the situation is more complicated, as we will see in Chapter 4. For Campbell, England, in its geographic presence, seems to play a defining and unifying role in the character of the poem. Campbell notes the "parade of familiar place-names" in the poem, including Hampton, Nottingham, and London, but these, because they are familiar to English audience members, only serve to heighten the romance's Englishness for Campbell, and do not exert any particular spatial pull of their own (214).

¹⁵ Scholars have long argued that *King Horn* has a British setting even though its place-names are indefinite, as we will see in Chapter 1. But in a slip I find quite suggestive, Dominique Battles implies that England is actually one of the places named in the poem, which it is not: "place names (Westernes, Sudene), with the exception of 'England' and 'Ireland,' do not correspond clearly with any historical people or places" (18). The quotation marks may be intended (confusingly) to flag England as a term not drawn from the poem's lexis, but in any case Battles's usage gives "England" equal semantic status with "Ireland," a place that is named in the poem (as *Irelonde*). Battles is arguing that *King Horn* encodes and preserves multiple phases of the Anglo-Saxon past, and in so doing, she reshapes the poem's geography in light of that past—an impulse that seems to me to occur in many readers of medieval English romance.

¹⁶ Originally published in French as *La géocritique: réel, fiction, espace* (2007), translated by Robert T. Tally as *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011).

¹⁷ See Tally's comments in "On Geocriticism," 3; *Spatiality* 140-43. Prieto accepts Westphal's call for a geocentered approach that moves beyond studies of individual authors or works, but argues that such approaches need not be applied to the study of individual places; he suggests that alternative approaches, such as studying types of place or spatial practice across an array of works, can contribute equally to the project of understanding the relationship of consciousness, representation, and the world.

For a very succinct statement of the main principles of Westphal's geocriticism, see Westphal, "Foreword," xiv. A longer elaboration of the practices I discuss below is found in Westphal, *Geocriticism* ch. 4. The current study differs in several regards from the program of geocriticism outlined by Westphal. In particular, my dissertation does not attend to the *polysensoriality* of textual places; romances are often sparse in sensory detail beyond the visual, and many of the large-scale places I describe (regions, countries) are not experienced in a

sensory manner. (Sten Pultz Moslund has discussed how bare place-names and ordinary vocabulary can evoke the experience of a place, but it is of course substantially more difficult to recover these associations for medieval audiences.) The *generic* absence of sensory detail highlights another way in which my project differs from Westphal's. Westphal calls for *multifocalization*—bringing together many different representations of a place from a number of authors and times and in a variety of modes, from novelistic representation to the tourist brochure, in order to present a full and comparative view of the place. Rather than doing a full-scale geocriticism of Britain in the fashion of Westphal, I rather use geocritical methods to expose the methods by which a particular subset of literature invokes and manipulates place.

¹⁸ For a detailed taxonomy of referentiality in the spatial representations of literature, see Westphal, *Geocriticism* ch. 3.

¹⁹ For Soja's account of these "spaces of representation," see 67-68. "Spaces of representation" are a key model for Soja of the vast and slightly nebulous concept that is thirdspace; he draws this model from Lefebvre, who outlines the three forms of space discussed here at 38-39. (Soja replaces the term "representational spaces" employed in the English translation of Lefebvre with his preferred translation, "spaces of representation"; see Soja 61.) The term "real-and-imagined" as a descriptor for thirdspace is found in Soja's subtitle and first appears in the book at 11.

²⁰ Defining what constitutes a representation of a place is a complicated problem. The 2012 exhibition at the British Library entitled "Writing Britain: Wastelands to Wonderlands," which seems to me an example of a geocritical project, brought together all-encompassing views of Britain like Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* with accounts of local places and even the fantastical otherworlds of Lewis Carroll and J. R. R. Tolkien; as the author of the exhibit's companion volume describes its range, "It tells of rural dreams of Arcadia and odes to romantically gothic landscapes, of toiling farmers and the lowering threat of dark satanic mills. It moves from the seaside to the river bank, and into densely populated cityscapes that can be both threateningly dangerous and culturally vibrant" (Hardyment 9). The exhibition demonstrated compellingly that all these representational artifacts contribute to the complex and plural sense of place of this "country of dramatic contrasts" (Hardyment 9). But many of the representations selected by the curators do not take Britain or England as an explicit referent; they treat places local or imagined without reference to a larger insular framework. Such representations may well belong to a thorough geocritical treatment of Britain, but how to select and define them when they do not define themselves as such is, I would argue, a difficult theoretical question. I focus on texts that make moves to link their narrative places to the physical space of the island; other approaches might allow an even wider range of perspectives to be brought together.

²¹ Of course, referring simply to "the island" and "insular space" has its own drawbacks, most notably that the world has *many* islands. Still, I think it worth the risk of ambiguity to preserve the openness of a landmass that may be conceived of as British (for example, by Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*), or as English (a name often applied to the island as a whole both in medieval historiography and in modern informal speech), or perhaps as Anglo-Scottish (as Scotland prepares to vote on the question of independence), but is not fundamentally, spatially any of those things. I of course refer to Britain and England when historically appropriate, and I also sometimes find this vocabulary unavoidable for the sake of clarity.

²² For example, the tradition of descriptions of Britain, rooted in classical geography and frequently appearing as prefaces to chronicle accounts. That Britain is an island, and its boundaries can for the most part be marked off by water, perhaps gives it better-defined contours than many places.

²³ Hanna calls our attention to “the polyvocal and individual voices of discrete local/regional literary cultures,” decentering fourteenth-century London to treat it as just one such a community in the face of thriving “provincial” literary cultures (*London* 3); elsewhere, he notes that “Book history . . . may generate information capable of prioritizing diverse notions of local literary community” and urges scholars to replace the “literary history of late medieval England” with “variously fractured local histories” (“Middle,” 174). Barrett, taking up the literature of Chester, describes “the irregular distribution of periodization across English space: the historical changes we identify as period markers do not take place inside a single homogenous space, but within a heterogeneous England divided into an assemblage of ‘parcellized sovereignties’,” with the regional possessing “simultaneous awareness of local and national contexts” (13, 17). Both take aim at traditional national literary histories, grounding their projects in particular local geographies that seek to counter the homogenizing effects of a national focus.

²⁴ See Warren, *History*; Ingham, *Sovereign*.

²⁵ In introducing the essay collection that he nicknames the “Infinite Realms Project”—a volume which assertively seeks to push postcolonial medievalism beyond its nation-centricity—Cohen points out that the fourfold division of the islands today is by no means natural or necessary; English, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are constituents of an archipelago that only gradually resolved into its modern political form (“Introduction,” 5).

²⁶ In contrast to the regional focus of Hanna and Barrett, Butterfield writes instead from what we might consider an international perspective, arguing that boundaries of language, territory, and identity were unstable and fluid throughout the Middle Ages (especially during the Hundred Years’ War, the period Butterfield describes in *The Familiar Enemy*), and that the sharp delineation of authors like Chaucer as “English” is possible only retrospectively. All these critics begin in the geography and history of the real world and use outside categories to challenge the alignment of literature with “English.”

²⁷ The following discussion is based primarily on the classic study of the Middle English word *romance* in Strohm, “Origin”.

²⁸ However, Strohm is careful to point out that these components are not necessary elements of romance, and that amorous romances are only a subset of the genre as a whole (“Origin,” 11-12). See also Furrow, *Expectations* ch. 3 on the capaciousness of romance in England; Furrow notes that the English romance incorporated the material of what was in French literature the separate and competing genre of *chanson de geste*.

²⁹ See Hume 158-59; Barron 208.

³⁰ See Liu; Furrow, “Radial”; Furrow, *Expectations* 51-71. Liu and Furrow are not the first to propose this sort of approach to romance. For instance, Ad Putter comments that “In

Wittgenstein's terminology, romance is a 'family-resemblance' category: we should think of them as forming a complex network of relationships and similarities, not as a set that can be defined on the basis of specific properties common to each of its members" (Putter and Gilbert 2). Similarly, Helen Cooper observes, "Drawing up a list of the common features that cumulatively indicate family resemblance, generic identity, for romances presents few problems so long as one bears that caveat in mind: that no single one is essential for definition or recognition taken individually" (*English* 9). But Liu and Furrow make a particularly significant contribution in applying the theory to medieval catalogues of romances, demonstrating some of the specific associations that held the category of romance together.

³¹ D. H. Green, for instance, defines the rise of Matter of Britain romances in twelfth-century France and Germany as an explicit and self-conscious move away from history and from historical writing and as an emergence of fiction (168-87).

³² Susan Crane's *Insular Romance* is a particularly foundational study; Crane focuses especially on the relationship between romance and history in her first two chapters.

³³ And their credibility did not stop with the Middle Ages; Jennifer Fellows notes that some writers were willing to consider as late as the mid-nineteenth century the possibility that Bevis of Hampton was a historical figure ("Bevis in Popular," 141).

³⁴ "Bot I haf grete ferly, þat I fynd no man, / Þat has writen in story, how Hanelok þis lond wan. / Noþer Gildas, no Bede, no Henry of Huntinton, / No William of Malmesbiri, ne Pers of Bridlynton / . . . / Bot þat þis lowed men vpon Inglish tellis, / Right story can me not ken, þe certeynte what spellis" (*Peter Langtoft* 25). Mannyng's comments, of course, are double-edged; while he would expect to find a historical source for a hero of such popular reputation, the range of authorities assembled emphasizes the lack of authoritative support for the Havelok story, and ultimately leads Mannyng to omit the episode from his own history: "Sen I fynd non redy, þat tellis of Hanelok kynde, / Turne we to þat story, þat we writen fynde" (26).

³⁵ See Rouse, *Idea* 57-58.

³⁶ This contract is, presumably, the reason William of Newburgh and Gerald de Barri respond so sharply to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. On the truth-claims of chronicle, see Given-Wilson ch. 1; as Given-Wilson says, historical writing was "distinct from other forms of literature, and what especially distinguished it was its claim to be presenting the truth" (1). Furrow has shown that romances and romance readers, too, were concerned with the truth, but there were many kinds of romance truths, including ethical and religious truths, which were compatible with fictional narratives (*Expectations* ch. 5). While chronicles might also be interested in such forms of truth, a sense of historical accuracy is a *sine qua non* of chronicle in a way it is not of romance.

³⁷ Strohm notes that some romances, like John Barbour's *Bruce* and *King Alisaunder*, did make explicit truth-claims ("Origin," 19-20). Much more common are references to source materials; formulae like "þe romounce telleþ" (from the Auchinleck *Bevis*), Strohm says, are how the word *romance* entered English ("Origin," 8). These references are double-edged: they ascribe events

reported in the text to an outside authority, but they also distance claims about what happened from the author.

³⁸ So effective were the openings linking individual romances to larger tradition that romances sometimes employed them even when superfluous. *Sir Degrevant*, for example, tells a story independent of characters or elements from any of the cycles, but its opening lines establish that Degrevant was a knight of the Round Table and received his estate from Arthur; this immediately establishes Degrevant's knightly *bona fides* even though no part of the Arthurian story will intersect with *Degrevant's* narrative again. (Degrevant is described as Arthur's nephew, and his name may be a corruption of Agrivaine; he is also mentioned by name in Malory. See Davenport 115 and n. 10. However, even if this connection is intended, it hardly affects the superfluosity of the Arthurian graft, for the identification of the romance's hero with Agrivaine does not add any significance.)

³⁹ If we understand the story of Guy of Warwick to constitute a single romance, for instance, it focuses on the deeds of two generations: Guy and his son Reinbrun. However, I am more inclined to view the Auchinleck *Guy* as consisting of three separate romances (all deriving from a common Anglo-Norman source): a romance of Guy's winning of Felice in couplets; a second of his career as a Christian knight in tail-rhyme (the transition signalled by a change of script as well as of verse form), and a third of his son Reinbrun (clearly articulated as a separate romance by a rubricated title and an opening illumination). That these three romances descend in common from the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* (the Middle English version disentangling the deeds of Reinbrun, which are interspersed with those of Guy in the original) may suggest an impulse in English-language romance toward briefer, more self-contained plots.

⁴⁰ On the passage of dominion topos, see Leckie, which discusses the change in the island's name in the context of individual histories throughout the book. As Jeffrey J. Cohen reminds us, the absolute separation of Britons and English that underlies such periodization narratives is a construct whose fundamentally artificial nature is evident even in the work of the historians themselves; see *Hybridity* ch. 2.

⁴¹ Indeed, Westphal goes on to suggest that studies of general, "thematic" spaces like the desert "might serve as theoretical frameworks for studies of more specific geographical referents." However, many of the scene-spaces of romance seem to be incompatible with this kind of analysis in Westphal's view: he excludes from consideration "nongeographical places," citing as an example the "intimate, domestic spaces" analyzed by Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*.

⁴² From the British Library Digital Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=44477>>, retrieved 28 May 2014. This image has been released under a Public Domain Mark by the British Library.

⁴³ From the British Library Digital Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=43424>>, retrieved 4 Apr. 2014. This image has been released under a Public Domain Mark by the British Library.

⁴⁴ The itinerary does not unfold along a single line; some segments depict multiple routes, running in parallel as roads join and split at particular cities. Nevertheless, the dominant spatial

logic is vertical on the page and axial; roads diverge to permit alternate routes, rather than to place all the points in a planar relationship.

⁴⁵ Paris's map emphasizes the length of travel between sites; the frequent annotation *Iurnee*, written in red ink between the parallel vertical lines that mark out the road, marks off the itinerary in segments typically lasting a day of travel.

⁴⁶ From the British Library Digital Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=43382>>, retrieved 4 Apr. 2014. This image has been released under a Public Domain Mark by the British Library.

⁴⁷ Cooper focuses on scene-space in the context of her broad study, which takes in Renaissance romance as well as medieval romance of all varieties. She notes that "The romances most likely to name familiar places are those that serve a genealogical function," while "The characteristic setting for a quest romance is most simply described as *somewhere else*" (*English* 71). However, while the linearity of travel holds in scene-space and geographic space alike, different levels of spatial solidity produce very different impressions of place in the reader: romances consisting largely of unnamed scene-spaces can take on an arbitrary, almost symbolic quality while those heavy with named places retain a sense of precision (even if the names are unknown).

⁴⁸ The classic description of interlace is found in Vinaver ch. 5.

⁴⁹ See Rudd 53-54.

⁵⁰ "So mony meruayl bi mount þer þe mon fyndez / Hit were to fore to telle of þe tenþe dole" (Andrew and Waldron 207-300, ll. 718-19). For "contrayez straunge," see l. 713.

⁵¹ However, cf. Atkinson. Atkinson approaches ballad place-names as an editorial problem, and argues that in order to facilitate reference, editors should distinguish place-names with referential value and regularize them; place-names in some contexts, especially historical, "have a *prima facie* referentiality, which the vagaries of the singer or reciter's pronunciation, or the collector's orthography, are quite without authority to change" (260). Atkinson insists on the importance of making such distinction for the purposes of reference, but also suggests that "ballad precedent," along with other factors, can help us be attentive to whether apparently "new" place-names belong to different objects even in the the imagination of singers and listeners (268). The distinction between the perspectives of Nicolaisen and Atkinson is in part a matter of audience: Nicolaisen considers how the singers and listeners of ballads experience places, while Atkinson considers the ballad from the researcher's perspective. But the difference points to broader theoretical questions: if a clearly georeferential place is unrecognized by the singer and the audience in a particular performance, is it still there? In Chapter 1, I will argue that Westernesse has taken on a life of its own in *King Horn* even though it may derive from *Westir*, a place the *Romance of Horn*, one of *King Horn*'s close analogues, identifies with Ireland.

⁵² Susan Wittig argues that this pattern, which she terms broadly "separation–reclamation," is one of the two fundamental patterns structuring Middle English romance (together with "love–marriage"); the spatial logic of the pattern is part of what defines romance for Wittig's purposes (175-78). Wittig's analysis excludes cyclical romances (most notably for my purposes all

Arthurian stories), which according to Wittig operate on different structural principles; she also relies entirely upon the catalogue in *MWME*. Accordingly, her observations do not encompass the whole range of materials identified by modern scholars (or by medieval readers) as romances. Nevertheless, her observations point to the central role that space and travel play in romance narratives, and movement also plays a prominent role in subgroups not discussed by Wittig: many Arthurian romances, for example, operate essentially on a separation–reclamation pattern as a knight leaves the court in the face of a challenge and ultimately returns (think of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, or the doubled separation–reclamation in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Le chevalier au lion* and its Middle English derivative, *Ywain and Gawain*). Other major patterns inherited from continental romance, the quest and errantry, are likewise fundamentally about movement.

⁵³ It is perhaps noteworthy that both *Gamelyn* and *Degrevant* are relatively local romances in terms of the array of space they depict: both concern estates, rather than counties or kingdoms, and so the places in both are closely identified with their owners; perhaps, accordingly, they need no independent geographic markers.

⁵⁴ That the naming of places is a particular characteristic of English romances and not simply intrinsic to all types of narratives of travel is clear through a comparison to folktale. Romances share plot features with folk narratives (for a motif-based collation see Bordman). But Nicolaisen has noted that folktale spaces tend to be acartographic, naming relatively few places; even those “legend-like” place-names folktales do offer are “only a named ‘beyond the beyond’” (“Past,” 5). Romances, by contrast, tend insistently to name places.

⁵⁵ In discussing *Richard*’s “combination of historical and romantic materials,” Lillian Hornstein notes its “accurate reference to geography” (160).

⁵⁶ Audiences mapped the events related in *Bevis of Hampton* onto the landscapes of Southampton, Arundel Castle, etc. Nicolaisen argues that place is essential to imagining the past: “The past as place is the arena in which the past as time is allowed to create itself; past space makes past time possible” (“Past,” 13).

⁵⁷ Horsfall notes that as a consequence, scholars are likely to understand much less about these places than any member of the poem’s original audience: “today’s merely academic readers (who may be less richly blessed with miscellaneous learning in theology, geography, history, architecture and archaeology, genealogy and biography . . .) will be hard pressed to conjure up the full dimensions and wider parameters of all this accumulation of allusion and information, the growing weight and ever-expanding definition of the associative charge carried by the majority of the toponyms they encounter” (306–07, ellipsis in the original). Our lack of knowledge about what toponyms would have meant to early audiences is a constant problem in scholarship and will be a major issue in this dissertation; in some cases, we cannot even tell for certain whether or not a poem’s audiences would have recognized a given place-name, or where they would have understood it to be located if they did. Our comparative ignorance is part of why it’s essential to allow the texts’ own spatial vocabularies to shape our reading; Chaucer’s insistence on referring to Northumberland by its regionally specific, historical name or the coincidence between the name of Westernesse and *King Horn*’s pervasive western orientation are obscured if we assume these textual geographies are supposed to decode into configurations we

recognize, but the language of space provides essential information about how the textual spaces were deployed by their authors and how they might have been received by their early readers.

⁵⁸ On the role of the senses in the literature of place, see Westphal, *Geocriticism* 131-36.

⁵⁹ See Westphal, *Geocriticism* ch. 3.

⁶⁰ This last phenomenon is how Westphal accounts for utopian writing as well as fantasy and science fiction: “the narrative unfolds at the margins of the referent or around a projected referent in a derealized future” (*Geocriticism* 109). Such spaces are still actually (and not just virtually) referential, for they refer to readers’ experience of the world, just without collating specific locations. Identifying such spaces, which Westphal terms “utopian,” is more difficult in the narratives I deal with than in the more modern literature on which Westphal focuses; we may in most cases be able to dismiss fairylands as not intended to belong to the familiar, everyday world, but unrecognizable place-names might or might not have been meant to invoke particular places.

⁶¹ According to Turville-Petre, “The very act of writing in English is a statement about belonging” (*England* 11). See also Watson 334-35.

⁶² *The Romance of Horn* is included among a catalogue of other works that Madden sees as fundamentally English in background, including Arthurian literature. Interestingly, Madden cites the title we now give to the English-language (but not the Anglo-Norman) romance: *Kyng Horn*.

⁶³ Some scholars, particularly those who suggest that the geography of *King Horn* is meaningless, adopt the text’s spelling of Ireland (*Irelonde*) and place the name in scare quotes. I have opted to use Ireland’s modern spelling because of its familiarity; my point is that the name of Ireland allows the text to interface with recognizable, real-world geography.

⁶⁴ For a good overview of interpretations of these place-names, which range across the island and (in the case of Suddene) into northern Europe, see Speed, “Saracens,” 565; a survey of earlier approaches (many assuming a Scandinavian setting) is offered in Schofield 6-7. Specific influential suggestions are found in McKnight xviii-xix; Schofield 11-13, 24; Oliver 106-07, 111. A comment by editor McKnight encapsulates the sense of the romance’s topography as puzzle: “One is loath, however, to let go the only thread that seems to lead to an explanation of the name Suddenne itself” (iv).

⁶⁵ Bly Calkin also notes that “Ingland” is absent from *King Horn*, and further points out that the term is not present in one of the poem’s manuscripts (Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27(2)), at least in its surviving form, denying the poem in that manuscript a context emphasizing English identity (*Saracens* 210).

⁶⁶ Carol Fewster takes this view: “These placenames are specific, but are not externally referential . . . Names that do not refer to real countries are translated directly into romance structure” (15). John Finlayson, whose views I discuss below, also seems to see them in this way. He compares Suddene and Westernesse to “the kingdom of Carnant in *Erec* or the unnamed

kingdom of Alundyne in *Yvain*” (“*King Horn*,” 20). As we shall see, for Finlayson, even “Ireland” is meaningless.

⁶⁷ Both names exist within the larger Horn tradition, for both appear in some form in the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*. Suddene is still the name of Horn’s native kingdom in the Anglo-Norman poem, with no firmer indication of precisely where it might be located. Westir, a clear cognate for *King Horn*’s Westernesse, appears in RH as an old name for Ireland (though cf. Schofield 14, n. 1). On the whole, these wider associations make me believe it is unlikely that the names had special significance to *King Horn*’s original audience; if Westir/Westernesse, in particular, was meaningful, we would not expect to see it attaching to lands that form different structural parts of the story. However, we cannot be certain of this, and must allow for the possibility that some among the early audience would have known immediately where in the real world Suddene and Westernesse were supposed to be.

⁶⁸ Descriptions of Britain dating back as far as Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* discussed and described Ireland as a distinct place, a coherent, well-delineated mass of land that could be referred to by name. The discourse surrounding the Norman invasion of Ireland also treated Ireland as a discrete unit. When Pope Alexander III ratified the bull *Laudabiliter*, which had granted Henry II the right to invade Ireland, he described Ireland as a kingdom (“Hibernici regni”; Giraldus Cambrensis 146, 2.5, l. 71). The Lordship of Ireland, established in 1171 and annexed to the English crown with King John’s accession in 1199, verbally represented Ireland as a singular unit, though in practice English control never extended to the whole of Ireland.

⁶⁹ Especially given the instability of the name Westernesse. While modern editors choose that name for the land, it appears in only one manuscript (C); in the other two surviving manuscripts, the land is called Westnesse. (The poem’s manuscripts and the name of Westernesse will be discussed further below.)

⁷⁰ Franco Moretti, in his *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900*, notes that mixtures of “real geographic sites and imaginary locations” are a common feature of the novel, and suggests (with particular regard to Jane Austen’s plots) that fictitious places may be particularly well-suited to wish-fulfillment (such as the marriages that conclude Austen’s novels), while more pessimistic books focus more determinedly on the real (18, especially n. 6). Moretti’s notion of imaginary space as optimistic perhaps dovetails neatly with my thesis on *King Horn*, that the romance’s hybrid geography allows a kind of positive, productive community formation that the forces of history preclude. But *King Horn*’s geography is more hybrid than that analyzed by Moretti; while I presume Austen’s audiences would likely have known the real cities from the imaginary homes, Westernesse and Suddene are not clearly invented, merely obscure. That the toponyms *could* code for recognizable spaces is part of what makes the romance’s geographic work so effective.

⁷¹ The romances of Chrétien de Troyes employ this kind of space frequently, anchoring his space in familiar categories like Wales while introducing unknown toponyms. *Bevis of Hampton* also operates in this manner, naming many places we still recognize today while depicting the Saracen city of Mombraunt and (in Middle English) the land of Aumbeforce, both of which defy identification today.

In practice, it is difficult to be certain how cognizant medieval audiences would have been of the separation between what we would today consider real and unreal places in the

absence of technologies like the modern atlas that claim to offer an exhaustive catalogue of real places. Mombraunt exemplifies this problem for the modern scholar: the city, though we have no evidence to connect it to any place we know, exists in other texts besides *Bevis*. Since *Bevis* offers place-names audiences definitely recognized, would they have had reason to think Mombraunt was anything but real? Does its intertextual existence give it the full force of geographic knowledge? After all, Robert Rouse has suggested that romances did not just tap into an existing body of geographic knowledge, but were themselves a source of geographic knowledge for their medieval audiences (“Walking”).

In the case of *King Horn*, however, the situation is clearer. *Horn*’s geography is much simpler than these other romances, naming only four places and focusing on just three. Moreover, in contrast to the geographic exoticism of Chrétien’s romances and *Bevis*, the one surely recognizable name in *Horn* is close at hand for its English readers: Ireland. Thus, I think we can be certain that *King Horn*’s audiences would have noticed the interface between recognizable and unknown toponyms, and not simply assumed they ought to know where Westernesse and Suddene were.

⁷² Finlayson’s generic analysis is an important reading of the poem, which helps us understand both how the poem works and its literary affiliations. However, in my judgment Finlayson is too dogmatic on the subject of genre, and his analysis is too ready to declare that the names of the places that (as he acknowledges) structure the poem meant nothing to the poet or his authors.

⁷³ We often call this “solid” world the “real world,” but that term establishes an unsustainable priority between these kinds of space. I choose the word “solid” to emphasize the physical nature of this world as opposed to the virtuality of various textual worlds—yet that distinction, too, is limited, as all representations exist within physical media and many instance the world of physicality in the minds of their viewers.

⁷⁴ The exceptions seem to prove the rule: romance settings that are striking in their individuality, like the Green Chapel in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the remarkable glass tower of *Floris and Blancheflour*, seem to ground their exoticism in their position in a larger world: the Welsh marches in *Sir Gawain*, the East in *Floris*.

⁷⁵ On the referentiality of such “utopian” spaces, see Westphal, *Geocriticism* 108-09. Westphal describes utopian spaces as in “vice-distinction” with what I call the “solid” world. These spaces do not point directly to that world, but neither can they be entirely divorced from it; “the narrative unfolds at the margins of the referent or around a projected referent in a derealized future.”

⁷⁶ A. C. Spearing refers to *King Horn*’s “pseudo-geographical settings” (*Textual* 40), a phrase which suggests the spatial equivalent of the term *historicity* (geographicity?): the poem’s spaces look like geography, want to be treated like geography, even if they are not geography. Such spaces, we might say, are mimetic, even if they are not referential.

⁷⁷ I have also consulted the edition by Joseph Hall (1901). Allen’s is a heavily emended composite text, while Hall prints the texts of the three manuscripts largely unedited. I default to Allen’s edition because it provides a sort of compromise among the manuscript versions, from

which I can note variations as necessary. For the variations themselves, I use both Allen's apparatus and Hall's edition.

⁷⁸ By default I cite line numbers from Allen's edition because Hall lineates each manuscript separately, which would require overly cumbersome references. On occasion, when I cite a reading specifically from a single manuscript, I list Allen's line number first but follow it with the sigil for the manuscript I am referring to and the line number in this text. The line numbers for the manuscript texts are drawn from Hall, and in these cases I quote the reading of the line from Hall; I retain Allen's line numbering in my citations for ease of reference.

⁷⁹ In KH, Horn is a native of Suddene and travels first to Westernesse and then to Ireland. In RH, he is likewise native to Suddene, but travels first to Brittany and next to Westir, which the poem glosses as Ireland. In general, events follow the same structure in both poems, so what happens in Westernesse in KH happens in Brittany in RH. However, the poems agree only in the broad outline of the story, and do not share many details; for instance, the warring of the Brittany section of RH has no equivalent of KH.

⁸⁰ According to Maldwyn Mills, HC's editor, the poem is closer to RH than to any other surviving analogue, and RH could indeed be its source (44). Mills dismisses KH as a possible source for HC (45-46). Neither KH nor RH identifies Suddene with England, so HC may represent an interpretation of the Horn story's geography if it depends on RH. On the other hand, if some scholars are correct that England lies in the background of the story, HC could independently preserve an earlier tradition. The question of sources and relationships of the Horn texts is too complicated to get into here; I am interested in HC not for its genetic relationship to KH, but for the alternative geography it offers.

⁸¹ *Ponthus* has seldom if ever been given serious critical consideration next to *King Horn*. This is in part because of their distance, but is probably due even more to philological prejudices in favor of what appear to be more "authentic," "folkish" productions. *Ponthus* is frequently described with condescension by those scholars who mention it: according to McKnight, "It is purely an artificial product based on R. H., and has little bearing on the origin and history of the version in hand" (xvi), while for Charles W. Dunn "the tone is sententious, and the primitive power of the original has disappeared" (22). *Ponthus* in its various versions undoubtedly deserves greater attention as part of the *Horn* family, just as the extended dissemination of *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* has recently received particular critical attention (see the essays collected in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, and *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, ed. Fellows and Djordjević). However, to limit the scope of inquiry, I will continue to reproduce this critical prejudice by excluding *Ponthus* from my analysis. Though the geography of *Ponthus* (like its character names) differs from that of RH, RH exemplifies a toponymically rich, historically deep geography sufficient for my purposes of demonstrating how KH functions.

⁸² In her edition, Allen breaks *King Horn* down into seven sections; every time she begins a new section, it is because Horn has traveled from one place to another. Thus, my breakdown of the poem that follows corresponds to the sections proposed by Allen.

⁸³ My terms estrangement and reclamation are in some ways just a gloss on the familiar category of exile-and-return, but they define more precisely the structure that I see at work in *King Horn* (and, indeed, in other exile-and-return romances). The heir does not merely *return* to the land of his origin; he wins it back, re-earning his rightful inheritance. In the case of *King Horn*, estrangement is an apter term than exile, for as we shall see Horn goes through two phases of estrangement that carry him successively farther not only from Suddene but from his birth identity. Movement is a crucial part of the process, but that movement *accomplishes* something. Rosalind Field offers a perceptive analysis of the structure and function of the exile-and-return pattern in “King.” On estrangement and reclamation, cf. also Susan Wittig’s vocabulary of the separation–restoration pattern (175-78); my terms describe more precisely the action of *King Horn*, though they are less widely applicable than Wittig’s (or the traditional exile-and-return).

⁸⁴ That is to say, the romance does not invite readers to imagine how Horn is feeling, or to ponder the motivations of his actions. For instance, when Horn defers the advances of Rymenhild in Westernesse, we are not privy to any sort of “inner life” that would provide him with secret motivations, nor are we meant to second-guess his actions. Compare this to the portrayal of love in the famously psychologized Anglo-Norman *Roman d’Enéas* (c. 1160), where both Enéas and Lavine secretly ache with love and second-guess each other’s motivations constantly. Horn does not act out of secret desires or even personal feelings, but acts as is appropriate for his social position. He is less an individual than an embodiment of his rank. Even when Horn avenges his father’s death, the romance presents it as an act of justice and balance, rather than reducing it to personal loss. See also Crane, *Insular*: “His traits are static, present and complete in his character even as a boy, so that the story proceeds not through the gradual development of his personality but through a series of enemy actions which he progressively reverses by his own actions” (35).

⁸⁵ Guy undertakes two major journeys; as Rouse characterizes it, in the first Guy gains reputation while in the second he is changed spiritually. Horn experiences neither kind of change: his righteousness is a given throughout the romance, and his victories against the Saracens ratify his kingly nature rather than gaining a new reputation for him.

⁸⁶ Before the Saracens set Horn and his companions out to sea, they tell him,

þu schalt more wexe
 Binne 3ere sexe: [Allen. L omits this line, and C and O differ significantly; in
 terms of duration, C offers “seue 3ere,” while O reads “þis sis yere þe nexte.”]
 Mote þu to liue go

 Mote þat bi-falle
 3e sholde slen vs alle. (97-102)

A few lines later they again anticipate Horn’s future: “For were þu aliue, / Wiþ swerd oþer wiþ kniue / We scholden alle deie / Þi fader dep t’abeie” (109-12). The Saracens look at the child Horn and see future revenge: revenge that will not be realized until Horn is grown, but that inheres in him even as a child. (In C, this revenge will not occur for seven years, making it part of a pattern of seven-year deferrals in the poem.)

This is more than a simple prediction; the Saracens’ view of Horn carries an almost prophetic force, and as such constitutes a deep observation about his character. The Saracens

predict that Horn will slay them and, in a vain attempt to avert this eventuality, they put him and his companions out to sea in a ship, where they expect him to perish. These events recall stories of children exposed to prevent the fulfillment of a prophecy, such as Oedipus. While *King Horn* does not frame the Saracens' words as a prophecy, they carry a similar force of certainty. Put another way: just as Horn is not a psychologized character, the Saracens are not making an in-character, fallible prediction. Their words encode formal information about the tale and Horn's character: Horn already contains his future revenge, and the Saracens seek to abridge Horn's life to prevent that revenge from being realized.

In containing already in youth his adult traits, Horn resonates with other romance heroes like Bevis of Hampton, who demonstrates his nobility when at age seven he harshly castigates his mother for having his father murdered and then knocks down his mother's new lover.

⁸⁷ While exile is, as Speed says, "testing and threatening," Horn's actions in response to this period of testing publicly demonstrate his preexisting nobility rather than constituting a developmental process.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Fowler offers a similar analysis, to which I am indebted, of the process of heroic credentialing in *Sir Isumbras* (100-06). As Fowler explains, Isumbras proceeds through a chain of "social persons," including knight, pilgrim, emperor, and even "smythes man," roles registered visibly through Isumbras's clothing. Horn's process is more linear than Isumbras's: in each land he begins with less status than at his birth (in Westernesse without his social rank, in Ireland without his name), and he accedes to the rank of knight and approaches kingship in an orderly fashion through his deeds. The process of credentialing that Horn goes through seems solely concerned with what makes a king. On the other hand, *Isumbras*, a penitential romance, is thinking through more complicated ideas of Christian virtue, as well as (as Lee Manion demonstrates in "Loss") ideas about crusading.

⁸⁹ O tends to avoid the term *fundlyng*; of the four times it is used in C, O preserves it only once. The term may have carried a particular charge of debasement for the O-scribe; he retains it only in l. 426, where Horn is asserting his own low status to Rymenhild. By contrast, in the line where Horn is first identified called foundling (226), O instead calls him "þe sweting," suggesting Almair's personal affection for Horn.

⁹⁰ In L, Horn underscores his subordinate status even further by highlighting his dependence on her father: "þy fader fundlyng wiþ al."

⁹¹ In this line, all manuscripts attach articles to the nouns. In C, the article for both nouns is *a*, giving this couplet the generalized, aphoristic quality that Allen's reading suggests. For OL, on the other hand, it is "*a þral* and *þe* king," which main give the statement slightly more specificity.

⁹² *Thral*, according to the MED, can mean both slave and, more generally, a person of low degree. The term marks a major social difference between Horn and Rymenhild: the princess is free in a way that the debased Horn is not.

⁹³ "Help þu me to kniȝte / . . . / Þanne is mi þralhod / Iwent [C] *or* al wend [L] *or* Yterned [O] into kniȝthod" (441-46). Horn's language emphasizes process: the ceremonial speech-act of dubbing will change his state from that of thrallhood to that of knighthood.

⁹⁴ Here, O switches from the third person of the previous line to the first person: “Her ich eny wif take.” This grammatical shift highlights how Horn understands the general maxim of the preceding lines to apply to him personally.

⁹⁵ For simplicity, I use the pseudonym offered by C. Horn goes by *Cubert* in L and *Godmod* in O. My comments in this section apply to whatever pseudonym a particular manuscript gives to Horn.

⁹⁶ Up to the moment of the giant’s revelation, only MS C uses Horn’s birth name (in l. 859), and even then only once; the rest of the time C retains Cutberd.

⁹⁷ The MED defines *agrisen* as tremble or show fear, citing this line from KH; another sense suggests horror rather than fear. Horn’s reaction here does not seem to be fearful, but enraged.

⁹⁸ The romance repeatedly uses this transactional language to talk about the results of actions. The Saracens banish Horn from Suddene originally because they fear “We scholden alle deie / ði fader dep t’abeie” (111-12); the couplet describing this massacre in Ireland refers verbally to this earlier couplet foretelling it. When a porter attempts to bar the disguised Horn from entering the hall where the wedding feast for Rymenhild and Modi is being held, the text warns, “ðe boye [porter OL] hit scholde abegge” (1097) before going on to explain that Horn threw him over the bridge and cracked his ribs. And, in a particularly striking example, when Horn himself tarries too long in Suddene after defeating the Saracens, we learn that “Rymenhild hit aboʒte” (1422). The verb *bien* operates in KH in its senses of paying a penalty and of suffering (MED, s.v. *bien*, 7 and 8), but all these uses seem to emphasize causality. Horn’s slaughter of the fleeing pagans on the Irish coast is not just an act of passionate emotion, but the natural result of their murder of his father.

⁹⁹ C: Cutberd; L: Godmod; O: Horn child.

¹⁰⁰ Horn first claims that he is guiltless of the crime that led to his exile from Westernesse. As Allen edits Horn’s speech to Almair, Horn declares that the king “wendest þat I wroʒte / Þat y neure ne þoʒte: / Bi Rymenhild to forligge” (1303-05). Allen’s is closest to the reading of O, which reads “for ligge” instead of “to forligge”; CL read “for to ligge.” Allen’s emended version may help resolve a potential contradiction in the poem. Earlier, before banishing Horn from Westernesse, Almair found “Horn binnen arme / On Rymenhild barme” (715-16), a phrase which may suggest a sexual relationship following Horn’s marriage vow; Almair subsequently labels his daughter “Rymenhild þine [Horn’s] hore” (720). If that is the case, Horn’s assertion that he never thought to lie by Rymenhild is plainly untrue. However, *forlien* specifically indicates illicit or improper sex, such as seduction, fornication, adultery, or rape (MED). Even if Horn and Rymenhild have had sex, Horn’s assertion that he never thought to *forlie* Rymenhild is correct, for their relations would have been licit and marital. Thus it is not necessarily the case that Horn and Rymenhild cannot consummate their marriage before Horn has liberated Suddene; they have probably already done so. However, perhaps even more interestingly, Horn’s marriage to Rymenhild is somehow incomplete while he is estranged from his kingdom, so that despite being married to her, he cannot lie with her *again* until he has reclaimed his kingship. (The poem seems to ratify the legitimacy of their earlier marriage vows, for there is no suggestion that they marry again.)

¹⁰¹ O uses the plural form of the verb, *gonnen*; both Horn and his mother are crowned, explicitly involving Horn's family connections in his achievement of his heritage. C offers an entirely different reading: "Corn he let serie." (Allen explains this line as a misreading of *corn* for *croun*.) Instead of privileging the ceremonial ratification of Horn's kingship through his coronation, C instead frames him as a provider for his subjects, distributing food as he returns to his castle. C's version may also be another in a series of puns on Horn's name, which would associate Horn himself with this kingly plenitude. (*Corn* meant Horn in Anglo-Norman and Latin, and is indeed used in RH. The availability of the pun in English is ambiguous; MED does not recognize *corn* as a form of *horn*. If *corn* is a cross-linguistic pun in C, it is an intriguing reversal of a linguistic peculiarity in RH: it has long been suggested that RH must have an English-language antecedent because of lines that pun Horn's name with an animal or musical horn, a pun available for *horn* only in English. Of course both poems circulated in a multilingual environment and the pun was probably available in both directions to many readers.)

¹⁰² This is the extent of the relationship between place and structure for Carol Fewster: "Place and transition between places are not memorable events in themselves but serve to underline structure in *King Horn*" (15).

¹⁰³ Horn is even framed as a competitor with Harild and Berild while they are still alive. As he is welcoming Horn to the court, King Purston jestingly says to Berild,

And whan þu farst to wowe
Tak him þine gloue;
Iment haue þu to wyue,
Awai he schal þe dryue;
For Cutberdes fairhede
Ne schal þe neure spede! (811-16)

The king is joking, but in this compliment he frames Horn as a sexual competitor with his own son, effectively threatening the king's own lineage.

¹⁰⁴ The poem insists on the origin of this company, identifying them as Irish up to four times (1026, 1312, 1320, 1398); the adjective is only ever applied to these soldiers. (C has a different version of 1312 that does not discuss these troops; O identifies them as his "knyȝtes bi side" rather than "yrisse felazȝe" in 1320.)

¹⁰⁵ I see this phenomenon as geographic because the romance consistently refers to Horn's new followers by the demonym *Irish*; verbally, they are identified by their affiliation with the land of Ireland, rather than (for instance) King Purston.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Hynes-Berry observes that the poem's structure depends on the interleaving of episodes concerning Horn's conflict with the Saracens and episodes about his affair with Rymenhild. Thus, the two episodes back-to-back resolve both of the major strands of the plot (656-57). However, it is noteworthy that the rescue of Rymenhild takes pride of place: it is by achieving this rescue, not by liberating his homeland, that Horn completes the deferred action of the poem and advances it into the resolution phase.

¹⁰⁷ C provides a different couplet, which Allen, rejects, citing the agreement of earlier editors French and Morris; it is not interesting for our purposes. Though C does not insist upon Horn's ignorance of this altered geography in this couplet, it does announce his ignorance of the castle in the following line.

¹⁰⁸ Almair does not deny Ffikenhild's pursuit of Rymenhild, but we are told he does not dare resist it: "Þe kyng ne dorste him werne" (1438). By contrast, Almair accepted Modi's suit for Rymenhild: "Aton he was wiþ þe king / Of þare wedding" (945-46).

¹⁰⁹ Sebastian I. Sobecki points out that building in the sea Saracenizes Ffikenhild; throughout the text the sea has constantly been associated with Saracens and the land with Christians (111). For Sobecki, Horn demonstrates his mastery over the sea by reaching Ffikenhild's castle and defeating his treacherous companion. While I agree with Sobecki's reading, I want to emphasize a different kind of threat: Ffikenhild offers a model of space that threatens Horn with the possibility of his withdrawing from the poem's geography, and thus of tearing apart the network that Horn has made.

¹¹⁰ Sobecki makes a similar argument, although he is more concerned with the character of Horn and the way he comes to master the sea (107-13).

¹¹¹ Sobecki makes much of how the vaunted defense that the sea is supposed to provide for Ffikenhild's castle comes to nothing at all; Horn gains access to it with ease (111-12). However, Sobecki understands Ffikenhild to have been betrayed by the fickleness of the sea, a view I do not think the poem encourages.

¹¹² Mary Hynes-Berry characterizes this process as structured by Horn's achievements: he "establishes an agent of law in each place that he restored to order, in inverse chronology of his successes" (659). However, this rather oversimplifies the order of what happens. Ffikenhild's castle is arguably not *in* Westernesse, and if it is, Horn has restored order in Westernesse not once but twice. On the other hand, he has never restored order in Reynes at all; his only action before this final tour has been to deprive the land of its king. Notably, Horn's voyage does not retrace the out-in path; he returns from Ireland to Suddene without passing through Westernesse. Rather than there being any specific effort to match the events of the story, it seems to me that the poem's main impulse is simply to revisit each of its places and find a role for its most important secondary characters. I see network, rather than continuum, as the organizing principle.

¹¹³ In Allen's edition, Ireland is the place "Þer he [Horn] wonung fonde" (1550); this description emphasizes Ireland's important place in Horn's personal history and his connection to it. The closest manuscript reading is in O: "Þer he hadde woned so longe." CL are more puzzling, however: "Þer horn wo coupe er fonde" (L); "Þer he wo fondede" (C). To Allen, associating Ireland with sorrow does not make sense. Perhaps CL make Ireland a place of woe for Horn because that is where he was exiled from Rymenhild. In any case, the description of Ireland as a place of sorrow rather than of dwelling gives a very different sense of his relation to it.

¹¹⁴ Minor variations abound in these lines, but do not substantially change the sense. The most significant variations are in the final line, given by Allen in a reading closes to that of O; L has

Horn slay Modi “wiþ is hond” rather than with ire, while C omits the line entirely, trusting the reader to remember who Modi is.

¹¹⁵ MED (s.v. *rein*, n. 2); Cleasby and Vigfusson (s.v. *rein*). *Reynes* is an attested spelling of the word *rein* in Middle English in *Partonope of Blois* (I). However, the MED dates this text after 1450, and the word is attested in Middle English only as a toponym element (never as a toponym by itself) prior to the fifteenth century.

¹¹⁶ Other spellings found in RH include *Fenie*, *Finnee*, *Fenice*, and *Fenoi(e)*; according to Pope, the spellings *Fenie* and *Fenie* correspond with *Aspremont*.

¹¹⁷ On the priority of KH for names, see French 141-43.

¹¹⁸ On the other hand, it makes less rhetorical sense to align Modin in RH with the Saracens than it would Modi in KH, for Modin is Horn’s kinsman.

¹¹⁹ While *Reynes* appears only once in KH, *Fenie* occurs five times in RH: Thomas 3715, 3959, 4003, 4496, 5218.

¹²⁰ “Entre lui [Rigmel] e Modin ad trop pres parenté” (Thomas 4536).

¹²¹ Quotations of the *Romance of Horn* are taken from Thomas; translations are by Judith Weiss, from *Birth* 1-120; all citations are given by line-numbers in the original and by *laisse*, common to both.

¹²² “Al folk hit iknew / Ðat hi he loueden trewe” (1557-58).

¹²³ RH almost entirely eschews KH’s interest in carving up the map at the end of the romance. *Fenie* has not lost its governor; the land of Westir (Ireland) is divided between Modin and Haderof. Horn and Rigmel live out their days ruling in Rigmel’s land of Brittany, rather than Suddene, as in KH. Suddene Horn leaves not in the hands of a new king but of a steward, Hardré, who will hold but not rule his realm and who, indeed, will be subservient to Horn’s mother. (“Mun regne gaderat en tant li bons Harderez, / E ma mere Samburc servirat a sun grez,” 5021-22, *laisse* 236). These spaces are simpler in KH, which leaves them in a politically identical state and knits them into a web based upon rulership.

¹²⁴ Metlitzki notes that one source of evidence for her theory provides referential difficulties of its own: in Ibn Dihyah’s thirteenth-century account of an Ummayyad diplomatic voyage in the ninth century, “The geographical indications are vague but it is clear that the Saracen ship visited countries within the realm of *King Horn*, the topography of which is equally vague, except for Ireland” (121).

¹²⁵ Thus the MED, but for a caveat, see note 127. The poem’s vocabulary does seem to treat the terms *sarazin* and *payn* as interchangeable for the most part. Indeed, *payn* is the dominant term for the invaders, outnumbering *sarazin* by about 2 to 1 in all manuscripts. (The epithet *hund* appears about as frequently as *sarazin* in C and L, and is only slightly less common in O.) I tend to favor the term *Saracen* because it appears more specific than *pagan*, but this could represent

merely my modern sense of the terms. *Saracen* is the first term the romance offers to identify these invaders.

It is possible the text preserves some distinction among the terms; in all manuscripts, the Irish section avoids the term *Saracen*. However, as the giant Horn fights in Ireland is explicitly the warrior who slew his father in Suddene (where the invaders were Saracens), I cannot make anything of this variation.

¹²⁶ This interpretation is discussed and catalogued in Speed, “Saracens,” 564-66; as Speed observes, “This interpretation is often offered as a matter of course and accepted without scrutiny.” Speed cites several of the early arguments advanced in favor of viewing the invaders as Scandinavians, noting that the arguments are distinct and incompatible but have nevertheless seemed to work together to suggest a consensus. Hall suggests that the story’s historical background is actually in the events of the English conquest, and that KH is a direct descendant of this account; HC represents a northern adaptation of the story to apply to Viking raids, while RH combines both traditions (liv); Speed notes that this view has not been influential. Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury, editing the romance for TEAMS, describe the term *Saracen* as layering these notions together: the Saracens are “usually thought of as Muslims, yet also clearly representative of the Vikings; they are an abstract, thoroughly evil enemy that must be defeated” (Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury 12). These views share a desire to understand and explain the behavior of the Saracens through a historical referent: because they are unexpected, they must be explicable according to some antecedent in real events.

¹²⁷ It is true that two other early works in Middle English (c. 1300), *Gloucester Chronicle A* and *Of Arthour and Merlin*, employ the term to refer unambiguously to Atlantic peoples (particularly Saxons and Danes). (See MED, s.v. *Sarasine*, 1e.) However *King Horn* predates both these works, and there is little context to demonstrate that the term had that meaning when *Horn* was composed. KH would be the earliest attested English-language use of *Saracen* to refer to Scandinavian or Germanic peoples; indeed, if an earlier dating of c. 1225 is correct, it is the earliest recorded usage of the term (apart from name elements) cited by the MED.

¹²⁸ “The Saracens of King Horn are essentially a literary phenomenon, based not on figures from real life, but on other literary phenomena” (“Saracens,” 595).

¹²⁹ RH treats Africa and Saracendom as almost coextensive. At the poem’s end, we learn that Horn’s son Hadermod conquered all of Africa to avenge his ancestors on the pagans (“Ki Asfriche cunquist e qe pus i regnat / E ki tuz ses parenz de paens i vergat,” 5236-37, strophe 245).

¹³⁰ Kathy Cawsey argues that religion was the primary category of cultural difference in the Middle Ages: works like *King Horn* could depict Vikings as Saracens, she suggests, because they understood cultural difference primarily through the lens of religion instead of race.

¹³¹ The site of the battle—the pass of Roncevaux, in the Pyrenees, a liminal space, underscores the way geography is polarized in the *Chanson*: the pagans strike at the Christians in the space between their territories. As I suggest happens in *King Horn*, the *Chanson de Roland*’s conflict over geography is at the same time represented as a cultural/religious clash, encapsulated in Roland’s (in)famous declaration that “Païen unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit” (1015).

¹³² Indeed, the MED offers as one definition for *Sarasine* “one of the pagan invaders of England” (1e), citing *Horn*, among other texts.

¹³³ As in *King Horn*, the geographic imprecision of *Sir Isumbras* is essential to its work. Elizabeth Fowler describes the poem as operating within “a stark landscape of ‘suppose’” (99). The romance can work as the “thought experiment” Fowler sees in it precisely because its geography is more concerned with religion and ideology than with external referents; unmoored from history, it can treat Christendom and pagandom as systems without worrying about the real-world details. That is not to say the romance has no stake in history; Lee Manion has shown the strong mark made on the poem by the fall of Acre in 1291 and has situated it in terms of a broader discourse of crusading (“Loss”), and Acre is one of the small handful of geographic names appearing across the poem’s manuscripts. However, the story’s interest in Acre is not in the details of what happened there, but in cultivating a renewed sense of popular crusading, which corresponds with the Christian/Saracen dichotomy it advances.

¹³⁴ The variation in the name of the Christian deity does not change the sense of the message for my purposes, but it is interesting to see what terms the different manuscripts use. CL underscore the particularity of Christian religion by having the Saracen identify *Christ* as the figure in whom Suddene’s inhabitants believe.

¹³⁵ *Hound* is of course an epithet, but it particularly attaches to infidels: see MED, s.v. *hound*, 2b. The identification of the pagan warrior in Ireland as a *geaunt* also bears religious overtones—gigantism was often a sign of Saracens’ religious monstrosity (“Romance solves the problem of the present’s intractability by constructing a lost past when Christian right and pagan wrong were rendered obvious through cleanly oppositional modes of embodiment” [Cohen, *Of Giants* 133]).

¹³⁶ As terms for the deity, I allow God, Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus, and Drihten. Allen emends almost all of these references to some form of *Drihten* in her edited text, on rather tenuous grounds: because the name of the deity varies among manuscripts in most lines of the poem, Allen presumes the original must have offered a word that was archaic by the time it was copied in the surviving manuscripts, and chooses *Drihten* on the basis of its presence in a single line of C (Allen, *King Horn* 76).

¹³⁷ Allen adopts this as her reading. L omits the line entirely; C offers a garbled reading, “ne lefde þer non in þende.” Regardless of the original reading, it is striking that only one manuscript gives any space to who or what the Saracens believe in.

¹³⁸ Other lines act similarly. For instance, the assertion in l. 86 that Horn was beautiful, “Also Driȝte him makede,” ascribes Horn’s physical features to the action of the deity.

¹³⁹ That this is an identity term, rather than a statement of theological position, is especially apparent in light of C’s reading: “Þat þu longest to vre driȝte.” Allen emends the line to read “Þat þu leuest vre Driȝte,” taking *driȝte* to refer to the Christian deity and rejecting Wissman’s suggestion that the word derives from the Old English *dryht* meaning “people.” Yet *dryht* is used in *Lazamon’s Brut*, and was actually spelled with a yogh in the much later *Wars of Alexander* (MED s.v. *driht*). In C, the meaning of “host” or “people” makes much more sense of the line as written; it seems likely that, as Allen suggests, the surviving manuscripts preserve scribal

encounters with an archaic word, and it is very possible that some scribes within the tradition interpreted the word as “Lord” while others read “host.” Regardless of the original sense, what OL present as a matter of *belief*, C presents instead as *belonging*; if we follow Allen in reading C’s *driȝte* to refer to the deity, C even makes the Lord into an identity term.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *The King of Tars*, where the Christian princess, who has feigned conversion herself and is now attempting to convert her husband the Sultan to Christianity, offers a lengthy explanation of Christian doctrine (l. 840 ff.).

¹⁴¹ See MED, s.v. *laue*, for a long list of what seems to us today like very different senses. OL prefer the spelling *lawe*, which, because of its relative similarity to our own more limited term *law*, can hide the full force of the term.

¹⁴² The couplet containing this line is omitted in C. O reads identically to L except for spelling; I have adopted the L reading to avoid Allen’s emendation of *ihesu cristes* to *Driȝtes*.

¹⁴³ Including the Old French cognate term *lei* in *La chanson de Roland*, which speaks enthusiastically of “la lei des chrestiens” (38), but equally the “lei de chevalers” (1143) and “la lei de sa terre” (2251).

¹⁴⁴ MED, s.v. *Laue*, 6c(a).

¹⁴⁵ See for example *Isumbras*: “The Sawdon werryd on Crystene lond” (Hudson, *Four* 7-44, l. 401); and *Bevis*: “schipes of painim londe” (Kölbing 496).

¹⁴⁶ Architectural domination was an important feature of the Norman Conquest of England. The Normans undertook serious building programs for both castles and churches as they ratified their control over their new territories. R. R. Davies labels a *building*, the castle, as “the instrument and symbol *par excellence* of that domination” (*Domination* 40). Though castles afforded a strategic military advantage, this was not their only (or necessarily even their primary) function. Castles in Ireland in the early English lordship were often located in strategically weak sites, and there is little evidence that they were built according to any organized plan (McNeill 77). They served practical administrative purposes, but also served symbolic functions as visible signs of the exercise of power in a community of noblemen.

While castles have obvious military and administrative functions that might make them prominent in a colonizing effort, churches, too, served a historical role in territorial domination. The Norman church-building program was so significant that “by the end of the twelfth century almost every Anglo-Saxon cathedral and abbey had been pulled down and rebuilt in the Norman style” (R. H. C. Davies 103). Architecturally the change was extreme: as Lisa Reilly explains, “none of the major Anglo-Norman churches built over earlier structures preserve any trace of their Anglo-Saxon predecessors above ground. . . . This may indicate a deliberate decision by Norman patrons initially to eradicate the past.” Furthermore, the change happened rapidly: “Anyone surveying the English landscape even within twenty years of the Conquest would have noticed a difference” (335). Reilly explains that the break was not absolute—structures like Durham Cathedral incorporated elements from Anglo-Saxon architecture—but this in fact demonstrates the symbolic value of ecclesiastical architecture, for incorporating local elements into monumental Norman structures allowed the Normans to appropriate elements of the Anglo-

Saxon past to legitimize the present Norman community (345-48). Horn's churches are much simpler in function, but they resemble Anglo-Norman churches in the way they use religious structures to spell out the control of territory across the landscape.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. the miraculous light that issues from the mouth of Havelok and confirms his innate nobility. Here, the light of the cross ennobles not a person but a conjunction of land and religion.

¹⁴⁸ Allen prints, "On Driȝte þat ihc bileue." In sentiment, the reading of O is closest to Allen's reconstruction: "Bi god on wam yleue." C is slightly more ambivalent: "On crist ihc wolde bileue"—he *desires* to believe in Christ, which might simply mean that he wishes to follow the Christian religion instead of the pagan, but, taken literally, indicates that he wishes to have Christian *belief* but does not. L omits the line. The variation, and the difficulty of knowing how to read C, stem from the complex relationship between Christian belief and practice. Witness the anxiety in *The King of Tars* about the status of the Christian princess who outwardly submits to pagan religion, but preserves Christian belief in her heart. The romance is at pains to insist that "Ihesu forȝat sche nouȝt" (507), but Geraldine Heng suggests that the perversity of the princess's feigned conversion is part of what produces her malformed child, and notes that within the logic of the text, which yokes race and religion together into a single system, only the princess's white skin color sets her apart from the true Muslim faithful whose practices she imitates (*Empire* 228-29, 236). Romance postulates that Christians may maintain proper beliefs while appearing to comply with the demands of a forced conversion, but this status is uneasy and unsettling.

¹⁴⁹ Sebastian I. Sobecki, noting the association of Christians with land and Saracens with sea in the poem, reads the poem in terms of Horn's increasing control over the sea, which is Saracen territory (111). This is a powerful moment in that trajectory; Horn is now arriving on the shore of Saracen-controlled land as an invader, mirroring the Saracen threat against the Christians throughout the poem.

¹⁵⁰ Many of the examples that follow are discussed by Sobecki, though I cite them from Allen's edition.

¹⁵¹ L reads, "vn londisshe," going even further in creating the un-landish Saracens as a separate category. Likewise, after l. 604, at the point of Horn's encounter with Saracens on the beach of Westernesse, O adds a couplet in which it describes them as "Of out londisse manne / Of sararine kenne."

¹⁵² "Sed cum a convictu mores formentur, quoniam a communi terrarum orbe in his extremitatibus, tanquam in orbe quodam altero, sunt tam remoti, et a modestis et morigeratis populis tam segregati, solam nimirum barbariem in qua et nati sunt et nutriti sapiunt et assuescunt, et tanquam alteram naturam amplectuntur" (III.10). Translations from the *Topographia* are by John J. O'Meara (Gerald of Wales), and are cited by page number; quotations of the Latin are from *Giraldi*, and are cited by part and chapter.

¹⁵³ When Horn returns to install a king in Ireland, O recalls it as the place "Per he hadde woned so longe" (1550, O 1559). Other manuscripts, however, associate Ireland with woe, perhaps thinking of Horn's separation from Rymenhild (see note 113).

¹⁵⁴ See also laisse 13: “Mis peres fu dunc pruz; en meint liu fui faidé; / Ne sai s’i unc vus forfist, mes pur ço n’iert celé / Ke joe ne vus dië tute la verité” [My father was thus a brave man, with enemies in many places; I do not know if he ever did you wrong, but that will not stop me telling you the whole truth] (269-71).

¹⁵⁵ This may be because *The Romance of Horn* self-consciously lives within a network of texts. *King Horn* is a freestanding text and begins by telling how Suddene fell to the Saracens. The *Romance of Horn*, on the other hand, opens by reminding readers of the story of Horn’s father Aalof and announces that it is the sequel to his story:

Seignurs, oi avez les vers del parchemin,
Cum li bers Aaluf est venuz a sa fin.
Mestre Thomas ne volt k’il seit mis a declin
K’il ne die de Horn, le vaillant orphanin,
Cum puis l’unt treit li felun sarasin.

You will have heard, my lord, from the verses in the parchment, how the noble Aalof came to his end. Master Thomas does not want to end his own life without telling the story of Horn, fatherless and brave, and his fate at the hands of the wicked Saracens. (1-5, laisse 1)

And, at the end of the *Romance of Horn*, Thomas leaves the story of Horn’s son Hadermod and his conquest of Africa to his own son Wilmot (“Icest lais a mun fiz, Gilimot, ki-l dirrat” [I leave this to my son Wilmot to tell, 5231, laisse 245]). Being thus emplaced within a network of texts, the *Romance of Horn* acknowledges a kind of history that is never present in *King Horn*. But these differences give the places in the two texts a fundamentally different character; having no apparent life outside of *King Horn*, that poem’s places feel isolated in a way that is untrue of the *Romance of Horn*.

¹⁵⁶ Another example connecting these two encounters is less certain. When the poem describes Murri’s first glimpse of the Saracen invaders of Suddene, it reports that he finds “Schipes fiftene / Wiþ sarazins kene” (39-40). Horn may use the same adjective when describing the Saracens he fought to King Almair: “non Londisse Menne / Ac sarazines kenne” (639-40). Allen has interpreted the latter word as *kin*, a reading borne out by C (*kyn*). But *kenne* is a valid alternative spelling of *kene*, and OL may choose it in order to preserve a visual rhyme with *menne*. Note that O repeats the latter couplet following line 604, which actually places it during the scene where Horn encounters the Saracens on the shore of Westernesse, and not just when he reports on the encounter to Almair.

¹⁵⁷ “He fond bi þe stronde / Ariued on his londe” (37-38); “Hi beop vpon stronde, / King, vpon þine londe” (827-28).

¹⁵⁸ The poem does describe one specifically local practice—a local *laze*. When Horn has come disguised to Rymenhild’s wedding feast, the poem tells us, “Horn he [Rymenhild] bar an honde / So laze was on londe” (1131-32). Although the poem introduces this detail, its function is to enable the pun between Horn’s name and the drinking horn. Cf. RH, which details affairs at the individual courts much more precisely. Weiss even proposes that Thomas uses subtle details of

characterization to paint the Irish court as less sophisticated than the others (“Wooing,” 155). It would be difficult to find this sort of subtle differentiation within *King Horn*’s spare depiction of life in its various lands.

¹⁵⁹ For Finlayson, geographic realism is a function of genre: “That kind of realism is to be found only in chronicle romances or heroic narratives where, even if the names are exotic, they usually relate to the known or credited geography of the Middle Ages” (“*King Horn*,” 20). In differentiating between *Havelok* and KH, he also points to an abundance of authenticating detail as a factor conferring realism (38). KH, which lacks these realist qualities, is in Finlayson’s eyes a proper romance in the French, chivalric model, while *Havelok*, which possesses them, is something else—*geste* is the term he chooses (somewhat ironically, since L, the only manuscript to provide KH with a title, labels it a *geste*).

¹⁶⁰ Though Crane seems to think of Suddene as English territory in her analysis of the RH and KH, in a sense it would not matter to her argument even if it is not. She sees the greater exile-and-return plot, which “traces the loss and recovery of his inherited lands and titles” through heroic means, rather than mundane legal proceedings, as what appeals to the English barony (*Insular* 23). For Crane, a text needs to offer precise details in order to be seen as stemming from a specific political issue. She points to discrepancies in geographic details to argue against understanding several Anglo-Norman romances as “ancestral romances” composed at the behest of specific families (16-17). The far more general KH has comparatively little even to suggest it is entering into specific political questions surrounding place.

Rosamund Allen, in arguing for a later date for KH than traditional, notes that events in the romance resemble those of the English 1270s, and points to a few details that might echo incidents a London audience would have remembered (“Date,” 122-24). However, these connections are general and tenuous; while Allen persuasively suggests that the ideology of KH would not have been incompatible with 1270s London sentiments, she does not go so far as to argue that the poem comments directly on specific political incidents or questions.

¹⁶¹ In l. 1157, Allen follows C against OL and has the disguised Horn declare that he is “Wel feor icome bieste.” However, see her note in *King Horn* 322-23, where she notes that this may be C’s gloss on the formulaic phrase *fram biweste*. Overall, the directional terms in the surviving versions of the poem are quite confused, and we could draw no definite conclusions about the reading of the original even if we wanted to.

¹⁶² However, setting aside the placement of the name, there are similarities. Chrétien places the first appearance of Lancelot’s name in Guinevere’s mouth as if to demonstrate the extent to which his identity depends on her. Likewise, granting to Horn the first naming of Suddene highlights the mutual dependence of Horn and the kingdom: they take definition from each other.

¹⁶³ Hall glosses *biweste* as “in the west country” (198). Hall chooses this interpretation because he believes the action of the poem essentially English, and that it has Celtic sources. Consequently, he identifies Suddene with Cornwall (liv-lv). Thus, Hall offers a gloss that bears out his understanding that the poem is associated with a specific place in the island. It is worth comparing this precision which Hall attempts to provide to the abstraction and generality of the way the poem itself situates Murri’s kingdom: *bi* combined with a cardinal direction, according

to the MED, means simply “in, to, or from” that direction (s.v. bi [prep.], 1a.d). The poem identifies not a specific part of a landmass, but *anywhere* that can be described as in the west.

¹⁶⁴ To be precise, the MED lists *sud* as a spelling under the noun form of *south*, but none of the cited examples feature this spelling; it is attested twice in the adjectival form, once as part of a place-name and once as part of a surname.

¹⁶⁵ Even for the philological explanations of the place-name, *suð-* is simply a part of the referential name, and not a relative term indicating that Suddene is south of any other space in the poem.

¹⁶⁶ *Westnesse* is the name that O and L give to the land that C (and most editions of the poem) refer to as *Westernesse*; this discrepancy will be discussed below. Of course, toponyms were not consistently capitalized in manuscript, so the visual distinction between “westene londe” and “Westnesse londe” is not as great in manuscript as it appears here.

¹⁶⁷ MED, s.v. nes(se).

¹⁶⁸ Although the Wirral *is* a peninsula in the west of Britain, Oliver exclaims that it is “scarcely a peninsula” and suggests that it does not jut out enough from the surrounding coastline to answer to the description of *ness* (106).

¹⁶⁹ Oliver identifies separate locations as *Westernesse* and *Estnesse*—a proposition to which we shall return.

¹⁷⁰ The relationship between the geographies of the Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions has long vexed readers invested in the geographic and historical referentiality of the ur-*Horn*. Oliver describes the geography of RH as “hopelessly confused” (106), and prefers KH as a source of information about the original geography. Hall agrees that KH preserves the prototypical story most accurately, but suggests that the whole of KH’s *Westernesse* section is an embellishment (Rymenhild is merely a duplication of Reynild) and “the real *Westernesse* is Ireland” (liv-lv). Laura Hibbard Loomis protests that the prominence of Horn’s rescue of Rymenhild in all the surviving versions makes it hard to believe that the whole plot of the youthful lovers stems entirely from a duplication of the Irish episode (Hibbard 90). I tend to agree—and if Hall is correct, I am not sure how much knowledge of such an ur-text would enhance our understanding of the thirteenth-century poem.

Such attempts attempt to work back toward historical events, or at least toward a tale that aspired to geographical specificity. Whether or not such a tale existed, I argue that such groping toward the past does nothing to elucidate KH as we have it, which privileges a different mode of referentiality than faithful precision of setting; I see no reason to believe that the readers of the thirteenth century would have found this geographic tangle any easier to work out than scholars of the twentieth century.

¹⁷¹ “En Westir veut alez . . . / Yrlande out si a nun al tens d’auntiquitez” (2130-31).

¹⁷² L. 965 seems to beg for emendation, for it appears to announce that the messenger has come from the west, while other forces encourage us to think of Ireland as the westernmost point in the

poem (see discussion in the Ireland section below). Allen emends the line to read “Wel feor I seche biweste,” but I have restored “I seche fram,” which all manuscripts agree upon. OL finish the line with *Westnesse*, as discussed below.

¹⁷³ See Allen, p. 318, who assumes he takes *Westnesse* instead of *Suddene* because he was knighted there. In similar manner, in the Northern *Octavian*, Florent is called “Florent of Paresche [Paris]” (*Octovian* L 1038) after defeating a giant and helping to save the city from a Saracen attack. Florent is associated with Paris because his true origin is unknown, and once recognized by his father, he is called “Florent of Rome” (*Octovian* L 1147). The romance makes a point to tell us that he holds the name of Florent of Paris “Þoghe he þer were noghte borne” (*Octovian* L 1040), simultaneously reinforcing the association of knights with their birthplace and showing that the system is flexible. He receives this name shortly before he is knighted. Perhaps Horn’s dispossession gives him a status similar to that of Florent, who does not know his origin; in either case, Florent offers a precedent for naming a knight by the location of a major feat of arms, and of his knighting.

However, in the case of Horn, I am struck that both times we find “Horn of *Westnesse*,” the context is Horn’s relationship to Rymenhild. It may equally be that he is “Horn of *Westnesse*” in these cases because his marriage to Rymenhild, princess of *Westnesse*, gives him a claim to the land. With such isolated examples, it is impossible to say for certain what is most important in the construction of this name.

¹⁷⁴ L, however, gives *Westnesse* in this line. The possible explanations for this variation are too numerous to draw any firm conclusions; we cannot determine whether the scribe varies *Estnesse* and *Westnesse* deliberately or carelessly, nor at what point in the poem’s transmission these two readings appeared.

¹⁷⁵ If we give priority to C’s reading, the idea of OL as a scribal correction of 965-66 would do double duty, replacing the geographically confusing assertion that the messenger comes “fram biweste” with an unambiguous statement that he comes “fram *Westnesse*” at the same time it remaps his point of origin. Of course, scribal action could as easily flow in the other direction, with the C-scribe rejecting the otherwise unnamed *Estnesse* and confusing the sense of 965 as he avoids repeating *Westnesse* at the end of successive lines. Note that C’s version attempts to rhyme *biweste* with *Westnesse*; according to Allen, KH tends to use exact rhymes, and “scribes were jealous guardians of the couplet rhymes” (*King Horn* 35-37).

¹⁷⁶ A similar pattern of variation occurs in Robert of Gloucester’s *Metrical Chronicle*, which reports in most manuscripts that Edmund Ironside “was fram bi este ywent” into Wessex (*Metrical Chronicle* 6158). Two manuscripts of the chronicle (Trinity College, Cambridge, R.4.26 and Bodleian Library, Oxford, Digby 205) vary the line in a way that resembles the slipperiness of *Westnesse* in KH: they report instead that he “went fram *Estsex*” (α and β, with a minor spelling variation). This shift hardly gives the reader pause: when one travels from Essex into Wessex, one is coming from the east, so the variation accords with our geographical knowledge. But the variation is telling in the context of KH. Here we encounter a real, known geographical term that can alternate flexibly with a directional term encoded in its name.

¹⁷⁷ In l. 163, all MSS identify Almair as “King of West(er)nesse,” a formula repeated in L at 1529. Other phrases, like “Rymenhild was in Westnesse” (941), also suggest that Westernesse still works as a toponym.

¹⁷⁸ The variation between Westnesse and Westernesse does not, on the whole, affect my argument. Except when discussing a specific MS, I adopt the name *Westernesse* in my analysis in deference to the weight of scholarly tradition: researchers looking for information are more likely to search for *Westernesse* than *Westnesse*.

¹⁷⁹ In O, the name of the land is here spelled *Westnise*. Allen emends the last word of 771 to *lede*, a word that appears in none of the manuscripts, on the supposition that C’s reading of *londe* is orthographically similar and that O’s *wisse* would be a reasonable gloss of *lede* (p. 301-2).

¹⁸⁰ Allen dismisses C’s *londe* in 771 as merely a repetition of the last word of 772 (Allen, *King Horn* 301), but the *rime riche* that C offers has poetic merit: it connects Horn’s debarkation (the verb *londe*, 771) with the territory he is entering (the noun *londe*, 772) in a forceful manner. C’s use of *londen* as a verb may indeed be innovative—it is the earliest use attested in the MED by almost a hundred years (s.v. *londen*)—though the significance is difficult to judge given the relatively early dates of both the poem and the manuscript.

¹⁸¹ “Insularum occidentalium haec ultima.” Gerald further adds that the island has “solum oceanum ab occidente” (I.1).

¹⁸² “Tyle, quæ inter occidentales ultima fertur insulas, quod apud orientales tam nomine quam natura sit famosissima; cum occidentalibus sit prorsus incognita” (II.17). While O’Meara’s translation seems to imply that Thule is unknown to the Western world (in a modern sense), Gerald’s meaning is probably different. Both the location where Thule is reputedly located and the location where it is unknown are represented by the word *occidens*. Gerald’s point seems to be that Thule is known to those who are farthest away from it, but unfamiliar to those who are nearest to it (that is, among the western islands, rather than throughout Europe).

¹⁸³ “Solinus, inter multas quæ circa Britanniam sunt insulas, Tylen ultimam esse commemorat. In qua æstivo solstitio dicit noctem nullam; brumali vero perinde diem nullum” (II.17).

¹⁸⁴ “nullam occidentalium insularum hanc constat habere naturam” (II.17).

¹⁸⁵ While *mappaemundi* are commonly described as placing Jerusalem at their center, David Woodward has shown that this was not a standard feature even of T-O maps, and became common only with the Crusades (“Reality,” 515-17). However, regardless of where the maps are centered, Ireland is visually peripheral.

¹⁸⁶ *Irish Script On Screen* <<http://www.isos.dias.ie/english/index.html>> (accessed April 4, 2014). As Kathy Lavezzo argues, this map also represents Ireland as outside western Christendom by highlighting its distance from Rome, which is placed at the top of the map. By contrast, Britain is near the center of the map, positioning the English as the bearers of Roman Christianity to Ireland (Lavezzo, *Angels* 66-69).

¹⁸⁷ Further examples include the Sawley Map (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 66, p. 2, reproduced at Melanie Holcomb, “The Sawley Map,” *Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages*, Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://blog.metmuseum.org/penandparchment/exhibition-images/cat300r2_49e/>, accessed 2 June 2014) and the Hereford Map (*Mappa Mundi: Hereford Cathedral* <<http://www.themappamundi.co.uk/mappa-mundi/>>, accessed 2 June 2014).

¹⁸⁸ The Evesham *mappamundi* (c. 1400; London, College of Arms, MS Muniments 18/19) employs another strategy: it significantly exaggerates the size of Britain, so that it takes up approximately a fifth of the map, positioned precisely at the bottom (Delano-Smith and Kain 41, including a reproduction of the portion depicting Britain; for a full reproduction, see Barber 14).

¹⁸⁹ Lavezzo argues that the flourishing of English cartography and colonialist writing like that of Gerald were linked in a common project of negotiating English identity both by integrating England into a broader world and by consolidating its control over its even more peripheral neighbors: “assimilationist drives that are at once national and international” (*Angels* 52). A number of maps (especially in the tradition accompanying Higden’s *Polychronicon*), including the Evesham *mappamundi*, render England, Scotland, and Wales as islands, completely separated by the sea (Barber 23); in these maps, Scotland and Wales may join Ireland in lying to the outside of England. The level of representative detail differs significantly among *mappaemundi*, and islands could occur with equal status in the outer ocean, but often these spaces—and especially Ireland—implicitly moved England toward the continent by serving as spaces even closer to the edge of the map.

¹⁹⁰ Foys remarks upon this arrangement, interpreting it as an effort to reclaim Britain from its marginality in classical geography and align it with the “known world” (282-83). The two complete examples of this family of maps are found in Oxford, St. John’s College MS 17, f. 6r (*The Calendar & the Cloister* <<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/ms-17/folio.php?p=6r>> [accessed April 9, 2014]) and London, British Library MS Harley 3667, f. 8v (see Figure 4, p. 96); the third copy discussed by Foys—Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 265, p. 210—was planned, but only a small portion was executed, not including Britain and Ireland (reproduced in a plate accompanying the Foys article).

¹⁹¹ From the British Library Digital Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=16645>>, retrieved 4 Apr. 2014. This image has been released under a Public Domain Mark by the British Library.

¹⁹² The double-preposition formed by *fram* and *bi* is odd and somewhat difficult to parse. *Bi* is the more flexible of the terms, denoting *in*, *to*, or *from* when paired with a cardinal direction. The sense is evidently “from the west.” The same construction occurs elsewhere in the L-manuscript, in the Life of St. Edmund Rich of Abingdon from the early *South-English Legendary* (Early SEL 441, l. 364). The form also occurs in the line of Robert of Gloucester’s *Metrical Chronicle* reporting that Edmund Ironside “was fram bi este ywent” into Wessex (*Metrical Chronicle* 6158); see note 176.

¹⁹³ Specifically, she argues that this line and the one following it are formulaic and adopting the preposition from another instance of this formula, which provides *her* in a single manuscript.

Allen suggests that *her*, mistaken in O 1201, stemmed from the O-scribe's remembering the correct version of the line in the wrong place (*King Horn* 303).

¹⁹⁴ Westphal goes on to observe that the space Brendan navigates is organized according to the liturgical calendar.

¹⁹⁵ See Putter; Green 176-78; Moll 11-30 (ch. 1).

¹⁹⁶ In Canto XXVI of the *Inferno*, he has Ulysses recall that this was "where Hercules marked off the limits, warning all men to go no further," and Ulysses proceeds to declare to his men that they "have reached the west" ("dov'Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi / acciò che l'uom più oltre non si metta"; "siete giunti a l'occidente") (Alighieri 482-83, ll. 26.108-09, 114). The ill-fated voyage that carries Ulysses and his crew to shipwreck and death on the shores of Purgatory is specifically a transgression of the boundary of the Pillars of Hercules, which demarcate the territory that is safe and open.

¹⁹⁷ This is true of the "Mission T-O" maps already discussed (see Figure 4, p. 96); another example is offered by a mandala-style map from a manuscript of Higden's *Polychronicon* (London, British Library, Royal MS 14.C.xii f. 9v, reproduced in Woodward, "Medieval," 353, fig. 18.69).

¹⁹⁸ See note 187 for references. On these maps, Britain and Ireland are significantly larger than any other islands depicted. Moreover, they demonstrate topographical detail far surpassing other islands. Most of the *insulae* that ring the Hereford map, including a long line in the southwest and a great multitude in the Mediterranean, are depicted as simple elongated ovals, varying in thickness. By contrast, Britain and Ireland show contoured coastlines, and, unlike any of the other Hereford islands except for Sicily, contain rivers. This last feature connects them visually with the continental landmasses, which are also heavily marked by rivers. And on both the Hereford and Sawley maps, Britain and Ireland seem to bear a greater connection to the continental world than do other islands: the European coastline scallops inward, and Britain nestles within it, so that a circle drawn around the landmasses of the world would encompass Britain, too. On the Hereford map, Ireland lies outside this imagined arc, or perhaps straddles it; the estimation is more difficult to make on the Sawley map. However, despite this close graphic affiliation with the continent, Britain and Ireland remain markedly separate: the English Channel on the Hereford map is shaded with the same pigment as the ocean, different from that used for the rivers, and is not bounded by a line, as are rivers. (On both maps, other islands of the Atlantic archipelago are also depicted—more on the Hereford map—but Britain and Ireland are by far the most visually prominent.)

¹⁹⁹ I do not mean to suggest that the *Horn*-poet was familiar with cartographic representations, which were comparatively uncommon, merely to offer maps as one source for a broader cultural consciousness of space that might inform *King Horn*.

²⁰⁰ However, I argue in Chapter 4 that the end of the romance is more complicated, and perhaps less English, than Campbell believes.

²⁰¹ R. R. Davies points out similar features as historically problematic: “There was much else that an English observer would have found disconcerting about the kingship of the west: there was, in spite of the ponderous learning of the native jurists, no clear practice of succession; kings were regularly made and unmade by over-kings and, equally, by the men of their own communities” (*First* 98).

²⁰² “What is surely striking about the British Isles in 1300 compared with the British Isles of 1100 is how much more integrated—though far from unitary—a world they were” (*First* 166).

²⁰³ See also Gillingham, *Angevin*: “By the end of his reign Henry III was indisputably an English king and men were beginning to think of the Plantagenets as an English dynasty” (84).

²⁰⁴ Kimberley K. Bell, picking up on a suggestion made by Rosamund Allen, suggests that the romance could have rather specific political meaning: it might be a paean to Edward I, celebrating his expansionism in territories including Ireland (269-70; citing Allen, “Date,” 122).

²⁰⁵ “gens omnium gentium in fidei rudimentis incultissima” (*Giraldi* 3.19).

²⁰⁶ “Moreover, although all this time the Faith has grown up, so to speak, in the country, nevertheless in some corners of it there are many even still who are not baptized, and who, because of the negligence of the pastors, have not yet heard the teachings of the Faith. . . . When they were asked if they were Christians and baptized, they replied that they had as yet heard nothing of Christ and knew nothing about him.” (“Ad haec autem, quamvis tanto jam tempore in terra ista fundata fides adoleverit, in nonnullis tamen ejusdem angulis multi adhuc sunt non baptizati, et ad quos ex pastoralis negligentia fidei nunquam doctrina pervenit . . . Cumque ab ipsis quæreretur, an Christiani et baptizati fuissent, responderunt de Christo se nihil hactenus vel audisse vel scivisse” (*Giraldi* 3.26)

²⁰⁷ As reported by Gerald de Barri in the *Expugnatio Hibernica*: “gratum et acceptum habemus ut pro dilatandis ecclesie terminis, pro viciorum restringendo decursu, pro corrigendis moribus et virtutibus inserendis, pro Christiane religionis augmento, insulam illam ingrediaris” (text and translation from Giraldus Cambrensis 2.5, ll.49-52).

²⁰⁸ “barbara nacio, que Christiano censetur nomine”; “gens ea per vos Christiane professionis nomen cum effectu de cetero consequatur” (Giraldus Cambrensis 2.5, ll. 75-78).

²⁰⁹ In MS O, a Saracen Horn encounters on the coast of Westernesse is also described as a “geaunt” (607); in the other manuscripts, only the Irish pagans are giants.

²¹⁰ Elizabeth L. Rambo surveys a number of examples of Irish giants at 56-61.

²¹¹ Confusingly, the manuscript that KH editors label O (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108) is referred to as L in Bell and Couch’s volume. The manuscript is probably a composite. The first part of the manuscript has been associated on dialectical grounds with Oxfordshire, the second (which contains *King Horn*) with Norfolk. However, Edwards expresses some skepticism about the potential of dialectical analysis to solve the problem of origins. The two portions seem to have been put together with some care and with an eye to coherence (27-29).

²¹² Ker xxii-xxiii; Revard 24; Thompson, "Mapping," 126.

²¹³ David L. Jeffrey similarly offers a speculative connection to a context of Anglo-Irish exchange. Jeffrey notes the possibility that was a friar (Augustinian or Franciscan) connected to Thomas de Charlton, Bishop of Hereford, who served as Lord Justice of Ireland. Noting, like Thompson, L's similarities with Harley 913 (a "friar miscellany"), Jeffrey proposes that the L-scribe could have been in the southwest of Ireland in Charlton's retinue (or perhaps in conjunction with the Bohun family); thus the scribe might have encountered a volume like Harley 913 (Jeffrey 264, 268-69). However, see Pearsall, "Whole," 28, which criticizes Jeffrey's speculations as improbable over-interpretation ("what could have taken the Harley scribe to the southwest of Ireland between 1328 and 1340? Raised eyebrows might be the best answer to such a question").

²¹⁴ As Bell puts it, "By serving as the geographical marker for the audience to identify the other regions in *Horn* with England (and, perhaps Scotland), it [the toponym *Ireland*] draws the audience's attention to the romance's connection with the historical world" (268-69). I concur entirely that the toponym functions as the romance's interface with the world of history. But the presence of the term Ireland does not just transparently code the other lands as England. Even if Ireland encourages readers to think of England, the other toponyms still create an interpretative gap that must be crossed.

²¹⁵ Even more pronounced forms of deixis are possible: Bell notes that in the *Life of St. Gregory*, the third person gives way to the first, so that the English become "us" (257). This anticipates Chaucer's treatment of insular space in the *Man of Law's Tale*, discussed in Chapter 2, though the meaning of Chaucer's "us" is more complex than that described by Bell.

²¹⁶ Turville-Petre notes that the English excluded the Anglo-Irish from the community of the English nation by branding them simply "Irish"; similarly, Maurice fitz Gerald is said to have complained, to the native Irish they are "English," constituting what has been called a "middle nation" (*England* 143, 156). Bell picks up on this historical fact as a warrant for reading *King Horn*'s "Irish" as partners with England: "In *Horn*, rather than being a derogatory term, the word 'Irish' connotes bravery . . . They become part of the body politic of Suddene and subjects of King Horn. *Horn* thus offers its audience a fantasy of English unification brought together by (saint) Horn" (273). *King Horn*, she goes on to suggest in a footnote, "recuperates the Irish the way *Havelok* recuperates the Danes" (273, n. 71). Again, I agree with Bell about the work of community formation that *King Horn* does, and about its recuperation of Ireland. I object only to her insistence on the role of England. It is not possible (and I do not think Bell suggests that we try) to read *Irish* in *King Horn* as indication the Anglo-Irish. Used as such, *Irish* is a term of insult, used to imply that these settlers are not English and are insufficiently differentiated from the Irish settlers (a growing concern, and the subject of severe legislation in the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366). Without context, the word just means the Irish themselves. R. R. Davies (in a passage also cited by Bell) notes that the Anglo-Irish of the thirteenth century "sedulously cultivated their distinctive and exclusive Englishness" (*First* 154; cited in Bell 271); a presentation of Englishness is exactly what we do not find in KH.

²¹⁷ Field supplies a useful survey of lists of Matter of England romances in (“Curious,” 30-35). Of the collections Field supplies, only Robert Rouse excludes *King Horn*. (Field also cites Frankis’s observation that *King Horn* is not English in setting.)

²¹⁸ Indeed, the two are closely connected in the manuscript. *King Horn* appears without a title or opening rubric, a four-line initial A alone serving to separate it from *Havelok* (Bell 253).

²¹⁹ Finlayson protests the long critical tendency to compare *King Horn* and *Havelok*, arguing that the two poems are of utterly different genres and neither has any bearing on understanding the other (“*King Horn*”). My discussion here bears out Finlayson’s point, for the two texts are working in fundamentally different ways. But the comparison is nevertheless illustrative. The difference between the two texts’ spatialities is related to their genres, as Finlayson suggests, but it would be a mistake to reduce the issue to a question of genre, for space is doing things in *King Horn* that Finlayson misses by focusing too finely on the category of “chivalric romance.”

²²⁰ Cf. *Horn Childe*, where Horn’s native Northumbria is invaded by Irish and where he spends his exile in the Welsh and Irish courts. While the poem’s conclusion is missing, this configuration of places makes it hard to resist seeing in the poem the English Horn taking the spaces of the Celtic fringe under control and annexing them to his centralizing crown.

²²¹ *Floris and Blauncheflur* and *Amis and Amiloun* are the romances aside from *King Horn* that do not; *Of Arthour and Merlin*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Sir Tristrem*, *Guy of Warwick*, and *Bevis of Hampton* employ the term. I am following the dating offered by the list in *MWME* 13-16 for this list. Not coincidentally, *Floris and Blauncheflur* and *Amis and Amiloun* are the least geographically precise romances in the list, and give the least impression of history.

²²² John Gillingham, noting that a sense of Englishness among the descendants of the Norman colonists has typically been dated to the late thirteenth century, suggests instead that it developed across the 1130s (“Henry”). Laura Ashe observes a sense of Englishness in Anglo-Norman literature, including the *Romance of Horn*, in the 1170s (11; see 146-58 for RH). Turville-Petre’s study, vital for English-language literature, begins in 1290, while Kathy Lavezzo, for her part, traces common tropes and concerns in the negotiation of Englishness from Ælfric of Eynsham in the tenth century through Cardinal Wolsey in the sixteenth (*Angels*). While some dissent—Derek Pearsall has suggested that there was no sustained sense of Englishness before the fifteenth century (“Idea”)—on the whole the late thirteenth century, when KH was composed, is viewed as a time when a sense of English identity existed and was being expressed and cultivated in vernacular literature.

²²³ After all, romances do not require toponyms for their stories to work. *Gamelyn* maintains a romance plot while naming no places at all (if we discount the toponym in the name *John of Boundes* [Knight and Ohlgren 169-226, l. 3], which abstractly means “borders” or “boundaries”—*Boundes* is not a solid place in the same way as Ireland). Though *Gamelyn* is unique in naming no places whatsoever, many romances specify themselves less precisely in space than *King Horn*. The roughly contemporary *Amis and Amiloun* brackets its plot by reminding readers that events unfold in Lombardy—which, the romance tells us, is “beyond the see,” removed from England (Foster 1-88, l. 4)—it names no location between the references to Lombardy at the beginning and end, preferring to talk abstractly about *this country* and *the town*.

Or Ireland could as easily have been replaced with another name, a geographically ambiguous name like Westernesse or Suddene, without harming *King Horn*'s structure and plot. (RH and HC adhere to KH in basic shape, though they name different places.) Ireland, which is recognizable, nearby, and politically involved with England carries a special referential weight that other toponyms and other spatial configurations would not share.

²²⁴ Despite frequent depictions of Saracen characters, linguistic difference is not typically a factor in romance, where characters from across the world seem to be able to speak to each other with great facility. Since language barriers are not a necessary rule of the romance world, language becomes noticeable when a romance chooses to bring it up, as when Chaucer in the *Man of Law's Tale* describes Custance's language as "a maner Latyn corrupt" (II.519). I am suggesting that Horn's desire to discipline the Saracens linguistically directs attention to the linguistic community the romance otherwise depicts.

²²⁵ Though there are good reasons for glossing "vre speche" as English, we cannot *assume* that English is the language that the characters speak. Texts tend to report direct speech in the language of the narration, even when it is clear that the characters are speaking a different language. Middle English romances treating the Matters of France and Rome report characters' speech in English, usually without content, even though they must be conscious that their subjects would have spoken French or Latin. Ultimately *King Horn* seems uninterested in the history of language, but the language we understand its characters to speak cannot be a foregone conclusion.

²²⁶ Allen's proposed emendation follows fairly closely the reading of L, which I discuss below; the lines are absent in C.

²²⁷ If we assume that the L-scribe is not thinking of this as a compound, we can read *kunne* as a form of *kin*, which brings us closer to the reading of O. But the sense in L is still not what Bell reads in O; if *kin* is the term, the messenger says he cannot find Horn with the help of *any* *people's* speech, not singling out any group as linguistically different.

²²⁸ Laura Ashe has detected in the Anglo-Norman *Song of Dermot and the Earl* (late 12th century)—a text displaying "a particularly subtle form of colonial exploitation, predicated not upon difference, but upon likeness"—the somewhat similar glimmer of a possibility running counter to the bloody history of Irish colonialism: "there is an intriguing, counter-factual, possibility, that this sort of cultural interaction could have led, albeit slowly and piecemeal, to a relatively indiscriminatory, still recognizably Irish, society" (194). The *Song* lives in history and narrates events that initiated the English colonization of Ireland, but the poem's capacity for imagining the fundamental similarity between the Irish and the English opens more peaceful paths, even as it enables the colonialist agenda. *King Horn* goes further: it suggests that the territories of the Atlantic archipelago share a kind of space in common, and that kind of space constitutes sufficient and natural grounds for connection.

²²⁹ On synecdoche and close-up as key features of *King Horn*'s narrative style, see Spearing, *Readings* 34-39.

²³⁰ Relph takes the term "other-directed architecture" from J. B. Jackson.

²³¹ Cf. *Bevis of Hampton*, in which even the smaller, more politically unified space of England can scarcely hold together under the weight of various competing political agendas as forces both internal and external lay claim to Southampton. *Bevis* is a much more strongly emplaced romance than KH, featuring a famously detailed depiction of London and a legend of the founding of Arundel Castle.

²³² “Of national feeling or a sense of national identity—whether it has to do with ideas of national or racial history, with England as a land, with ideas of national character, or with opposition to some hostile national other—I find little or nothing in Chaucer” (“Chaucer,” 90).

²³³ On Gower’s influence on the *Man of Law’s Tale*, see Nicholson, “*Man of Law*”; Nicholson, “Chaucer.”

²³⁴ Mann; Wallace; Strohm, *Social Chaucer* ch. 6; Burger.

²³⁵ This connection is noted by Bowers, “Chaucer,” 60; Knapp 156.

²³⁶ Burger stresses that the “nation” he describes, a “‘new’ group of English men and women” united by reason and class (and chance) but coming together as a community, is not yet fully formed: “I want to emphasize such an imagined community as something not yet known, and therefore separate from the kind of ‘English nation’ defined a generation later by the fifteenth-century Lancastrian state apparatus” (198). Burger traces this community forward through the early reception of the CT, exploring how fifteenth-century respondents treat this group, which the CT *imagines* as though it’s already established, as if it *actually is* established. While he is careful to preserve a sense of openness and possibility in the text itself, Burger certainly describes the condensation of a community of people defined in part by their geography as part of the work of the CT.

Wallace is an exception, cautiously resisting the impulse to find England. After noting vocabulary in the General Prologue that might suggest the Ship of State, Wallace comments, “This might please critics who have strained to see Chaucer’s *felaweship* as expressive of a newly emergent nation-state consciousness” (71), but goes on to explain why it is not tenable to understand the figure as operating throughout the Prologue.

²³⁷ I largely share Butterfield’s sense that “to call Chaucer an English poet is to risk, at best, misunderstanding. ‘English’ is a retrospective term, just like ‘nation’” (“Nationhood,” 63). As we will see throughout the chapter, Chaucer does use the category of England at certain points to shape or question readers’ sense of group identity and territory. But to assume Chaucer is writing about England absent specific invocations of England as a category maps onto his work Victorian assumptions that he belongs to the nation.

²³⁸ All references to Chaucer are to *Riverside*.

²³⁹ Diana Webb has cited Thomas Becket as the main reason for pilgrimage into England, and notes that “Canterbury was included among the ‘greater pilgrimages’ to which repentant heretics were sentenced by the inquisition of southern France” (225).

²⁴⁰ MED gives *people* or *persons* as the primary definition, but notes that the term can have explicitly universal meaning: “people in general, human race, mankin[d]” (*folk* 1a[c]). The following lines, of course, confirm that these *folk* are geographically widespread: “palmeres for to seken straunge strondes, / To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes.” The destinations of their pilgrimages are geographically wide-ranging, and the fact that these pilgrimage sites were *kowthe* (known) in many lands suggests that the pilgrims Chaucer imagines in the opening lines are also widely dispersed.

²⁴¹ Wallace cites these terms as an example of the “striving for spatial inclusiveness” of the CT. Borrowing from Jeannine Quillet, Wallace notes a tension in medieval thought between universality and concern for specific subgroups, and cites these lines as examples of the CT’s universality. Wallace describes this as “a movement that surprises us momentarily by moving beyond the immediate occasion of a pilgrimage to Canterbury” (87-88), but this is putting the cart before the horse: the collection opens at the most universal level possible (the coming of spring), and only after the focus has been narrowed multiple times do we arrive at the idea of pilgrimage to Canterbury.

²⁴² The reference to Deptford is primarily about time, for the Host observes, “Lo Depeford, and it is half-wey pryme!” (I.3906) The Host’s comment about Greenwich—“Lo Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne!” (I.3907)—could carry a tenuous connection to the tale that follows, for the Reeve’s Tale certainly displays shrewish characters. But the tale itself takes place in Trumpington and features Cantabrigian scholars; its immediate geographic markers separate it from the geography the pilgrims are traversing. I am inclined to see shrewishness simply as a stock attribute attached to Greenwich—and perhaps a joke by Chaucer, who may have been living there at the time (see *Riverside* 849)—and I doubt it is intended to correspond closely with the matter of the tale.

²⁴³ This town has been interpreted as Sittingbourne on the basis of the Summoner’s declaration near the end of the Wife of Bath’s Prologue that he will “telle tales two or thre / Of freres er I come to Sidyngborne” (III.846-47). This assumption troubles the geographical realism of the pilgrimage as arranged in the Ellesmere Manuscript among others; in Ellesmere, the conclusion of the Summoner’s Tale comes well before the Monk’s Prologue, where the Monk declares, “Loo, Rouchestre stant heer faste by!” (VII.1926), even though Rochester comes before Sittingbourne on the route from London to Canterbury. This discrepancy occasioned the Bradshaw Shift of the order of the Tales, which suggested placing Fragment VII before Fragment III to flatten out these references; however, as many scholars in the intervening years have noted, the Shift entirely lacks manuscript support.

Stanley B. Greenfield argues that there is no reason to assume the “towne” at the end of the tale fulfills the Summoner’s boast in WBP; indeed, he suggests that “towne” is the less important word in its rhyming pair, suggested by “gowne,” and concludes, “Since it is the rhyme word, ‘town’ may not have a real place as a referent” (52). Certainly, the “towne” here *could* be another town on the road to Canterbury if we need it to be, but if Greenfield is correct, the function of the term (aside from rhyming) is more to produce a general geographic effect than to nail that moment in the tale-telling sequence onto a particular location in England. Although, as George R. Keiser observes, Chaucer’s geographic references are typically specific and concrete (“In Defense,” 195-96), it is surely worth noting that Chaucer does not *name* the town here; if the referent of “towne” is Sittingbourne, it is so only by an act of recall across almost 2000 lines.

Even if Chaucer did intend the town to be Sittingbourne (perhaps the sequencing of tales and geographic references were not fully revised, or perhaps Chaucer was not too concerned with the precise details of the route), the Ellesmere order suggests either that Chaucer's intention was not clear to his scribes or that they were simply not bothered that the order of the geographical indicators does not correspond to the order of locations on a trip to Canterbury.

²⁴⁴ For a demonstration of the difficulties of drawing conclusions about where along the route particular tales fall, see Owen. Owen proposes an ordering for which he offers both textual and artistic support, but his proposed arrangement corresponds to no extant manuscript and depends upon a return trip that almost none of the manuscripts suggest (822). It is certainly possible to make critical arguments for particular connections between tale and route, particularly if one is willing to insist on a hypothetical authorial arrangement of the tales as definitive and the only order of consequence, but it is difficult to sustain any of these arguments as representative of the way medieval readers encountered the Tales in light of the diversity of manuscript evidence.

²⁴⁵ The Ellesmere group is the only major group of manuscripts (of those outlined in *Riverside* 1121) that places Fragment VIII after Fragment VII, despite the fact that Fragment VII sees the pilgrims passing Rochester, more than 20 miles before Boughton-under-Blean, which features in Fragment VIII.

²⁴⁶ See for example the itinerary by Matthew Paris from London to Jerusalem contained London, BL Royal MS. 14 C.VII, ff. 2r-4v (see Figure 3, p. 21). The map is not linear in the sense of depicting only a single route; the map branches, showing multiple routes and becoming progressively more spatially complex as the map approaches the Holy Land. However, the English leg of the itinerary (f. 2r) is quite simple and schematic, laying out towns from London to Dover on a single straight line. The focus of the map is on time, rather than space; the road between towns bears an inscription indicating the amount of time required to travel between those towns ("Jurnee," a single day, for all but one leg). The map gives an impression of the space of each town, depicting it in thumbnail sketch, but does nothing to indicate insular space as a whole.

That is not to say that even itinerary maps cannot represent territories even as they represent travel between towns. Paris's itinerary alludes to England as a whole, labeling London "chef dengleterre," Canterbury "chef de iglises de engleterre," and Dover "lentrete e la clef de la Riche ille de Engleterre." (Rochester, the other English town depicted, carries no such label.) Moreover, Paris's most famous map of Britain (London, British Library, Cotton Claudius D.vi, f. 12v), "should also be seen as an itinerary map" according to P. D. A. Harvey (496), being constructed along the axis of a single route even though it depicts the contours of the island along with other topographic features. However, the *Canterbury Tales* eschews such features. Instead, we get isolated towns, and the impression of a route between them, without further reference to the English space that surrounds them. With its repeated interest in astrological computations of the hour, the frame narrative of the *Canterbury Tales* follows the focus of Paris's itinerary on time more than on space.

²⁴⁷ A similar process of prioritizing spiritual pilgrimage over physical occurs in Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Approached by a group of pilgrims to be their guide on their pilgrimage to Truth, Piers assents, but asks that they first plow his half-acre with him. The process of plowing stretches on and replaces the pilgrimage, which never gets underway. Piers explicitly represents plowing as

pilgrimage, declaring that he will “ben his [Truth’s] pilgrym atte plow for pouere mennes sake” (*Piers B* VI.102). However, after receiving a “pardon” that offers no pardon at all but simply says that the fate of men’s souls will accord with their actions, Piers rejects even the physical act of plowing as pilgrimage: “Of preires and of penaunce my plou3 shal ben herafter” (*Piers B* VII.123). (For Denise N. Baker, the shift from pilgrimage to plowing marks a movement from a Nominalist emphasis on works to an Augustinian emphasis on grace—a shift that directs focus away from engagement in the world [720].) Chaucer and Langland approach pilgrimage differently: the Parson’s Tale moves from the pilgrimage to Canterbury (frequently undertaken in the literal world) to a journey of spiritual perfection, while Langland’s allegory stages different forms of pilgrimage as it attempts to work out which is best. But to do so, both deemphasize physical pilgrimage in favor of attending to spiritual matters.

²⁴⁸ The Miller’s, Reeve’s, Cook’s, Man of Law’s, Wife of Bath’s, Friar’s, Summoner’s, and Canon’s Yeoman’s Tales. The Franklin’s Tale uses England as an element in its geographic system: the action of the tale is made possible when Arveragus decides to travel from his home in Armorica and live for a few years “In Engeland, that cleped was eek Briteyne” (V.810). However, we never go with Arveragus to England, but remain in Armorica with his wife, Dorigen; England is the space of absence in the poem. The tale does link British and Breton space. Though set in Armorica, the tale immediately glosses this geographic term “Armorik” with “that called is Britayne” (V.729); the Middle English word for Brittany being orthographically identical to that for Britain, this term resonates with the island of Britain, even though it is not set there. (Indeed, Francis Ingledew argued in a 2012 conference presentation that the Franklin’s Tale draws upon Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae* and follows Geoffrey in recognizing the Bretons as the sole successors of the Britons.) Despite these affinities, the tale’s main topographic feature, the black coastal rocks that threaten to wreck Arveragus’s ship, are distinctly Breton, and the action is confined to Brittany and does not spill into Britain; therefore, I exclude the tale from the British settings of the Canterbury Tales.

²⁴⁹ However, comparatively few actually take *England* as a term. In fact, the Wife of Bath’s Tale *could* be set within the space later known as England, and for that matter, the name *England* often attached to the island as a whole. But the opening of the tale aligns it with the pre-English, Briton past described by Geoffrey of Monmouth and often depicted in Arthurian romance. In particular, the second line of the tale names the Britons. Since Chaucer avoids contemporary toponyms and never uses the term England, I see no evidence for considering its space English rather than British.

²⁵⁰ Rome: Man of Law’s, Second Nun’s, and Physician’s (by reasonable inference). Lombardy: Clerk’s, Merchant’s. Of these, the Man of Law’s, Clerk’s, and Merchant’s all use *Ytaille*, in addition to the more local term, as a geographic category. The Physician’s Tale does not actually name its setting, but the reference to Livy in the tale’s opening line and the characters’ Latin names both prime the reader to understanding the setting as Rome—although there is no evidence that Chaucer used any version of the story besides that offered in *Le roman de la rose* (*Riverside* 902).

²⁵¹ Of the 63 romances (which exclude the work of Chaucer and Gower) that *MWME* lists through the year 1400, 24 have English or British setting: about 38%. (I count *King Horn* among this number—see Chapter 1—as well as *Sir Degrevant*, which has only the shakiest of

geographic indicators but which seems to align its titular character with Britain by assigning him to King Arthur's "Tabull Round." Excluded from my list of texts with British setting are those that take place in Brittany, though such a setting could well have been thought of as "British," and *Joseph of Arimathie*, which holds an important place in British legendary history but which does not treat Joseph's time in Britain in its mid-14th-century version.)

²⁵² "Artour of Britaigne," A.1199.

²⁵³ The Canon's Yeoman's Tale (VIII.1356) and Friar's Tale (III.1322, 1340) both use *in Engelond* as part of a superlative, expressing that no one or nothing in England possesses a comparable quality. The work of the phrase is more to express the qualities of the person or thing described than to ask its reader or hearer to think seriously about geography.

²⁵⁴ Though, as Helen Cooper notes, there is also a heavy moralizing component, and the tale's continuations picked up on its moral, rather than its fabliau, elements (*Canterbury* 119-20).

²⁵⁵ The Merchant's Tale, one of the two non-English fabliaux, eschews presentism by incorporating mythological characters into its plot.

²⁵⁶ The connection between the local and fabliaux is all the more compelling if he was, as some have suggested, a Canterbury monk himself.

²⁵⁷ Chaucer propounds the idea of a fallen world in the conclusion to "The Former Age" (*Riverside* 650-51):

Allas, allas, now may men wepe and crye!
For in oure dayes nis but covetyse,
Doublenesse, and tresoun, and envye,
Poyson, manslawhtre, and mordre in sondry wyse. (60-63)

²⁵⁸ On Chaucer's use of *nacioun*, see Akbari, "Orientation," 113, 120-22. Akbari notes that as well as identifying groups of people, the label of *nacioun* can be used as a mark of estrangement, separating people from each other (121); as Ardis Butterfield points out, Chaucer appears to use the word primarily as a marker of foreignness ("Nationhood," 61).

²⁵⁹ See Kolve 298-99, which notes that both of Chaucer's sources emphasize their indebtedness to previous sources in a way that endorses the story's fundamental historicity. Kolve is surely correct that Chaucer's early audiences (not to mention Chaucer himself) "would not have thought the story of Custance a fiction at all: they would have perceived it as history" (298).

²⁶⁰ Dharmaraj; Schibanoff; Birns, "Christian-Islamic" (less explicitly); Lynch; Ingham, "Contrapuntal Histories"; Heng, *Empire* ch. 4; Lavezzo, *Angels* ch. 2 are all influential readings.

²⁶¹ For an early and influential statement, see Schibanoff 60-61. Schibanoff notes that the tale gives us Others in many forms—"as Saracen or Muslim, as woman, and as heretic" (61)—all of which contribute to the tale's work of identity formation. While the tale's treatment of women is a major critical issue taken up by most of the scholars I cite, I focus primarily on religious and

geographic categories, which are more directly involved in its representation of the insular past, while acknowledging that gender is involved in all these constructions.

²⁶² Heng notes how Rome provides an authoritative origin for England, and suggests that Chaucer's story and its sources align her with Rome rather than Byzantium (with which she has historical and traditional affiliations) because of the normativity of Latin Christianity. (*Empire* 194, 209-10). Lavezzo argues that the tale explores English anxieties about England's relationship to Rome; her analysis emphasizes the centrality of Rome because "any celebration of the marginal always entails an appreciation of the center" (*Angels* 111).

²⁶³ Of course, the Constance narrative in Trevet is not an independent story, but one sequence of events in a long chronicle. Trevet's practice is to organize the events he relates by year, and the Constance story is not even the first event related in the year it begins (A.D. 570, R 199 ff.). But Trevet marks off the beginnings of new bodies of material within an entry using the phrase *en le temps* to coordinate the new events with the already established reigns of key figures. In this case, his "En le temps cist emperour Tyberie" (R 200) establishes the life of Maurice during the reign of Tyberius and marks off the beginning of the Constance narrative, which runs until the next date Trevet gives (A.D. 583, R 222). The Constance material is also registered as a discrete segment of Trevet's text by a marginal gloss in the MS Leyden, Universiteitsbibl. Voss. Gall. F.6, fol. 49v: "De la noble femme Constance" (Correale and Hamel 2:297).

No modern edition of the whole of the *Cronicles* has ever been published. Where possible, I quote text and translation from the portion of the *Cronicles* printed by Correale in Correale and Hamel 2.296-329. When referring to portions of the *Cronicles* not printed by Correale, as here, I quote instead from Rutherford vol. 2, silently accepting handwritten corrections in the microfilm copy I consulted and occasionally correcting or regularizing. All translations from Rutherford's text are my own. I distinguish between these two sources my parenthetical citations (R = Rutherford, C = Correale), citing the page number on which the French-language text appears.

²⁶⁴ Trevet: "Puis quant ele [Constance] estoit entré le treszisme an de son age, viendrent a la court son pere Tyberie marchaunz paens hors de la grant Sarizine" (C 297); Gower: "Constance, as the cronique seith, / Sche hihte, and was so ful of feith / That the greteste of Barbarie, / Of him whiche usen marchandie, / Sche hath converted as thei come / To hir upon a time in Rome" (597-602). As my discussion of Gower does not extend beyond the Constance story, I cite the excerpt printed in Correale and Hamel 330-50. Citations are by line number (within Book II of the *Confessio Amantis*); the lineation corresponds with the edition by G. C. Macaulay.

For Trevet, Constance is the dominant figure here, and the coming of the merchants slots into a particular moment in her life. Gower makes Constance's prominence even greater than Trevet. In Gower's version, Constance is actually the grammatical subject of the sentence that tells how the merchants came to Rome. The merchants themselves are relegated to a dependent clause, where they are initially presented as an exemplum of Constance's extraordinary faith. Both authors align the narrative initially with Rome and present the merchants as figures entering Roman space from the outside.

²⁶⁵ Most of the tales that do not establish a setting in the opening line lack a precise geographic setting: *Melibee*, the Monk's Tale (though some of the snippets within this anthology of tragedies do identify a setting in the opening line), the Nun's Priest's Tale, the Manciple's Tale (though we

learn in the opening line that the tale is set “Whan Phebus dwelled heere in this erthe adoun” [IX.105]), the Parson’s Tale. The only tales that have discernible geographic settings but do not announce them close to the beginning are the Physician’s Tale and the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale (though the latter begins by telling us “With this Chanoun I dwelt have seven yeer,” which may do the work). The Second Nun’s Tale withholds precise spatial identifiers but tells us in the second line that Saint Cecilia “Was comen of Romayns and of noble kynde” (VIII.121), which is probably enough to get us to Rome. The Knight’s Tale similarly tells us in l. 3 regarding Theseus, “Of Atthenes he was lord and governour” (I.861), instancing the first important space in the tale, though it takes twelve more lines to announce that Theseus is going to Athens. The Wife of Bath’s Tale waits until l. 3 to name “this land” (III.859), though references in the previous two lines to King Arthur and the Britons have left little doubt regarding the setting. *Sir Thopas* does not identify Flanders until the second stanza. But all the remaining tales—twelve in total—identify the geographic setting in the opening line (though some become more precise in succeeding lines).

²⁶⁶ The Reeve’s, Squire’s, Franklin’s, and Pardoner’s Tales. See in particular the opening line of the Pardoner’s Tale—“In Flaundes whilom was a compaignye” (VI.463)—which repeats almost exactly the opening line of the Man of Law’s Tale, although the action of the Pardoner’s Tale remains in Flanders.

²⁶⁷ Schibanoff remarks that Chaucer’s rendition establishes similarities between the merchants and Roman Christians, in contrast to the accounts of Gower and Trevelyan, which present the merchants as Other (77-78). However, she does not notice that Rome itself is othered in the process.

²⁶⁸ This approach to the world is “orientalist” in the way it coordinates geography and difference. Within medieval English geographic discourse, *wondres* were not the exclusive purview of foreign lands. A number of Middle English texts throughout the Middle Ages enumerate the wonders to be found in Britain, a tradition dating back to the *Mirabilia* appended to the *Historia Brittonum* (9th century), which list the marvels of the island of Britain along with those of Mona (Anglesey) and Ireland. Likewise, as we saw in Ch. 1, Gerald de Barri enumerated the *mirabilia* of Ireland in order to furnish the West with marvels like those claimed by the East.

However, by placing *wondres* in the context of distance and travel, the Sultan is suggesting the Wonders of the East tradition more strongly than the Wonders of Britain. Reading of travelers charged with reporting wonders, medieval readers might think of travelers like Alexander the Great; Suzanne Conklin Akbari observes that in the Middle English *Kyng Alisaundre*, “the peak of Alexander’s conquest seems to simply be a moment when the king has, at last, seen plenty of ‘wondres’” (*Idols* 105). The mid-fifteenth-century metrical version of *Mandeville’s Travels* similarly links wonders with travel: “Euer he trauailid without wene / The wondres of þis worlde to sene” (*Metrical Version* 30). While some British writers were eager to discuss the wonders in their own land, the Sultan’s speech joins such accounts in framing *wondres* as something to be encountered elsewhere, outside of one’s own land.

Making *wondres* a feature of other lands might be described as orientalist in that it produces exoticism from spatial difference. As I use the term here, it does not (of course) carry the same history of power relations described in Said’s *Orientalism*. But the Sultan’s request produces a discourse of alterity that seeks to collect and absorb knowledge about the Other within an authoritative framework (it will be reported to the Sultan).

²⁶⁹ I am using Geraldine Heng's term in describing western Christian domination in the Constance stories as cultural imperialism (*Empire* 184). Whether or not we follow Heng in seeing Christian religion as merely one species of a broader discourse of power, Trevet and Gower unquestionably establish the supremacy of Roman Christianity over Syrian paganism, sending the merchants to the Sultan as Christians who have been made by Constance.

²⁷⁰ "Et quant reconustrent la foi devaunt lour veisins et parentz Sarazins, estoient accusez a l'haut soudan de lour foi. . . . Mes puis q'il avoient suffisaument defendu la [loi] Jhesu Crist encontre les paens, qi ne savoient plus contredire, comenserent de preiser la pucele Constaunce" (28-31).

²⁷¹ Note that she converts them entirely by *words*: she "lour precha la foi Cristiene . . . [et] les fist baptizer et enseigner parfitement en la foi Jhesu Crist" ("preached the Christian faith to them and had them baptized and instructed perfectly in the faith of Jesus Christ," C 297) or "hath hem with hire wordes wise / Of Cristes feith so full enformed / That thei thereto ben all conformed" (Gower 606-08). In Trevet, as we saw above, the efficacy of teaching continues as the merchants, returning to their own court, both proclaim their faith and successfully defend it against the objections of pagan wise men ("les sages de lour ley," 28), in the manner of St. Catherine of Alexandria.

By contrast, in Chaucer's version of the story, conversion always depends upon some additional stimulus. The Sultan converts because he wants to marry Custance; Hermengyld out of love for Custance; the steward after seeing Hermengyld recognized by the blind Briton; and Alla and his court, most spectacularly, after seeing Custance's accuser miraculously struck by a hand. Trevet and Gower, like accounts of the life of St. Catherine, align Christianity with wisdom from the very beginning. Chaucer does not dramatize the same sense of Christianity's logical superiority.

²⁷² The Sultan is of course not the only figure who converts in Syria; the accord that arranges Custance's marriage decrees that "is baronage / And alle his liges" (II.239-40) convert as well. It is not impossible that the merchants, who "stode in grace" (II.176) of the Sultan, are included in the general term *liges*. But one way or another the narrative does not return to the merchants; if they do convert it is only as an implicit part of the broader (thwarted) effort to convert the kingdom of Syria as a whole.

²⁷³ MED cites only five examples in total, of which MLT is the earliest.

²⁷⁴ The Sultaness refers to "the hooly lawes of our Alkaron, / Yeven by Goddes message Makomete" (II.332-33) and addresses one god, whom she calls God, throughout her speech. Nicholas Birns describes her words as "a consummate statement of Islamic orthodoxy" ("Christian-Islamic," 22). This accurate representation has surprised modern readers, who are more accustomed to fantastical distortions.

²⁷⁵ Bloomfield explicitly separates Chaucer's accomplishment in imagining an Islamic perspective from his specific knowledge of Islam: "Chaucer falls down on his knowledge . . . by assuming that Mohammedans sacrificed to God (l. 325). This is however a point of fact, not an attitude."

²⁷⁶ For a variety of sympathetic readings of the Sultanness, see Dharmaraj 6; Birns, “Christian-Islamic” 22; Davis 116; Ingham, “Contrapuntal Histories,” 65; Nakley 386. These approaches differ in the amount of agency they give the tale in its portrayal of the Sultanness (many argue that the tale, or its narrator, is markedly unsympathetic to the Sultanness), but agree that she mounts a logical and sincere defense of her own religion.

²⁷⁷ Such similarities are a favorite subject of *Mandeville’s Travels*, which also furnishes two of the remaining four uses of *alkaron* listed by the MED. On the other hand, for Joerg O. Fichte, the similarities between the Sultanness’s religion and Christianity actually stigmatize the Sultanness (“Rome,” 233-34).

²⁷⁸ Custance’s linguistic knowledge has been discussed extensively, with scholars drawing a variety of conclusions: this description demonstrates Chaucer’s historical consciousness of linguistic change in Latin (Burrow; Spearing, *Textual* 134); it refers to speech in the Italian vernacular (Rose 165); it is a “littoral language” common to mariners (Hsy 19); the scene depicts xenoglossia, in which Custance speaks in her own language and is miraculously understood by the Northumbrians in theirs (C. Cooper 30). On this point, the Man of Law’s Tale differs significantly from Tretet, where Constance is said to have learned the Saxon language in her youth and speaks it to the Northumbrians. In my view, these lines likely refer both to Chaucer’s sense of linguistic change and an idea of Latin as a universal language; Custance can speak to the Northumbrians because everyone knows Latin. But the main point is how this reference at once represents Custance as able to communicate with the Northumbrians and marks her as apart from them; language does not confer identity.

²⁷⁹ As distinct from the Prologue, which comprises five stanzas drawn from Innocent III’s *De miseria condicionis humane*. The relationship among these parts is complicated, and may suggest that they were incompletely revised when put together. Aside from the question of prose, which I discuss below, the Man of Law seems to announce the beginning of his tale twice: once at the end of the Introduction, and once at the end of the Prologue. However, whatever Chaucer’s intentions regarding the tale, prologue, and head-link, the three typically stand together where the Man of Law’s Tale is found in the context of the *Canterbury Tales*, and their juxtaposition allows us to think about how they interact.

²⁸⁰ The reflection on literature accomplishes more than this, of course; the condemnation of tales of incest may be a jab at John Gower, and Elizabeth Scala argues that this concern with incest suggests a relationship between repression and narration. But the potentially serious thematic issues raised by the Introduction do not undercut its self-referential humor.

²⁸¹ One reason critics have been so inclined to take the Man of Law’s Introduction at face value as a declaration that the character of the Man of Law will tell a prose tale may be that two other tales explicitly announce that they will be told in prose: when the Host interrupts the Tale of Sir Thopas, with complaint about the quality of Chaucer’s rhyming, he instructs him to “tell in prose somewhat” (VII.934), and Geoffrey affirms that “I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose” (VII.937), paving the way for the prose Tale of Melibee. Similarly, in his Prologue, the Parson explains that he has no talent either for alliterative verse or for rhyme, and thus “I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose” (X.46); the Parson’s prose sermon follows.

However, the association with Thopas/Melibee actually heightens the metatextuality of these discussions of the choice of form: Thopas and Melibee are the two tales which Chaucer himself tells. When the Host brings Thopas to its premature end for faults of style, famously exclaiming, “Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord!” (VII.930), Chaucer represents himself telling a tale poorly (at least in the Host’s judgment)—a state of affairs which calls attention to the division between Chaucer the author who composed the *Canterbury Tales* and Chaucer the pilgrim whose skills are being ridiculed. Though he really does go on to tell the Tale of Melibee in prose after announcing that he intends to, this change of form corresponds to a metatextual moment that self-consciously highlights the difference between Chaucer the author (or even the author-function) and Chaucer the character.

Though less explicitly metatextual than the Thopas-Melibee link, the Parson’s Tale, too, troubles the relationship between the purported teller and Chaucer the author, this time in the opposite direction. One of the few unequivocally good characters in the *Tales*, the Parson closes the *Tales* with what seems to be a definitive moral statement. Moreover, this prose sermon bleeds over into an explicitly authorial text, Chaucer’s Retraction, which follows immediately and is also in prose. Indeed, the opening words of the Retraction may look back specifically to the Parson’s Tale, as Chaucer appeals to “hem alle that herkne this litel tretys or rede” (X.1081), the term *tretys* perhaps applying better to the Parson’s Tale than to the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole (*Riverside* 965). Indeed, these two voices are only uneasily distinguished: some critics, eager to distance Chaucer the author from the moralizing Retraction, have suggested that the Retraction was initially in the voice of the Parson, and that the references to Chaucer’s works were only added later (see note, *Riverside* 965). While this is not my view, it does underscore how closely the Parson’s Tale and the Retraction run together.

(Prose also comes up in the Prologue of the Monk’s Tale, where it is listed among the forms in which tragedies are told: “In prose eek been endited many oon” [VII.1980]. Here, prose is simply registered as a formal possibility, like Latin hexameter, but is not announced or used as the form of the tale to follow. This reference thus does little to inform my sense of prose in the *Canterbury Tales*.)

The references to prose in the *Canterbury Tales*, then, occur at moments where the relationship between Chaucer as author and the grammatical voices of the text are particularly charged. While both the Tale of Melibee and the Parson’s Tale are literally in prose, they provide a context that focuses attention on the slippery role of the author with regard to the text. My reading of the Introduction to the Man of Law’s Tale as offering a postmodern self-consciousness about the division of author and character would represent an extreme instance of this concern, but one that coincides with ideas that surround the other key references to prose.

Given the broad concern with formal possibility that surrounds all the other references to prose, it is also perhaps noteworthy that MLT marks the first major formal shift in all of the major *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts. All of the text to that point has consisted of rhymed couplets, the dominant verse form for the *Tales* as a whole. The Introduction to the MLT is in couplets as well. But beginning with the Prologue to the tale (which is separated from the Introduction by a rubric), the verse form switches to rhyme royal stanzas, which persist throughout the tale itself; the canceled Epilogue (found in only one manuscript, but believed to be authorial and to represent an earlier state of CT) returns to couplets. While rhyme royal is of course far from prose, it seems plausible that the *narratorial* division that seems associated with prose should be *formally* registered by a change in verse form.

²⁸² A. C. Spearing argues powerfully against understanding the Man of Law's Tale as a performance in the voice of the Man of Law, explaining that the poem instead encodes subjectivity without possessing any individual narrator (*Textual* ch. 4). I accept Spearing's conclusion that seeking an individual persona behind the tale's narration (and its pronouns) is misleading; my interest is in how the pronouns articulate the relationship between the narrative and its audiences.

²⁸³ For example, Daniel (II.473), Jonah (II.496), the Hebrews (II.489), St. Mary the Egyptian (II.500)—and those occur on a single page of the *Riverside*!

²⁸⁴ The terminology surrounding bodies of water frequently aligned them with particular cultural groups. The body we today know (in a similar formulation) as the English Channel was called the British or French Ocean or Sea; the North Sea was Danish or "Flaundrish." (See MED entries for *occean* and *se*, as well as for each of these adjectives of identity.) In the tale, Chaucer follows a common terminology by calling the Mediterranean the "See of Grece" (II.464). Having Custance enter the "British Sea" would have been unremarkable, simply placing her in space. But the deictic pronoun *our* instead treats space personally: Custance is positioned simultaneously in space and in relation to the reader.

²⁸⁵ For instance, when the Friar interrupts between the conclusion of the Wife of Bath's Prologue and the beginning of her Tale, the speech of all parties is clearly ascribed. Moreover, lest we miss this break in the formal structure, a rubric in the Ellesmere manuscript breaks in to call our attention to it: "Biholde the wordes betwene the Somonour and the Frere" (f. 71v; see *Riverside* and Seymour 231).

²⁸⁶ Other tales demonstrate an eagerness to incorporate such textual transitions into the framework of verbal delivery. In the Knight's Tale, the transitions between parts are moments where the tale pauses to reflect on its own telling, with the narratorial *I* (ostensibly belonging to the Knight) coming to the forefront. Directly before the transition between *tercia pars* and *pars quarta*, the Knight announces, "Now wol I stynten of the goddes above" (I.2479), explicitly framing the narrative "pause" between parts with a break in the telling of the tale. Lydgate, doubtless in reaction to the Knight's Tale, takes this conceit further in *The Siege of Thebes*, explaining the transition between Parts I and II by returning to the frame story and introducing a geographic necessity: he pauses at the end of Part I so that the pilgrims can descend a hill and pass through the Blean Vale (*Lydgate's Siege* 1044-45), and only resumes with Part II when they have passed Boughton under Blean. But the structural transitions accompanying the change of parts in the Man of Law's Tale are minor, and the textual *I* does not forward itself as an agent of these transitions; they are apt to produce an impression of textuality rather than oral delivery.

²⁸⁷ Spearing comments that the proximal deictic in "this ile" functions similarly to the possessive pronoun, though with "less intimate effect."

²⁸⁸ This quality is heightened in Chaucer as compared to Trevet. Trevet, writing in a chronicle context, begins his version of the Constance story by calling attention to Emperor Maurice and twice mentioning the Saxons, reminding us both that he found the tale in a Saxon chronicle (though no such source is known, and this chronicle may well be an authentication fabrication designed to link Trevet's tale to the Saxon past) and that Maurice's father was himself as a

Saxon. Chaucer, like Gower, dispenses with this contextualizing, beginning his tale with the merchants who first sight Custance in Rome. Thus, in contrast to Trevet, Chaucer's tale conceals its English connections. The tale could simply be an exemplary Roman story up to the moment when Custance arrives in *oure occian*; this very line is the moment that pulls English history into the tale.

²⁸⁹ Which is not to say that hagiography cannot have local interest or significance; within English studies, for instance, scholars have noted the preponderance of English saints in the *South English Legendary* and proposed that the collection has a nationalist function. But, again, there is no reason to associate Custance with England before this moment.

²⁹⁰ See Turville-Petre, *England* 11-22; Evans et al. 321-29.

²⁹¹ Of course, while the equation of English language and English community is to some degree simply a realistic assessment of the linguistic situation, it is also a rhetorical posture, for English verse (indeed, Chaucer's own verse) was read on both sides of the Channel. Eustache Deschamps's *ballade* addressed to the "Grant translateur, noble Geoffroy Chaucier" suggests two-way Anglo-French literary exchange (Deschamps 66-67), though the precise extent of Deschamps's knowledge of Chaucer is debated. (For a reading of the *ballade* as directly concerned with linguistic exchange, see Butterfield, *Familiar* 143-51.) Charles d'Orléans, said to have left his captivity in England knowing English better than French (Arn 29-30), was influenced by English works throughout his career, including but not limited to his English-language poetry (Arn 39-45), and French noblemen in similar positions commissioned English books and sometimes carried them back to France (Arn 30). The boundaries of the readership of Middle English were not actually restricted to the island, but it was rhetorically useful to imagine that they were.

²⁹² Heng discusses Trevet's production of England, but finds the idea of national unity of diverse communities in all the Constance stories, though most explicit in Trevet (*Empire* 213).

²⁹³ The opening lines of the Constance section of the *Cronicles* introduce "un roi de Sessions, Alla avautndit, qi estoit le second roi de Northumbre" ("a king of the Saxons—the aforesaid Alla, who was the second king of Northumbria," C 297). Trevet's *avauntndit* points to the function of *Northumbre*, for Alla has already featured in the chronicle: in a king-list detailing the origins of Northumberland (R 191) and in the episode of Saint Gregory's encounter with Northumbrian slave-boys in a market in Rome.

²⁹⁴ Unusually, Trevet associates the name *Engleterre* with the foundation of English Christianity. Trevet relates the famous story in which Saint Gregory encounters Anglian slaves in a Roman marketplace and decides to convert the English. In Trevet's account, this moment authorizes the new name of the island: "Lors dit Seint Gregoire qe droit serroit qe Anglay fuissent associétz as aungels, et qe lour terre estoit ja nomé Engleterre et pur cel encheson estoit la terre de Brutaigne desormès apelé Engleterre" (R 199; Then Saint Gregory said that it would be right that the Angles were associated with angels, and that their land was now named England, and for that cause was the land of Britain thenceforth called England.) But Constance arrives on the island before Gregory sends Saint Augustine on his mission to convert the English; she replaces Augustine as the founding figure of English Christianity. Trevet's account of the marketplace

encounter highlights this connection. The slaves, as in other versions of the story, are subjects of King Alla, but while Alla's kingdom is usually named only as Deira (one of the two kingdoms that eventually constituted Northumbria; Gregory uses the name in a pun), Trevet also uses the same geographical term he later applies when Constance travels to the kingdom: "Deyra, q'est un pais de Northumbreland" (R 199).

²⁹⁵ Jamison 249 offers a key example: Gower omits one of Trevet's striking historical details—Constance communicates with the Northumbrians in the Saxon language, so they erroneously believe she must be the princess of another Saxon tribe—leaving a scene in which they take her in out of pure charity.

²⁹⁶ Gower turns the "povre Cristien Bruton enveuglés" (C 305) of Trevet's account into a generic "blind man" (759), and so eliminates the plot where Olda, Hermigild, and Constance, send the man to Wales to fetch a bishop to baptize them; when "a bisschop out of Wales" does show up, *episcopus ex machina*, it is an arbitrary turn of events introduced by a clumsy transition: after Alle and Constance agree that Alle will be baptized and the two will wed, Gower writes, "And forto make schorte tales, / Ther cam a bisschop out of Wales" (903-04).

²⁹⁷ See also Eberle, for whom the tale offers "the story of the origins of Christian rulership in Saxon England" (126).

²⁹⁸ Pearsall points to the role of the Britons in the insular foundation myth as one of the impediments to establishing a narrative of English national identity ("Chaucer," 89). As I show in this section, Chaucer not only is aware of this problem but plays it up in comparison with his sources; the Briton problem both suggests and enables Chaucer's vision of spatial history as multiple and discontinuous.

²⁹⁹ For Ingham, the Britons are one of the "slips and misses of the story of English history," revealing the multiplicity and instability of identity categories ("Contrapuntal," 66). I argue that the Britons multiply not just cultural positions but insular space itself. Siobhain Bly Calkin suggests that through the Britons "the land itself harbours a longstanding Christian identity" ("Man," 14). Bly Calkin's notion that the land possesses a religious identity regardless of its inhabitants suggests insular space as something stable and constant. But that constancy of space underscores the ruptures and discontinuities of the history that fills that space; the stable *space* has been transformed into different *places* for groups possessing different identities.

³⁰⁰ Birns also suggests that the pastness of the tale is related to its imagination of insularity: "From Chaucer's perspective, the Northhumberlond of Aella was more securely autochthonous to the island of Great Britain than the realm for which he worked, with its huge and inherently transnational military and territorial investment in the French-speaking lands on the Continent" ("To Aleppo," 371).

³⁰¹ Lavezzo acknowledges the important role the Britons play and suggests that "the very *incompleteness* of the Anglo-Saxon effort to reterritorialize England and push the Britons to its fringes enables England to preserve a residue of Christian practice absent in the thoroughly heathen space of Syria" (*Angels* 101). Despite the attention of this analysis to the variety of ways in which insular identity is established, this perspective on the past relies on a terminology

Chaucer does not embrace: “England”; “Anglo-Saxon.” *Briton* is a better-established term in the tale than *England*, challenging a teleological reading oriented toward Englishness.

³⁰² On the passage of dominion topos, see Leckie, who discusses its development across the twelfth century in the wake of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s disruption of the traditional periodization. The passage of dominion refers to the specific moment at which the Anglo-Saxons are reported to have gained control of the island; Chaucer does not specify when the passage occurred, but sets his tale after the transition.

³⁰³ Bede excoriates the Britons for their failure to convert the English: “Qui inter alia inenarrabilem scelerum facta, quae historicus eorum Gildas flebili sermone describit, et hoc addebat, ut numquam genti Saxonum siue Anglorum, secum Britanniam incolenti, uerbum fidei praedicando comitterent.” (“To other unspeakable crimes, which Gildas their own historian describes in doleful words, was added this crime, that they never preached the faith to the Saxons or Angles who inhabited Britain with them,” text and translation from *Bede* I.22). He follows this declaration with a statement that “much worthier heralds” (“multo digniores . . . praecones”) were appointed by God to bring Christianity to the English, and the next chapter inaugurates Augustine’s mission to the English.

Lavezzo notes that the story of Chaucer’s blind Briton is a reworking of an episode in Bede in which Augustine miraculously heals a blind Englishman in an unsuccessful effort to persuade the Britons to help him evangelize the pagan English; as Lavezzo puts it, Chaucer’s Britons “perform a more beneficial function” (*Angels* 174, n. 41).

³⁰⁴ On Briton communities in Northumbria to the time of Bede, see Rollason 58-61, which concludes that isolated Briton communities endured but were not part of the social elite.

³⁰⁵ See Cohen, *Hybridity* ch. 2, which examines the production of identity through exclusion in Bede and twelfth-century historical writing.

³⁰⁶ See Robertson 341, which emphasizes the risk this public act entails.

³⁰⁷ “En cel mesme temps Alle, le roi de Engleterre, par le conseil Lucius, evesque de Bangor, et Olda, son contestable, ala ove gentz pur faire le pilrinage a Rome” (C 323).

³⁰⁸ Lucius might echo the Briton King Lucius, who appears earlier in the *Cronicles* in an account drawn from Geoffrey of Monmouth and is responsible for the Christianization of the Britons (R 142).

³⁰⁹ On the absence of Rome and the Latin language from Custance’s conversion of Northumberland, see Bowers, “Colonialism,” 124-25. Cf. Bly Calkin, “Man,” 16-18, which emphasizes cooperation between British and Roman Christianity in converting Northumberland.

³¹⁰ My thinking about Chaucer’s “Britoun book” has been considerably enriched by a lively exchange on the subject in both posts and comments at the blog *In the Middle* (Steel; Cohen, “Britoun”).

³¹¹ Breeze, “Celtic”; Skeat 157-58, n. to l. 666; Robertson 337; Bowers, “Colonialism,” 124. Additionally, Christine F. Cooper cites the book as an example of “ambiguous translation,”

noting that it is unclear whether the book is written in Latin or English, but apparently not considering that it might be written in Welsh (28).

³¹² R. James Goldstein notes that with this introduction “military opposition to the Scots is one of the defining characteristics of his kingship,” and that this association distinguishes Chaucer’s Alla from Trevet’s and Gower’s (34).

³¹³ Nakley takes it thus, describing the point where the tale names *Engelond* for the first time as “the time that sovereign England comes clearly into focus” (Nakley 392). Mary Kate Hurley offered a similar reading in a 2012 conference paper, suggesting that the tale introduces the term *England* only at the end because becoming Christian is an essential part of becoming England. I thank Dr. Hurley for her discussion of the tale with me at that panel.

³¹⁴ I cite primarily from Gates, but have also relied heavily on Hanna, *Awntyrs* and have referred frequently to the text and notes printed in Hahn 169-226. In my discussion I regularize the names of characters to familiar forms from Arthurian tradition; except when discussing the readings of specific manuscripts, I also regularize place-names, sometimes to forms different from those of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324, the base-text for Gates, Hanna, and Hahn.

³¹⁵ On the association between gaps in Arthur’s reign and romance, and the consequences for genre, see Putter; Green 176-78; Moll ch. 1.

³¹⁶ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fonds français 1450, which includes further material of historical interest in the form of Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Roman de Troie* and the *Roman d’Eneas*. Another manuscript, written by a scribe called Guiot—Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fonds français 794—also groups Chrétien’s romances with Wace’s *Brut*, Benoît’s *Troie*, and other historical material, though it does not break up the *Brut* to do so.

³¹⁷ See also Putter 5.

³¹⁸ Hunts begin *The Avowing of Arthur*, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, and *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*, as well as later ballad versions of the latter two poems, “The Marriage of Sir Gawain” and “The Carle of Carlisle,” found in the Percy Folio manuscript. (Texts of all these poems are printed in Hahn.) Only in *Avowing* is the hunt itself a central part of the plot; in that text, Arthur fulfills his vow by slaying a mighty boar.

³¹⁹ After telling Guinevere that she “brake a solempne a-vowe / And no mane wist hit but powe” (205-06), the ghost further says that she suffers because of “luf paramour, listes, and delites” (213). Taken together, these statements have seemed to many critics to suggest a sexual sin, and therefore to foreshadow Guinevere’s own adultery (Klausner 316; M. Robson 231; Jost 136-37; Twu 120-12; Furrow, *Expectations* 89; Hauht 12). However, if the *Awntyrs* does allude to Guinevere’s role as adulteress, the precise referent is uncertain, depending on what literary associations the *Awntyrs* activates. Richard J. Moll argues that the possibility of Guinevere’s adultery (with Lancelot, in Moll’s characterization of other scholarship) has been overemphasized, given that the *Awntyrs* aligns itself with the Brut tradition of Arthur’s fall rather than with the trajectory of the Lancelot–Grail Cycle (134). But Twu (published too late to be known to Moll) believes the ghost’s sin alludes to Guinevere’s adultery with Mordred, a

possibility also admitted by Moll (291, n. 68), and while some other scholars do mention Lancelot, many do not mention Guinevere's partner in adultery. While Moll is correct that the *Awntyrs* defines itself in relation to the chronicle tradition through its references to the broader Arthurian history, a number of copies of the Lancelot–Grail Cycle were in England in the Middle Ages (see Middleton), so it might have been accessible to some of the poem's readers. The idea of Guinevere's adultery, indeed, may act as a bridge between the chronicle and continental romance traditions; Melissa Furrow notes that adultery is a key association of Guinevere's character, used differently for many purposes by authors working across an array of genres (*Expectations* 85-93).

³²⁰ While in my view K. S. Whetter's definition of English romance by "the combination and interaction of love and ladies and adventure, culminating in a happy ending" is unilluminating both in its generality and in its prescriptivism (Whetter 7), Whetter is correct to point out that, contrary to the suggestion of J. O. Fichte, Gawain and Guinevere's encounter with the ghost is an adventure in accord with what we might expect to find in a romance (Whetter 85-86; citing Fichte, "*Awntyrs*," 131-33).

³²¹ On the relationship between duties to the poor and duties to the dead in the poem, see Chism 255-60. Chism, who believes the poem's characters fail to heed its moral lessons, sees the poem as highlighting problems potential in the exchanges between rich and poor, living and dead.

³²² As Ralph Hanna puts it, in the second section "the author relies only upon the romance tradition for materials" ("*Awntyrs*: An Interpretation," 293).

³²³ For a more thoroughgoing discussion of the evidence, see Hanna, *Awntyrs* 17-24.

³²⁴ Spearing earlier argued for the structural cohesion of the *Awntyrs* in "*Awntyrs*" and first applied the notion of the "sovereign mid point" to the poem in "Central," 252; as Spearing explains, drawing on a distinction elaborated by D. S. Brewer (42), the poem need not possess "organic unity" to be cohesive. The most recent argument of which I am aware for the fundamental disunity of the *Awntyrs* is that of M. Robson 219-21. Cohesion is possible even if the text of the *Awntyrs* was composed in as many as three stages over several decades and possibly by two different poets, as Rosamund Allen has suggested; as Allen points out, "a second poet could have created his own 'mid-point' within his continuation of an original," building a cohesive two-part structure onto what was originally a single, simple episode (Allen, "Some," 24-25).

³²⁵ For a description, see Hanna, "Scribe". On the dating of the manuscript, see further Mooney and Stubbs 31-35; Mooney and Stubbs prefer a date in the early 1420s.

³²⁶ For descriptions, see the introduction to the facsimile edition of Brewer and Owen, as well as Guddat-Figge 135-42. An updated list of contents is printed in Fein 21-48. Brewer and Owen give the date as ca. 1430-50, Guddat-Figge as ca. 1430-40. Linda Olson notes that the process of gathering and copying the materials and organizing, assembling, and correcting the volume took decades, giving the range as 1420s-60s (116).

³²⁷ For a description, see Skemer 1:420-24. MS Taylor 9 consists of what were originally two independent manuscripts, bound together in the fifteenth century but after 1465. The first portion, ff. 1r-60v, contains three romances, including the *Awntyrs*; the second, ff. 61r-100v, consists of records from the Manor of Hale, Cheshire (formerly Lancashire). Both manuscripts may have been produced in Merseyside, and they were bound together for William Ireland, lord of the Manor of Hale, who likely commissioned the manorial record transcriptions. In this chapter, when I refer to the Ireland manuscript, I am discussing only the first portion, containing the metrical romances.

³²⁸ On the provenance, see Doyle 97. D, which today consists of the *Awntyrs* alone, was once a booklet in a larger manuscript; its contents are outlined in K. Smith, "Fifteenth-Century," though for a note of caution and a more conservative reconstruction and description, see Guddat-Figge 292-95.

³²⁹ Andrew Breeze, interpreting the problematic toponym of Vlstur Hall as Oysterlow, Wales, suggests that a reference to Oysterlow "shows that the *Awntyrs* poet knew Welsh political geography unusually well" ("*Awntyrs*," 65). However, since this translation is far from certain and the list of lands that Gawain receives poses editorial difficulties, we can only say with certainty that the poem speaks precisely about Cumberland and Galloway.

³³⁰ Kelly; Eadie; Allen, "*Awntyrs*"; Breeze, "*Awntyrs*"; Walkling; Allen, "Place-Names" are dedicated in at least a significant portion to this problem, and of course all build on the work of the poem's editors, especially Amours and Hanna. In addition, Howes is devoted to explaining the nature of the forest that would have been invoked by the poem's reference to Inglewood, though the referent itself is not in question.

³³¹ Allen, "*Awntyrs*"; Breeze, "*Awntyrs*"; Allen, "Place-Names."

³³² For an overview, see Walkling 107-12. Rondolsette has variously been identified as a manor formerly at Plumpton Park (J. Robson xv), Randalholme Manor (Amours 348, accepted by Gates 214; Kelly 166-67), and Seat, a raised point near the village of Caldbeck (Eadie 3-5; Walkling 109-12). Madden suggests that the location "may be, as in other instances, an imaginary spot" (Madden, *Syr Gawayne* 333). While the referential density and precision of the poem makes it likely that some specific point was originally intended, its precise identity is much less significant than its structuring role.

³³³ See Cox, which cites W. T. McIntire's account of the folklore of the Tarn for the notion of the drowned village and connects it with the valley of Laikibrait, mentioned as the site of bell-ringing by Gervase of Tilbury. The story of the drowned village is attested in the nineteenth century, and the date of its origin is uncertain, but Cox makes a persuasive case for associating Laikibrait (which he glosses as "lake that cries") with this tradition.

³³⁴ Helen Phillips points to the function of the isolated space created by the storm, comparing it to the isolated spaces furnished by dream visions: "The hunt, storm and separation create a cut-off area, an area for concentration on individual supernatural revelation, the granting of insights not normally available to human beings while in life" (85). These qualities are aligned with the

broad traditional associations of the Tarn. But I would emphasize that the Tarn is not the only space with a functional quality; all the places in the setting serve a specific purpose.

³³⁵ On the prototypical pattern for Arthurian romance, which stems from Chrétien de Troyes, see Fichte, “Middle,” 572.

³³⁶ Walkling also draws on Virginia Lowe’s analysis of the *Awntyrs* as governed by the folkloric structure of the hunt, identifying Rondolette as the location of “intermediate feasting” between stages.

³³⁷ These spatial descriptors, of course, rely on Walkling’s identification of the intended referents, though the spatial structure he describes holds true regardless.

³³⁸ Allen, “Place-Names,” 184-85 suggests emendations that make the lists in ll. 420 and 681 equivalent, albeit in a different order, but acknowledges that her emendations are partly speculative and are justified on the assumption that 681 repeats 420 because 679 repeats 419.

³³⁹ IL repeat the place-names from 419 in 679, if we make some allowance for spelling variation, though the syntax of the lines differs. Only DT possess line 681, and in neither case is even one place-name in that line clearly the same as in 420. T, however, offers interesting (if ambiguous) evidence of a relationship between the lines. The final place in 420 in T is “Lowthyane hillis.” In 681, the last term is “Leveastre Iles,” but prior to the word “Iles,” Thornton has written and struck the words “helle” and “Ile.” While the precise textual situation cannot be deduced from the available evidence, it seems possible that the final topographical descriptor in both lines in Thornton’s exemplar was *hill*, and that Thornton’s *Iles* is a rationalization of some sort.

³⁴⁰ Kelly reasons that its generality points to Brittany, for the poet would have offered a more precise place-name for a location in England, Scotland, Wales, or Ireland (182).

³⁴¹ *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*, for instance, includes England in a geographic overview of the island of Britain near the beginning. However, in the course of the romance itself, England is merely the site for a hunt that begins in Cardiff and ends at Carlisle, a forest space, devoid of content, between two centers of power on the borders.

³⁴² Alternatively, they could be attempts to correct perceived errors.

³⁴³ Line 282. T: “Thay salle 3itt be Tybire tymbire 3ow tene”; D: “Thus shal a Tyber vntrue tymber with tene.”

³⁴⁴ Hanna proposes the synecdochal interpretation (*Awntyrs* 119), followed by Hahn (186, n. 3). Amours believes the Italian Tiber is unlikely, identifying the corresponding lines in the *Morte*, an identification that Gates tentatively follows in his gloss, though he notes that *Tyber* was probably influenced by the reference to the Romans (344-45). The Cornish reference emerges from the widespread tradition of placing Arthur’s final battle at Camlan; the River Camel (following Geoffrey of Monmouth) and the Tamar (Lazamon, perhaps on the basis of a scribal form in his copy of Wace) have both been identified as possible sites, and the flexibility of spelling in Wace suggests that either might be the intended referent here (see discussion in Breeze, “Battle”).

³⁴⁵ *Carlit*, evidently rooted in some scribal error, appears to act as one of the generic *Car*- names that imbue Arthurian toponymy with a vague and undefined sense of the Celtic past, like *Cardueil*, popularized by Chrétien, generally thought to refer to Carlisle but often described as being in Wales.

³⁴⁶ Malory's extraordinary handling of the Roman campaign results from his decision to incorporate the alliterative *Morte* into his *Arthuriad* while drawing his account of Arthur's death from French romance rather than English chronicle.

³⁴⁷ Indeed, he describes the first half of the tale, the part concerned with the ghost, as "secondary to the second half" (Manion, "Sovereign," 86).

³⁴⁸ See Fradenburg 252-54.

³⁴⁹ The contestation of land is even more abstract in the *Awntyrs* than in many more conventional romances. To take two examples from the Lincoln Thornton manuscript, in which the *Awntyrs* is found: In *Octavian*, Florent fights the giant Arageous outside the walls of Paris, the city the giant seeks to capture. In *Sir Perceval of Galles*, Perceval defends Maydenlande from Golrotherame outside the gates of the castle of Lufamour, the lady who holds the kingdom. I'll discuss the relationship between these texts and the *Awntyrs* in their manuscript context in my final section; for now, I point to them simply as representative romances of a kind likely familiar to the poem's medieval audiences.

³⁵⁰ Phillips; see also Hardman, "Unity."

³⁵¹ On the *Awntyrs* as "cohesive", see Spearing, "Awntyrs," 185; Spearing, *Medieval* 126.

³⁵² "Here I gif Sir Gawayn, with gerson and golde, / Al þe Glamergan londe with greues so grene" (664-65); "Here I gif Sir Galeron, withouten any gile, / Al þe londres and þe lithes fro Lauer to Ayre" (677-78). I quote these lines from Hanna's edition, which makes their parallelism slightly clearer than Gates's rendition. Patterns of manuscript variation in the first line of each stanza reinforces the impression that these lines are meant to be parallel: I begins the line in each stanza with "Now(e) here"; IL read "gif þe" in place of "gif" in both cases; L omits "Sir" in each case. Other variations undercut the parallelism, but there is at least a broad similarity in all manuscripts.

³⁵³ As I discuss below, this reading has grown prominent since 2001 under the influence of postcolonial studies. While the poem's echoing concern with land acquisition allows this concern to bubble up, it remains entirely unstated in the text, which seems structurally to position Arthur's solution as successful.

³⁵⁴ For Phillips, Arthur's treatment of Galeron at the end of the poem "depends neither on the justice of Galeron's claim, nor on his performance in battle, but is an exercise of his princely prerogative of mercy. Such mercy is a Godlike response, but an amoral one, beyond the claims of morality" (81). J. O. Fichte similarly describes Arthur's solution as "a political decision, not a moral one" (*Awntyrs*, 135).

Phillips rejects the bipartite structure as the best guide to reading the *Awntyrs*; her reading is shaped by the structure of the Ireland manuscript, which I discuss further below. For now, the point is that Phillips redeems the ending in part by offering a different understanding of the Gawain/ghost scene—a move that Brett Roscoe criticizes as “downplaying topics that do not fit nicely into her interpretive scheme” (50).

³⁵⁵ Manion stresses that the text’s reminders of Arthur’s fall render this strategy only temporarily effective, but nevertheless stresses its legitimacy as a unifying factor in the poem (“Sovereign,” 90).

³⁵⁶ Manion describes the poem’s structure and remarks of the episode of the ghost, “in my view it is secondary to the second half” (“Sovereign,” 86); he nevertheless proceeds to discuss the scene’s instantiations of sovereignty and conquest, tacitly acknowledging the scene’s connection with what follows.

³⁵⁷ See also Klausner 324. However, Fichte (who denies that Arthur’s defense of his claim to Galeron’s lands is a moral problem) points out that “his generosity has a price: Galeron will be reinstated only if he is willing to join the Round Table, that is, if he submits to Arthur” (“*Awntyrs*,” 135). But as I mention below, the integration of a knight into the community of the Round Table is generally positive in Arthurian romances, a move to restore social order that also ennobles the knight who has been invited.

³⁵⁸ Moll alone cites Ingham on this point, though Hauht is aware of Ingham’s work.

³⁵⁹ Unlike the other authors cited above, Hauht does not actually predict future conflict, but merely underscores the similarity between the cause and the resolution of the plot: Arthur “essentially recreates Galeron’s grievance all over again by stripping yet another lord, this time in Wales and not Scotland, of his land.”

³⁶⁰ Cf. Klausner 323: “the author has clearly shown that Galleroune is in the right, and has aroused sufficient sympathy for him that his outright defeat at the hands of Gawain would prove highly unsatisfactory.”

³⁶¹ The comparison was also in the earliest published version of Spearing’s thought on the *Awntyrs*’ structure (“*Awntyrs*,” 186-87).

³⁶² See Vinaver 128-29; Sanborn. That is not to say that nothing like interlacing is found in Malory, or indeed in the Middle English verse romances, but it was not the same foundational technique (nor did it achieve anywhere close to the same complexity) as in the French romances.

³⁶³ The *Awntyrs* is excluded as a romance for the purposes of Wittig’s study. She maintains that cycle stories, including Arthuriana, operate on the basis of different narrative rules than other romances. The *Awntyrs* does not adhere to the narrative type she identifies as comprising the Middle English verse romance, defined by the conjunction of a love plot and a separation-restoration plot, though it references elements of both patterns. Nevertheless, Wittig’s insights into the construction of romance narrative are helpful for approaching works that function differently from those she studies.

³⁶⁴ See Vinaver 92, n. 1; Vinaver cites Tuve's statement as "an interesting observation which is true of some episodes, though not of all."

³⁶⁵ Helen Phillips has used the subdivisions of the *Awntyrs* in manuscript to challenge the diptych structure, focusing especially on the Ireland manuscript. Phillips rightly acknowledges that Ireland's three-part structure "may have no authority" (81), but finds it useful in illuminating themes and connections the two-part model of the poem has obscured. My work in this section builds on Phillips's, showing how the various structures offered by the poem's manuscripts put the forms of space the poem makes available to work in different ways.

³⁶⁶ The Ireland manuscript also leaves space for initial letters corresponding to the start of each fitt, but they have not been executed.

³⁶⁷ Damage to T allows the possibility that a second ornamented capital could have occurred on the bottom third of 159v or on the following leaf, now lost. T did not share the break at stanza 40 found in DI, the opening of which fortunately survives directly above the damage to 159v. (I have referred to the facsimile of T available in Brewer and Owen.) If an initial signaling a break is lost, it must have occurred at the beginning of one of the stanzas 41-47. These stanzas all describe the battle between Gawain and Galeron. A break during these stanzas could have registered a moment of heightened intensity, like the slaying of Gawain's horse. However, as T's break at the start of stanza 30 comes more than halfway through the poem (which runs 55 stanzas in total), it seems more likely to me that no additional subdivision existed.

³⁶⁸ Indeed, Hardman suggests that the Ireland manuscript represents a compiler's literary shaping of his texts through the process of narrative division. The manuscript contains three romances, each divided into three fitts, which Harman argues emphasize the moral aspects of the poems, in contrast with divisions serving primarily narrative purposes like those typically offered in the manuscripts of Robert Thornton ("Unity," 46; "Fitt Divisions," 77-78).

³⁶⁹ For another chart of these divisions, which collates them with the ways Hanna and Allen subdivide the poem, see Phillips 88-89.

³⁷⁰ According to George Keiser, "Thornton did not understand the *Awntyrs* stanza at first"; he copied the layout of his exemplar for the first four pages (154r-155v), but switched to the layout he had used for the tail-rhyme *Degrevant* once he understood the stanza better ("Robert Thornton," 82-83). Most other theories of the compilation of the manuscript (discussed below) place the copying of the *Awntyrs* before that of *Degrevant*, but regardless of the sequence of the two texts, Keiser's point that Thornton appears to have learned about the stanza as he copied stands. It is possible that he similarly recognized a structural break retrospectively after having copied the first few stanzas of a new episode and registered it in his layout at the first opportunity.

³⁷¹ Hardman finds the presentation in Douce, as in Thornton, to register the poem's diptych structure, and contrasts this with Ireland's rearrangement of the poem as a triptych ("Fitt Divisions," 76-77). She does not note the additional capital found in Douce or consider its significance for how the poem might be read in that manuscript.

³⁷² In fact, Allen suggests that ll. 223-60 (part of the ghost's conversation with Guinevere) and 261-313 (her prophecy to Gawain) were both composed in a later phase (Ib), and were inserted in an originally shorter account of the ghost's conversation with Guinevere (Ia, ll. 1-122, 314-38, and 703-15), with the Galeron portion (II, ll. 339-702) composed still later. She suggests that Ia was begun around 1400, Ib around 1423, and II around 1424. The Ireland manuscript thus places its first division in the middle of Allen's Ib, although between portions of Ib that appear sufficiently distinct to be distinguished in Allen's chart of these revisions. Still, I find it noteworthy that Allen's theory of composition holds that the conversations with Guinevere and Gawain may initially have been separable ("Some," 23-24).

³⁷³ On the centrality of the section's concerns, see Phillips: "Whatever we make of the Ireland three-fitt model, it is obvious that territorial sovereignty and themes associated with Fortune's Wheel provide a unifying factor in the central sections of the poem, and are also implicitly important in the episodes that precede and follow them" (78).

³⁷⁴ Hanna notes that these two traditions are not completely separate: "Arthurian history has firm imagistic connections with the materials of Purgatory descriptions" (*Awntyrs* 31). In particular, the Wheel of Fortune, borrowed from the *Morte* by the *Awntyrs*, is connected to *ubi sunt* and purgatorial traditions that lie behind the ghost's appearance and her message of transience to Guinevere. (See also Phillips 75-76.) But despite this interrelationship, the visible sources and modes of address in the two dialogues of the ghost are distinct, and the Ireland manuscript registers these differences.

³⁷⁵ "Muse one my mirroure" (167); "Haue pite one þe poer whil you art of powere" (173); "Fonde to mende thi mys" (193); "Gyf fast of þi goode / To folke þat failene þe fode" (232-33); "Hold þes words in hert" (258).

³⁷⁶ For Hardman, the focus of this fitt is "the problem of just war" ("Unity," 53). But the conflicts concerned are not any wars; all involve expansionism and conquest. Phillips regards the fitt as "centred on Arthur and his kingly power" (71), but again, that power seems exceptionally focused on land.

³⁷⁷ The chronicle tradition offers a clear motivation for Arthur's war against Rome: Emperor Lucius demands tribute from Arthur, a tribute the king is unwilling to pay. While the alliterative *Morte* also shows that Arthur's ambitions go beyond merely refuting this claim, the *Awntyrs* omits Arthur's motivation entirely, presenting his future Italian campaign as simply one more war. Phillips notes the nonlinear temporality of the poem and suggests that the point is not causal development but repetition: "The structure is full of parallels or mirrors across time: the ghost offers a mirror to kings and emperors; she is a mirror of Guenevere's future. Guenevere mirrors the ghost's past. The dead queen's loss of territory and power mirrors Arthur's future loss" (Phillips 87).

³⁷⁸ *Golagros and Gawain* offers a particularly pertinent example: the text describes Arthur's preparations to lay siege to Golagros's castle, but the romance then switches gears and presents instead a tournament-style series of knightly battles, culminating in Gawain's encounter with Golagros. The single combat enables a resolution that preserves the honor of all, as Gawain refuses to kill the defeated Golagros and agrees to a plan in which he feigns defeat in order to

allow Golagros to submit to Arthur while saving face. Of course, in many romances, single combat and pitched battle coexist. But single combat, embodying two opposing forces in individuals who can be given clear moral definition, seems to open narrative possibilities that more traditional forms of war do not allow.

³⁷⁹ Galeron prefaces his release of his claims to Gawain by saying, “I wends neuer wee 3ette had been so wizte” (639), and ends by saying he cedes to him “As man of medlert þat most is of might” (643). By surrounding his return of lands to Gawain with an acknowledgment of Gawain’s prowess, he makes that prowess the warrant for Gawain’s possession of the lands. Gawain’s might produces his right to the lands that Galeron claimed previously. The mutual honor that accrues to the knights supports Manion’s sense of the productive power of “sovereign recognition.”

³⁸⁰ Even stylistic features of the Ireland text serve moral functions in Hardman’s analysis (“Unity,” 46)

³⁸¹ While Guddat-Figge disputes the evidence for Smith’s full reconstruction, she accepts the identification of at least three manuscripts that formed part of the original volume, all in the Bodleian: MSS Rawlinson D.82, Douce 324, and Rawl. Poet. 168. On the *Awntyrs* as commissioned booklet, see Doyle 97.

³⁸² Work on literary nationalism has demonstrated that manuscripts do sometimes have spatial focuses. See for instance Turville-Petre, *England* 108-41 on the Auchinleck manuscript, Bell on Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108, and Hardman, “Compiling” for a discussion of several manuscripts, including Thornton. All have been read to treat the representation of English places among the texts included in the manuscript as an important component of the manuscript’s English nationalism. The manuscripts under discussion here may well demonstrate such a spatial preoccupation; all but Douce feature at least two texts set on the island, and both Lambeth and Thornton include texts concerning English history. While such correspondences do play an important role in contextualizing the *Awntyrs*, my sense of the geography in a manuscript here depends not on the places that preoccupy it, but rather on the kinds of textual space it makes available and the ways in which it uses them.

³⁸³ On the influence of the *Awntyrs* on Scottish poetry, see Royan.

³⁸⁴ All agree that the dialect is northerly, though Hanna has noted the difficulty of localizing northern texts precisely; the detail of Cumbrian and southern Scottish geography is usually understood to suggest a Cumbrian origin (*Awntyrs* 50), though Hanna has recently suggested (based on a dialectical detail, but endorsed by the poem’s Scottish geography) that it might be a Scots composition (*Knightly* xxxv-xxxvi). We must be wary about making such assumptions about provenance based on a text’s geographic focuses; in an essay demonstrating that the Middle English *Guy of Warwick* A-redaction cannot have been composed in Warwickshire, Alison Wiggins calls for us to reassess traditional beliefs about the localization of romances with a regional focus (Wiggins 230). All we can say for certain is that the poet was familiar with place-names in Cumbria and Galloway; if it is not in fact a Cumbrian composition, that would drive home even further its interest beyond the local.

³⁸⁵ The specific provenance of Merseyside is suggested in the manuscript's most recent description, found in Skemer 1.420-24.

³⁸⁶ On the provenance of the Douce manuscript, see Doyle 97. Of the texts in Smith's reconstructed volume, the *Awntyrs* is the only one in a dialect of Derbyshire. Doyle also remarks of this collection that "Miss K. Harris has found an early London layman's name in it."

³⁸⁷ Doyle's speculation that the *Awntyrs* might have been requested by a customer supplying the Derbyshire exemplar further complicates any attempt to consider the overall construction of the manuscript, as Doyle suggests that the remaining booklets appear to have been part of a stationer's stock.

³⁸⁸ On this copy of the *Brut*, see Matheson 91-92.

³⁸⁹ On the composition of the manuscript, particularly the identification of its constituent booklets, see the description in Hanna, "Scribe," 130.

³⁹⁰ Even the "oriental" section of the Huntington manuscript is hardly a unifying factor: *Susannah* is only obliquely invested in the East, and the presence of the *Three Kings of Cologne* excerpt is motivated by Mandeville, rather than suggesting a common interest.

³⁹¹ I is the only manuscript to identify Inglewood Forest with precision. D offers "Englund Forest" (a similar substitution of England for Inglewood may occur in *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*, l. 22, where Auvo Kurvinen suggests that "Cardyf" and "Ynglonde" might originally have been "Carllyll" and "Ynleswode," respectively [Kurvinen 162]), while TL agree with placing the action simply "in (a) forest." TL are descended from a common ancestor shared by no other manuscripts, and Allen describes the two manuscripts together as "the most corrupt" (Allen, "Some," 10; see also Hanna, *Awntyrs* 53), so if Inglewood was named in the original (as seems likely), the suppression of the forest's name stems from the TL-ancestor rather than being an innovation in L itself or any intervening manuscripts. Nevertheless, the imprecision in this line accords with other delocalizing tendencies in L.

³⁹² Where other texts name what seems like a specific structure—"Vlstur halle" (D), "Hulkers home" (I), or "pe Husters hulle" (T)—Lambeth names "Hulster al holy" (l. 668). The original referent of this line is opaque. The Lambeth text appears to substitute a widely familiar term (Ulster) for a confusing reading. (The problem might have been an unrecognizable word, or it might be that a scribe already understood the received toponym as referring to the province of Ulster but was confused by the association of Ulster's association with a specific hall. The substitution of "al holy" retains the alliteration given the aspirated beginning of the toponym; I am unaware of other reasons for attaching the epithet "all holy" to Ulster.) More strikingly, the Lambeth manuscript omits another specific place entirely: where other manuscripts list Criffones (D) / Gryffones (T) / Kirfre (I) Castle(s) as one of the holdings Gawain will receive, Lambeth simply lists "cuntres and castels," substituting a thoroughly generic term for a specific one.

³⁹³ See also Gates 30, which takes the disappearance of the Tarn and Inglewood in L (the southernmost text, to Gates's knowledge) as further evidence for the poem's northern provenance.

³⁹⁴ The explanation is plausible, but hardly necessary. While a scribe might reasonably correct a toponym that appears mistaken or substitute a more familiar place-name for an unfamiliar one (whether in real confusion or in an effort to make the text more accessible to local readers), he is by no means compelled to *suppress* a place-name on grounds of unfamiliarity. The prepositions that introduce these places in other manuscripts—*by* the Tarn Wadling, *in* Inglewood Forest—make the functions of these terms perfectly clear. And both Inglewood and the Tarn itself might well have been known to any readers who had access to other Gawain romances. Inglewood is named in *The Wedding*, whose sole surviving manuscript was produced in London in the sixteenth century (the poem itself is of East Midlands origin), in addition to *The Avowing*, which, along with “The Marriage,” also names the Tarn. And if the Douce manuscript was indeed produced in the south-east, that would place a second copy of the *Awntyrs* near London, whose copyist saw no need to suppress presumably unfamiliar names.

³⁹⁵ Hanna offers a corrective to a view that condemns the scribe as unfaithful in his copying, a view deriving especially from the erratic, conflated copy of *Piers Plowman* found in HM 114. Hanna views him instead as a “fastidious” editor-scribe; where he is aware of other versions he corrects from other copies and conflates texts to produce the fullest version possible, but copies faithfully in other circumstances (“Scribe,” 127-29).

³⁹⁶ Eddy’s work further suggests that chronicle annotation provided the intellectual context for the annotation of romances. However, the Lambeth *Awntyrs* is completely devoid of annotation; while the *Brut* annotations establish a context for reading, they do not actually guide readers of the *Awntyrs*.

³⁹⁷ For the foundation of “Karleil,” see *Brut* 1:14.

³⁹⁸ Carlisle itself features as a temporary site of power in the alliance between Edward III and Edward Balliol: after being attacked at Annan, Balliol “ascaped wiþ miche drede to þe Toune of Cardoile, and þere helde him, sore annoiede”; Edward III then “sent him worde þat he shulde halde him in pees stille in the citee of Cardoile, til þat he hade gaderede his power,” before the two lay siege to Berwick together (*Brut* 1:281).

³⁹⁹ As Hanna explains, a long delay in work on the first booklet apparently followed the completion of copying of the *Brut*. The scribe began copying *Jerusalem* into a new booklet, “casting off” to determine how much text the remaining leaves of quire 16 (the final quire of the first booklet) could accommodate, underestimating and leaving insufficient material to fill the quire. *Three Kings* follows *Jerusalem* in the second booklet, while the *Awntyrs* begins a third booklet. Thus, while the *Awntyrs* and the *Book of Hunting* form an independent textual unit in line with P. R. Robinson’s classic definition of the booklet as “self-sufficient” (47), capable of being placed anywhere in a manuscript, at no stage of production could the *Awntyrs* have been planned to follow the *Brut*. For an account of these booklets, see Hanna, “Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts,” 105-06; Hanna discusses the manuscript as part of an effort to refine Robinson’s sense of the booklet with a more production-oriented focus.

⁴⁰⁰ While Hanna believes the Lambeth manuscript was the earlier of the two, the editor of the *Three Kings* believes HM 114 may have been produced first and suggests the possibility that the extract in the HM 114 represents the original translation from the Latin, subsequently expanded

by a second translator into a full translation of the *Historia Trium Regum* that was then copied into Lambeth (*Three Kings* 36-37). Regardless of the sequence of translation, the Huntington extract shows that the text's spatial representations are sufficiently detailed and versatile to be used outside its narrative framework.

⁴⁰¹ “. . . of which spekiþ Maundevile &c, wherfor no more here” (*Three Kings* 113). Schaer suggests that this comment refers the reader to the copy of *Mandeville* Osborn inscribed in the Huntington manuscript (*Three Kings* 37-38).

⁴⁰² “And thes thre glorious Kyngis for her hye deuocioun made in þe fote of þat hille a noble cite and callid hit Sculla, which is now into this day hold on of the noblest citees and the ricchest in all þe parties of Inde and of the Est. And in this cite is þe habitacion of þe lord of Inde which is callid Pretre Iohn, and also of Thomas, þe patriarke of Ynde” (*Three Kings* 89).

⁴⁰³ “And such a gouvernour yn temperalte shold not be callid as kyng or emperour, but of all peple shold be callid Prestre Iohn” (*Three Kings* 93).

⁴⁰⁴ Wace offers a memorable summation of this role of historical writing in his twelfth-century *Roman de Rou*:

Pur remembrer des ancesurs
les feiz e les diz e les murs,
les felunies des feluns
e les barnages des baruns,
Deit l'um les libres e les gestes
E les estoires lire a festes.

To remember the deeds, words, and ways of our ancestors, the wicked deeds of the wicked men and the brave deeds of brave men, books, chronicles, and histories should be read out at festivals. (Text and translation from Wace 3.1-6)

⁴⁰⁵ Printed in *Brut* 2:333-34.

⁴⁰⁶ The description that concludes the text celebrates his military success: “And in all batayle & assemblies, with a passyng glory and worshyp he had euere þe victory” (*Brut* 2:333).

⁴⁰⁷ “Neuere the latter, lecchery & mevyng of hys flessch haunted hym in his age . . . Ryzt so, whan he drow in-to Age, drawyng downward þurgh lecchorye and oper synnes, litill & litill all þo Ioyfull and blyssed pynges, good fortune & prosperite decresed and myshapped, And Infortunat pynges, & vnprofytable harmes, with many evele, bygan for to sprynge, and, þe more harme is, conteyned longe tyme after” (*Brut* 2:334, reading from the Lambeth MS [Y]).

⁴⁰⁸ As pointed out in Guddat-Figge 131.

⁴⁰⁹ In addition, Menealfe of the Mountayn says that he captured the lady who is his prisoner “atte Ledelle” (Dahood 310). This may refer to the fortification of Liddel Strength on the river Liddel Water in the Anglo-Scottish border region; a town and castle of Lidel feature in Guillaume de Clerc's *Roman de Fergus*, and in a Welsh legend the madness of Merlin (Lailoken) begins at a

battle near Lidel. Ledelle may thus form part of the local topography, but it occurs only in a passing reference and is never a setting. The only other toponyms in the poem are Spain (where Baldwin journeyed under King Constantine in his military career) and the very imprecise place element of Baldwin's name: "of Bretayne." See Bruce 317 (s. v. Lidel); Dahood 106, n. 310.

⁴¹⁰ Arthur's vow makes no reference to the forest, but the boar's location has already been established by the hunter—"In Ingulwode is hee" (Dahood 65)—and the four companions are in the forest when they make their vows. Gawain and Kay both make vows that explicitly instance the space of Inglewood:

[Gawain says:] "I avowe to Tarne Wathelan,
To wake hit all ny3te."
"And I avow," sayd Kaye,
"To ride þis forest or daye;
Quose wernes me þe waye,
Hym to dethe digte." (Dahood 131-36)

⁴¹¹ Since the *Avowing* is unique to the Ireland manuscript, we cannot know how other copies divided it, but Hardman has made a persuasive case that the passus divisions in all three Ireland romances are scribal rather than archetypal ("Fitt Divisions," 76-78).

⁴¹² The text says of the king, "Thus dwellus he atte the Rowun Tabull" (570), treating the Round Table itself almost as a place, but this certainly has a different function from the toponyms.

⁴¹³ In Baldwin's account of the campaign, "We werrut on a sawdan" (917); the specific setting of Spain seems otherwise to play no role in Baldwin's stories.

⁴¹⁴ In both its manuscript copies, *Amadace* lacks its opening, so it is not impossible that the early lines of the poem situated Amadace's lands in a particular part of the world. However, given the consistent lack of names through the rest of the poem, it seems likely that the romance eschewed toponyms throughout even when complete.

⁴¹⁵ In the Ireland manuscript version. In the Advocates manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 19.3.1), which does not contain the last few stanzas of the Ireland version, Amadace gains territory but does not explicitly become a king during the course of the romance (though he is, presumably, an heir); he also does not formally settle his debts, allowing his original lands to be restored to him, as he does in the Ireland version.

⁴¹⁶ When the ghost tells Amadace how to win the hand of the princess, he extracts a pledge that Amadace will give him half of what he gains. At the end of the romance, the ghost comes to collect, demanding that the knight cut his wife in half to divide her with the ghost. Amadace is dismayed, but intends to fulfill his debt to the ghost. When the ghost sees that Amadace will fulfill their compact, he stops him before he delivers the fatal blow and reveals his identity. Amadace's generosity is not enough to secure his new fortune; he must settle his debts, a point emphasized in the Ireland text (though not the Advocates) when he settles his debts at home and reclaims his original lands, which he had mortgaged at the start of the romance.

⁴¹⁷ “For I wulle gif full ryche giftus / Bothe to squiers and to knyghtis; / To pore men dele a dole” (40-42).

⁴¹⁸ For Chism, the dichotomies of rich/poor and living/dead are closely interrelated.

⁴¹⁹ Besides settling the merchant’s debts and thus gaining the assistance of the ghost, Amadace gives half of the lands he wins in jousting to the king in order to secure his favor.

⁴²⁰ Indeed, this repetition shows that Amadace is richer than before, for the ghost lists these holdings as among Amadace’s possessions that he will not collect in fulfillment of his debt; he will take instead half his wife (he initially demands their child as well, but relents on that point), clearly positioned as his most valued “possession.” The ghost’s catalogue seems designed to emphasize Amadace’s richness in property, for it adds further categories of space, like those listed by Guinevere’s mother: “Allso thi wuddus, thi waturs clere, / Thi frithis, thi forestus, fer and nere” (724-25).

⁴²¹ “Thine avowes arne profetabull” (1130); “And thou hase holdin all that thou highte, / As a knyghte schulde!” (1143-44)

⁴²² Only his third exemplum, in which he relates how he feasted the enemy’s emissary to show why he will deny hospitality to nobody, is positive; his first two exempla demonstrate the fates that befall those who are jealous and cowardly.

⁴²³ In the latter article, Hardman notes that *all* the romances of the Ireland manuscript have been seen as diptychs, but that the manuscript presents all three in three fitts. Moreover, as she elaborates in both articles, the Ireland structures appear to serve moral goals, rather than merely narrative ones.

⁴²⁴ The precise origin of the manuscript is unclear—a recent cataloguer has speculated that it might have been produced in Merseyside—but it came quickly to reside in Hale, Lancashire, where it was bound with the records of the Ireland family.

⁴²⁵ See Hudson, “Middle English Popular Romances”, which takes the Thornton manuscript as one representative example of a category of romance compendium manuscripts and associates it with the increasing popularity of romance among the fifteenth-century gentry.

⁴²⁶ I have adopted spellings and titles commonly used in literary studies, which differ from those present in the manuscript. My references to *Octavian* are to the Northern version, which is the version found in the Lincoln manuscript. Texts of these romances may be found in Hudson, *Four* 7-171 (*Isumbras*, *Octavian*, *Eglamour*), Laskaya and Salisbury 309-65 (*Tolous*), and Casson, and Braswell 1-76 (*Perceval*).

⁴²⁷ I exclude the “filler” materials from consideration here partly out of convenience, but there are also codicological reasons for considering them separately from the romances that compose the greater part of the booklet. The materials that have been described as filler are a unique verse *Life of Saint Christopher* following *Tolous* and a group of verse texts following *Eglamour*: *The Wicked Knight and the Friar* (a miracle of the Virgin), *Lyarde* (a satire on friars), and *Thomas of Erceldoune* (prophetic). (A final group of texts follows *Perceval*, but as they follow the last

romance, their most obvious function is to fill blank leaves.) Thompson notes the possibility that all these texts except *Lyard* might be seen to fit the romance booklet, though he seems more inclined to regard them as fillers (“Compiler,” 118-21). All except *Christopher* serve to fill the blank pages between *Eglamour* and the *Awntyrs* that Thompson believes were caused by a change in the plan of the booklet. (Though Keiser offers a different explanation for the gap between *Eglamour* and the *Awntyrs*, he, too, sees the intervening texts as intended to fill a gap [“Robert Thornton,” 83].)

Finlayson concurs, remarking that “With the exception of the saint’s life, these non-romance pieces . . . were clearly added later as fillers” (“Reading,” 641); despite regarding *Christopher* as an integral part of the collection (642), Finlayson omits it from his account of the romances in sequence (644). Thompson suggests that “Thornton was just as interested in filling up the remaining blank space in gathering G as he was in exercising a degree of medieval ‘literary discrimination’ when he commenced copying the *Vita Sancti Christofori* on f. 122v” (“Compiler,” 119). It may be that Thornton had no further romance exemplars at hand when he began copying the Life; the three romances preceding were likely copied from a common exemplar, named by Hanna the “Doncaster exemplar” (“Growth,” 55, 57, developing a suggestion from McIntosh 231-32), while *Degrevant*, formatted differently, likely derives from a different exemplar (Keiser, “Robert Thornton,” 82). (Hanna includes *Perceval* among the texts in the Doncaster exemplar; Keiser believes it was acquired later [“Robert Thornton,” 82], while Fredell proposes that *Perceval* might have been set aside and later added to a booklet previously regarded as completed [116-17].) Because of its uncertain status in the romance booklet, I also set aside *Christopher*.

Christopher is in any case distinct from the texts conventionally recognized as romances in the present discussion because it takes a very different relationship to land. Every other romance concerns the acquisition or defense of land, a concern foreign to the Life. It takes place largely in the abstract space of an unnamed land; though the loss of a leaf early in the text (following l. 5) makes it possible that the beginning of the text named the land of Christopher’s origin, the text’s general unconcern for geography is illustrated when Christopher is twice asked the formulaic question, “Whene þou arte & of whate contree” (ll. 147, 654 with minor variation), and does not specify his origin either time. Only one place-name occurs in the poem: “Licie þat riche cetee” (l. 466), home of his adversary, King Dagius, who converts his lands to Christianity at the poem’s end. But much of the poem takes place in an abstract landscape of scene-spaces, which merely present challenges to Christopher or enable his movements rather than being objects of control in their own right. Regardless of Thornton’s motivations behind including *Christopher*, it evinces spatial concerns distinct from those of the other romances. The poem is printed in Horstmann 454-66.

The *Awntyrs* may have begun life as the start of an intended independent booklet and been “codicized” (Hanna’s term; see “Booklets,” 104 for a discussion of the Thornton *Awntyrs* in relation to the booklet as a concept) into the romance booklet; the codicological situation will be discussed in greater detail below. Regardless of its original status, it was ultimately incorporated into the romance booklet.

⁴²⁸ None approaches the extensive catalogue of places and strong focus on a single place of the *Siege of Jerusalem*. On the prevalence of the separation–restoration pattern, see Wittig 175-78; this pattern is a larger category containing the more familiar exile-and-return. Separation–restoration is almost impossibly broad as a story pattern and could apply to a great proportion of

romances—but not, most importantly, the Siege poems, which occur in a block of romances focused on religious history in the London MS; see note 447.

⁴²⁹ Only *Octavian*, which ends with the reunion of Octavian's family and their return to Rome together, does not treat land as a prize, though much of that romance is concerned with Florent's defense of Paris. The distinctions I draw among how the heroes win their land are tentative and imprecise: Eglamour and Degrevant secure marriage in part through martial deeds (in each case the bride's father dies at the end, leaving the hero in charge of his lands); in *Tolous*, Barnard is elected emperor on Diocletian's death, presumably at least in part because of his heroic defense of the Empress against her accusers, but at the same time marries his widow; Perceval technically becomes king of Maydenlande through his marriage to Lufamour, but secures her hand by defending her land against the sultan-giant Golrotherame.

⁴³⁰ Finlayson offers this assessment in his overview of the collection's shape, but does not emphasize these "unreal" elements in the section of the article devoted to these two poems (and, indeed, does little to highlight their similarities or the features that make them function as a group). Ultimately, aside from their Arthurian subject matter, the grounds for understanding these two very different poems as serving a similar function are tenuous at best.

⁴³¹ On this group, consisting of seven romances commonly read together (though not all present in any single manuscript), see Evans 55-56.

⁴³² On the association of romance with the gentry, see Hudson, "Middle," 76-78; M. Johnston, "Romance."

⁴³³ For an overview of Thornton's land holdings, see M. Johnston, "Romance," 452-53.

⁴³⁴ On Thornton's manuscript as a "household romance library" intended for his family, see Olson 116-39; see especially pp. 133-34 for evidence of the manuscripts continuing (childhood?) use by Thornton's descendants. Recent scholarship has attempted to associate a number of romances and romance collections with child readers. For an overview especially emphasizing the Auchinleck manuscript, see Olson 109-13. Mary E. Shaner argues that Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.3.1 (which shares *Isumbras* with Lincoln and *Amadace* with Ireland) was edited specifically for child readers. Nicole Eddy, in research awaiting publication, suggests that the Lambeth manuscript was used by fifteenth-century schoolboys (see Eddy 58-59).

⁴³⁵ "Hugh Gascoigne, parson of Staynegreve" alleged that "Robert de Thornton of Neuton," together with other men including Thornton's former servant "William Cok, 'leper', . . . and other armed malefactors broke his close and houses at Steingreve, assaulted him, fished in his several fishery there, and took away fish and goods and chattels to the value of 200 marks as well as 1000 marks in money, and assaulted his men and servants" (*Calendar* 365). Keiser discovered this record and identified the Robert de Thornton named as the scribe's father ("Lincoln," 160 and n. 8). See also M. Johnston, "New," 311.

⁴³⁶ For Johnston, *Tolous* does not show the same gentry spirit as *Degrevant* because the hero of the former romance is an earl, while the latter is a knight whose adversary is an earl. While

Johnston is right to notice the concentration of gentry heroes in the Thornton manuscript, it seems to me over-literal to insist on a character's rank as the key to a text's imaginative potential. *Tolous* and *Degrevant* share a basic story-pattern involving a hero whose land claims are threatened by a higher-ranking neighbor and who secretly loves a member of the aggressor's family; it has even been suggested that the *Degrevant*-poet adapted his romance directly from *Tolous* (Finlayson, "Reading," 653-54; Casson lxvi, lxxi). The two poems, in my view, are engaged with the same problem and posit similar solutions.

⁴³⁷ The mechanism by which the conflict halts differs between the romances. *Degrevant* carries on a romantic affair with the Earl's daughter; when the Earl learns of this and condemns his daughter to death, his wife interposes and demands reconciliation. In *Tolous*, Barnard loves the Emperor's wife. He comes to her defense when she is falsely accused of adultery, and her uncle, an abbot, tricks the Emperor into making peace with his wife's defender before learning who he is. In both cases, the resolution comes not through decisive combat between the two opponents but through the mediation and love of women, who have much earlier urged against hostilities.

⁴³⁸ On the conjunction of these two plot structures in Middle English romance, see Wittig 175-78.

⁴³⁹ Perceval's dispossession is indirect: after his father is slain in a tournament, his distressed mother takes him into exile so that he will grow up without knowledge of knighthood.

⁴⁴⁰ Isumbras inherits one Saracen kingdom from his wife, who rules it as queen on the death of the king who abducted her, and gains further kingdoms after slaughtering a Saracen army with the help of his family in the climactic battle. The giant whom Perceval fights for the hand of the lady Lufamour of Maydenlande, Golrotherame, is described as a "Sowdane" (Braswell 1-76, l. 977), and his followers are "Sarazenes" (Braswell 1-76, l. 1190).

⁴⁴¹ Prynsamour dies by falling from his tower and breaking his neck upon the return of Eglamour's reunited family to Artois. This fate allows the romance to dispense with the old earl, whose banishment of his daughter renders him a villainous character, without the hero's having to kill him directly; cf. the suicides of the mothers of Bevis of Hampton (who leaps from a tower in a striking parallel) and Octavian.

⁴⁴² My account of the construction of Thornton's books is drawn from Keiser, "Lincoln," 177-79; Thompson, "Compiler"; Hanna, "Growth." Keiser, "Robert Thornton," 76-89 offers a different, though sometimes complementary, view based largely on the evidence of letterforms and page layout.

⁴⁴³ Hanna's analysis of Thornton's supply of paper stocks offers further evidence that copying of the *Morte* and the *Awntyrs* took place around the same time (with the *Awntyrs* perhaps copied first), an order of production that makes little sense if the quire (which begins with the conclusion of *Eglamour*) always existed in its current form ("Growth," 56).

⁴⁴⁴ Keiser suggests that Thornton had already marked off a double-column writing area following *Eglamour*, which could not accommodate the longer lines of the *Awntyrs*; he thus skipped to the

mid-quire where he had not yet drawn the margins to begin the *Awntyrs*, later returning to fill in the intervening pages.

⁴⁴⁵ Finlayson, among the few scholars to believe the manuscript to be the work of several scribes, describes the *Awntyrs* and *Perceval* as being in a different hand from the three preceding romances (“Reading,” 639, 661; see also Guddat-Figge 140).

⁴⁴⁶ The *Awntyrs* is “a pendant to the *Morte*,” as Hanna puts it (“Growth,” 56). Hanna has emphasized that Thornton’s volumes were in flux to the end of compilation (60). Though the uncertainty over the relative sequence of the *Awntyrs* and *Morte* has provoked varying interpretations of their presence—Hanna suggests that recognizing a text like the *Morte* as a source for the *Awntyrs* led Thornton to seek out the *Morte* (56), while Finlayson goes so far as to propose (improbably) that the *Awntyrs* was composed as a companion piece for the *Morte* in the context of the Lincoln manuscript (“Reading,” 662)—most critics who have considered the matter have agreed that it is significant that Thornton may have been engaged in copying the two works around the same time.

⁴⁴⁷ Which is not to say that Thornton was uninterested in such material. While the Lambeth manuscript places the *Awntyrs* in a context connected to world history, imperial kingship, and crusade in compiling it with *Three Kings* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*, Thornton appears deliberately to separate it from this context. The London Thornton manuscript also contains romance material; one booklet contains *The Siege of Jerusalem*, *The Siege of Milan*, and *Duke Rowland and Sir Otuel of Spain*, while a later booklet includes *Richard Coeur de Lion* and a Life of Christ labeled *Ypokrephun*, identified in Thornton’s title as a romance. These are all Christian heroic texts, clearly grounded in history and concerned with clashes significant to global religious politics.

John Finlayson has demonstrated the importance of understanding these works together in the context of their volume; in arraying them together in a volume whose overarching concern is Christian history, Thornton segregates this material from the more courtly romances of the Lincoln manuscript (“Context”). Finlayson chooses to ignore the evidence for the manuscript’s construction in order to focus on the crusade-themed works as a literary, not codicological, grouping. Although this makes his argument less powerful as an explanation of the actual state of these poems in the manuscript, he convincingly demonstrates shared techniques and themes among these romances (particularly their focus on an assertively Christian militarism) that differs significantly from those of the Lincoln manuscript, and makes a strong case for understanding the London manuscript as thematically focused, whether or not it was given its final shape by Thornton himself.

Of the Lincoln romances, *Octavian* most closely approaches the content of the London romances, but even it is markedly less historical in character, and includes romance motifs and a love motive aligning it more closely with the other Lincoln romances than those of the London manuscript. Though Lee Manion has argued for recognizing *Isumbras* as a “crusading romance” (“Loss”), its spatial generality (Jerusalem, Acre, and the “Grykkyssche see” are the only places named) makes its relationship to history different from the more spatially specific romances. (The London volume also includes a unique, fragmentary copy of a verse translation of the *Three Kings of Cologne*, though it is in a separate section of the manuscript from either group of romance materials.)

⁴⁴⁸ While this is a place-name attested elsewhere in Arthurian literature, there seems no reason to connect this land to that appearing in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet* or in the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*; Bruce 338 discusses them as distinct places. If anything, the recurrence of this name in unrelated contexts underscores its conventionality and abstraction.

⁴⁴⁹ See the catalogues offered in Field, "Curious," 30-35.

⁴⁵⁰ For example, scholars' sense of the origins of romances like *Havelok*, *Bevis*, *Guy of Warwick*, and the *Awntyrs* is heavily conditioned by the spaces they depict. In an essay demonstrating that contrary to conventional wisdom the Middle English *Guy of Warwick* was not written in Warwickshire, Alison Wiggins points out similar associations for *Guy* as well as for *Havelok* and *Bevis* (Wiggins 230); while these ascriptions have been made partly on dialectical grounds, Wiggins urges new and more sophisticated techniques of dialectical analysis to reassess such assumptions. See further note 384.

Robert Rouse suggests that familiar settings provide a certain "accessibility" to narratives: "In terms of narrative technique, the situating of the narrative within well-known localities helps to immerse the audience in the world of the romance, allowing them a way to access and engage with the narrative" (*Idea* 62).

⁴⁵¹ The Middle English poem's editor, G. V. Smithers, has argued that the *Havelok*-poet need not have had any sources beyond Gaimar and the *Lai* (*Havelok* liii-lvi), though it has seemed more likely to many that *Havelok* draws on an independent tradition (for a summary of the evidence, see Bradbury), or perhaps from a lost Middle English antecedent (see *Havelok* lxix-lxxi).

⁴⁵² See also Battles 31, which argues that the poem references the four most important Anglo-Saxon cities—London, Lincoln, York, and Winchester—to ground its sense of England in the Anglo-Saxon past; further geographic references, Battles suggests, link the usurpation of England on Apelwold's death to the Norman Conquest.

⁴⁵³ See also Faletra 372.

⁴⁵⁴ Turville-Petre points to the story of *Havelok* as a rewriting of King Cnut's unjust accession to the English throne ("*Havelok*," 132; *England* 152-53). Battles connects it with Hereward the Wake (particularly the form of his story related in the *Peterborough Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*), and suggests that the poem recalls the failed Anglo-Danish alliance against the Normans of 1069-1071; in imagining "an Anglo-Danish alliance as a central tool of English political salvation," the poem imaginatively rewrites history, effecting a fictional reconquest that never succeeded historically in the wake of the Norman invasion (131-33).

⁴⁵⁵ Gaimar and the *Lai* also include a dream that ratifies Haveloc's kingship, but it is Argentille (their equivalent of Goldeborw) who has the dream rather than Haveloc, and it takes a radically different form. Rather than the cartographic vision of the dream in *Havelok*, the Anglo-Norman versions offer a prophetic vision of beasts—a tradition stretching back to the book of Daniel and particularly associated with insular history through the Prophecies of Merlin, included in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. Like many beast dreams, this one is somewhat obscure; while the two lions of the dream have been associated with the usurpers who oppress Haveloc and Argentille, Michael Faletra has proposed that they might instead represent

the two kingdoms Havelok will rule (376). Regardless of the referent, the Anglo-Norman dream involves Havelok's sovereignty, but takes up very different concerns from the geospatial focus of the Middle English dream.

⁴⁵⁶ Faletra argues that, while the later part of Havelok's vision represents England as "an entirety, a separate entity . . . Denmark is never viewed in its entirety from England" (378). While it is true that Denmark is not so viewed *from England*, the vision does begin with a perspective that seems to take in Denmark as a whole. The kind of command that Havelok exercises over the two spaces is different, but each land is conceived of as a distinct whole.

⁴⁵⁷ P. D. A. Harvey takes a view of an area from above (whether vertical or oblique) to define a map for the purposes of his study of medieval local and regional cartography; he notes that such areas are "viewed from a position often unattainable in reality" (454). (While the romance attempts to rationalize Havelok's cartographic gaze through the contrivance of the hill, tall indeed would be the hill that offered a commanding view of all Denmark.) However, Havelok's view would be unusual among medieval maps; as Harvey notes, medieval maps of entire countries are rare (though there are several prominent English examples).

⁴⁵⁸ Sometimes the iconographic depictions carry a sense of visual realism. While the *Polychronicon mappamundi* pictured in the introduction (Figure 2, p. 20) depicts all the cities of England, like many cities throughout the world, as identical three-layer towers, the Hereford Map shows variation in both the size and form of the buildings it depicts, and may have depicted actual buildings in places with which the artist was familiar (Delano-Smith and Kain 30).

⁴⁵⁹ However, cf. Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury 176, n. to l. 1306.

⁴⁶⁰ See MED, s.v. *honde*, 2.

⁴⁶¹ As Faletra says, "Whatever apparent unity England seems to possess hitherto in the story (a network of roads, various social strata) is overtly represented *only here*" (378).

⁴⁶² For example, on seeing Havelok's king-mark, his foster-father Grim declares, "He shal hauen in his hand / Al Denemark and Engeland" (*Havelok* 610-11).

⁴⁶³ Dominique Battles argues that Goldeborw's name is a specific reference to Peterborough Abbey, commonly known as the "golden borough" (35). This association, for Battles, contributes to a process by which she "come[s] to symbolize England itself" (126). Even lacking that association, her name is strongly geographic, which further heightens the strong spatial focus of the Middle English romance as compared to the Anglo-Norman accounts. (The Anglo-Norman *Argentille* might be understood of *argent* + *ville*, which would make Goldeborw's name a relatively literal translation changing to a more precious metal, but aside from the "strident Englishness" her name in *Havelok* imparts (362), the geographical element of her name is much more audible in English.)

⁴⁶⁴ References by line number only are to the text of the Auchinleck version as printed in Kölbing. I cite readings from other manuscripts from the unpublished dissertation by Jennifer Fellows, "*Sir Beves*." Those citations begin with *Fellows*, followed by the volume number as a

roman numeral, then the line number, and finally the sigil of the text being cited. I employ the sigils listed in Fellows, “*Sir Beves*,” 1:xi, or more accessibly in Fellows, “Middle,” 104-08; these correspond with the sigils listed in Kölbing v, though Fellows has assigned sigils to two fragments unknown to Kölbing; the sigil P refers to the early print version, edited by Fellows in vol. IV. Fellows prints all but one of the manuscripts in a single volume (II), and line numbers correspond among the manuscripts collated in this volume, but do not match Kölbing’s edition.

With six largely complete manuscripts and three fragments (not to mention many early prints, some with textual authority), *Bevis* has the most complicated textual tradition of any text in this dissertation, and I will not attempt an account of the manuscripts here; Fellows, “Middle” offers a good overview, and Baugh also highlights important considerations (though his conclusions are somewhat outdated). While I attempt to describe pertinent differences in readings, the amount of variation means that I do not attempt to account for the full range of alternate readings. All published editions of *Bevis* have been edited from the Auchinleck manuscript, which constitutes a separate branch of the stemma from all other manuscripts; for this reason, criticism of *Bevis* is significantly (and often consciously) biased toward Auchinleck readings.

⁴⁶⁵ The catalogue is known to most readers from A; it also appears in SN, which Fellows understands to be a product of conflation between the branch represented by A and the branch represented by all other manuscripts. But I think it likely that *some* catalogue, if not necessarily this one, was a feature of the Middle English original, for a (much briefer and rather different) catalogue appears in *Boeve*:

“Sire,” ceo dist Boves, “jeo ai esté a Nubie
e en Cartage e en Esclavie
e a l’Arbre Sek e en Barbarie
e a Marecoyne, par tut en Paenie,
mes a chastel de Abilent, la ne fu ge mie.” (Stimming 1519-23)

“My lord,” said Boeve, “I have been in Nubia and in Carthage and in Esclavia and at the Dry Tree, in Barbary and in Macedonia, throughout heathen lands, but I never went to the castle of Abilent.” (‘*Boeve*’ and ‘*Gui*’ 54)

Boeve’s catalogue offers a relatively small set of far-flung spaces marked by their religious alterity; *Bevis*’s catalogue is more expansive and presents more clearly a broad, flat world.

⁴⁶⁶ This catalogue is omitted in CP; the text of E lacks at this point (Fellows II 2942-51 EC; III 1995-99 P).

⁴⁶⁷ *Babiloine* is a possible exception; the name could refer to Babylonia, but could equally signify the city of Cairo, and Metlitzki takes it as such (Metlitzki 132). Mandeville, for instance, distinguishes between “Babyloyne the lesse where the Soudan dwelleth” (Cairo, though for Mandeville, Cairo is a separate city a short distance away) and “the grete Babyloyne” (Babylonia, location of the tower of Babel); Babylon the Great, he tells, is subject not to the Sultan but to the King of Persia (*Mandeville* 26). As both the other places named in the line are countries rather than cities, and as Greece interposes between Egypt and *Babiloine*, I am inclined to interpret it as a reference to Babylonia rather than Cairo. But the indeterminacy is perhaps

more to the point: the places in this list are so little realized, and laid out with such inattention to spatial categories, that it is impossible to determine for certain the intended referent. Encountered in this list, *Babiloine* is just a place among many, and not a seat of power to which Bevis travels while he is in Egypt.

⁴⁶⁸ They are certainly more appropriate than the places he claims to have visited in *Boeve*, which I discuss below.

⁴⁶⁹ The Middle English version, which names Egypt elsewhere, presumably does not think of the two lands as identical.

⁴⁷⁰ See Eckhardt for an explanation of why the “Ermonie” mentioned in *Sir Tristrem* should be read as Brittany; citing examples of the term referring to Armenia in Chaucer, Mandeville, and *Piers Plowman*, Eckhardt remarks, “In all of these instances, the array of eastern Mediterranean names in the immediate narrative context determines the identification of Ermanye/Armonye with Armenia” (26). Eckhardt also cites a “Hermenye” in Africa from a fourteenth-century Middle English poem edited under the title “A Geography in Verse” (27). Clearly, in decoding toponyms, context is everything.

⁴⁷¹ The close resemblance of Ermin and Ermonie recalls the medieval etymological commonplace of a place’s name deriving from its legendary founder, as Rome from Romulus, Britain from Brutus, and England from Hengist or (occasionally) a woman named Angela. The case of Ermin is somewhat different, however, in that Ermin is not the land’s ancestral founder but its current ruler.

⁴⁷² On the added episode in these manuscripts, and their probable relationship, see Fellows, “Middle,” 87. The switch to couplets in other texts in fact comes before the interpolation in SN; these manuscripts extend the tail-rhyme format at first by supplementing the couplets with short tail-rhyme lines, yoking two couplets and two added short lines to form a stanza. But at the point at which Bevis is sold to the Saracen merchants, the text of SN abandons this practice and extends the text as I explain below.

⁴⁷³ This couplet is common to all manuscripts; the remainder of the quotation is unique to SN. The added material does not correspond with the Anglo-Norman text except in naming the kingdom at the moment of the merchants’ arrival; *Boeve* otherwise agrees with other Middle English texts in treating the arrival briefly and having the merchants carry Bevis directly to the king. It is thus presumably an innovation of a Middle English redactor.

⁴⁷⁴ For the format of these citations, see note 464. SN are very closely related; Fellows prints the text of S to stand for both and notes N’s variants in her apparatus.

⁴⁷⁵ E includes the conversion, though it is not for the love of Bevis. A handles the issue elsewhere.

⁴⁷⁶ The logic of Guy’s succession of Ermin may be slightly more emphasized in *Boeve*, where Ermin inquires which of the children is older before naming Guy his heir. But even in *Boeve* the

succession is presented as the king's choice, a feature emphasized when Guy asks (fruitlessly) that the king give the kingdom to Bevis instead (3115); all citations of *Boeve* are from Stimming.

⁴⁷⁷ The sense is more explicit in *Boeve*: “si jeo su mort ou recreant e priz, / jeo vus frai roi e amiral jurez, / tut ma terre vus ert quite clamez / e le bel dongon de Monbrant la cité” (3574-77).

⁴⁷⁸ SNC are more passive, eliminating the ambiguous “po” who do the crowning: “Now is Beuys king of þat lond” (Fellows II 5438 S).

⁴⁷⁹ I use the phrase “Auchinleck redactor” as a convenient shorthand to refer to the medieval editor who produced the version of the romance preserved in the Auchinleck manuscript. I make no judgment as to whether this individual is the Auchinleck scribe himself or (as A. C. Baugh thinks likely) an earlier editor (Baugh 24 describes the scribe of the Auchinleck *Bevis* as “copying mechanically what is before him”; however, he does not treat the Auchinleck version as a significant redaction, believing it instead to be the closest representation of the Middle English original). It is also possible that even in the case of Aumbeforce we are dealing with the work of multiple redactors (l. 4584, which offers a different form of the name, could have been introduced by a different scribe than the one who made the initial change), but a single redactor is verbally more convenient.

In the stemma offered by Fellows, A stands as the sole representative of the *x* branch of the textual tradition, with all other MSS descended from the *y* branch (Fellows, “*Sir Beves*,” 1:36); Fellows argues persuasively that Kölbing is incorrect to derive SN from the *x* branch (see Kölbing xxxviii), and that they instead descend from a copy conflating *x* and *y*. With such limited evidence for A's branch, it is impossible to determine how representative A is of its family of manuscripts, or how many of its features might descend from the Middle English original. I attempt to avoid assuming that features unique to A are innovations created by a specific redactor. In the following discussion, however, we can be certain that A or one of its ancestors significantly altered its source.

⁴⁸⁰ Baugh, chiefly concerned with the textual tradition, describes the city as “Seville, but in English the kingdom of Aumbeforce” (21); though he later notes that all his quotations have been drawn from the Auchinleck manuscript, this bare statement is striking, particularly as Baugh suggests early on that Kölbing's presentation of the text and the Lachmannian method have discouraged attention to the romance's textual variants. Loomis's statement of the name, found in a discussion of the transnational *Bevis* tradition, is as striking in its own way: she identifies the city as “*AF*, Aumbeforce, *CF*, Civile” (122), where *AF* and *CF* refer to the Anglo-French and continental French versions respectively. While Loomis's *AF* category includes the Middle English version, this statement is particularly misleading since *Boeve* joins the continental version in identifying the city as Civile, while among the extant Middle English manuscripts only Auchinleck names it at all.

⁴⁸¹ No further information is offered concerning the city; it is not associated with Hermin until l. 3066, when *Boeve*'s family reaches the city to bring reinforcements to the king. Judith Weiss has suggested that *Boeve* originally terminated with *laisse* 165 (around l. 2396) and that the remainder of the surviving romance is a continuation, possibly by a different author (“Date,” 240). It may be that we are already supposed to know about Abreford when it first appears; other

features of the second half, like the lady of Civile, are similarly introduced as though referred to previously (*'Boeve' and 'Gui'* 78, n. 247).

⁴⁸² Ll. 2782, 3066, 3129, 3182, 3191, 3265, 3314, 3421, 3447, 3511, 3540, 3556, 3652.

⁴⁸³ Explanations of pure transmission error seem improbable, however. While in every case where the name occurs in any manuscript A diverges from the other surviving texts in additional factors, the text of A also has enough correspondences with other texts in each episode to suggest common intelligible descent; according to Fellows, only the T fragment seems likely to record an oral performance, although it is impossible to rule out the influence of oral transmission on other facets of the written texts. It is difficult to imagine the textual situation that would make it appear that *Ambeford's name belonged to Civile while leaving the rest of the episode intelligible.

⁴⁸⁴ Metlitzki, in her rationalization of Bevis's journey, describes the site as "a Saracen castle in Palestine, apparently in the region of Tiberias," (131), but no descriptors in the text help to place it; we can at best extrapolate (as does Metlitzki) from the similarly ill-defined features that Bevis encounters in his journey before and after the castle.

⁴⁸⁵ Auchinleck uniquely relates that Bevis and Josiane flee England toward Ermonie "Pour3 Fraunce & pour3 Normondie" (3618). Other versions describe them only as traveling through scene-space: "Pour3 felde and pour3 toun" (Fellows III 4568 S).

⁴⁸⁶ Of course, *Abreford* might not be the form in which the Middle English translator encountered the name; since only one manuscript survives for this portion of *Boeve*, we cannot guess how much variation might have marked the Anglo-Norman tradition. Regardless, the point stands.

⁴⁸⁷ Wittig, in her structural analysis of Middle English romances, observes that the various factors precipitating expulsion, including the motifs of the death of the father and the unnatural birth, play structurally equivalent roles (133). *Bevis* effectively combines the two; Bevis himself is exiled, while his mother's adultery contaminates his lineage.

⁴⁸⁸ While the makeup of Doun's force in *Boeve* is the same—men summoned from Germany and the King of Scotland's men—the Anglo-Norman text refers to them collectively only as "les Alemans" (Stimming 2352; Stimming also supplies the word in 2337 where a collective designation has clearly been omitted from the surviving copy), giving less emphasis to this fighting force composed of two groups of outsiders.

⁴⁸⁹ Susan Crane notes that the trial in *Bevis* is related to historical animal trials, which might lead to the animal's execution and perhaps fines against the owner. However, Crane emphasizes that the threat of death to both horse and owner is a break from this tradition: "The debate in Edgar's court revises this historical practice by suggesting that animal and owner might be equally guilty for the animal's crime, and equally subject to execution" (*Animal* 164). However, this conception is not shared by the law of the realm; elsewhere, Crane notes that the scene portrays the barons as checking an abuse of power by the king and constraining him to the law (*Insular* 67-68); Rouse makes a similar observation (*Idea* 116-17; "English," 81).

⁴⁹⁰ MED s.v. *forsweren* (3a): "To leave (a country) under oath not to return, go into banishment."

⁴⁹¹ Rouse notes that Bevis's self-imposed exile spatializes English law (*Idea* 117; "English," 82). While medieval law sometimes applied on an ethnic basis (see Bartlett 204-11, cited by Rouse), Bevis leaves the authority of English law in renouncing England. Less evident to me, though, is Rouse's claim that "Beues's self-imposed exile stands as the ultimate act of condemnation: by abandoning both England and its laws for the East, Beues highlights the medieval belief that a king must embody both the laws and customs of his realm: if he fails to do so, this makes not only the king, but also the kingdom, despicable" (*Idea* 117). Although the barons must intercede to check Edgar's attempt to have Bevis executed, and while Edgar will later overreach by seizing Hampton without cause, the barons' reaction indicates that the king is within his rights to execute Arundel; it is unclear what, exactly, Bevis's departure would be condemning. Crane argues much more persuasively that "Bevis's protectiveness may be understood as a principled response arising directly from the living relationship he has long shared with this horse," a connection of "shared embodiment" at a sub-rational level (*Animal* 165). While Edgar may tend to transgress the limits of his authority, the problem here is not that he is a bad king: it is just that he has more power than Bevis in the spatial context of England.

⁴⁹² "So mot y þe, / Þat of ich wile awreke be!" (4285-86) In C, by contrast, Bevis vows not revenge on the king but rather to restore Saber's lands (a noteworthy vow since he advances Saber's claim rather than his own): "I wyll yow feofe a-geyn, be God a-lyue!" (Fellows II 5471 C) This variation makes clear that Bevis's departure is permanent—he is not working to reclaim his land for himself—and anticipates his departure at the poem's end.

⁴⁹³ On arriving at the court, the king asks who Bevis is, and once he explains his identity and reports his defeat of Doun, he concludes, "Ich bidde be-fore þour barnage, / Þat 3e me graunte min eritage!" (3501-02) (In SN, the power of the barons in relation to the king is played up: "I aske þe grace of baronage / Þat þou me graunt myn herytage" [Fellows II 4379-80 S].) In contrast to *Boeve*, in which Boeve disputes a legal fee he owes, in *Bevis* the king accedes at once: "'Blepeliche,' a seide, 'sone min, / Ich graunte þe, be sein Martin!'" (3503-04).

⁴⁹⁴ Only the Auchinleck text realizes the formula in full, repeating the king's response from the earlier episode; other texts repeat only Bevis's request. Handling of the aftermath of the request varies: the Sutherland and Cambridge texts go directly to a couplet (common to all manuscripts) that relates that the knights (or barons in Auchinleck) all assent to Bevis's request, while the Caius text also expresses the king's assent, but without recourse to the formula: "Þe Kyng hym wolde haue 3euen wiþ ryȝte / Þe styward sayde, 'Nay!' — þat he nay myȝte" (Fellows II 5493-94 E).

⁴⁹⁵ Other manuscripts offer a couplet, clearly descended from the same source and employing the same rhyme-words, that emphasizes instead that Bevis ought lawfully to die for transgressing the realm after his self-imposed exile: "Good it is þat he be slawe, / Ffor he haþ wrouȝt aȝen þe lawe" (Fellows II 5504-05 E).

⁴⁹⁶ While Josiane is skillfully able to protect herself from sexual violation, she is unable to attain independence. She remains married to Yvor until Bevis rescues her, using a magic ring to make her husband believe they are having sex without ever having to touch him. Later, when she is married to the Earl, she escapes rape by murdering him on their wedding night, but is going to be burned for her crime until she is rescued by Bevis. Kidnapped by Ascopart and brought again to

Yvor, Josiane protects herself a third time by consuming an herb that gives her the appearance of a leper, but she remains imprisoned in an isolated tower until rescued by Saber. The change in the identity of her rescuer underscores her symbolic connection to Hampton, for, following Bevis's exile, the land is now in Saber's possession.

⁴⁹⁷ Josiane is sexually enthusiastic for Bevis: she is impressed by his prowess almost from her first sight of him, and she expresses physical desire and seeks to take him as her lover well before he will consent. Indeed, she, like Rymenhild, is one of the "wooing women" of insular romance memorably described by Judith Weiss ("Wooing," for Josiane see 152-54). Weiss notes that presenting a hero as the object of desire enhances his status, but in the case of *Bevis*, the wooing also has geographical meaning. The romantic and sexual forwardness of Josiane and Rymenhild serves their role as surrogate representations of the hero's land: they do not need to be seduced by the hero because they, like his native land, are already his. Rather, his role is to defend them from would-be usurpers.

⁴⁹⁸ Bevis's mother further complains, "Al dai him is leuer at cherche, / Þan in me bour" (59-60). Here the romance hedges its bets in case her complaints about her husband's impotence seem reasonable: she positions herself as a rival to God, complaining that her husband does too much worship instead of having sex with her.

⁴⁹⁹ On blindness as a consequence or punishment for sexual transgression, see Wheatley ch. 5; for the "religious model of disability," see 10-19. As Wheatley explains, the link between sex and blindness also had medical reasons.

⁵⁰⁰ The case of Miles, Josiane's second (unconsummated) husband, makes clear that the threat to Josiane is essentially about sex, rather than marriage. Miles declares that "I wyl þe haue wilt þou or nylle" (BF II S 3939), and later attempts to rape her; only then does the subject of marriage arise as Josiane averts the rape by affirming that she has sworn not to have sex unless married and offering to go to bed with him if he marries her. While Yvor seeks marriage from the first, Miles is explicitly after sex, and marries Josiane only as a means to that end.

⁵⁰¹ Devoun is described as the lover of Bevis's mother, which may imply adultery during her marriage to Guy. But note that once Guy is dead, we have no indication that the couple's sexuality extends beyond their marriage: Saber accuses Devoun of having too much sex with his wife, Bevis's mother. It doesn't matter: the desire that led to the murder of her first husband cannot be legitimized through marriage.

⁵⁰² Arundel's prominence in the *Bevis* romances has been much remarked. Susan Crane notes parallels between Josiane and Arundel (*Insular* 59; *Animal* 155-56). For Jeffrey J. Cohen, the case of *Bevis* indicates that "knightly identity depends more on animal bodies than on mere heterosexual desire or quotidian social structures like family" (*Medieval* 61), though Cohen misleadingly suggests that *Bevis* abandons Josiane in going into exile with Arundel; in fact, she accompanies him, and they are separated only when she requests privacy to give birth to their children. But Arundel is certainly prominent in *Bevis*'s life, the deaths of the three together constituting the end of the family unit.

⁵⁰³ Even a throwaway line indicates Arundel's alignment with Hampton. After his escape from prison, the starving Bevis laments his present state (like the ghost of Guinevere's mother) by reference to his former possessions:

Whilom ichadde an erl-dam
And an hors gode and snel,
Pat men clepede Arondel;
Now ich wolde zeve hit kof
For a schiuer of a lof! (1822-26)

As Crane observes, this complaint equates Hampton and Arondel in implying their extraordinary value to him: "Bevis's conditional 'I would' raises the specter of quantifying his earldom and his warhorse, but his desperation indicates that they are almost beyond price" (*Animal* 162). The story of the foundation of Arundel Castle also involves the horse with Bevis's territorial projects, even if it doesn't precisely equate him to the land: "Bevis names his castle after his horse, inserting Arondel into his dynastic achievement" (160).

⁵⁰⁴ In P, as Rouse notes, Miles instead gains the Earldom of Cornwall ("For King," 125); this very different spatial logic perpetuates the fragmentation of England by seeing Miles take charge of a space that is "an insular Other . . . both within and without England" (*Idea* 88).

⁵⁰⁵ See Speed, "Construction," 151.

⁵⁰⁶ See also Pearsall, "Strangers," 53, which sets the London street battle that marks the climax of *Bevis* in the context of actual hostilities involving foreigners; Pearsall suggests that "a Lombard emerges as the ringleader of Bevis's enemies, almost as if the translator became aware that he needed to 'alienize' this native opposition to an English hero," but Rouse seems to suggest that the London episode emerges precisely in order to explore tensions regarding these alien Londoners.

⁵⁰⁷ See note 469.

⁵⁰⁸ In contrast to Horn, however, Bevis has not won all the lands he visits, so that a number of important locations in Bevis's journey (notably Damascus and Cologne) play no part in the final moments.

⁵⁰⁹ Auchinleck is the only text to offer such a vast array of places. NC, closely related in this section, simply report that Bevis makes his way homeward to Mombraunt following the feast, first entrusting Miles to Saber's tutelage and taking leave of Terry, now a king (Fellows II 5924-51 NC). E sees him first go to Ermonie, where he takes leave of Guy; the two couplets concerning Ermonie and Guy are most likely an interpolation provoked by a specific desire to include Ermonie, but the text still does not offer a range comparable to that of the Auchinleck version.

The first line of the first couplet concerning Ermonie—"Sere Beffs homward gan hym hye" (Fellows II 5948 E)—repeats almost exactly the line before, which is also found in NC and is similar to the line that begins the catalogue of travels in Auchinleck: "And Sere Beffs homward haþ hym dyȝt" (Fellows II 5947 E); the new line appears to have been produced by

substituting both the verb and the rhyme-word. The second couplet concludes with the line “And be-tauzte hom God Al-Weldyng” (Fellows II 5951 E), a line shared with NC, but the king in the preceding line has been changed from Terry to Guy.

⁵¹⁰ Barnes holds “the concrete and recognizable world of London and its environs: Putney, the Thames, Westminster, Cheapside, Ludgate” in spatial contrast with “exotic and unhistorical ‘Armenia’.” See similarly Ralph Hanna: “The poem mainly treats leaving England for a(n Islamic) world of pure fantasy, or pure ingenuity, a bit ironically identified as Armenia/‘harmony’” (*London* 134).

⁵¹¹ For Crane, the idea of Bevis’s Englishness is nascent, but largely unrealized, in *Boeve*. Crane is writing specifically about national values as distinct from baronial values; as she explains, the personal interests of Horn and Havelok align perfectly with those of their communities, which is not the case in *Bevis*. Hierarchy contributes to this disjunction; Horn and Havelok are kings (even in the Anglo-Norman version of the Havelok story, where he rules only part of England), while Fulk of *Fouke le Fitz Warin*, Bevis, and Guy are noblemen, their spatially limited holdings necessarily existing within a broader geography of royal authority.

⁵¹² That is not to say that the simple spaces are unrelated to baronial concerns. Crane stresses the baronial concern with inheritance, the transfer of family holdings between generations; Guy becomes the heir of Ermonie and Terry the king of Aumbeforce, so that Bevis’s actions have enfolded these lands into his family holdings. But Crane discusses *Bevis* as part of a later generation of insular romances that have begun to explore the tension between individual and nation, and the foreign kingdoms do not form part of these concerns. Also, in striking contrast to *Boeve*, *Bevis* is unconcerned with the succession of Mombraunt, the land of Bevis’s actual rule. In *Boeve*, as Josiane lies dying, Boeve tells her that he will die too, and she raises the question of inheritance:

“Sire, ke tendra vos riches cassemens?”
 “Dame, jeo n’en ai cure, a deu lur command;
 la merci deu, uncore ay trois enfans,
 ke purrunt tener nos riches cassemens.” (3815-17)

“My lord, who will rule your great estates?” “Lady, I don’t care, I commend them to God. I’ve still got three children, thank God, who can rule our great estates.”
 (*‘Boeve’ and ‘Gui’* 94)

Their son Gui arrives to solve the problem, and after both are dead, the romance tells us, “Gui se fet coroner o l’onur de Monbrant” (3843; “Guy was crowned king over the land of Monbrant,” 95). Most manuscripts of *Bevis* have Guy present at Josiane’s death, but none see him crowned; instead, after the couple die and are entombed, the romance ends with prayers for their souls, as well as for Arundel.

⁵¹³ Siobhain Bly Calkin reads the Auchinleck *Bevis* as part of a meditation on the problem of differentiating among groups, suggesting that Bevis’s dangerous proximity to the Saracens raises the possibility that it may not be possible to differentiate sufficiently among cultural groups, including English and French (*Saracens* 58-59). Across the many representations of Saracens in

Auchinleck, the patterns that Bly Calkin analyzes are suggestive, but I see little to link the challenges posed by the Saracens and those posed by the English king within the specific context of *Bevis* alone.

⁵¹⁴ Christopher Cannon reads land as what is stable in the face of historical upheaval in *Lazamon's Brut* (ch. 2), and Laura Ashe notes the similar centrality and stability of land in Wace (59-64), also emphasizing land in other works she classes as twelfth-century national writing. But, as Helgerson emphasizes, chorography marks a change in focus; chroniclers like Wace and *Lazamon* present land in a sequence organized by rule, while chorography formally shifts to land as its organizing principle.

⁵¹⁵ Notably maps by Matthew Paris and the Gough Map. As P. D. A. Harvey observes, however, maps of entire countries were rare in the Middle Ages (464).

⁵¹⁶ Jacob notes that the modern atlas, as a planned collection of maps, is fundamentally a product of print (68).

⁵¹⁷ In his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh (Spenser 714-18), Spenser describes himself as “a poet Historical” (l. 46) and his poem as “my history” (l. 49).

⁵¹⁸ Helen Cooper points out the belatedness of *The Faerie Queene*: “Spenser achieved the magnificent feat of harnessing the idealism of romance knight-errantry to practical public service, but his work was becoming outdated even while it was being written. By the time Shakespeare died, to behave like a knight was an anachronism, a reversion to romance rather than a living ideal” (*English* 44).

⁵¹⁹ On Spenser and medieval English romance, see King. King points to Spenser’s comments on the plausibility of Fairyland in light of the discoveries of the New World at the opening of Book II, suggesting that they link Fairyland to the solid English geographies of medieval romances: “like the treatment of England in Middle English romances the analogy of actual (discovered) places suggests a very physical and geographical understanding of faerie land” (161). But of course (as King understands) the ontological status of these spaces is different: insular places, when they appear in the Middle English romances, are meant to be connected directly to the sites they name, while the as-yet-undiscovered Fairyland is not—a fact signaled by its name, which links it to geographically non-specific traditions like the Wife of Bath’s Tale. As King shows, Spenser deploys spatially authenticating strategies from Middle English romance in order to show his poem’s investments in geography and history, but these authentications remain rooted in the thought-world of the poet rather than the geographical world beyond it.

⁵²⁰ Erickson complains that “Critics who discuss the setting of *The Faerie Queene* almost invariably treat Faeryland as equivalent to the world of the poem” (7) but points out that places and historical events do exist beyond Fairyland, including the geography of Britain (71-72). Yet despite the presence of Britain, “the only sustained representational depiction of socio-political reality in *The Faerie Queene*” (87-88), Fairyland itself is atemporal, bringing together separate historical times (72-76), and as such functions very differently from the medieval romances I have examined, set in an unselfconscious (if sometimes undetermined) past composed entirely of plausibly georeferential places.

⁵²¹ See the brief treatment in Beer ch. 3-4 and its successor, Fuchs ch. 4, as well as the essays collected in Saunders.

⁵²² See Fuchs 106-10.

⁵²³ For an example of both terms, see Miéville 70.

⁵²⁴ In the lists discussed by Furrow and Liu, the citation that gives the strongest impression of providing a title is that of “Horn child” in Chaucer’s *Tale of Sir Thopas* (VII.898). The formulation appears to suggest that the specific work being alluded to is *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*, which bears that title in a rubric to its only surviving copy in the Auchinleck manuscript (f. 317v; see the electronic facsimile available at Burnley and Wiggins)—an association doubtless bolstered by Laura Hibbard Loomis’s suggestion that Chaucer had actually read the Auchinleck manuscript. (Loomis believed Chaucer’s reference to be to *Horn Childe* and dismissed the possibility that his allusion is to *King Horn*; see Loomis 116 and n. 11.) Certainly, the weight of probability appears to support this ascription; the fourteenth-century *Horn Childe*, unlike the thirteenth-century *King Horn*, is in tail-rhyme, the verse form Chaucer skewers in *Thopas*. (On *Horn Childe* as Chaucer’s probable referent, see D. Smith, “Chaucer,” 101-02.)

However, the references in the list do not appear to refer exclusively to tail-rhyme works. *Ypotis* is in couplets, as is the majority of *Bevis of Hampton*, as well as the romance relating the youth of Guy of Warwick, followed in Auchinleck by continuations in tail-rhyme reporting his adventures from his marriage to his death and the deeds of his son Reinbrun. (Of course, any of these could have been known to Chaucer in a different version that has not survived.)

More strikingly, *King Horn* uses the locution “Horn child” or “child Horn” repeatedly in reference to its hero, while the surviving portion of *Horn Childe* never names him so apart from its rubric (for a similar observation, dismissed by Loomis, see Trownce 93, n. 1). It is thus entirely possible that “Horn child” was a generalized way of referring to the hero featured in both romances. (*Horn Childe* is not descended from *King Horn*, and both are related to the earlier Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*; beyond that their relationships need not concern us here.) It may even be that the Auchinleck rubricator supplied *Horn Childe*’s title because the phrase was a culturally recognizable way of referring to Horn, who had perhaps already been popularized as a hero by *King Horn* (or the *Romance of Horn*, or other versions) before the fourteenth-century romance was composed. (*King Horn* survives in three manuscripts, a not unappreciable number for a romance of the thirteenth century, and was still being copied around the time the Auchinleck manuscript was produced.)

The case of “Horn child,” then, brings home the difficulty of connecting references to romance heroes with specific texts: even where the form of a hero’s name corresponds with a title attached in manuscript exclusively to a specific version of that hero’s story, we cannot be certain we know to what text the author is referring.

⁵²⁵ For a further example, see Melissa Furrow’s discussion of Robert Manning’s comments on a romance of Sir Tristrem in his *Chronicle*. Furrow cites this as “a rare instance of direct literary commentary on a specific English romance” (*Expectations* 17), but shows that the extant Middle English romance of that name is likely one of the inferior derivatives of the original romance (which was ascribed to Thomas of Erceldoune) about which Manning complains (17-20).

⁵²⁶ As evidenced by the inclusion of the heroes of cyclical romances, like Arthur, Lancelot, and Charlemagne. The “romans . . . o kyng arthour . . . als wawan” mentioned in the prologue to *Cursor Mundi* refer not to any specific texts about Arthur or Gawain, but to a whole literary tradition. These citations occur alongside references to heroes we think of as belonging to independent (non-cyclical) romances: “O Ioneck and of ysambrase, / O ydoine and of amadase.” Quoted in Liu 348 from London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A.iii.

⁵²⁷ Bevis orders the construction of the castle in celebration of the victory of his beloved horse Arondel in a race. He uses the promise of this monument to urge the horse to victory—“i schel do faire and wel / For þo loue reren a castel” Kölbing 3533-34—and uses his winnings to achieve the construction: “Wiþ þat and wiþ mor catel / He made þe castel of Arondel” (Kölbing 3541-42).

⁵²⁸ “Men sais in Lyncoln castelle ligges ȝit a stone, / þat Hanelok kast wele forbi euer ilkone. / & ȝit þe chapelle standes, þer he weddid his wife” (*Peter Langtoft* 1.26). This authenticating evidence comes in the midst of Mannyng’s discussion of his inability to find authoritative written sources for the story of Havelok.

⁵²⁹ The seal is pictured at The Historical Association <http://www.history.org.uk/resources/public_resource_4424_144.html>, accessed 30 May 2014.

⁵³⁰ All citations from Caxton’s Preface are from *Works* 1.cxlili-cxlvii.

⁵³¹ “Fyrst ye may see his sepulture in the monasterye of Glastynburye. . . . Fyrst in the Abbey of Westmestre at Saynt Edwardes shryne remayneth the prynte of his seal in reed waxe closed in beryll . . . Item in the Castle of Dover ye may see Gauwayns skulle and Cradoks mantel; at Wynchester, the Round Table; in other places Launcelottes swerde and many other thynges. . . . And yet of record remayne in wytnesse of hym in Wales, in the toun of Camelot, the grete stones and mervayllous werkys of yron lyeng under the grounde, and ryal vautes, which dyvers now lyvyng hath seen.” Such is the seductive authenticating power of these emplaced artifacts that upon reading Caxton’s reference to Westminster Abbey I took to the Internet to make sure I hadn’t missed seeing a purported Arthurian relic when I visited the shrine of St. Edward.

⁵³² However, Mannyng names Havelok’s wife Goldeburgh (*Peter Langtoft* 1.25), and her name is also found on the Grimsby town seal. Dominique Battles has argued that Goldeborw’s name is substituted in *Havelok* for the name Argentille (as she is known in the French-language versions) because it is a name for Peterborough Abbey, a change in part suggested by the *Havelok*-poet’s use of the story of Hereward in the *Peterborough Chronicle of Hugh Candidus* (35). While Bradbury’s warning that we cannot know how closely the stories heard by Mannyng resembled the Middle English romance is well taken, the precise relationships at work remain indeterminate, and it is by no means impossible that a version of the romance was among these stories.

⁵³³ Text and translation are from Wace; I cite line numbers of the original text and page numbers for the translation.

⁵³⁴ Both were probably written in the 1170s, though Chrétien's writing likely postdates Wace's. On the date of Part III of the *Roman de Rou*, see Wace xxvii; Burgess suggests that Wace did not begin composing Part III until the late 1160s, and perhaps not until after 1170. *Yvain* might have been composed in the late 1170s, but could have been begun as late as the late 1180s; on its dating see Duggan 15-17.

⁵³⁵ David Rollo understands this passage as Wace's repudiation of his earlier contributions to "Brythonic fantasy" in the *Roman de Brut*: "While the Norman author certainly discovered no marvels in the physical space of Broceliande, he had nonetheless already helped create the metaphorically marvelous space of the *silva britonum* itself. . . . Wace is doing no less than dismissing his past career, precisely the insubstantial fable he here divorces from empirical history" (162-63). While we might view Wace's report of his own naïve expectation to find marvels as a mere rhetorical posture, I am inclined to believe his story (which does not discount the possibility of further meaning like that suggested by Rollo), and in any case it must have seemed reasonable to his readers. The story, a non-sequitur in Wace's account of the preparations for William's invasion of England, seems motivated by nothing apart from the reference to Brocéliande, and poses a sharp contrast to the military history that surrounds it. Wace engages directly with issues of accuracy and credibility in his historical writing; Jean Blacker, who accepts Wace's story of his trip to Brocéliande as projecting an air of credibility, describes him as a "highly self-conscious historian" (43) and notes the care he takes in presenting facts and distinguishing material of which he is certain from that about which he has doubts. In a passage in the *Roman de Brut* discussed by Blacker (34-35), Wace notes the "merveilles" and "aventures" told of Arthur, so embellished by their tellers "Que tut unt fait fable sembler" ("that they have made it all appear fiction," text and translation from *Wace's Roman* 9789-90, 9798), anticipating the kind of language later used by Caxton while implicitly contrasting these semi-fictitious stories ("Ne tut mençunge, ne tut veir," l. 9793) with the truth of his own history. Wace, in other words, has a framework for considering the truth of narrative and calls attention to this capacity in his work; his comments on his experience of Brocéliande resonate with broader concerns about historiography and reading practice. But whether or not Wace actually had the experience he reports here, his words express a theory at least of how some readers might view the world in relation to narratives like those of romance.

⁵³⁶ Auchinleck *Sir Orfeo*: "For Winchester was cleped þo / Traceins, wiþ-outen no" (*Sir Orfeo* 49-50).

⁵³⁷ That this manuscript now resides in Northumberland, which as one of the principle settings of the Man of Law's Tale was a major topic of Chapter 2, is sheer coincidence; linguistically connected with Essex, an owner's signature places it in Devon in the sixteenth century, and it did not come into the Northumberland Library until the early eighteenth (Seymour 38-39).

⁵³⁸ References are to Bowers, *Canterbury Tales* 55-196.

⁵³⁹ "The poet had not read closely, did not remember clearly, or (as I shall argue) did not care greatly about the details in The General Prologue and the links that comprised the frame narrative. . . . These blunders are all the more baffling when we consider that Lydgate knew his master's poetry so thoroughly, line by line and phrase by phrase, that he seems under a divine decree to write only in echoes" ("*Tale*," 40).

⁵⁴⁰ The transition from *Prima pars* to *Secunda pars*, sees the teller pause until “we ben / descendid doune this hil [/] And ypassēd / her / the lowē vale” (1044-45) and then begin the next part with the words “Passēd the throp / of Bowtoun on þe ble” (1047). Even this geographic indicator follows directly from those offered by the *Canterbury Tales*, for Boughton under Blean, roughly five miles from Canterbury, is the place where the Canon’s Yeoman met the pilgrims on the way to Canterbury (VIII.556). Indeed, desire to repeat a bit of Chaucerian topography may have outweighed verisimilitude for Lydgate, for as Bowers notes, this break, which comes at the five-mile mark, sees Lydgate only a quarter of the way through a tale he said would take seven miles (“*Tale*,” 41). All references are to *Lydgate’s Siege*; slashes represent medial punctuation, and I indicate line breaks with a slash enclosed in square brackets.

⁵⁴¹ Except for the Cook, who is listed in the General Prologue immediately after the Guildsmen who employ him, these figures also number among the pilgrims that Derek Pearsall describes as “a rogue’s gallery of miscellaneous predators” (also including the Summoner and the Manciple). This group is named last in the Prologue, and Wallace calls them “a subset defined by parastitic individualism” (80; citing Pearsall, *Canterbury* 58). Lydgate’s choice of pilgrims thus suggests that his reading of Chaucer privileges individualism, even when corrupt, over communalism. The choice is particularly striking since Wallace suggests that Chaucer lists himself as a member of this particular subset of pilgrims out of anxiety about the ethical value of a project like the *Canterbury Tales* (81). Lydgate, perhaps feeling authorized as a vernacular author by Chaucer, finds this collection of characters worthy of celebration rather than anxiety.

⁵⁴² While Thomas Becket was generally renowned as a healer, here Lydgate is surely echoing the motivation for Canterbury pilgrimage that Chaucer lays out in the General Prologue: “That hooly blisful martir for to seke, / That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke” (I.17-18).

⁵⁴³ As Bowers mildly puts it, “he stays in Canterbury for a shorter period than we would expect for a devout monk” (“*Tale*,” 40-41). For Bowers this undercuts the “verisimilitude” of Lydgate’s text (40), but I think we can see it as a rejection of the efforts to rewrite the pilgrimage as a journey of the spirit. Instead of progressing toward the Celestial Jerusalem, Lydgate enters Canterbury and immediately leaves it again, finding other pleasures that will suit him better.

⁵⁴⁴ He adds that Lydgate will “leyn a-sidē / thy professioun” (132): to participate in the pilgrimage, he must un-monk himself.

⁵⁴⁵ The stretch of narrative between the end of the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale, which is the final tale told on the way into Canterbury in the Northumberland arrangement, and the start of the *Tale of Beryn* bears no rubric in the manuscript to furnish a title (see Seymour 37; I have not consulted the manuscript myself). I reject the designation of Prologue to the *Tale of Beryn*, for the prologues of the *Canterbury Tales* are designated by rubrics in many Chaucer manuscripts, including this one, and the episode is much more about what happens in Canterbury than about setting up the *Tale of Beryn*. I therefore choose to refer to it as the Interlude, acknowledging that it is a purely modern designation.

⁵⁴⁶ Higl observes that *Beryn* has been incorrectly termed a new end for the CT, and insists on correctly referring to it as in the middle; it is an act of intervention rather than continuation (76).

⁵⁴⁷ As an example, Higl notes that the Northumberland MS separates the two tales told by Chaucer the pilgrim: the “frivolous” *Sir Thopas* is told on the way to Canterbury, while the didactic *Melibee* is withheld for the return journey.

⁵⁴⁸ My discussion of these uncertainties relies on Higl 85-88.

⁵⁴⁹ Indeed, M. C. Seymour suggests that the Interlude may be in “partial imitation” of Lydgate’s text (22).

⁵⁵⁰ Bowers observes that the pages lost from the last quire of the manuscript offered sufficient room for the remainder of the Parson’s Tale as well as the Retraction, but notes the possibility that additional quires could have followed (“*Tale*,” 36).

⁵⁵¹ Put another way, these continuations choose to privilege the dramatic elements of the CT’s frame narrative over the moral conclusion it possesses in its compiled form. As Bowers puts it with regard to the Tale of Beryn, “The arrival of the pilgrim band in Canterbury is not transformed into an ascent to the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is the arrival of thirty-two merry travelers in the medieval equivalent of a tourist town, one which would have been known as a solid secular reality to the poet” (“*Tale*,” 32). As Bowers shows, the poet of the Interlude was a careful reader of Chaucer, and this reinscription of Canterbury as a worldly location seems a deliberate response to Chaucer’s concluding moves.

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