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HISTORY OR FICTION?:
A STUDY OF CAXTON'S NARRATIVES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1985

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This study began as an investigation into the nature of medieval romance, with the hope of arriving at a better understanding of what the medieval writer and audience understood the type of narrative we call romance to be. Like many such studies, it did not end with the same focus with which it began.

The problems involved in trying to define or classify romance are too familiar to need enumeration here. On the surface the task of definition would seem straightforward. We all think we know that a romance is a fictional narrative of chivalric deeds and courtly love. Early discussions of romance assumed such a definition, but its inadequacy has long been obvious. Narratives like the "English" or Charlemagne romances do not quite fit that description, so we are left with the overly-broad and general definition of "a fictional narrative." Yet removing chivalry as a prime ingredient ignores what most would call the central issue. Recent attempts to define romance, which frequently take account of these problems, have not been fully satisfactory, either, often because in their attempts at all-inclusiveness they fail to illuminate the genre or individual medieval examples in a meaningful way. We seem to be left with a negative definition: a romance is a narrative that is not chronicle, exemplum, fabliau, saint's life, or tale. I have finally
needed to assume, in order to proceed with my exploration, that we all know a romance when we read one, even if we cannot satisfactorily describe all romances by one set of criteria—hardly a definitive characterization.

Unable to arrive inductively at a definition of romance, I turned to medieval writers (specifically rhetoricians and grammarians) on narrative. Their remarks on narrative, reported in detail in my second chapter, are highly derivative and general. Yet several strands running through the tradition are suggestive. Writers are continuously concerned with justifying literature, especially fiction, on moral grounds, and literary narrative is repeatedly classified according to its relationship to literal truth. Both of these strands are particularly applicable to romance and, I suggest, may help us better understand the genre because the relationship of many romances to literal truth is so unclear. It has always seemed to me that one of romance's most important appeals is that it is particularly well-suited to fulfill Horace's injunction that literature teach and delight, and that it does so by virtue of its fictionality, that is, its nature as neither literal history nor fable. The best romances—those of Chaucer, Gottfried, The Gawain-poet, Malory—provide profound insights into human problems and moral dilemmas while entrancing us with their creation of a literary universe and characters. Even pedestrian romances frequently offer flashes of humor or fantasy that entertain, and the status of romances as courtesy books gives them a didactic function at least at that most trivial level. The appeal of romance, then and now, is undoubted, and my intuition is that a great
deal of that appeal (both moral and aesthetic) inheres in romance's essential nature as fiction.

However, that intuition leads in turn to new problems. It has long been a truism that the medieval reader and writer had no concept of fiction. My second chapter's report on the tradition of classifying narrative shows that theorists at least were willing to admit to the existence and utility of fiction—not only of fable, but of narratives that could have occurred, but did not—without allegorizing it. It is true, however, that evidence for considering specific works as fiction is scanty. The issue is made even more difficult because, especially for the terms used to refer to narrative in the Middle Ages—gest, history, story, lay—the degree of truth or fictionality is not clear. History, for instance, may have its modern meaning, or it may mean simply "story." Furthermore, the relationship between theory and practice is difficult to pin down, at any period. Yet I find it inconceivable that writers as sophisticated in other literary and moral matters as Chaucer and the Gawain-poet (and their audiences) could have been so naive as medieval folk are sometimes asserted to have been, unable to admit to or recognize fiction except by allegorizing, incapable of seeing that telling fictions is not the same as telling lies. That they might have been uncomfortable doing so is possible; that they were incapable of doing so I find hard to credit.

The medieval ambivalence about fiction becomes less problematic when examined in a broader context. The debate about fiction's nature and use might have received new impetus from a Christian need to find moral utility in every activity, but it began before the
Christians, and it has not stopped in our time. Plato and Aristotle participated, as did Puritans in both England and America, and the question was not settled even by the practitioners of the realistic novel, who so often seem so self-conscious and confident about what they are doing. Henry James' stricures on the "intrusive narrator," which prompted so much of the theory about fiction early in this century, are addressed partly to the question of the relationship of the fictional and real world. Indeed, the question of fiction's nature and truth has preoccupied twentieth century writers of experimental novels and short stories and practitioners of the "new journalism." Despite increasing critical and imaginative attention to fiction over the last thirty years, the issues remain as unsettled as when Plato and Aristotle debated them.

Most discussions of the nature of fiction equate it with the novel, usually the realistic novel, and so they offer only tangentially insights that might prove useful to the student of medieval fiction. Yet some of the issues being discussed provide fruitful background for understanding the fiction of any age. Still much debated is the question of fiction's claim to moral truth. The controversy generated by John Gardner's call for a return to the moral vision of fiction illustrates the passion the issue invokes. In fact, conservative reactions against modern literary theory and non-traditional fiction frequently are based on moral as well as aesthetic assumptions, and much of the reexamination of literature prompted by political movements like socialism and feminism proceeds on moral grounds. Whatever their position, many critics and writers even
today feel a need to defend fiction against the charge of frivolity and are uncomfortable with morally ambiguous fiction. At the same time, they defend fiction's nature as play and reject it when too clearly didactic.

This question of the moral function of fiction may be complicated because the connections and differences between the world of fiction and the world of what is commonly called reality are sometimes blurred. Again, this is clear in the novel, for at every stage of its development (and not least most recently), writers seem to have worked at somewhat cross purposes, simultaneously encouraging us to believe in the reality of the stories they tell and reminding us that we are reading fiction. Some even explore the effect reading fiction has on their own characters (Austen's Catherine Morland, Flaubert's Emma Bovary). Ambiguities in attitudes to fiction, then, are neither new nor yet resolved. But such ambiguities, troubling as they are for the reader or writer trying to organize literary experience, may in fact be productive. That is, these kinds of ambiguities about moral message and the nature of fiction's world are in large measure a source of fiction's appeal as well as a dilemma. Reading fiction is one of the most pleasurable and powerful methods we have for trying to understand ourselves, other human beings, and our world, and much of that pleasure and power come from these very blurred boundaries, from the fact that the world of fiction both is and is not ours. But the very ambiguities of fiction which provide part of that pleasure for the perceptive and curious reader are a danger or source of frustration for the naive one. The recognition of such
confusion even in our widely literate and experienced culture must make us more sympathetic to the pre-eighteenth century uncertainty about the nature and function of fiction. For these reasons, though attempts (like Schlauch's) to search medieval narrative for fore-runners of the novel are not particularly illuminating, discussions of the novel have helped me formulate assumptions from which to study medieval fiction. Some of those inform the preceding discussion on the ambivalent attitudes toward fictionality that seem so common; others have helped me isolate what might distinguish fiction from non-fiction.

In addition to treating thematic (i.e., moral) concerns, discussions of the novel typically focus on technique: on character, plot, form, point of view. Such a focus suggests a useful perception: fiction is made. It is the product of an imagination and as such will provide evidence of the imagination's shaping power. This is why narrative stance, or point of view, has proved since Henry James to be such a fruitful focus for discussion. Even when a narrator is not obviously intrusive, a reader is conscious of him in the pattern of sentences, images, and attitudes imposed on the work. A study of devices which remind us of that imaginative shaping might elucidate the nature of the fictional narrative of any period. That is, it seems to me that fiction's special blend of aesthetic shaping by a narrator and creation of a separate world which informs us about our own might provide ways of understanding fiction and of distinguishing it from non-fiction. To say, as Thomas J. Roberts does, that something is fictional because the author, or publisher, or librarians
perceive it as such is insufficient (though ultimately perhaps as spe-
cific as it is possible to be). What causes readers or publisher to
perceive a work as fiction? What evidence might an author provide,
more subtle than calling his work a novel? What might a reader see
that brings him to perceive a work as fiction? This study raises
such questions, focused on medieval narrative, and makes an initial
attempt to answer them.

Part of my method in making that attempt has been to consider
also the nature of historical writing, an important consideration not
only because history needs to be distinguished from fiction, but also
because romance so often seems to pretend to be history. But, as we
all now recognize, historical narrative is not always clearly dis-
tinct from fictional. This is true not only because forms like
the historical novel or new journalism blur the distinction: his-
torians frequently use the novelist's technique of constructing
dialogue to create interest, and writers of fiction may take pains
to locate their tales and characters in realistic settings. We now
appreciate, too, that no writer is completely objective, and that
even one who tries to be so will unconsciously impose imaginative
control on his narrative. In fact, Beryl Smalley's summary of the
nature and appeals of history in the Middle Ages applies in nearly
every particular to literature in general, including fictional narra-
tive. History, she says, was useful, recreational, and instructional
for its medieval audience; it provided for writers a chance to ex-
ercise skill. Further, her survey of history writing in the Middle
Ages illustrates how difficult it is to generalize, especially given
the variety of forms history encompasses: chronicles, annals, saints' lives, biography, universal history, church history, and others fitting no particular class. This difficulty is reflected in William Brandt's study of medieval English chronicles. Even for such a limited group of histories, Brandt finds two radically different modes of perception and individual chronicles or passages which do not fit his generalizations. It might seem, then, that the only way to distinguish history (short of the author's not always reliable testimony) is by reference to data outside the text in question.

Yet some of the modern writers who have tried to distinguish medieval fictional narrative from medieval history seem to share assumptions similar to mine: that history assumes a certain amount of fidelity to action that did occur, and that fiction depends on the creation of a human mind. The historian, that is, has the responsibility to be true to events of the past, while the fiction writer's loyalty is to the creation of his mind. Medieval theorists suggest this distinction when defining history as the record of what has happened, fiction as the record of what might have, but did not, happen. This history-writer's responsibility to real events, people and settings, of course, helps explain the widespread distrust of fiction's lying, since the fiction-writer's responsibility to be true to life in spirit, though not in detail ("events that could have happened"), may make him look like a historian. And if he looks like a historian, yet is not true to history, he lies. In summary, the fundamental similarity of fiction and history is that each relies on the particular (as opposed to the abstract, general method of
philosophy), but history's particulars have referents in our world, and history takes care that we recognize and understand that. Fiction's world is a created, controlled one (though frequently very like ours). My assumption that those differences will be reflected in the character of a narrative underlies the analysis in the following chapters.

Having outlined in a kind of general way an attitude toward fictional and historical narrative, my task in the rest of this study is to investigate whether those general perceptions may be applied to sustained narratives of the English Middle Ages. My focus is on romance because within the range of what we refer to as romance are fairly straightforward accounts of historical figures (Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bologne) and, at the opposite end of the scale of probability, fantasies like the Breton lais. The frequent assertion (in both the High Middle Ages and today) that romance is history also makes an investigation into its fictionality potentially illuminating.

After surveying the remarks of the rhetorical and grammatical traditions on narrative and fiction, I turn to William Caxton, one of the few sources who discusses particular narratives as well as general issues. For the investigation of the narratives themselves, I have chosen five narratives that Caxton published and commented on. Though all are commonly classified as romances, they represent a range from clear history to clear fiction. Godfrey of Bologne is part of William of Tyre's history of the First Crusade, a work which is regarded by historians as skillful, sophisticated history, though Caxton's
shortened version is frequently classified by literary critics as romance. Caxton clearly sees it as history, and my analysis of the narrative finds evidence of an authorial concern to delineate a true story of the past. With Blanchardin and Eglantine we have a conventional romance. In his introduction to that narrative Caxton suggests different criteria for reading it, emphasizing its appeal to both ladies and gentlemen as pastime. The narrative itself supports the idea that its entertainment value is important and that it is, in fact, different in kind from Godfrey. The Four Sons of Aymon and Charles the Grete, both prose retellings of chansons de geste, are more like the historical Godfrey than the fictional Blanchardin. Malory's Le Morte Darthur proves more difficult to classify. Caxton certainly appreciated its power and appeal, but he seems to have been uncomfortable with the claim of some that it is historical truth. My analysis of the narrative suggests that Caxton's ambivalence is well-founded, for the narrative shares characteristics with history and fiction, seeming to become more fiction-like as it progresses. In general Caxton is responding to an already existent text, for his usual practice as translator and publisher is to change as little as possible. That is, I am analyzing what in a text may have shaped Caxton's judgement of it, rather than how Caxton may have shaped his text to fit his views. My reading of Caxton's criticism and narratives suggests some distinction between history and fiction, at least among these narratives; and our appreciation of the way that distinction operates illuminates the narratives themselves.
NOTES


6 Perceptive discussions of this problem as it is reflected in Chaucer and his followers are found in Alfred David, The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976) and Alice Miskimin, The Renaissance Chaucer (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975). Both find Boethius' banishment of the Muse and welcome of Philosophy in the Consolatio particularly significant.


10 Even detective novelists play with the relationship between the fictional and real worlds, Dorothy Sayers telling us that Peter Wimsey is "wool-gathering" when he makes a mistaken remark about a Caxton edition in Whose Body?, Edmund Crispin's characters referring to their creator and the time remaining before a crime must be solved, as the novel's end approaches in Glimpses of the Moon.

11 Beryl Smalley, Historians in the Middle Ages (New York: Scribner's, 1974), pp. 184-86.


13 In addition to Hanning, Brandt, and Smalley, see C. David Benson, The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae in Medieval England

II

MEDIEVAL NARRATIVE: THE THEORETICAL TRADITION

The ambivalence of contemporary discussion on the nature and function of fictional narrative is shared by medieval theorists, who lack a consistent, clear-cut theory accounting for, defining and describing fiction. Yet fictional narrative was written in the Middle Ages. While exempla and fabula are easily accounted for, of course, with their clearly didactic messages, explaining the large numbers of romances, many of them fantastic, is more problematic. To insist that they were regarded as true is to posit authorship and readership unacceptably gullible; yet to try to define the medieval attitude to fiction, and to separate out a distinction between fiction (res ficta or argumentum) and lies, is difficult. It is for this reason that, before turning to actual works I have surveyed the theoretical tradition from the classical period to Boccaccio.

Elements of a theory of fiction may be seen in three threads running through medieval commentary. The first of these is perhaps where we should expect to find immediate answers, the writers of poetics beginning with the Greeks. Such theoreticians, in exploring the nature of poetry, usually defend it against the charge that it is worthless or immoral because not "real," often by discussing the relationship of truth and fiction and the role of poetry as imitation
of real life and/or as fabulous invention. Discussions of fiction itself depend particularly on the assumption that poetry can be defended (or needs to be defended) on the basis of its utility, an assumption which fostered attacks and defenses for hundreds of years. Indeed, Christian theoreticians of the Middle Ages, with a stronger need to find moral usefulness, found even more reason to distrust fiction than had the Greeks, so it is not surprising that it should prove difficult to find full defenses of fiction. In addition to addressing the question of the moral utility of poetry, writers of poetics frequently discuss genres, exploring the nature of poetry by identifying its kinds and codifying the differences among various genres.

Writers of poetics were not the only classical theoreticians to discuss the nature of poetry. Grammarians, the teachers of writing, were concerned with both the nature of language and the nature of literature. Their contribution to a theory of fiction came as they prescribed how the writer should write, for in providing instructions and exercises for their pupils, they repeated theories of narrative and the genre classifications of the literary theorists. Indeed, the line between literary critic and grammarian is not clear, especially in the transitional period between Horace and the new poetics of the twelfth and thirteenth century.¹

Rhetoricians provide the third source for a theory of fiction. Of special interest is a rhetorical definition of fiction that began with Cicero and the Rhetorica ad Herennium whereby non-oratorical narrative is classified according to its degree of truth
or fictionality. Discussions of narratio based on Cicero's system continue in the rhetorics of the Middle Ages, surviving finally as part of the ars dictaminis tradition. More importantly, what began as a section of oratorical discourse came to assume more and more importance as a form of literary discourse.

In what might be called the culmination of medieval discussion on fiction, all three traditions inform remarks by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, John of Garland, and Boccaccio, Boccaccio following more closely the tradition of poetics and Geoffrey and John more closely the grammatical and rhetorical traditions. What these three writers show is the continuation of the concern with the distinction between narratives that are true, or close to true, and those which are pure fiction, and the survival in a mutated form of earlier traditional ways of viewing narrative.

Common to poetics, grammar, and rhetoric is the classification of literary types. Most such attempts are neither systematic nor informative, frequently consisting simply of lists. Sometimes the writer formulates the "law" of one or more genres (lex operis), generally stipulating that genres be carefully segregated and distinguished. To confuse or blur the distinctions between two genres is to violate the rules of decorum. Such classifications, especially when accompanied by a lex operis or discussion of appropriate style, might contribute to a theory of fiction. Unfortunately, their formulators are concerned with criteria not really relevant to an exploration of the nature of fiction, and they are not dealing only with narrative poetry. Indeed, study of the lists of kinds suggests that poetic form
is more likely a criterion (though obviously not the only one). However, one system which does use consistent criteria is that which relied on "voice," a tradition that begins with Plato and Aristotle and has an active life in the Middle Ages, informing the work of Isidore, Vincent of Beauvais, Diomedes, Bede, Dosithius, and Rabanus Maurus.  

Suetonius' treatment of this system is the most complete. The first class, where the characters present the action themselves, is the dramatic, also called the active, imitative, or mimetic (Suetonius reports both the Greek and the Latin terms). Including tragedy, comedy, fables, and bucolic poetry, its four types are tragedy, comedy, satire, and mime. The second class, where the poet presents the action, is the narrative (also called exegitic), with the three types of aphorism, history (the composition of geneologies and narratives), and didascalice (instructional writing, e.g., philosophy and astronomy). The narrative seems to include direct reporting by the poet, reporting we might sometimes hesitate to call poetic. Finally, the mixed (or common) voice (both characters and poet speak) includes epic, lyric, elegy, and iambus, that is, what we might call non-dramatic poetry.

The continuance of this system of classification in the Middle Ages was not based on experience or analysis, but was the result of fairly close copying of the Roman and early medieval authorities. The medieval writers retain most of what Suetonius had said and add little of their own, keeping his examples and his use of Greek as well as Latin terms, differing in that they do not discuss the various genres
under the three kinds in his detail. Nevertheless, they provide some innovations, Diomedes and Isidore combining the genre listing with the voice classification (though not providing a coherent connection of the two traditions), Bede adding Biblical examples. None of the medieval followers of Suetonius duplicates his entire discussion or integrates the voice and genre list tradition for classifying literature, though Bede's use of Scriptural examples suggests his desire to apply the tradition independently of his sources, as well as to incorporate Christian experience. It is difficult to determine how much of either tradition they understood.

Despite the wide range covered in these traditions for classifying literature, neither treats the nature of fiction. But that question is widely discussed in the classical-medieval tradition of literary criticism by the writers of what are usually called "poetics." All respond to an apparently general distrust of fiction as untruth, some by admitting fiction's inferiority, while claiming for it some appropriate sphere, others by arguing for fiction's superiority.

As with so much else in Western thought, we tend to see the beginning of the debate in Plato, in his banishment of poets from the republic. Sharing his distrust of fiction's "lies" and potential for eliciting undesirable attitudes and behavior were the Stoic philosophers, who accepted the legitimacy of fable (clearly false), but distrusted the fictive (probable, but not true, verisimilar). Wesley Trimpi sees evidence of this desire to sift out truth from falsity in Strabo's concern in his Geography over the truth of Homer's geography or in Plutarch's distinction, at the beginning of his Lives, between
history and fable, Plutarch wishing to "purify" fable to make it seem like history. The Epicureans went even farther, wishing to exclude all imaginary events from serious discourse. Such discomfort with fiction afflicts not only the ancients who distrusted its power, for the coming of Christianity gave writers like Jerome and Alcuin reason to distrust the powers of all poetry.

As might be expected, there flourished alongside the distrust of fiction a tradition of defense of fiction, beginning with Aristotle's praise of literature as a more specific and immediate way of teaching truth than philosophy. The defenders of fiction share with its attackers the assumption that literature's purpose is a moral one, and they typically defend fiction for its moral utility. In a representative statement Plutarch says in his Moralia that poetry's function is to aid the young man preparing for the study of philosophy, fiction being more palatable. The important content of poetry is its philosophical or moral truth, but in order to make that truth more pleasing the fabulous is used, for truth or history is not as interesting when unadorned as when shaped by art. Responding specifically to the Epicureans, Macrobius defends the legitimacy of fiction in serious discourse in similar terms. He relegates fables which merely "gratify the ear" to the nursery (just as Plutarch assigns poetry to young students). But there are other types of fable which encourage the reader to good works. Here Macrobius distinguishes between the purely fabulous but moral, where setting and plot are wholly fictitious (Aesop is his example) and solid truth treated in fictitious style.
(the stories of Hesiod, for example). This latter type may treat of "base, monstrous matters" (the immoral behavior of the gods), but it may also be used to present "a decent and dignified conception of truth . . . through allegory." Such fiction is sometimes an appropriate form of philosophical teaching, but not for discussions of the Supreme God or Mind. Macrobius recognizes both the power of fiction to move and the uses of certain kinds of fiction to teach in some (but not all) philosophical contexts. Macrobius, that is, seems more concerned with the uses of fiction for philosophy than with imaginative literature in its own right.

Though the writers of poetics did not always describe fiction in any detail, there is a long tradition of defining it by distinguishing it from other kinds of narrative. Alexandrians recognized three classes of poetic subject matter: the probable, the absurd or fabulous, and the actual or true, and in his De Inventione Cicero provides a similar classification of narratives, a system which eventually became part of the poetic tradition. Cicero divides the parts of a speech into seven: the exordio, the narratio, the partitio, the confirmatio, the refutatio, the digressio, and the peroratio. The narratio is the exposition of events or probable events ("rerum gestarum aut ut gestarum expositio"). It may be closely related and limited to the legal case at hand; or it may serve as a digression from the strict concerns of the case (to attack, make a comparison, amuse the audience, or amplify); or it may be unconnected with a civil case or public issue.
This third type, Cicero says, is intended solely for amusement but may provide valuable practice. This non-oratorical narrative is divided into two classes, one concerned principally with characters, the other with events. It is with this latter that Cicero provides the traditional classification of narrative and definition of fiction. This non-oratorical narrative concerned with events is divided into three classes, distinguished in terms of their approximation to the truth: fabula is narrative which neither is nor appears to be truth, historia an account of distant true events, argumentum a realistic fiction ("Fabula est in qua nec verae nec veri similes res continetur... Historia est gesta res, ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota... Argumentum est ficta res, cuae tamen fieri potuit"). This system shares with the Alexandrian classification of poetic subject matter the concern for writing's relationship to truth and the recognition of a grey area neither wholly true nor wholly false. The eventual conflation of these two systems, the rhetorical and the poetic, will provide a theory of fiction.

The system set forth in the Rhetorica ad Herennium, widely attributed to Cicero in the Middle Ages, is nearly identical but differs in treating the third, non-civil narratio as valuable primarily for providing practice (the author does not mention the amusement Cicero sees as one of its primary functions). Additionally, non-oratorical narratio is more closely identified with literary types, fabula with tragedy and argumentum with comedy.
Quintilian carries the potential for combining rhetoric and poetic already implied in Cicero a bit further. Since the Institutio Oratoria is concerned primarily with the education of speakers, he begins his instruction in rhetoric with narratio because of its similarity to the literature the student will already have studied under the teacher of grammar. In his discussion Quintilian, even more than the author of the Rhetorica ad Herennium, identifies the non-judiciary types of narratio with literary genres, explicitly linking fabula with tragedies and poems, argumentum with comedies, and historia with historical narratives. For Quintilian only the last should be the concern of the rhetorician; the other two are the appropriate province of the grammarian. As such, fabula and argumentum are assigned specifically to imaginative literature. Quintilian's system, on both the grammatical and the rhetorical classifications of literary types.

The system Quintilian is here referring to is defined in the progymnasmata, grammatical treatises on the teaching of composition. The major Greek progymnasmata were those of Hermogenes (second century AD) and his imitator Aphthonius (fourth-fifth centuries AD). These manuals provided both instruction for teaching writing and some system of literary criticism. Priscian's Praeexercitamina, one of the basic grammars of the Middle Ages, is basically a translation of Hermogenes. In the progymnasmata system the young grammar student begins with the form that is easiest to master, then moves on to progressively more difficult forms; as in many freshman composition texts today, that means beginning with narrative.
The first form Priscian would have his students master is **fabula** (fables like Aesop's), appropriate for young boys because fables lead the pliant young minds to the better roads of life. **Fabula** is fictitious, Priscian says, but should also be plausible and show the "image" of truth, whether treating men or animals. Hence, even though it is fiction, fable's value rests in its underlying truth; just as for Plutarch, poetry's value lies in its moral truth. Priscian's second category for practice is narrative, **narratio**: "narrative is the exposition of things of fact or near-fact," a formulary definition repeated again and again, with little variation, in the grammars and rhetorics of the Middle Ages. Priscian identifies four kinds of **narratio**: fable (**fabularis**, the form already treated), fictive (**fictilis**, as in festive comedies or tragedies), historical (**historica**, reports of **res gestas**, "deeds"), and civil (**civilis**, the kind orators use in cases). These classes are similar to those of the rhetoricians, but the emphasis differs. While rhetoricians assign greater importance to civil narrative, treating literary narrative as a sub-class of non-civil narrative, the grammarians see civil narrative as simply one of four types, all equal.

These rhetorical and grammatical systems for discussing narrative were repeatedly conflated by the transitional (fourth to tenth centuries AD) writers who passed on the Ciceronian tradition. For example, the fourth century commentator on Cicero, Victorinus, expands on Cicero's distinctions among the types of narrative. Analyzing Cicero's definition of narrative as the exposition of events
or probable events, Victorinus clarifies the distinction between expositio gestarum, which he assigns to civil and historical oratory, and expositio gestarum rerum ("probable events"), which he assigns to the lecture room in the forms of comedy, fable, and horoscope. Thus does Victorinus develop Cicero's and Quintilian's suggestions that the type of narrative "remote from civil cases" might find specific application in the classroom--the province we have already seen it assume in the progymnasmata tradition. In fact, Victorinus explicitly assigns fabula, historia, and argumentum to poets and historians, rather than to rhetoricians. Victorinus' commentary joins three elements to the De Inventione remarks on narrative: Quintilian's statements on the role of imaginative narrative in teaching, narratio's identification with specific literary genres, and its assignment to the poet or historian (hence to the grammarian) rather than to the rhetorician.

In his encyclopedic Allegory of the Seven Liberal Arts, Martianus Capella goes even further in juxtaposing rhetorical and grammatical approaches to narrative. Though writing in the Cicero-nian tradition, Martianus adopts the grammarian's habit of treating the three types of non-oratorical narratio simply as classes, rather than as sub-categories, classifying narratio as historia, fabula, argumentum, and judicial, making judicial oratory no more important than the other types. Furthermore, the non-civil types are defined and illustrated before the discussion of judicial narrative.

In contrast, the seventh-century encyclopedist Idisore of Seville maintains the distinction between rhetorical and grammatical
Yet he does not merely repeat the traditional distinction. In the De Rhetorica of his Etymologiarum (Book II) he merely mentions narratio, citing it as the second of the four parts of an oration (exordium, narratio, argumentatio, conclusio), recalling a limited part of what Cicero had said. But in Book I, De Grammatica, Isidore devotes several chapters to fabula and historia. Fabula (from for, 'speak, say') relates fictitious events, such as animals or inanimate things speaking, for delectation and for instruction on the natural or man-made world. Historia is the narration of past exploits providing lessons for the present from the past. When Isidore explains the difference between these two kinds of discourse, he also adds argumentum to his system: "Inter historiam, et argumentum, et fabulam interest. Nam historiae sunt res verae, quae factae sunt. Argumenta sunt quae, etsi facta non sunt, fieri tamen. Fabulae vero sunt quae nec facta sunt, nec fieri possunt, quia contra naturam sunt (Etymologies, I. 41)." Although Isidore does not use the term narratio in his exposition, the distinctions he makes are similar to the ones traditionally made among the three kinds of non-civil narrative. Clearly he is distinguishing rhetorical narrative from fabulous, historical, and fictive narrative, and he has removed the Ciceronian scheme for classifying narrative completely from the concern of the rhetorician and assigned it to the grammarian, retaining the rhetorical terms and definitions. But he has not associated these types of narratio specifically with poetry, as earlier writers had.

With the renewed popularity of Cicero in the High Middle Ages, there was further impetus for the continuation of his tradition on
narratio. Brunetto Latini, for instance, provided French and Italian versions of Ciceronian rhetoric in his *Li Livres dou Tresor*, an encyclopedia, and *La Rettorica*, an Italian version of the rhetoric section of *Li Livres*. Brunetto's remarks on narratio (fait in *Li Livre*) repeat fairly completely what Cicero said in *De Inventione*, Brunetto explicitly assigning the first kind of narratio (stating the facts of a legal case) to rhetoric and the third kind (designed to provide jeu or solas) to grammar. Writing squarely in the rhetorical tradition, Brunetto supplies a vernacular version of the Ciceronian treatment of narratio. However, this traditional treatment was not adopted in the medieval *ars praedicandi* (art of preaching) or *ars dictaminis* (art of letter-writing), which Murphy identifies as the two main rhetorical traditions of the High Middle Ages (11-15th centuries).

Both of these new rhetorical traditions continued the Ciceronian interest in dispositio (arrangement), but only the *artes dictaminis* treat narratio, though with important innovations. Alberic of Monte Cassino and Konrad of Mure may be considered typical. Their discussions share with Cicero's the idea that narratio is the exposition of real or imagined events and the concern that narratio be brief, clear, and plausible. But in contrast to Cicero, Alberic and Konrad are not concerned with the relationship of narrative to a civil case or with the non-civil narratio and its division according to whether it concerns persons or events, or the latter's division according to verisimilitude. Rather, they and the other writers of *ars dictaminis* classify narratio according to whether it treats one event (and hence is simplex) or several (and hence is multiplex). Alberic of Monte
Cassino further adds that narratives may treat the events of the past, present or future.

The Ciceronian rhetorical tradition on narratio evidently had no more to offer the concept of narrative. However, writers in a different tradition developed that concept in a new direction when in the twelfth century a new strand of rhetorical study emerged, as rhetoric combined with grammar and the classical tradition of literary criticism into the tradition of ars poética. Its best known practitioners were Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Matthew of Vendome, and John of Garland. Most relevant to this study are the treatments of poetic genre, narrative and fiction by Geoffrey of Vinsauf (twelfth century) and John of Garland (thirteenth century).

Geoffrey of Vinsauf, in a section of the Documentum de Arte Versificandi, repeats the Greek and Roman poetic division of literature by 'poetic voice,' using the terms dragmaticum (drama), distinctum or erementicum ("decorated," when the author is the speaker), and didascalicum ("didactic," when the author speaks in dialogue with another character, as Boethius questions Philosophy in the Consolatio). Having assigned narration to the second category, Geoffrey uses the Ciceronian division of narrative into fabula, historia, and argumentum. To fabula Geoffrey assigns narratives which contain neither truth nor versimilitude. Historia, he says, reports exploits remote from memory and includes forms (carmina) we would consider neither history nor narrative, such as epithalamion, elegy, bucolic, georgic, lyric, hymn, invective, satire. Argumentum is fictive, but seems true, as in eclogues and comedies. Fuller discussion of most of these generic
terms is provided, so that what Geoffrey does in this version of the Documentum is to combine the classical division of poetry into genres, the division of poetry by voice, and the rhetorical division of non-oratorical narratio into one system.¹⁹

Combining the medieval genres of ars poetica, ars rhythmica, and ars dictaminis, the discussion of narrative and genre in John of Garland's Parisiana Poetria, like Geoffrey's, blends the traditions of three poetic voices and of three kinds of narration, but in a different context. John applies the traditional statements of classical grammar, poetics, and rhetoric to a variety of discourses. His discussion of narrative, part of his treatment of the traditional parts of a letter, is based on the traditional division of the parts of a discourse in Cicero and is as applicable to the writing of speeches or poems as it is to the composition of letters (Book IV, 192-98). Since narratio is common to both prose and poetry John feels compelled to discuss both the three kinds of narratio and the various poetic genres (V. 303-73), drawing on the traditions of rhetoric, grammar, and poetics as he does so. For instance, in a discussion clearly derived from the three-voice tradition of classical criticism, John identifies three forms of discourse ("est triplex genus sermonis"): the dramatic (dragmaticon, dicticon, imitatiuum, interrogatiium), the expository (exagematicor., apageticon, enarratiuum, ermeneticon, interpretatiuum), and the mixed (micticon, chelion, mixtum, commune, didascalicon, doctrinale). John neglects to repeat the definitions of these terms or to offer the traditional examples, but he is careful to include all the homonyms, in both Greek and
Latin, for the three classes. These in themselves provide some definition, especially in the case of the third class, which is didactic as well as mixed. To the second class belongs narratio, and in his discussion John offers Cicero's classification of non-civil narratio. John's special contribution to narrative theory comes with his discussion of truth and verisimilitude. Any genre of poetry which includes any "truth" must be classified as a type of hystoria since both fabula and res ficta include false narratives, so epitaphs, bucolics, georgics, lyrics, hymns, invectives, satires, tragedies, and elegies are grouped as kinds of history. John's editor, Traugott Lawler, suggests John's feeling that both fabula and argumentum are "patent fictions" leads him to classify any poem which has in any way to do with real life or a real event, even if not "historical" in our sense of the term, as historia. Comedy is argumentum, while tragedy is historia, because comedy allows the appearance of supernatural characters. Furthermore, a certain degree of verisimilitude seems to be valued, even for fabula: the best way to compose a fabula, John says, is "to lie with probability," following Horace's advice either to follow tradition or make up a consistent story.

Not realizing how widespread and longstanding was the application of Cicero's remarks on narratio to poetry, Charles Sears Baldwin characterized John's application of the traditional Ciceronian concept of narratio to the composition of poetic narrative as a "perversion." He viewed such common perversion of the Ciceronian tradition as a symptom of the confusion of rhetoric and poetic with their consequent merger into a new poetic concerned almost exclusively with style rather than
Though Lawler does not share Baldwin's now generally discredited judgment, he does believe that one of John's most significant characteristics is the attempt to combine in one series of rules the prescriptions of the *ars poetica*, *ars rhythmica*, and *ars dictaminis*. Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his longer *Documentum* and John of Garland both provide instances of medieval theoreticians who combined the traditions of Horace, Cicero, and the grammarians, not always systematically, to talk about both poetry and other forms of discourse.

There are, then, several threads which inform medieval writers on fictional narrative, but they do not provide a coherent theory of fiction. The Ciceronian tradition of classifying narrative according to its degree of literal truthfulness is joined with the grammarians' descriptions of narrative types. In some writers the poetic tradition of voice classification also informs the grammarians-rhetoricians' system. Yet all those systems of classification, repeated with only slight modification, provide no real insight into the nature of fiction. Their failure comes mostly from the limitation of their method of treatment, for the main concern is to create a system of classifying rather than to describe or understand (as Aristotle did) the qualities of literary works. There is also little attempt to discuss fiction perse, that murky area between the purely fabulous and the wholly factual. The theory is limited also by its only rarely attempting to apply the classifications to specific works. The same examples appear again and again, innovations limited to changes like Bede's addition of Old Testament examples or Isidore's of Moses and Dares to the list.
of historians. So though there is a long and clear tradition of classification and definition of fictional narrative, there is no application by theorists to contemporary work.

Writing at the end of the English Middle Ages, the printer William Caxton, informed by earlier traditions and sharing many of its assumptions, provides a convenient source for investigating the character of fictional narrative, for with some of the narratives he published he provided critical remarks in introductions or conclusions. With the juxtaposition of these remarks and the published narratives (most of which Caxton also translated) we have the meeting of theory and practice. As both publisher and critic Caxton is essentially conservative: he published a large number of traditional medieval works (histories, romances, rhetorics, poetry) rather than modern ones, and as a businessman of the "Burgundian Renaissance" he supported the old chivalric system and distrusted new fashions. The works to be studied here reflect those conservative tendencies: his old-fashioned enthusiasm for crusading and chivalry, his fondness for the medieval chivalric romance and chanson de geste, and his concern with literature's didactic usefulness. Because Caxton remains throughout his prefaces and epilogues essentially a merchant, his remarks generally reflect his need to sell a product or please a present or potential customer and so do not form a consistent, clear, or fully thought-out literary theory. Nevertheless, they do suggest what kind of perceptions a late medieval reader might have had about the narratives.
Critical judgement on Caxton's remarks has been mixed. Saintsbury characterized them as "naïf and interesting, but only infantinely critical." At the other extreme is Sweeting's response to Saintsbury:

The suggestion of childish first steps here is misleading. . . . Caxton's comments on literature and language are so discriminating, his attitude to translation so thoughtful, that they point to a mind alive to the many currents of thought in his age. . . . There is in him a genuine manifestation of the critical spirit, independently developed and consistently sustained.

Most commentators, however, fall somewhere between these two, and their central concern has been to identify whether Caxton's criticism belongs more to the medieval or the Renaissance tradition.  

Caxton is above all a practical critic; that is, his remarks proceed from reaction to a specific work. Still, he repeatedly addresses two major general issues: appropriate style and the moral value of literature. As we have seen, the question of literature's didactic function has a long pre-Renaissance history; indeed, it is a concern of Western literary criticism of all periods, including our own. Caxton's concerns as a translator are not new either; his solution—to translate as literally as possible while still maintaining a work's spirit and effect—is the same one Alfred had reached five hundred years earlier. Nor is his concern with appropriate level of diction new, though it is a concern that was particularly important in Tudor criticism. Caxton, is, then, preeminently a critic of the fifteenth century, continuing medieval traditions that would in turn continue in the Renaissance, but lacking the breadth of treatment the Renaissance critics would provide.
Like most of the earlier theorists, Caxton has as his primary concern the moral nature of literature. He frequently reminds us of Paul's statement that "all is written for our doctrine." Though Paul was speaking specifically of the ways Christians should respond to Old Testament texts, his remark was used generally to defend a wider application of allegory. To what degree allegorical methods should be used in reading medieval literature remains a controversial issue, Robertsonians applying the four-fold level of interpretation universally and others proposing a much more limited (if any) use of allegory. Allegory certainly provided for many medieval exegetes and literary theorists a convenient method for defending apparently immoral texts. In fact, allegorical methods began before the Christians, among the Hebrews and Greeks trying to understand their own ancient literature, and in the Middle Ages the method was applied mainly to those very texts. Only a few theorists mention allegory as a way of defending all fiction against the charge of lying. The fullest such defense is Giovanni Boccaccio's Geneology of the Gentile Gods.

That work is the ultimate source of Caxton's sole discussion of allegory, which appears in a manuscript of Ovid's Metamorphoses, a work which Caxton evidently never published. Like his published criticism, Caxton's remarks in the preface to the Metamorphoses reflect his concern with the moral utility of literature. Uniquely here, though, Caxton seems to be discussing allegorization as a means of defending fiction. Robert Mongomery characterizes the preface as
a traditional defense of poetry based somewhat loosely on the
fourteenth and fifteenth books of the *Geneology*, where Boccaccio
combines in a sophisticated and systematic way a rhetorical-grammat-
cical classification system with the traditional classical-medieval
concern for the proper role of fiction. In his *Geneology*, Boccaccio
defends poets as tellers of tales, using the argument that fiction is
more than what appears on the surface, but is a form of discourse
which illustrates or proves an idea under the guise of invention.
Like Plutarch, Boccaccio argues that, if poetry is to be useful, the
mixture of fact and fiction is necessary, so that the external fiction
will please the unlearned at the same time that the hidden truth
pleases the learned. However, the role of poetry is not quite the
same for Plutarch and Boccaccio, for Boccaccio does not see fiction as
merely a preliminary study, defending poetry in its own right as a
form which may appeal to two audiences, the unlearned as well as the
learned. Indeed, by means of allegory a poet can hide his meaning
from the unlearned, and so avoid "casting pearls before swine."
Though Caxton's preface may descend ultimately from Boccaccio's
remarks, it is apparently not written in the same spirit. Caxton
describes the emotional power of poetry and warns that poets must be
read by the Christian cautiously, being valuable only when they
"Enhaunce vertu, and put down & blame vyces." He suggests allegorical
treatment for apparently immoral passages, yet he deletes extensive
examples of the allegorical method which were in his source. Mont-
gomery believes that Caxton's understanding of fiction is not as
complete or sophisticated as Boccaccio's; it seems more accurate to say that allegorization would not have been compatible with Caxton's habits of reading. Nowhere else does he explicitly recognize the special problems of poetry for the Christian or recommend allegorization.

When he discusses the moral value of literature elsewhere Caxton usually does so in general terms, and in fact when he praises particular works he attends almost exclusively to their style (their "solas") or their literal sense, and it is in that literal level that he finds "sentence." In fact the body of Caxton's writing suggests that he did not really understand Boccaccio's argument or the defense of fiction by appeal to hidden meanings, despite his references to Paul. Sometimes he claims moral utility for a specific audience; Cato is especially appropriate for school children, Feats of Arms for gentlemen and soldiers, The Knight of the Tower for girls and gentlewomen. 30 Though his claims for the didactic quality of his books are usually general, he sometimes promises specific kinds of moral instruction: Boethius teaches patience in adversity; Cato teaches every man to govern himself. Especially important to Caxton are books instructing in courtly behavior. In the epilogue of Order of Chivalry Caxton bemoans the passing of chivalry: "Where is the custome and usage of noble chyvalry that was used in tho dayes? What do ye now but go to the baynes and playe atte dyse?" To correct such frivolity he offers such works as Arthur, Blanchardin and Eglantine, Feats of Arms, and The Order of Chivalry that both men and women can learn courtly behavior. 31
Like the critics before him, Caxton seems to feel that the true is most obviously moral and defensible, and so he frequently claims truth for what he publishes. Defending Malory's *Morte Darthur* against the charge that "alle suche bookes as been maad of 'Arthur' be but fayned and fables," Caxton goes to great lengths to establish Arthur's existence. Uncomfortableness with non-historical stories may also help explain Caxton's occasional concern with the authenticity of what he publishes. The inconsistencies of the various versions of the Troy legend, their disagreements on events and names, disturb him. He apologizes for his first inaccurate edition of Chaucer. He says in his epilogue to the second edition of *Reynard the Fox*, the familiar beast fable, "this is the History of Renard... and if any more shal be written... it ben all lies and falsehoods." As he says, he has checked all the old sources and he knows that "this is the History of Renard so ferre forth as is knownen or mote be gadered out of ould Bokes." He makes similar claims for *Charles the Grete*: its truth is what comes out of "old books." 

The attitude that true works are the most valuable didactically gives history a particular appeal. The most complete discussion of the value of history is in the preface to the *Polycronicon*, where Caxton provides a definition of history:

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historye is a perpetuel conservatryce of
those tynges that have been doone before
this presentyme and also a cotydyan
wytnesse of bienfayttes, of malefaytes, of
grete actes, and tryumphas vyctoryes of
all maner pepel.
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Its didactic function is described in traditional terms: history
confers fame, preserving deeds longer than other monuments, and so provides the incentive as well as the example for moral acts to a wide audience—-not just young men, but kings, knights, and tyrants. Further, history may make men wise, providing the experience of many times and places, wider experience than is ever available to one individual.

Sometimes Caxton is more specific in the lessons he sees in history. For instance, he hopes the story of Troy "may be an ensample to all men durying the world how dredeful and Ieopardous it is to begynne a warre and what harms. Losses. and deth foloweth" and will promote "for the comyn wele . . . peas love and charyte." In contrast, he hopes the story of the first Crusade will inspire another one. 35

Caxton's occasional references to Paul's dictum that "all is written for our doctrine" would seem to suggest awareness that the moral value he claims for history may well characterize all literature. Such an attitude might lead to a defense of fiction. Yet Caxton's defense (if we can dignify his remarks with such a term) is so contradictory and sketchy it hardly constitutes a literary theory, though his remarks do contain many of the elements of the tradition.

Caxton's literary classifications are not systematic, but they suggest a rudimentary recognition of the difference between fact and fiction and the special nature of imaginative literature. He regularly separates history from other forms, purely instructional writing from other types, and courtly from non-courtly literature. 36 A fuller understanding of these distinctions seems evident in what Caxton says on style, one of his favorite topics.
Caxton again and again makes conventional apologies for his "plain, rude" English and for his lack of skill at rhetorical embellishment. He characterizes himself as a moderate in the plain versus aureate controversy, assigning to Skelton the task of polishing his own English should any find it not curious enough. However, his apology is at least in part mere convention, since his own prose style, characterized by frequent doubling and numerous loan words, is not rude or simple. The apologies may also have been engendered by Caxton's perplexity at the difficulties of pleasing all segments of his audience. He admits as much in the preface to the \textit{Enevdos}, telling of the "gentylmen whiche late blamed me sayeng that in my translacyons I had over curyous termes which coude not be understande of comyn peple." Caxton comments also on the problems caused by the variety of English dialects and by the changes in English: Old English, which looks more like Dutch, is as incomprehensible as are other dialects. As Caxton says, "we englysshe men be borne vnder the domynacyon of the mone whiche is neuer stedfast but euer wauerynge wexynge one season and waueth & dyscreaseth another season And that comyn englusshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother." And so, "Bytwene playn rude and curyous I stande abasshed." He defends his style as appropriate for gentlemen, perhaps too ornate for "rude hard uncarrying men," perhaps too simple for clerks.\textsuperscript{37}

Caxton's stylistic concerns may provide the first clues for considering the central concern of this study, the problems of distinguishing fictional and historical prose narrative as a way of better understanding romance, for besides defending decisions he made as
translator and printer, he makes appreciative remarks on others' styles which suggest a recognition of the nature and value of imaginative literature.

The prologue to the _Polychronicon_, based on a lost French source, contains Caxton's fullest discussion of the place of eloquence in literature. The discussion of eloquence begins with praise: eloquence "is soo precious and noble that almoost noothyng can be founden more precious." But the writer's mistrust for eloquence's power leads to praise for history over other forms of literature: some writers

> have taken another waye for t'enflamme more the courage of men by fables of poesye than to prouffyte, and by the lawes and institutes more to punyshe than to teche. Soo that of thysse thunges the utylyte is myxt with harme, for somme sothly techyth to lye. But historye, representynge the thynges lyke unto the wordes, embraceth al utylyte and prouffite (p. 131).

The passage reflects an ambivalent attitude to eloquence: distrust of its enflamatory potential and praise for its inspirational power when joined to truth (here represented as history). However, since the preface is apparently not Caxton's creation, it does not necessarily express his attitude. In fact, like the unpublished prologue to the _Metamorphoses_, it records widespread medieval attitudes to fiction not reflected in Caxton's own writing.

In contrast, Caxton's own discussions of style praise particular authors, generally reflecting a real appreciation of individual works. In the preface to the _Eneydos_, Caxton's concern over the adequacy of his own style arises at least in part from what Caxton identifies as one of the leading characteristics of his French text, its "fayr and
honest termes & wordes in frenshe/ whyche I never sawe to-for lyke, ne none so playuant ne so wel ordred." This book, he adds, seems to him "moche requysute to noble men to see, as wel for the eloquence as the historyes." The style, then, is as important a source for the work's appeal as its content. Such praise is significant, given Caxton's constant concern with the moral utility of the works he publishes. He offers similar praise for style elsewhere, praising the Troy story's "strange and marvelous histories where in I had grete pleasyr & delyte as well for the nouelte of the same as for the fayr langage of frensh which was in prose so well & compendiously sette & wreton." He says that Reynard, the Book of Fame, Aesop, and The Royal Book are "subtle," and he praises Boethius for his prose and metrical works made "craftily and curiously" (though he adds that the style of the Consolation is difficult). Finally, in his appreciations of Chaucer, Caxton is concerned largely with Chaucer as stylist, in his prologue to the Canterbury Tales claiming for Chaucer the title of "laureate poete" for his "ornate wrytyng" by which he "enbelysshyd ornamented and made faire" our rude English. Chaucer's style, he says, is "short quyck and hye . . . exchewyne prolyxte castyng away the chaf of superfluyte and sugred eloquence." Introducing the Book of Fame, Caxton says "he excellyth . . . alle other wryters in oure Englysh for he wryteth no voyde wordes." Such remarks do not reflect the distrust of literature's power seen in the Polycronicin prologue. Rather, they are part of the long tradition that praised the power of literature, seeing its emotional and aesthetic appeal as a way of enhancing its moral content.
Taken as a whole, Caxton's treatment of style suggests that in common with writers of the rhetorical-poetic tradition, he saw it as subtle craft, consisting of the embellishment of meaning by means of rhetorical devices, and that such craft could be used for good or ill, either to "enflame men" inappropriately or to make moral lessons more palatable. And except in the case of Boethius, Caxton attributes eloquence, subtlety, or craft to works which we today would identify as imaginative, fictive works, ones which we would separate from philosophy and history.

The recognition of the validity of imaginative literature suggested in his remarks on style is reflected in other contexts as well. Caxton admits the value of narrative that is not history, suggesting that a work's literal truth does not really matter as long as the work is didactic. For example, after arguing (he says to his satisfaction) that Arthur did indeed exist, he admits that the question of Arthur's true existence does not really matter, after all, because the story of Arthur is written for our virtue. Fiction, as well as history, might serve a moral purpose. In fact, Caxton admits explicitly in the prologues to the Polycronicon and The Four Sons of Aymon that the "feyned fables of Poetes" move and teach men. In Charles the Great Caxton even goes so far as to suggest that we learn better by appeals to our imagination, as in parables and exempla, than by appeal to authority. He makes a similar point in the Doctrinal prologue, saying examples stir and move simple people more than great authority of science (Bede is his authority here). In the prologue of Blanchardin Caxton says literature should entertain as well as
teach; of Eneydos he says it is admired for its eloquence as well as its moral. In the prologue to the Mirror of the World Caxton says some men learn from "bookes spekyng of faytes of armes of love or other meravelous historyes." Such remarks suggest appreciation for the emotional and ethical appeal of imaginative, fictive literature. In fact, Caxton's appreciation seems to me to be sincere and unapologetic to an unusual degree. He is not here defending the long tradition of classical literature which formed the basis of education, as Augustine was. He is attempting to find a place for the works of his near-contemporaries, and his enthusiasm for the style and contents of his authors' works reflects a heart-felt attempt to find a higher niche for imaginative literature than that granted it by Plutarch, Conrad von Hirsau, or the grammarians when they allowed for the limitations of the lesser minds of those, like boys and women, unequipped to face the rigors of philosophy.

The fullest discussion of the value of such literature appears in the remarks published with Caxton's translation of Reynard the Fox. As with his remarks prefatory to the Polycronicon, the comments here are generally not original to Caxton. Caxton's fullest, most coherent remarks on fiction and history are ones he translated from a source, not ones he wrote himself. His translations and original remarks suggest that he was aware of the problems of defending fiction, and that he was trying hard to resolve them. The prologue focuses on Reynard's subtlety, describing it in rather complicated terms, attributing to the work two types, one aesthetic, the other thematic. Aesthetic subtlety is seen in the difficulty a reader may have in
discovering the work's moral: "who that wyll have the very vnderstand-
yng of this mater he muste ofte and many tymes rede in thys boke and
ernestly and diligently marke wel that he redeth ffor it is sette
subtylly" (Crotch, p. 60). Like the familiar fruit-chaff and pearls
before swine metaphors, such subtlety could be connected with allegorical
reading, which is not normally part of Caxton's method. Secondly,
at the thematic level, the work exposes subtlety: it depicts "the
forsayd subttle deceytes that dayly ben vsed in the world . . . to
thenmente . . . that every man should eschewe and kepe him from the
subtyl false shrewis that they be not decyveyed," daily deceits identi-
fied with governments, the church, merchants, and "other comone
peple." In his dual treatment of subtlety, the writer refers to both
lies and literary skills; in a rather complex way, subtlety is used
to expose subtlety. The lies are the subject matter of fiction, not
its method. That dual meaning may reflect the ambivalent attitude to
fiction, the recognition on the one hand of its emotive and imagina-
tive power and didactic potential, and the distrust on the other of
that very power. But since the prologue is only Caxton's in part, we
cannot attribute that distrust to him.

In the epilogue to *Reynard* the fictionality and morality of the
work are again defended, but in slightly different terms. Here this
obviously fictional work is justified in terms of its moral utility
by being connected with other moral fictions, for:

\[
\text{ther ben many fygures playes founded that never were don ne happed But for an example to the people that they may ther by the better vse and folowe vertue and teschewe synne and vyces in lyke wyse may it be by}
\]
this booke that who wyl rede this mater
though it be of iapes and bourdes yet he may
fynde therin many a good wysedom and lernynges
By whiche he may come to vertue & worship (Crotch, p. 62).

The prologue has already hinted at this work's nature as fabula by emphasizing the subtly expressed moral, echoing Caxton's remarks in his preface to his edition of Aesop. Traditionally fable is characterized first by its obvious fictionality, secondly by its moral utility. Fabula is unlike argumentum (res ficta) because it is quite clearly not literally true. In this connection, the use of the terms iapes and bourdes is especially interesting, for both terms could mean jokes or lies. This ambiguity is like that which bedevils the very concept of fiction for medieval critics. Is the writer here defending narratives which lie, or simply narratives that are obviously fantastic, comic tales? Since fabula had a long and respectful history of moral teaching, and since the beast fables are so obviously comic, the latter seems more probable. Further, in what Blake sees as an echo (original to Caxton) of the "Nun's Priest's Tale," Caxton assigns blame for "any thyng . . . that may greue or dysplease ony man" to the fox, "for they be his wordes, & not myne." This kind of ironic attitude to the character would seem to lend further support to the interpretation that some readers at least see these types of tales as comic jokes, albeit didactically useful ones, and that fiction is not necessarily equated with lying. Though not as sophisticated as Chancer's work, the preface suggests many of the issues raised by the Nun's Priest's suggestion that we find our own
moral in his tale. And the use of the terms japes and bourdes makes one wonder how seriously any of the discussion of Reynard should be taken.

First and last, then, what ultimately matters in justifying and judging literature is its didactic value. History and philosophy are clearly valuable because they truthfully teach moral lessons; poetry is certainly powerful, and if it is also moral then it is defensible. But Caxton remains unsure about the eloquent makers of "feyned fables," and that suspicion leads him, even as he admits the use of fiction, to defend his own works as true in some sense or other. In a variety of works (Mirror of the World, Blanchardin and Eglantine, Eneydos, Four Sons of Aymon, Charles the Grete) Caxton defends and discusses imaginative literature for its own sake, but he does not manage to be persuaded for long. To the end, literature must be didactic, moral, and true. Though willing to defend the place of eloquence and fiction Caxton seems hesitant to admit the fictiveness of what he writes. His critical dicta, finally, reflect the range of typical critical concerns, and they suggest an awareness, but not necessarily full understanding, of the power of fiction and the ways in which it is distinct from history. A closer examination of five of his prefaces and the works they introduce suggests how adequate Caxton's remarks are when measured against the specific works he is discussing. Godfrey of Bologne is clearly history, by both Caxton's standards and ours. Blanchardin and Eglantine is clearly romance, and Caxton comes as close in its preface as he does
anywhere to defending fiction. The *Four Sons of Aymon* and Charles the Grete, though what we would call fiction, seem in Caxton's terms more like history. Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* is problematic, for Caxton as for many medieval and modern readers. Together the works suggest the range that so troubled medieval theorists, the range from historical narrative (what happened in the past not reported as chronicle) to realistic fiction (what did not happen, but could have). For all five works, I will test Caxton's remarks against the literary qualities of the narratives themselves.
For the question of whether or not, and how much, medieval theorists blurred these distinctions, see Alex Preminger and O. B. Hardinson, Jr. and Kevin Kerrane, eds., Classical and Medieval Criticism: Translations and Interpretations (New York: Ungar, 1974), pp. 263-98. They disagree with Charles Sears Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Original Sources (1928; rpt. Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1959), who holds the traditional view that the disciplines of rhetoric, grammar, and poetics were hopelessly confused in the Middle Ages. See also James J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1974), pp. 135-63.

Typical is the list given by Tacitus, Dialogus de Oratoribus, ed. Alfred Gudeman (1914; rpt. Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967), Dial. 10: lyric, elegy, iamb, epigram, tragedy, and epic. An early medieval example is the larger list of Conrad von Hirsau, Dialogus super Auctores, Collection Latomus, 17, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Berchem-Bruxelles: Latomus Revue d'etudes latines, 1955): bucolic, comedy, tragedy, satire, lyric, apology, panegyric, epithalamium, epitaph, chronicle (a description of times, not a historical account), and elegy.

Most of my discussion of the three voices is based on Salmon. The tradition remains alive even today because Stephen Dedalus in his aesthetic theory in Section V of James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man (New York: Viking, 1964), pp. 214-15, divides literature into the lyrical, the epical, and the dramatic, seeing a progression from one voice to the next.


The classic statements are in Jerome's Letter XXII. 30 (To Eustochium), when he reports being rebuked in a dream when he claims to be a Christian: "'Ciceronianus es, not Christianus; cui, thesaurus tuus, ibi et cor tuum.'" See also Alcuin's comment in a letter to the monks at Lindisfarne: "Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?", modelled on Tertullian's "Quid Athenae Hierosolymis?" (De Praescriptione Hereticorum, VII).


Victorinus, Explanationum in Rhetoricam M. Tullii Ciceronis, in Halm, pp. 201-03.

The section on rhetoric is reprinted in Halm, pp. 451-92.
15 The section on rhetoric, "De Rhetorica," (Book II of the Etymologia) is reprinted in Halm, 505-22; the "De Grammatica" and "De Rhetorica" are in PL, 82, 74-154.


19 The Documentum de Mode et Arte Dictandi et Versificandi is essentially a prose version of the better known Poetria Nova. The section I am discussing is reprinted in Traugott Lawler, ed. and trans., The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 327-32.

20 Lawler, pp. 254-5. This may explain Geoffrey's listing of non-historical genres as types of historia.

21 Baldwin, p. 193.

22 In the few attempts to apply the system to literature, there is some disagreement on the place of tragedy, Rhetorica ad Herennium and Quintilian classifying it as fabula, Priscian as argumentum. Everyone agrees that comedy is argumentum, perhaps reflecting the idea that realism depends on the use of "low" characters.


26 References to "Paul's doctryne" occur in remarks accompanying the History of Troy (Blake, Prose, p. 101), The Game of Chess (p. 87), King Arthur (p. 109), and Charles the Grete (p. 66).


29 This manuscript is discussed in detail by Montgomery, pp. 99 ff. My quotations are from his article.

30 Caxton does not usually define his audience beyond the patron; such discussions occur in the remarks on Blanchardin and Eglantine: for knights and ladies (Blake, Prose, pp. 57-58); Good Manners: for the common people (p. 60); Cato (p. 64); Enyedos: for gentlemen (p. 79); Feats of Arms (p. 82); Game of Chess: appropriate for every estate (p. 88); Knight of the Tower (p. 112); Old Age and Nobility: for noble gentlemen and merchants, especially old ones (p. 121); Friendship: for every estate (p. 124); Order of Chivalry: for noble gentlemen (p. 126).
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32 Blake, Prose, pp. 107-08. Caxton makes this defense despite his judgment in Order of Chivalry that the world of Arthur is "a world or as thyng incredible to believe" (p. 126). J.E. Housman, "Higden, Trevisa, Caxton, and the Beginnings of Arthurian Criticism," RES, 23 (1947), 209-17 thinks Caxton's preference for history explains his "only half-hearted" preface to Arthur.

33 See, in Blake's Prose, Caxton's remarks on Troy (pp. 100-01), Canterbury Tales (p. 62), Charles (p. 67). On Reynard, see Crotch, p. 63.

34 Blake, Prose, p. 130; some of this is from Caxton's lost source.

35 See the prefaces to Troy (Blake, Prose, p. 101) and Godfroy (pp. 137-41).

36 Caxton's several divisions of types of literature are neither consistent nor clear. In the prologue to the Canterbury Tales he divides writers into clerks, poets, and historiographers (Blake, Prose, p. 61); in Four Sons of Aymon, writing is divided into philosophy, poetry, and history and chronicle (p. 83); in King Arthur, into contemplative works, stories of conquerors and princes, and books of example and doctrine (p. 106); in Charles, into narrative and "symple auctoryte" (p. 66); in Blanchard, into "auncyent hystoryes of noble fayttes and valiaunt actes of armes and warre" and "bookes of contem­plation" (pp. 57-58); and, finally, in Mirror, books of edification are divided between books of science and "bookes ... of faytes of armes, of love, or of other mervaillous histories" (p. 114).

37 See Eneydos (Blake, Prose, pp. 80-81), Troy (p. 100), Chess (p. 88), Blanchardine (p. 58), Reynard (p. 134), Polycronic (pp. 132-33), Tower (p. 112), Charles (p. 68), Four Sons (p. 84), Golden Legend (p. 90), and Mirror (p. 119). The apology topos is one of the most frequently commented on by Caxton scholars.
38 For Caxton's borrowings for the Polycronicon preface, see Blake, World, pp. 151-71, passim.

39 See Reynard (Crotch, p. 60), Fame (Blake, Prose, p. 103), Aesop (p. 55), Royal Book (p. 136), Boethius (p. 59).

40 Blake, Prose, pp. 42-43.


William of Tyre's twelfth century Latin history of the First
Crusade was regarded in the Middle Ages, and is still regarded, as a
great historical work. Hence, Caxton's translation of the first part,
Godeffroy of Bologne, or the Siege and Conqueste of Jerusalem, seems an
appropriate place to begin a consideration of Caxton as historian. ¹
Furthermore, it is one of Caxton's few narratives about which we can
unequivocally say our perceptions, the work itself, and Caxton's re­
marks agree on the matter of genre. In fact, Colvin identifies
William's corpus as "the first history, in the modern sense of the
word, and the best, that the Middle Ages have to show us" (p. xxvi).
She points out that while other contemporary accounts are limited in
scope, partisan, disorganized, and uncritical in use of sources,
William's history is broad, balanced, clearly arranged, and careful
in use of sources. A.C. Krey adds further that William, especially in
the later sections of his work, provides unusual analysis of cause
and effect and human responsibility for events. Despite William's
limitations (occasional credulity, prejudice, and lapses in chronol­
ogy) his work remains a standard source.² My discussion of Caxton's
translation will focus on the extent to which Caxton saw the work as
history and the extent to which the work presents itself as history.
The preface and epilogue of Godefroy fit very clearly into the
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traditional view of history's nature, purpose and effect, suggesting that Caxton shared the perception of many that Godfrey is history.³

The preface is concerned largely with the didactic effect of Godfrey's story, but with the moral purpose limited and specified to an unusual degree. Whereas the idea that history provides moral examples is conventional, this history, occasioned by a particular political situation, has a more immediate purpose than usual. Furthermore, while the primary purpose identified in the preface and epilogue is didactic, the preface also provides a specific example of history's power to grant fame.

The preface treats these two conventional historical purposes by focusing on three subjects: the general value of history, the place of Godfrey as one of the Nine Worthies, and the exhortation to recovery of the Holy Lands. Caxton's treatment of these subjects is circular in organization, beginning with an account of the reasons history is recorded, moving quickly to specific examples. The need for recovery of the Holy Land provides specific evidence of history giving later ages an example of action to follow; the account of the Nine Worthies provides examples of people granted fame by history. The discussion of history's value closes, as it began, with an exhortation for recovery and defense of the Holy Lands, this time made more specific and closing with Caxton's conventional prayer to patron and to God.

Caxton's opening statement claims for history the dual purpose of providing us with examples, as do all other forms of literature, and conferring immortality or fame on those who lived in the past:
the hye courageous faytes/And valyaunt actes of noble, Illustrous and vertuous personnes, ben digné to be recounted/ put in memorye/ and wretone, to thende that ther may be gyuen to them name Immortal, by souerayn laude and preyseynge, And also for to moeue and tenflamwe the herites of the Redars and hierers, for teschewen and flee werkes vycious, dishonnest and vytyperable/ And for tempryse and accomplishe enterpryses honnestes, and werkes of gloryous meryte, to lyue in remembraunce perpetuell/for as it is so, that thystorya-graphes haue wretone many a noble hystorye, as wel in metre as in prose, By whiche thactes & noble fayettes of thauncyent conquerours ben had in remembraunce, and remayne in grete, large/and aourned volumes/and so shal abyde in perpetuell memorye, to thentente that gloryous Prynces and hye men of noble and vertuouse courage, shold take ensample tmpryse werkys leeful and honnest (p. 1).

The passage itself is rather circular--history is important because it confers fame and moves readers to virtue so they will gain fame because historians confer fame so people will follow history's example. This familiar message echoes the prefaces to Troy and the Polychronicon, as well as the rhetorical tradition.

In his lengthy discussion of the Nine Worthies Caxton applies his definition of history as the acts of noble persons intended to confer fame and supply examples. Here, the needs of the Christians in the Holy Land move Caxton to remember Hebrew leaders who served the people of God in similar distress, especially Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabaeus, all leaders of the "Children of Israhel, the chosen people of God" (pp. 1-2). These three, then, are clearly connected with Caxton's specific purpose of rescuing the Holy Lands. From them Caxton moves to other great but not religious leaders, suggesting that valor and prowess provide alternative means for gaining fame: "and by cause
valyaunce and prowesse is remembryd emong the gentyles & paynemes, as emong thebrewes, I fynde wreton of the incredible, cheualrous prowesse of the noble and valyaunt Hector," Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar. Caxton's naming the sources here suggests that part of the nature of history is the question of sources. For the Hebrew worthies, of course, the source is the Old Testament, and their leadership of God's chosen people is more important than their fame or the works which bestowed it. For the three pagan heroes, however, valorous deeds and the authors who celebrated those deeds are the focus of attention. For Hector, Caxton mentions Ovid, Homer, Vergil, Dares and Dictys as sources; for Julius Caesar he mentions Lucan and Statius. The pagan heroes, then, have been granted fame because their deeds were recorded by poets, mostly writers of epic. In the preface to the Polycronicon Caxton reflects a similar concern for the writers of "history" who "gretely have proliferated oure mortal lyf" when he reports the work's textual history, from Randolph and Chester to Trevisa to Caxton.

For the Christian Worthies, the focus is as much on the followers as on the worthies themselves. The "best and worthyest" Christian men are Arthur, "of whos actes and historyes there be large volumes, and bookes grete plente and many" recounting the "gloryous and shynyng" story of Arthur; Charlemagne, with his peers and their "noble faytes and actes . . . and conquestes"; and Godfrey of Bologne (pp. 2-3). In detailing the fame of Arthur, Caxton mentions also Lancelot, Tristan, and other knights; with Charlemagne he mentions Oliver, Roland, and other peers. For Arthur and Charlemagne Caxton has no
well-known writers to refer to, as there were for the Roman figures, but he does mention the "large volumes [in] latyn, ffrenssh, and Englysshe, and other langage" detailing the adventures of their followers as well as of the Worthies themselves. In contrast, the story of Godfrey of Bologne is not known in English, but exists only in Latin and French, though he is "taken, reputed and remnommed for to be egal entong thyse worthy & best that euer were" and "was stalled in the thyrde stalle of the moost worthy of Cristen men." Having found in a French book Godfrey's "noble hystorye . . . al alonge of his noble actes, valyaunces, prowesses and accomplysshement of his hye empryses," Caxton has been moved to translate his story. Here, too, with the mention of his "french book" Caxton reflects an interest in historical sources.

The decision to translate is, of course, linked to Caxton's most pressing concern in the preface: the present state of the Holy Lands. When early in the preface Caxton discusses the general purpose of history, he says that it should inspire men to undertake works for the sake of maintaining the Church, of recovering the Holy Land, and of defending Christian lands and men from thralldom and attack. Godfrey was a hero like those of Scripture, and his example should remind us of the duty we now have, when pagan encroachments into the Holy Lands are even greater than they were in Godfrey's time. In his history, Caxton says, he finds "very causes moche semblable and lyke unto suche as we haue nowe dayly tofore vs. And yet moche more nowe than were in his dayes." In spite of the unfortunate conditions in the Holy Lands, which Caxton describes in detail, "fewe Cristen prynces" have resisted.
Evidence of current disinterest brings Caxton yet again to consider the example of the First Crusade, and in ten lines to summarize it, from Peter the Hermit's campaign to Godfrey's election as king of Jerusalem. In doing so, of course, Caxton is also summarizing the bulk of the work he is now presenting.

Thus, the desire to help stir up feelings and actions similar to those which encouraged the First Crusade has led Caxton to publish the history of Godfrey of Bologne and the Crusade in which he participated:

for thexhortacion of alle Cristen prynces/ Lorde/ Barons/ Knyghtes/ Gentilmen/ Marchanttes/ and all the comyn peple of this noble Royamme, walys & yrlond, I haue emprysed to translate this book of the conquest of Iherusalem . . . to thentente ten-courage them by the redyng and heeryng of the mereuyllous historyes. [He beseeches God] that this sayd book may encourage, moeue, and enflamme the hertes of somme noble men, that by the same the mescreauntes maye be resisted and putte to rebuke, Cristen fayth encreaced and enhaunced, and the holy lande, with the blessyd cyte of Iherusalem, recouered and maye come agayn in to cristen mens hondes (pp. 4-5).

Caxton's purpose is here more than generally didactic, as it usually is in the histories he discusses; his purpose is more specifically hortatory. Caxton's second purpose in the preface, to establish Godfrey's "stall" in the ranks of major historical figures, provides specific and wide-ranging examples of the fame history provides. In defending his hero's didactic and historical significance Caxton explains the appropriateness of his translation defines the narrative's function and nature as history.
In the translation of the narrative itself the didactic concern is only one of several. Since Godfrey is not an original work by Caxton, but is a fairly literal translation of part of William of Tyre's history, the narrative is not completely shaped as Caxton might have chosen, and a great deal of cohesion between the preface and the work cannot be expected. However, even though Caxton's specific purpose is reflected in the text in only limited ways, his more general remarks on history's nature and purpose are clearly supported by the content, structure, style, and tone of the work. Its historical nature is clear throughout.

Given the title of Caxton's work and his care in the preface to establish the case of Godfrey's significance as one of the nine Worthies, it may seem surprising how little of the text focuses on Godfrey. Even the sub-title, "The Siege & Conquest of Jerusalem," does not suggest the wide scope treated in the work. Though Caxton ends his translation of William of Tyre's history (which treats the whole of the First Crusade and consequent European settlement in the Holy Lands—Historia rerum in partibus transmarinus Gestarum) with Godfrey's death, he does not begin it with Godfrey's birth. Rather, he begins where William does, with a history of the Holy Lands, starting with the time of Mohammed. From there he moves to the suffering of Christians under Moslem persecution, the coming of Peter the Hermit and Pope Urban's declaration of the Crusade, the Christians' journeys to and assembly in Constantinople, and the invasion of the Holy Lands and final conquest of Jerusalem. The work closes with a summary of Godfrey's one year rule and death. Godfrey plays no role
in the background section and only a minor one in the second, the journeys to Constantinople. Though he plays an important role in the action in the Holy Lands, he is by no means the focus of attention for extended periods.

This brief summary suggests already one of the ways this work functions as history: the focus is not on the exploits of an individual hero, but on a series of events covering a long period of time and a wide range of locations and involving a large cast of characters. The canvas is broad, from western and northern Europe to the Holy Lands, and the focus shifts repeatedly between Europe and the East. The characters are many and various, including important religious, political, and military figures, both Christian and non-Christian, as well as large numbers of named and nameless common people. Furthermore, we see these characters not only as individuals, but also as members of groups. Indeed, we also see groups functioning as units, and we see how individual characters act as members of groups. The time span is similarly broad, the narrative beginning as it does with the rise of the Saracen religion, time extending farther back when the narrator relates events from Christ's life or the history of cities like Constantinople, forward to the author's present in repeated comments on the immorality of Christian Europe. These kinds of remarks parallel those Caxton makes in the preface and epilogue and probably serve the same purpose of enhancing the example of and goad to moral behavior history provides.

This broad perspective is especially evident in the first section's historical background on the Christian-Moslem conflict.
The history begins at the time of Mohammed. From the identification of Mohammed the author moves to the conquest of Syria by the Arabs, the status of Jerusalem and its temple as it changed hands between the Christians and the Arabs, the treatment of the Christians in Arab lands, the continuing conquests of the Arabs over the Greeks and Christians, the conquests of the Turks, and the increasing sufferings of the Christians at their hands.

The introductory matter reflects a desire to place the First Crusade in a historical context. The work does not begin with the birth of the hero, or with his coming of age, or even with the marriage or birth of his parents, as it might in romance, where the exploits of one hero are the main concern. We are concerned here not with a hero but with a people in history, and so the narrative begins long before the hero is born, when the historical events in which he will play a part begin to take shape. With the struggle between Moslem and Christian over occupation of the Holy Lands, particularly Jerusalem, the logical place to start is with the founding of the Moslem religion, and so the narrative begins with Mohammed.

In the second section, devoted to describing the Christians' journeys to Constantinople, the breadth of coverage continues. The preaching of Pope Urban and his bishops affects all:

\[\text{it was fyxed and roted in the hertes of them that herde hym, and not only of them that were present, but of alle other that it was recorded and told vnto . . . . Ye shold haue seen the husbonde departe fro his wyf, And the faders fro the children, and the children fro the fadres. And it semed that every man wolde departe fro that he louyd best in this world. . . . Ther was so grete} \]
affraye, and so grete a meuyng thurgh alle the londe, that vnneth ye shold haue founde an hows/ but that som had enterprised this viage... (p. 44).

The call to crusade reaches all classes, ages, and professions. As might be expected, the nobility receives the most attention, William devoting an entire chapter to listing the names of the leaders of the groups. But in reporting the adventures of the travellers, he gives attention to the deeds of all types of people, Christian and not.

The Christians travel through Hungary in several separate groups, and William reports their various adventures with care. Walter the Penniless' group suffers under the Hungarians, as two groups are attacked and killed, and the Duke of Bellgrave refuses to sell Walter provisions. However, the Hungarians are not blamed for their behavior; Walter himself admits that the fault lies with his own people. The second group to enter Hungary, led by Peter the Hermit, wreaks much destruction in revenging the Hungarians' treatment of the first group. In fact, the contingent led by Peter is so large he cannot maintain control, and though they have begun to fight to revenge their peers under Walter, they continue looting and fighting despite orders to the contrary. With this group especially we see the power and will of "the peple and the folyssh folke [who] spake largely and rudely ayenst the knyghtes" (p. 57). "Thyse mene peple" in Peter's groups exert more influence than their cooler, wiser leaders. Similarly, the bellicosity of the third group, directed by a priest, leads to their slaughter. The fourth group of Crusaders to leave Europe do so without a leader, and "ther were emong them hye
men and good knyghtes, But the comune peple obeyed them not." This group is so roundly defeated by the Hungarians that those who follow are forced, at last, to take strong measures among their own people to assure peaceful passage through Hungary. When the attention turns to the relationship between the Crusaders and the Greek emperor the focus is again on a broad range of characters and behavior.

As the troops assemble in Constantinople, each is requested to swear fealty to the crafty emperor Alexis in exchange for costly gifts. Reactions to the emperor's request vary, just as behavior in Hungary did. Initially, the ten barons refuse his request, and the Christians are forced to forage for supplies and to fight the Greeks. Gradually the Christians agree to swear fealty. However, Buymont, Tancred, and the Earl of Toulouse remain unconvinced longer than their allies and eventually make peace with the Emperor only because of the barons' insistence. Even after the various groups have assembled in Constantinople and begin the invasion and conquest of the Holy Lands, they continue to operate independently, one group sometimes leaving the whole to lay siege to a city, sack the countryside, or seek provisions or riches. Especially significant in this regard is the siege of Antioch, the central event of the third section. Here, as in the journeys through Hungary and the time in Constantinople, William depicts various types of actions and groups, and we see noble and base behavior, barons quarreling among themselves and with their followers, triumph, defeat and suffering. Even William agrees (p. 144) that the action is too various to be reportable in detail.
What is significant about the journeys, battles, encampments, foraging and trading of all three sections is that they occur to large, varied, and separate groups rather than to distinguishable individuals. Not until the fourth section, when Jerusalem has been recovered by the Christians, does Godfrey emerge as a hero above the others. At last (in the 195th of the 212 chapters), we finally get what we might find at the beginning of a romance—some details of Godfrey's early life. Even so, this focus on Godfrey, the work's putative hero, is soon modified: "Many other prowesses made the valyaunt duc godeffroye / but it behoueth not to put them alle in this historye, ffor my purpose now is for the recountre of the holy londe by yonde the see, and not of them on this syde, but of them of whom ye may vnderstande that he was in his countre noble and a valyaunt knyght" (ch. 198, p. 290). Though Godfrey is an active participant at several points in the action, so are the Earl of Toulouse, Godfrey's brother Baldwin, Tancred, Bohemond, and a few other barons. Godfrey dominates some part of the action, but he is in no sense at its center. Caxton's prefatory remarks on Godfrey's nobility and heroic stature notwithstanding, the work is not about him. Instead, as the first ruler of the newly-Christian Jerusalem he provides a kind of terminal focus for Caxton's translation, which is broad-ranging in character as well as in time and place.

These qualities are those of history rather than of conventional fictional romance. The qualities of this particular work especially suit it to fulfill the function of history to provide
many kinds of moral examples of behavior to be avoided and imitated. Additionally, the work's broad coverage provides ample opportunity for didactic comment on both past and present, a kind of editorializing especially prevalent in the first section, the background on the Christian-Moslem enmity, which provides William an opportunity for some quite explicit sermonizing.

One of his favorite subjects is the general condition of the Christian world. Speaking of the Christians in Jerusalem under the rules of the Egyptian Caliph Hakim and the Turk Selduc, William suggests that their suffering is a direct punishment for the immorality prevalent among all Christians at the time. In fact, the whole of chapter nine is devoted to cataloguing the sins of the Christians in Europe:

[At] thys time were founden but fewe / that had the drede of our lord in theyr herte / Alle right wysnesse / alle trouthe / alle pyte were fayllid / The fayth of Ihesu cryste was as it had be quenchid . . . . it seemed / that thende of the world was nyghe / by the signes that our lord sayth in the gospel (p. 31).

Sickness, death, and suffering afflicted all the world, lords oppressing their subjects, criminals flourishing everywhere, churches suffering destruction; corruption characterized all classes: "everyche dyde Payne for to serve the deuyll." Given Caxton's concerns about fifteenth-century Jerusalem, remarks like these function in an even larger context, for they connect the historical times and peoples being treated with the modern readers Caxton addresses: they, too, have allowed infidels to desecrate the Holy Lands; they, too, have witnessed the persecution of Christian; they, too, live in a decadent Christian Europe.
Elsewhere William uses history's didactic potential to comment on a specific action's moral quality. On those departing for the Crusade he says, "it seemed that every man wolde departe fro that he lounyed best in this world, for to wynne the Ioye of that other" (p. 44). Of the complete defeat of the Crusaders who travel through Europe gratuitously killing Jews William says: "the peple was so ful of synne / that they had not deseruyde the loue of our lord / ne thonoure of the world / And therfor theyre synnes acowarded them in suche wyse that they myght not doo ne accomplyshe this grete werke / whiche they had nyghe achyeued" (p. 64). These Crusaders' experience serves to teach a lesson not only to readers of the history, but to its participants as well: the Crusaders who follow travel more peaceably, having learned from the experience of their predecessors.

Occasionally William's moralizing takes on a proverbial quality, as he generalizes lessons from specific events. Thus, for example, the misdeeds of the Crusaders passing through Hungary are evidence "how the deuyl doth grete peyne for to empresshe and lette good werkes" (p. 51). Of the repeated tendency of the masses to reject good advice, he says, "it happeth oftyme that the werse counseyl over­cometh the better / And it is no meruaylle, ffor there ben more fooles than wysemen" (p. 57). The rise and fall of Christian fortunes is part of the "chaunges and mutacions of the world" (p. 189). In trying to explain why such a noble man as Godfrey should be so angry simply because one of his allies has expropriated his pavillion, William says, "I can see none other reason, But that a noble herte may not suffre
shame" (p. 166). Finally, of the pilgrims' eagerness to proceed to Jerusalem, William says, "to a corageous desire ther is not haste ynowgh" (p. 246).

Again and again William draws specific moral lessons from the actions of groups or individuals, illustrating Caxton's observation that history provides examples of behaviors to be both imitated and avoided. The breadth of the work provides admirable opportunity for this kind of moralizing, for with so many characters stretched over such a large expanse of time and space we can see Christian and non-Christian, common man and noble, lay and religious characters acting both nobly and basely.

Particularly significant in this respect is the moral complexity of some characters and situations. Medieval narrative is so frequently naive about good and evil (for instance seeing Christians as necessarily superior to pagans, Europeans to foreigners) that the occasional moral complexity of Godefroy is refreshing. Such complexity is especially evident during the Christians' journeys through Hungary, in the behavior of both Hungarians and Western Europeans. In the skirmishing and battles that characterize the journeys of every group, blame is equally distributed. Sometimes these fights are the result of the greed or bellicosity of the Crusaders; sometimes the Hungarians are the attackers, either seeking revenge for attacks by earlier groups of Christians or simply looking for a fight. There seems to be no consistency in the natives' characterization—rather than being depicted merely as non-Christians, they are seen as a nation of individuals, some good, some bad, some both.
The action which succeeds the journeys through Hungary has a similar moral complexity. The various responses of the Christian barons to Emperor Alexis' demands suggest that the morality of their behavior is not clear-cut. Indeed, they do face a difficult real-life dilemma: though none of them is happy about becoming Alexis' vassal, they have no real choice. If the Crusade is to continue, they must give in to his demands. We see here that even well-intentioned Christians can behave differently under similar circumstances, that the morality of their behavior is difficult to judge.

Finally, a similar range of Christian behavior is reported as the Christians move through the Holy Land. Not all proceed directly to Jerusalem; the wealth of cities on the way provides too great a temptation. Indeed, it is finally the common people who band together in insisting that the Christians march on to Jerusalem. But the common people are just as complex as the barons and Hungarians. Sometimes the demands they impose are just, restoring the Crusaders to their true purpose (as when, from Antioch, they insist that the group move on to Jerusalem). At other times, however, their actions are vicious, rebellious, or at best foolish (witness, again, the Hungarian problems). No one is spared criticism.

We have, then, a variety of indications of the moral complexity of the world William perceives, complexities which affect the work in several ways. They provide further evidence for the degeneration of Christian Europe, to which the author attributes the infidels' occupation of the Holy Lands. They provide repeated examples of the varieties of virtue and the consequences of behavior. And they
enhance the sense that the author is recording what is found in history, making no real attempt to explain it or make it consistent. What is recorded serves a didactic purpose, but is not created for such, because the events are not the author's creation; they are real. But the narrator, as historian, uses them for a moral purpose, to provide examples.

These complexities also reinforce one of medieval historiography's usual topics, the working of God through history: actions, even when apparently immoral, tend to good because God is in control. William says as much when describing the Christians' departure for the Holy Lands and frequently reiterates the idea. Caxton, too, subscribes to the notion, as he prays for another Crusade and then discusses God's purpose as achieved by the Old Testament Worthies.

In William's work, God's role in history is suggested first by the moralistic basis for characterization. Mohammed is evil because he is an enemy of God and representative of the devil; the morality of fighting against his followers is therefore early established. Several other opponents of the Christians and immoral Christians are also identified with the devil. The Christians as a whole suffer so terribly at the hands of their enemies because they themselves have lost sight of their faith and virtue, as the Old Testament Hebrews suffered misfortune because of their loss of faith. This lost faith explains also the European Christians' slowness in coming to the relief of their brothers in the Middle East. Finally the Christians' recognition of their duty and the re-establishment of the Holy Lands in Christian hands is the result of the working of God, of his decision to provide relief to his people after their suffering.
The suffering of the Christians at the hands of the Arabs and Turks lasts nearly five hundred years until at last "the good lord, that after the tempeste and derke weder can wel brynge clerenes and fayr season, behelde this peple in pyte/and sente to them comforte and delyuerance of the tormentes in wiche they had longe ben" (p. 36). This relief begins with the journey of Peter the Hermit to Jerusalem, where he learns of the Christians' suffering and is inspired to travel to Europe and seek help, and culminates in the election of Godfrey of Bouillon king of a Christian Jerusalem. Though William does not attribute to God direct responsibility for all the action, generally focusing on the human characters, he does periodically remind readers that God affects the actions of man. When Urban exhorts the Christians to Crusade, God sends him his grace, making his sermons effective (p. 43). When the Crusaders nearly die on their way to Antioch for lack of water, God causes them to go into a valley with a running stream (p. 112). When they fight, God sends them strength (p. 205). In fact, when Christians do poorly in the battle, or suffer famine, God seems to have withdrawn (pp. 237, 149). God is the ultimate cause of events like these, but William does not often identify him as the direct cause.

However, despite the generally mundane character of the action, God does sometimes intervene more directly, through miracles. Christ appears in a dream to Peter early in the work; St. Andrew and others appear in visions while the Crusaders are in Antioch (pp. 39, 200). The Christians, led by that vision of St. Andrew, find Longius' spear. At the last moment, as the warriors are growing weary
of the assault on Jerusalem, a "cleer and shynyng" knight appears on Mt. Olivet brandishing a shield and encouraging them to renew the assault (p. 269).

In William's treatment of character and cause and effect, the didactic workings of Godefroy are complex and multiple, ranging from explicit moralizing on the lessons of God's action in history to a rather sophisticated appreciation of the complexity of virtue. But the history-like workings of Godefroy are deeper than the reported action and the author's attitude toward it. In the way these things are presented, too, the narrative is history-like. The most notable characteristics of the manner of presentation ensure that the action of the narrative and its significance will always be clear to the reader. Given history's claim to provide information about the actual past and moral examples for the present, a clear style of writing and adequate explanations of unfamiliar materials would be appropriate, and those are the qualities which characterize Godefroy's style. Furthermore, the author's first loyalty is to his matter, as the historian's must be.

The syntax typical of Godefroy, characterized by an unembellished, matter of fact sentence structure enhanced by a reliance on coordinate structure, contributes to the work's effect of verisimilitude. In addition, the narrator regularly provides details which, unnecessary in themselves to the development of the narrative, seem to reinforce his claim for the historicity of the material. Thus, although the narrator regularly intrudes, his style assures that one views him as the reporter of the narrative and not as its shaper.
The most notable of these characteristics is the care taken in providing background information. When troops arrive at a city for the first time, we are usually given a description of the city, its geographical characteristics and location, and frequently its history. In particular, Constantinople, Nicaea, Antioch, Jerusalem and Mt. Olivet are described as they become sites of action. These descriptions are especially important in the accounts of the Christians' journeys to the Holy Land in the second section, giving us a real sense of their experience. The description of Constantinople provides examples of the kind of material frequently included:

For to vnderstonde how the barons were enclosed by the desolyaulde of themperour / it is to wete how the cyte of constantinoble stondeth / the see whiche is in venyse cometh nygh vnto / xxx myle of constantinoble / ffor thens departeth an arme like a fresshe water, And estendeth it toward the eest, in lengthe / ij / C/xxx / myle / it is not lyke euen / ffor in somme place it is but a myle broode, And in another it is wel xxx / of brede or more / after the places that it renneth in. And it renneth bytwene thys two Auncyent cytees, Sexton and Abydon, of whiche that one is in asye / And that other in europe / ffor the arme is deuyded fro thyse two londes; Constantinoble is in europe: That other parte is nycene, whiche is in asye / This bras or arme, thus as it is moost brode toward the see / lyke a roode where the porte is / it is sayde that it is mooste paysible / And easyer than the see is. nyghe therto stondeth constantinoble, whiche is lyke a tryangle. The first syde is bytwene the porte and this arme / Ther standeth a chirche of seynt george / of whiche that see is named the braas of seynt george / And this endurith vnto the new palays of blackquerne, after the porte / That other pan of the walle dureth fro this chirche of seynt george vnto the porte aire / The thyrde pan fro that yate vnto the palays of Blacquerne / The towne is moche wel closed toward the
champayne of walles, of dyches, of towres, and of barbicans / Atteporte descendeth a fressh water rennyng / whiche is lytil in the somer/ but in wynter it becometh moche grete for the rayne / This water hath a brygge, on whiche oure men passed ower / whiche is enclosid by­twene the grete see and the braas / behynde the yate / where they lodged for tabyde that comyng of other barons (pp. 73-74).

This description, supplied as the Europeans assemble in preparation for invading the Holy Lands, illustrates several elements typical of the descriptions with which William repeatedly interrupts his narrative. He begins with the reason for the interruption: the barons' predicament as they try to deal with the Greek Emperor Alexis becomes clearer when one understands the geography of his city. Thus the description's instructive purpose is articulated from the beginning, making the description a legitimate, indeed essential, element of the history. In the first section of the description itself William places Constantinople in a geographical context, describing the Bosporus Strait, which runs between it and Nicaea, and the city's relationship to Europe and Asia. Having established Constantinople's place in relationship to Europe (and hence to his audience), William describes the city itself, using one of his rare figures of speech (the city is like a triangle) to help the audience visualize its plan. Here he provides some details on the nature of the city--its church of St. George, its walls, towers, and moats--but details remain sketchy. Finally, William ends where he began, with the Christians, surrounded by water, limited in mobility, waiting for their comrades and not completely protected from the emperor's ill-will or that of his people.
In most of his descriptions of places William gives similar types of information, focusing on surroundings, general plan, and detail. Sometimes he describes surrounding mountains and plains; sometimes he provides more detail on the character of the place or on its structures. Frequently he relates the place's history, as when he connects spots in Jerusalem with Biblical events. 12

In a similar fashion, William provides background information on characters as they enter the story. Some of this forms part of the first section's general background. But all through the work, as new characters enter—Peter the Hermit, Pope Urban, Emperor Alexis, Godfrey—they are introduced with care. Indeed, when Godfrey is elected king, the story is interrupted for background on his family and his early history. Furthermore, when a character who has been absent for some time reappears, we are reminded of who he is and where we have met him before. For example, when William describes the Christian assault on Nicaea he follows his discussion of its geography and history with background information on Solymon, reminding us that he has "spoken to fore" of him, reporting how he has prepared for the Christians' coming. 13

William takes the same care to explain past or foreign customs. Whenever he reports events that might have struck his audience as strange he is careful to describe the customs that clarify the events, customs connected with the Europeans on pilgrimage or at war as well as with the foreign culture of Islam. Thus, as part of the background in the first section, William explains the custom of both Christians and Moslems who regard a particular temple in Jerusalem
as holy (p. 25). In explaining the quarrel between Henry IV of Germany and Pope Gregory VII, William cites the German custom of assigning a dead bishop's jewels and crozier to the emperor for distribution to his clerks (p. 40). When Godfrey uses doves to send a message, William explains that custom. The needs of his readers are always kept in mind, reflecting William's consciousness of what it means to write a morally and politically instructive narrative about real people who lived in a time or place foreign to readers.

Such frequent authorial intrusions ensure that in Godefroy one rarely loses sight of the narrator, for he regularly comments on the action, the morality or immorality of his characters, the condition of Christian Europe (at the time of the Crusade and in his own time), and other matters. Authorial intrusiveness is frequently seen as especially characteristic of fiction. But these authorial intrusions do not undermine the historicity of the work. Quite the contrary: they act as the descriptions and explanations above do, to remind us of the reality of the action being treated and of its nature as history. That is, they serve as a means of reinforcing the historian's loyalty to the events he reports. Thus our appreciation of the extreme suffering and dedication of the Christians at Antioch is greatly enhanced when William interrupts the narrative for a chapter to describe the effect of their famine. His description covers all: the high men who are reduced to begging for food; other nobles, men and women, who are too ashamed to beg and so hide in their lodgings; the formerly strong knights who are too weak to walk; the nursing mothers who throw their children onto the streets for
others to nourish. William says the suffering is too great to describe, but "selde or neuer shal ye fynde in hystoyre / that so grete prynces, and one so grete an hooste suffred suche anguyssh of hungre" (p. 193).15

Because William clarifes the action and moral lessons of his history by in terru tin g the narrative for descriptions and moral comments, these are not ordinary embellishments. Neither are the particular kinds of parenthetical transitions with which William further clarifies his history. Again and again he says things like "as I shall say" or "as you shall hear," preparing us for what is to come, or "as I have said" or "as ye have heard," reminding us of what we have read in the past. Given the length and complexity of the narrative, these kinds of cohesive devices are especially welcome and useful, for they help the reader impose a kind of order on a narrative whose foreign setting, essentially episodic structure, and broad range--of time, place, and character--make it difficult to grasp. Given the didactic nature of history, the confusion of the reader must be avoided, and William's careful transitions and repeated reminders of whom and what he is dealing with help reduce confusion.

Also making the narrative clearer is the lack of poetic devices used primarily for ornament. What embellishment there is, as in descriptions or general moralizing comment, enhances the historicity of the work. There is no embellishment of the narrative for its own sake, little use of the rhetorical devices, especially those connected
with *amplificatio*, that are so important to Geoffrey de Vinsauf and other rhetoricians. The story is told in a straightforward manner, from beginning to end, one event following another in regular procession. There is no sense of a mind in control of the work or of what happens or a sense of events created (rather than re-created).

Those elements of style shape the didactic tone of the work, making it clear and matter-of-fact. In addition to giving the narrative those qualities, they also make the action seem real—that is, immediate, believable, part of the reader's world. As I said in my opening remarks, *Godefroy* impresses even twentieth century readers with its historicity, its believability. To a large degree, those qualities result from the story's realism. Not only do William's unembellished style and careful use of transitions and clarifying tags make the work clear; they also make the action seem real, minimizing any barriers or distance between audience and action. That is, because we confront character and action directly, we believe in their reality. Though this realism results partly from the work's direct, unadorned style, even more important than style is the effect of *Godefroy's* content. Action occurs in a world which readers can identify as theirs, to characters demonstratively like them, a world, by and large, of ordinary landscapes, human opponents, mundane motives and dilemmas, pragmatic solutions.
I mentioned above the care taken when new characters or locations are introduced into the work, with places provided historical, geographical, descriptive and cultural contexts, so that they are anchored in the real world, a world shared by readers. Though the lands through which the Crusaders travel may have seemed exotic to Europeans at home, they are clearly perceived as part of the everyday world of ordinary existence. In a similar fashion, the customs of the Crusaders and the lands they travel through are described in realistic detail. This attitude clearly contrasts to the world of romance and its landscape, where adventures—wondrous castles and fountains, ladies in distress, knights or landlords who offer challenges, forests filled with strange beasts—pop up as out of nowhere. That world is not one we share. In that world, anything may happen at any time. In the world of Godefroy events have clear causes and effects. Thus, for example, the problems in Hungary result from the behavior of some Christians, and Solyman’s attack on the Christians is a response to their siege of Nicaea. Sometimes cause is assigned to character: Alexis behaves the way he does because he is duplicitous, for example. When particular cause and effect relationships are not so obvious, a more general kind of causality is attributed to morality: the suffering of the Christians results from their immorality, their salvation from God’s mercy. And as I said above, such a perception of cause and effect connected to God changes the character of
any marvels this world contains, for they become specifically Christian ones, miraculous interventions by God, and so part of the real world of ordinary life.

Just as the landscape is that of the real world, so are the characters who inhabit it. I have already commented on the fact that the narrative focuses on groups as well as individuals. As I suggested above, the obvious importance of this fact is that most fictional forms of narrative treat the exploits of a hero; history is concerned with the fate of a nation. Additionally, though, this kind of broad focus enhances the work's realism. The frequent movement from group to group—first as the troops are raised in and leave Europe, then as they travel to and assemble in Constantinople, finally as they travel through and sack the Holy Land—provides a wide panoramic view of the world, a view that suggests something of the real world's variety and complexity and of its intricacy of social arrangements and action. The various deeds and attitudes of these numerous characters (ranging from pope to hermit, emperor to baron, knight to foot soldier, including even women and children, covering a variety of nationalities) illustrate the richness of human action admirably. They illustrate also how complicated moral decisions, motivation, and cause and effect can be. While a few characters are consistently moral or immoral, consistently motivated by good or evil, many betray more mixed characters, being demonstrably human. Even the hero Godfrey has his moments of weakness, as in his anger when his pavilion is seized and
given to Bohemond (p. 166). Such variety is reflected in the way individuals are characterized; it is also reflected in the dissent and debate among the Christians that William repeatedly reports. Usually it is the decision-makers, the barons, who engage in such debate, deciding for example how to reply to Alexis' demands, whether to besiege a particular city, when to resume their journey. In enhancing the work's realism, such debates provide additional evidence of the complex morality discussed above.

This variety and breadth of coverage, action and motivation contribute to the striking attention paid to the common folk who are frequently mentioned as part of the mass of Christians. More importantly than their mere presence is the fact that several times they even determine or shape the action, sometimes for good, sometimes for disaster. The common people are part of the action from the beginning, largely by implication in all the remarks William makes about the "Christian people," both in the Holy Lands and in Europe. But occasionally it becomes especially clear that he is speaking not just of the upper class. In describing the corruption of Europe which seems to foreshadow the end of the world, for instance, William says, "yf ony man had saued ony thynge in theyr kepyng / theyr owne lordes toke them, and put them in prison" (p. 32). This kind of condition could apply to several classes, though William goes on the speak of the rich. When Peter the Hermit spreads the news of Christian suffering in the Holy Land he approaches the barons first, but then takes the same message "to the mene peple/, for he assembled them oftymes" (p. 42). Not only do all the barons of France respond; so do the
"other lasse that were enclyned to synnes and acustomed to doo ylle" (p. 44). Having named the nobles who join the pilgrimage and summarized their preparations, William reports that, "The mene peple charged them self not moche with tentes ne Armures, ffor they myght not bere it" (p. 46). The lower classes continue throughout the work being frequently specified as participants in the action and as a force always to be considered. In fact, one of the reasons Godfrey's election as king is so acceptable to the barons is that "he was the man that had the hertes of alle the comyn peple" (p. 282). Thus the whole work proceeds, with the lower classes playing their part in the action, sometimes by implication, frequently in explicit ways.

Occasionally the "mean" or "common" people do more than simply participate in the action as part of the masses. Several times they act on their own, as a group separate from the barons and knights, shaping the action sometimes directly, at other times indirectly through their influence on the leaders' decisions. In fact, sometimes the nobles are forced to acquiesce to the commons' desires. Their foolish behavior leads to the battle with Solyman at Nicaea and the loss of thousands: "Thyse mene peple, and without reson, meuyd them so moche and cryed that the barons and other men that were with hem ran to armes, an horsbak and on foote" (p. 57). In all these cases, the common people are foolish and simple-minded in their eagerness for battle. Later, after they have suffered famine, pestilence, and many battle wounds, they again force the barons to recognize their wishes. This time, however, the common people (frequently now called pilgrims) express a noble impatience at the delay in journeying to Jerusalem.
They threaten revolt, criticize their leaders and call for the journey to continue. They even go so far as to distrust the miraculous spear of Longius found in Antioch. Their muttering contributes to disagreements among the barons, until even the Earl of Toulouse is forced to capitulate and resume the journey (p. 242). Thus the common people share in the action, as part of the huge mass and as a force in their own right, affecting the Crusade both for good and for evil.

In a consideration of the genre of Godefroy this attention to the lower classes is particularly significant. While romance is by its nature an aristocratic form, only history as the record of actual events involving large masses focuses on all of society in the same work. Even though romances in the fourteenth and fifteenth century found middle class audiences and began to use middle class settings and values, they continued to reflect their aristocratic origins by imitating courtly language, love, and characters. The presence of the commons here acting and speaking as a distinct group, occasionally even directing the decisions of the aristocratic leaders, is something quite different—a recording of historical events, and a reflection of historical reality consonant with history, not fictive literature. Furthermore, these common people do not belong to the tradition of the usual "realistic middle-class" fiction, the fabliau, for they do not act as individuals. Nor, clearly, do they owe anything to the sexual comedy of the fabliau. They are no more nor less than actors in history.

The treatment of women in Godefroy reflects the same kind of point of view. Women are not present as important characters or as an
 implicit part of the audience, but as members of the community of Crusaders and of foes. They are repeatedly mentioned (frequently with children, old people, and other non-fighters) as part of the huge group of Crusaders in ways that enhance the tale's realism and immediacy.\textsuperscript{21} We are told of wives and mothers left behind in Europe, of mothers unable to nurse their wailing infants because they are starving, of prostitutes ordered to leave the camps in an attempt to pacify God (p. 150). Few women are mentioned by name, and only one attracts more than a momentary glance.\textsuperscript{22} That one is Ida, Godfrey's mother, of whom we learn that she was a noble, gentle, holy woman who prophesied great things for her son (p. 285-6). The women, then, are simply women.

Not only are the locations and people real; the actions are too. People fight human opponents, not giants, dragons, and fairies. Especially in Hungary those opponents (and some of the Christians) have the most understandable and ordinary of motives: the desires for revenge, for wealth, for the fun of a good fight. This kind of real world milieu is particularly noticeable in the sieges. The descriptions of the effects of inactivity, hunger, and pestilence on the Christians are matter-of-fact, detailed and affecting. It is William's reporting of the details which does most to make the sieges "real." As William himself admits in his account of the siege of Antioch, "for to recounte alle that were in so grete a siege shold be over greuous and a moche long thyng." Still, he manages to tell enough to give a good sense of the extent of the Christians' suffering while they besiege Antioch and then when they are in turn besieged. Their
sufferings are most severe at this point, but similar to what they have undergone at Nicaea and will undergo at Jerusalem and, indeed, all through their journey. As I mentioned above, William is careful to show that the famine affects rich and poor, men, women and children, even animals. He also mentions several other effects associated with the rain, pestilence, and famine which make the suffering more real: the rotting of tents and clothing, the astronomical inflation of food prices, the loss of confidence, the desertion by Christians noble and common.

William is equally careful in reporting journeys, worship, debates—every element of his narrative. Such consistent care, echoed as it is by the work's broad cast of characters and range of settings, development of human motivation and cause and effect relationships, and minimalization of the miraculous, lends to the impression that these are indeed real people, places, and events.

Indeed, many qualities of the narrative contribute to this sense of reality: the very nature of the action and character; the descriptions of journeys, battles, and sieges; the treatment of the miraculous; the moral ambiguity and didactic comments; and the matter-of-fact, unembellished style. Such qualities make the reader feel that William of Tyre's work as translated by William Caxton is history, a true story told for the purpose of inspiring readers to noble behavior and conferring fame on its actors. The effects that the work itself achieves are precisely those Caxton attributes to it in his preface and epilogue. Caxton's praise for Godfrey has been amply justified, and Godfrey's life and death supply a clear example
of the rewards for service to God (in this case, not only the fame this book confers, but also the loyalty of the common people, the wondering admiration of the Arabs, and a place in heaven— all reported in Caxton's last chapter). Nor does Godfrey provide the only example; as Caxton promises, the narrative is filled with examples worthy of either praise or blame. More than that, the treatment of the Crusaders' suffering and sacrifices is affecting enough to inspire desire for crusading. Caxton found the narrative a moving, instructive account of Christian responsibility and individual virtue, and it provides ample evidence of both. Additionally, it provides full treatment, broad and detailed, of a series of actions from the past. In all particulars it functions as Caxton promises and as history should.
NOTES


5 Margaret Schlauch, Antecedents of the English Novel 1400-1600 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), points out that the 1453 Fall of Constantinople and the consequent expansion of Turkish power created a revived interest in Europe in the Crusades, accounting perhaps for Caxton's translation of Charles the Great and Godefroy.


7 This idea of God's role in history is, of course, one common medieval way of explaining history. See, for example, Robert W. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1966).
8 See pp. 51, 149, 167.

9 The particular connection of God or the devil with events in history is also referred to on pp. 51, 167 (the devil); 36, 43, 110, 112, 114, 161, 164, 198, 200, 208, 214, 237, 238, 268, 272, 280, 284.

10 Colvin (p. 316, n. 28) and Krey both point out that William tends to reduce the miracles of his sources, reporting only the most widely believed.

11 Other examples of God's direct intervention in the action through the performance of miracles: pp. 39, 201, 269.

12 See also descriptions on pp. 79, 85, 93, 124, 233, 134-39, 184, and 248 ff. Kathryn Hume, "Formal Nature," classifies romance according to the degree to which hero or landscape is dominant, calling those with more dominant setting "history." She places Godefroy at the midpoint, where setting and hero are roughly equally important. Though I do not use her system, her remarks have proved useful here.

13 Other examples of similar provision of background information: pp. 28, 40, 94-95, 62.

14 Customs are explained in similar fashion pp. 25-6, 40, 143, 162, 180, 219.


17 Krey sees careful treatment of cause and effect relationships as one of the hallmarks of William's work. The effect being caused by character (which is really no explanation at all) is one of the characteristics typical of the chronicle world view, according to William J. Brandt, The Shape of Medieval History: Studies in Modes of Perception (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966).
18 A striking example of this kind of debate among the barons is their difficulty in agreeing about Antioch both before and after the siege (pp. 138-74). Similar is the quarrel between Buymont and the Earl of Toulouse over the city of Albare (pp. 228 ff.).


21 When the masses of crusaders are referred to, women are frequently included: 51, 52, 53, 56, 58, 80, 111, 113, 114, 119, 138, 140, 161, 176, 182, 192, 193, 201, 204, 207, 212, 215, 217, 234, 245, 248, 255, 265, 267, 273, 275, 278, 268, 269.

22 The woman mentioned by name (and usually mention is all the attention they are given) or as individuals are: Marie, the daughter of Maurice, Emperor of Rome, wife of Cosdrove, king of Perisa (p. 20); Solyman's wife (pp. 104 ff.); Baldwin's wife Cutiera (p. 115); Gutiera's wife (p. 198); Balac's wife (p. 223); the wife of a Turk (p. 225); Sansadal's brother's wife (p. 226); Maude, the niece of Godfrey and wife of King Stephen of England (p. 285); and the wife of the Earl of Toulouse (p. 298).
Turning to *Blanchardin* and *Eglantine*, one finds a work substantially different from *Godefroy of Bologne* in plot, character, setting, and effect. Furthermore, Caxton's introduction suggests that he recognized those differences, for he places the narrative in a context clearly distinct from *historia*s. The work's moral function is not as serious as that in *Godefroy*, and the value Caxton finds in it not as purely didactic. In addition, Caxton's remarks on the narrative locate it squarely in the tradition we would associate unambiguously with romance, even though Caxton refers to the work as "history." The qualities Caxton associates with *Blanchardin* and *Eglantine*, as well as the qualities the work exhibits, are distinct from those associated with *Godefroy*, for it is an imaginative narrative designed largely to entertain.

However, the line between fiction and history is not sharply drawn, Caxton placing *Blanchardin* with "Auncyent hystoryes of noble fayttes & valiaunt actes of armes & warre, whiche haue ben achyeued in olde tyme of many noble prynces, lorde, & knyghtes" (p. i). Though these remarks seem to assume that the story occurred in the past, the limitation of subject matter to "noble feats and valiant acts of arms" and of characters to "noble princes, lords, and knights"
places the tale in what we would identify as the romance tradition. Furthermore, the terms "ancient histories" and "old time" distance the events and characters from the present, just as the conventional fairy tale "once upon a time" or Middle English "whilom" does. A few sentences later, when Caxton discusses the deeds and characters of this particular tale, its nature as romance becomes indubitable, for we are now concerned with knights and their ladies, love and its distresses, and fighting in the service of love:

[th is] boke specifyeth of the noble actes and fayttes of warre, achyued by a noble and victorious pryne named Blanchardin, sone vnto the kynge of Fryse / for the loue of a noble pryncesse callyd Eglantyne, . . . And of the grete adventures, labours, anguysshes/ and many other grete dyseases of theym both, to-fore they myghte atteyne for to come to the fynall conclusion of their desired loue (pp. 1-2).

Of course, a work described in romance terms is not thereby necessarily seen by its medieval audience as fictional. However, Caxton identifies a number of concerns that are prototypically appropriate to romance: the focus on the man and woman to the exclusion of a larger, more national cast; the junction of deeds of love and deeds of war; and the narrative structure moving toward union of lovers. That Caxton should have isolated these conventional romance characteristics to describe the work might suggest that it is more appropriately classified as fiction than history. The fact that Caxton never discusses fiction unambiguously makes it especially difficult to interpret his remarks, so the reader must be alive to every nuance.
In addition, the treatment in Caxton's preface of subjects besides the narrative itself reinforces my sense that he sees the work as an imaginative one designed to entertain, hence as fictional more than historical. The audience, as well as the characters, are noble gentlemen and ladies, and the tale's morality is a specifically courtly one. The immediate audience of the preface and the patroness of the book is "My lady Margarete, dushesse of Somercete," to whom Caxton has sold the French version, which she has requested he translate, for it is "honeste & Ioyefull to all vertuouse yong noble gentylmen & wymmen . . . to rede." Furthermore, Caxton asserts that it is as "requesyte" for noble men and women to read stories like this one "as it is [for them] to occupye theym and studye ouer moche in bokes of contemplacion." In defending this story of feats of love and arms, he makes the traditional claim justifying poetry or fiction, seeing them as particularly appropriate for weaker minds. Plutarch and writers in the progymnasmata tradition had defended fiction as a particularly apt vehicle for instructing young boys, and Conrad von Hirsau had extended its use to women as well. Fiction is viewed as an "easy" way for weaker minds to learn moral lessons, sharing with history an instructive purpose but approaching it differently. And indeed, the "lessons" to be drawn from books like Blanchardin are for Caxton quite different from those to be taken from Godefroy. It is the nature of those lessons which makes them particularly appropriate for the female audience Caxton has so carefully identified, for stories like Blanchardin provide lessons in love: such stories are good "for gentyl yonge ladyes & damoysellys, for to lerne to be
stedfaste & constaunt in their parte to theym that they ones haue promysed and agreed to suche as haue putte their lyues ofte in Jeopardye for to playse theym to stande in grace" (p. 1). And for men, such stories teach how to achieve valiant acts "for to stand in the specyal grace & loue of their ladyes." Caxton argues that tales of feats of arms are as valuable to read as "bokes of comtemplacion," but their particular value is in providing lessons in courtly behavior.4

Another special value of fiction lies in its capacity to entertain, and Caxton also points to Blanchardin's nature as entertainment. He says he knows the story is "honeste & Ioyeful . . . to rede . . . for [a] passe tyme."5 Though he then goes on to describe the moral value of Blanchardin, Caxton's first impulse is to claim its recrea­tional entertainment value. Though the defense of literature on the basis of its moral value is the more common means of defending fiction against the attack that it is not truth, there was in the Middle Ages also a tradition of defending literature, mainly fables and theatrics, as recreations; in short, of defending the value of entertainment, relaxation, and pleasure.6 Caxton is here fitting into that tradition in recommending Blanchardin as a "passe tyme," but it is a pastime recommended only for virtuous young men and women.

Caxton's final concern in the preface is the translation's style, as he asks his patron "to pardoune me of the rude and comyn englyshe, where as shall be found faulte; For I confesse me not lerned, ne knowynge the arte of rehtoryk / ne of suche gaye termes as now be sayd in these dayes and vsed" (p. 2). Such remarks, of course, are examples of the "affected modesty" topos described by Curtius.7 A
more important issue than Caxton's use of a common formula, however, is the question of why he should use it here, in introducing this work. He apologizes for his own "rude" English in a number of places, but generally in such cases he seems to be trying to forestall the charge of awkward or incorrect translation. Such apologies are generally qualified by a reference to Caxton's copy text as the source of awkwardness or by a request that any errors be corrected. What he says in the prologue to Blanchardin, in contrast, finds a parallel only in the preface to Charles the Great, the apology, not for inadequacies in translation, but for the lack of rhetorical embellishment. In Charles he laments his ignorance of "gay" terms; here he refers specifically also to rhetorical embellishment. Since his translations are generally literal, one must wonder whether there is some particular quality about Blanchardin and Eglantine that makes a concern with embellishment especially appropriate. As I said in chapter two above, style for Caxton seems to be of more concern in works that are imaginative or original rather than historical or philosophical, though he does not observe that distinction consistently. The fact that he does observe it in part, however, provides yet more evidence for the view that Blanchardin is different in kind from works like Godefroy. Such concern with style suggests in yet another way that Blanchardin's quality as a work of the literary imagination is what characterizes it most adequately.

Though Caxton does not develop his treatment of conventional form, audience, or style fully, it seems to me that the issues he raises are central to the consideration of the nature of fiction. If
we think of fiction as a narrative of events that have not happened, but could, we see it does not have the necessary connection to real events in the real world that history does. But at the same time it cannot have the independence of the real world that fable enjoys. It is a mode where the shaping control of the human imagination is particularly important, and the evidence of that control may be found in a narrative's use of convention, embellished style, or other techniques that make it more pleasurable for its audience. In his concern for these kinds of matters Caxton moves beyond treatment of fidelity to truth (the historian's prime responsibility) to aesthetic appeal. In talking of style, Caxton seems to be apologizing only for the inadequacy of his own, for his ignorance of rhetoric. But style is more likely to be important in an imaginative work, one where we get some sense of a human mind in control of what is written. Additionally, in identifying Blanchardin as entertainment or pastime, Caxton is placing it in a category traditionally assigned to fiction and fable, literature appropriate to "weaker" minds because it entertains while it instructs, or to minds tired from dealing with more difficult matters because it provides refreshment. And in identifying Blanchardin's didactic qualities with the courtly virtues, Caxton places it squarely in the romance tradition, a tradition heavily influenced by myth and folk tale and so allied with fiction. Analysis of the text itself suggests that these three qualities--self conscious style, amusing embellishment, and romantic narrative motifs--are its primary characteristics. Alone, the presence of any of those qualities might not mean much. Taken together, they make Blanchardin and Eglantine a
work very different from Godefroy, and they suggest what qualities we might expect to find in fiction.

The broad outline of the plot of Blanchardin is typical romance: Blanchardin falls in love with Eglantine and vows to serve her; she reciprocates his love when she sees him in battle; they must suffer separation, capture in battle, shipwreck, and kidnapping before being united in the end and gaining control of both their kingdoms. The complications of the plot, however, need a little more explication to make the character of the work clear. Blanchardin grows up educated in all aspects of noble life except chivalry, and on seeing the Trojan War depicted on a tapestry leaves home so he can share in the glory of knightly feats. The first two knights he finds instruct him in the arts of fighting and loving. The first also dubs him and provides him his first quest, as he rescues and avenges the knight's kidnapped lady. The second knight introduces him to the story of Eglantine, the proud "pucel de amors," who is being besieged by the Saracen king of Casydonye, Alymodes, and who has refused to fall in love with anyone. Blanchardin enters her service, having first to defeat the provost of her town, Tormaday, in exchange for the privilege of lodging. Eglantine's heart finally goes to Blanchardin, but immediately after they have exchanged their vows of love he is captured and sent, in the company of Alymodes' son Darius, to the brother of Rubyon, a giant whom Blanchardin has killed in single combat. Upon escaping from Darius and finding himself in Prussia, Blanchardin disguises himself by using herbs to darken his skin and enters the service of the Prussian king to lead the country in victory against Poland. He and
Sadoyne, son of the Prussian king, then set sail for Tormaday, but within sight of the city are driven off course by a storm, a detour which provides them the opportunity to take Cassydonye from Darius, Blanchardin rewarding Sadoyne with Alymodes' daughter Beatrice. In their subsequent battle against Alymodes at Tormaday, Sadoyne is captured, prompting Blanchardin to entrust Eglantine to one of her own knights, Subyon, and to return to Cassydonye. There Alymodes is finally subdued and Beatrice, Subyon, and Blanchardin are reunited. Meanwhile, Blanchardin's father has been imprisoned by Darius, his mother has died of grief, and Eglantine has been threatened with kid­napping by Subyon. Finally all Blanchardin's enemies are defeated, all lovers are married, and, after Blanchardin's father's death, he inherits his throne. The broad outline of the story and its main action—fighting and love-making, usually connected, with love the occasion and/or reward for fighting—are romantic, as are setting and character.

That the tale occurs in the world of traditional romance, a world closely allied to that of the fairy tale, is abundantly clear from the very beginning and remains so throughout. The opening presents us a fairy-tale setting and situation. The time is "once upon a time"—"That tyme when the Right happy wele of peas / flowrid for the most parte in all cristen Realmes / And that moche peple dyde moche peyne to gadre and multyplye vertues" (p. 11)—a kind of golden age in the past, when people and life were better than now. Like the "ancient, long-ago" Caxton refers to in his preface, this time has no connection with that of the reader. The situation at the opening is
equally traditional. The king is a good, well-loved, well-known ruler, but unhappy because he is childless. The queen, also suffering, prays for a child so that, "by veraye permyssion deuyne," Blanchardin is conceived and born to great rejoicing. As the story progresses, people and places foreign to Blanchardin are identified as Saracen. But such characters are not the Moslems of the real world, as in Godefroy; rather, their identity as Saracens is a fictional device which contributes to an exotic milieu and enhances Blanchardin's status as hero, for he converts or subdues all Saracens he meets. The geography of the tale is also at least partly fictional. Blanchardin's home, Fryse, may be identified with Friesland and so may be perceived as an identifiable place. Other locales clearly are not. Cassydonye, Alymode's realm, is once placed in Norway, but is also described as a Saracen land. When Blanchardin arrives in Prussia, another Saracen nation, he disguises himself by blacking his face, suggesting that the narrator perceives Prussia as an African or Mediterranean nation though its language is High Dutch. Eglantine's realm Tormaday does not seem to be identified with a real place, though her uncle is king of Norway, and neither is Salmandry, Rubyan's home. This casualness about geography contrasts with the care taken in Godefroy to locate settings in relation to each other, to Europe, and to natural features like mountains and rivers. Blanchardin's fuzziness of setting may be deliberate or the result of geographical confusion. Which is the cause is unimportant; what matters is that the setting is bound to be perceived as foreign to the world of the reader, rather than being identified with a real historical place.
The landscape is fictional in other ways as well, for it shares important features with the magical world we associate with traditional romance; that is, it is landscape primed for adventure. Indeed, the action starts when Blanchardin enters that landscape. Like Perceval, Blanchardin has been raised without training in arms (though unlike Perceval, he is well-trained in every other activity appropriate to a young nobleman—hawking, hunting, chess, talking, good manners, grammar, logic, and philosophy). The story of Troy he sees depicted on a tapestry moves "his noble and hyghe corage," making him want to imitate the "noblesse... horryble and mereuyllous bataylles [and]... right grete valyaunce" (p. 15) he sees there. He determines, then, to seek out "som place where by experyence he shuld lerne to bere armes."\(^9\) Like any fine knight, Blanchardin is presented at will with chivalric adventures that provide him the "laude & pryce" he seeks. All he need do is leave home on his father's horse bearing his father's sword, and the adventures present themselves though he must ride two and a half whole days "wythout fyndyng of ony adventure that ought to be recounted or tolde" (p. 22), through a forest, down a hill, and into a valley. But here his search is rewarded, for he finds a wounded knight lying on the ground moaning. As any reader of romance will have guessed, the knight's lady has been kidnapped. Moved by pity, Blanchardin promises to help the knight, who dubs and arms him. Blanchardin is so "ryght gladde & Ioyous" to have at last gained knightly status that he prances with delight. He then pursues the false knight and kidnapped lady into the forest, defeats the second knight (despite his inexperience in
fighting), and returns the lady to her love. She dies on finding him dead. Seeing the deaths of the two lovers, Blanchardin pities them and recognizes the strength of their love, a lesson in love he never forgets: "sore troubled atte herte for the pyteouse dethe of the two true louers . . . Blanchardyn, all mournyng and pensefull, departed & went his waye / And from that tyme forthar began to fele a lytel of the state of loue / & praysed & comended hit in his herte, and was remembred of it allewayes" (pp. 30-31).

Blanchardin's second adventure (with a fairy knight) introduces him to Eglantine, her aloofness from all potential suiters, her pride, Alymodes' love for her, and the siege he has mounted against Tormaday. The fairy knight encourages Blanchardin to undertake to serve as Eglantine's knight to win "praysyne of worthynesse and goode ronomme," thus winning Eglantine's love as well. Spurred by the knight's description, Blanchardin now learns of the sudden, irresistible nature of love: when he himself is wounded by love's arrow. Blanchardin now has two quests: a kiss from Eglantine, and the defeat of Alymodes. He begins his search immediately.

From this point Blanchardin is no longer searching at random for adventure just for its own sake, or for the sake of praise and fame. He now has a quest and a ladylove. Still, the adventures he meets continue to be typical of romance. The first example is his first meeting with the provost of Tormaday, the owner of the home Blanchardin is sent to on arriving in the city, the only place likely to provide lodging (since the city is filled with knights come to fight on Eglantine's behalf). Though the provost "prayed moche
[Blanchardin] in his herte" on meeting him, he informs Blanchardin: "the manere of this lodgyse is suche, that noon may lodge hum self here / but yf he doth that whiche is wryton in that marbel stone aboue the yate" (p. 46). On that stone Blanchardin finds this challenge:

Who that wol lodge hym self herynne,  
most furst befgyght thost of herynne  
wyth spere, swerde, & eke of axe. . .

The quality of this challenge as literary convention is highlighted by the host's attitude. He is not fighting Blanchardin to protect himself, his daughters, his home, or his city. As he fights he knows he must lose, but he must obey the instructions on the wall. He even admits Blanchardin's nobility on meeting him. This kind of unquestioning acceptance of the demands of an unreal world characterizes later adventures as well, and it is precisely this kind of adventure that a reader of romances expects. When Blanchardin lands in Prussia, it just happens that, even though he has a son who is a knight, the king needs someone to head his army in the war against the Poles. Nor are we surprised, having learned that Alymodes' forces include a giant, when that giant Rubyon challenges the Tormadians to a joust and Blanchardin volunteers to accept the challenge. Similarly, we do not marvel at the coincidence when the land where Darius is shipwrecked should happen to be the isolated island where Blanchardin's father is vacationing, so that Darius has the chance to capture him. Further, Blanchardin's propensity to travel in disguise, unrecognized even by those who know him as well as the provost and his own father do, echoes another frequent folk-tale and romance convention. All these happenings fit neatly into the typical romance
class of slightly improbable events providing the chance for the knight to exercise his prowess.

Movement of the plot is also typical. Throughout the tale events occur in the same way: a knight rides off and "by adventure" finds a maiden to woo or enemies to subdue. The only way in which the adventures are connected is that they happen to Blanchardin or the small group of characters around him. Events are not causally related; the structure of the narrative is episodic, unified in character but not possessing a coherent plot. Furthermore, adventures occurring to several characters are interwoven so that the tale does not follow a single thread from beginning to end. Indeed, the purpose of events seems to be to show off Blanchardin's prowess and to postpone his union with Eglantine, the episodes serving primarily to delay the inevitable happy ending and to provide repeated occasions for courtly behavior: thus Blanchardin's first battle with Alymodes provides the chance for Beatrice to admire him and for him to kidnap her; Blanchardin's sojourn in Prussia provides him the chance again to prove his mettle as a soldier and to find a husband for Beatrice; Darius' capture of Blanchardin's father returns him to the series of adventures; and Subyon's treachery in trying to kidnap Eglantine simply introduces one more complication.

Moreover, the very attitude toward adventure reflected by the narrator and characters enhances the sense that the work exists primarily to report adventures, and that the adventures are important largely for their own sake. Part of this is reflected, as I have suggested, in the very episodic structure of the plot. Additionally,
the narrator's use of the word *adventure* and the attitudes expressed by characters make the viewpoint even clearer. *Adventure* does not mean merely a series of actions. For the medieval speaker, most clearly in *Blanchardin*, and frequently in other romances, there is a strong suggestion of events occurring by chance. The first definition of the word in the *MED*, citing fourteenth and fifteenth-century passages, makes that connotation clear: "Fate, fortune, chance." The fourth definition shows *adventure's* connection with romance: "a knightly quest." The element of chance is clear in the narrator's occasional comment that a particular event happens "by adventure." Such chance opens the whole series of actions, for "it happe[ned]" that Blanchardin discovered the Troy tapestry "by aduenture" (p. 14). Similarly, the fairy knight appears on the other side of the river "by aduenture" (p. 32). This emphasis on the fortuitous nature of the hero's adventures reinforces the impression created by the typically romance milieu and narrative structure discussed earlier that this is not a world where one event leads to or causes another. The narrative reports a series of events related only because they occur to the same characters.

"Adventure" carries also the modern connotation of unusual, risky experience. Because his focus is on this type of adventure, the narrator does not report everything that happens to Blanchardin, occasionally saying the hero found no adventure worth repeating (pp. 22, 31, 199; note the use of the word "fynde"). Evidently the only adventures worth reporting are those of love or prowess. That Blanchardin shares the narrator's attitude explains his response to
the Troy tapestry. This initial impetus to search for chivalric glory belongs to the world of fiction Blanchardin inhabits, where adventures appear for the asking and a noble knight, though inexperienced and un-trained in the use of arms, can defeat even a giant. This attitude toward adventure is repeated again and again in Blanchardin's words to those he meets. On meeting the fairy knight, for instance, Blanchardin explains that "he had sette hym self to Iournaye / for to fynde som contreye where werre was, for to proue his barnag, exercisyng hym self in the noble crafte of armes for tacquyre lawde & pryce as ty l a knyght apparteyneth" (pp. 33-34). To the provost he says

I haue habandonned & forsaken both fadre & modre, kynnesmen & frendes, & eke lyflode & lande where I toke my byrth & noureture, for to excercyse & able my self in the noble crafte of faytes of armes, & to take & lerne the discipline of knyghthode (p. 60).

When Sadoyne and Blanchardin ask the king's permission to leave to fight Alymodes, Sadoyne's reasoning is similar: he wants to leave home "by cause he was a yonge man, he wolde yet faine excercyse him self in the noble crafte of armes, & that a lawfull & Iuste cause he had to do soo, for to gyue socoure & helpe the yonge knyght straunger" (p. 125).

The centrality of the conventional romance world and narrative structure is enhanced by the character and presentation of Blanchardin himself, for in behavior, character, motivation, and appearance he is typically romantic. Like other true knights, regardless of lineage, background, or training, Blanchardin is universally recognizable as a
knight. Even before leaving Fryse and taking on the role of knight errant, he "was naturally inclyned, and vsed alle that whiche the herte of a noble man appeteth and desyreth" (p. 13). After he leaves Fryse, wherever he goes Blanchardin is immediately recognized as noble by everyone he meets: Eglantine's fairy knight, all her attendants, the provost, the nurse, the Prussians. Even Blanchardin's enemies recognize his greatness, Alymodes' knights pitying him because of his worthiness, Alymodes himself jealous of his beauty. Later, despite the herbs he uses to darken his skin which disguise him so well his father and the provost do not know him, Blanchardin is everywhere recognized as a worthy knight.

Especially pronounced is the effect of Blanchardin's beauty on women, who universally praise his perfection as a lover. The provost's two daughters are especially taken with Blanchardin, immediately falling in love with him:

Blanchardyn mayntened hym self, talkyng emonge hem more graciously than euere dyde man, and shewed hym self of so goodly and honneste behauoure / that right sone he conquered the heretes and goode wylle of the two forsayde praty maydens' that was not a lytell thyng / For moche fayre and gentyl they were (pp. 50-51).

In a similar fashion, King Alymodes' daughter Beatrice secretly admires him and wishes she were his lady as she watches Blanchardin joust with and kill her lover Rubyon. Even Eglantine's initial determination against Blanchardin is softened when her nurse sensibly argues that he does not deserve death, but love:
"what someuer he be / he hath a gentyll
herte, and is a man of hyghe facion. . . .
ye may vnderstande of his worthynesse /
Ye may well knowe / that ye had not
chosen you full praty and ryght fayre,
and more than any other accompllyshed
in all manere of beaulite and faycture /
byleue certaynly that he neuere wolde
have vaunced hym self to take a kyssse of
you. . . . Wherefore . . . I . . . be-
seche you / that this euylle wyle and
grete indygnacion . . . ye putte and
chasse out from you' (p. 53).

Though she continues against him, saying she does not know "'what loue
ment, not what it is of loue / nor I loke not after to knowe it / For
all suche thynges I repute and take for foly'" (p. 55), her resolve is
shaken when she sees him on the battlefield: her "bloode ranne vp at
her face, and wexed red as a rose," evidence that "the loue of hym
smote her" (p. 64). She then begins the real suffering love always
brings:

Loue that departeth wyth her goodes, where
as it semeth her best employed / forgate
not her newe seruaunt / but atte her first
comyng made her to by vysited and wayted
upon by a seruant of hers named Care, that
well sore mouyd and troubled her spyrites.
And she that was not lernyd to receyue
suche geestes, sore harde was his queyn-
taunce to her. And yet wythin a whyle
after, loue smote her ayen wyth a darte to
the quycke tyll the herte of her / so that
the fayer pucell wyst not her behauyng,
nor how to mayntene her self / and also
had no power to drynke nor ete, nor coude
not slepe ne take no maner of reste(pp. 67-68).

Her lovesickness forces her confession of love to her governess, and
her suffering is so great that she gives herself up to it.

Of course, Eglantine is not the only sufferer, and a repeated
concern of the tale is Blanchardin's lessons in and sufferings for
love. Significant in this connection is the fact that his impetus to become a knight should have been a tapestry depicting the Trojan War, fought over a woman. At that point Blanchardin is struck only by "the right grete valyaunce . . . that sore moyed and styryd his noble and hyghe corage / And gaffe hym awylle for to be lyke vnto those noble and worthy knyghts" (p. 15). After leaving home, though, Blanchardin receives his instruction in love quickly, so that from the time he meets the fairy knight through all his adventures, Blanchardin's love for Eglantine dominates his thoughts, giving him many of the conventional characteristics of the courtly lover. In Darius' captivity, his greatest suffering is at the separation from Eglantine; entertained by the Prussians after leading them in victory, he feels nothing but sadness. Perhaps his most notable and conventional expression of love sorrow occurs in the Prussian palace garden, where he goes "alone, wythout eny feliship, for to complayne the better his herte sorowes" and sees a rose:

wherfore vpon her he dyde arrest his eyen, & said in this maner / 'Ha, noble rose, pre-elect & chosen byfore all other flouris that ben about the / how be it they be right fayre / thou puttest into my remembraunce thurgh the fayrnes that I see in the / the right parfyte & excellent beaulyte of myn owne goode lady, the proude mayden in amours, whom god gyue all that whiche her noble herte wysheth & desyreth / I am so ferre from her / that aduyse it is to me, and also I byleue the same / that I neuer shal see her nomore. I can not curse to moche myn vnfortune that hath brought me, whiche was come to have the goode grace of the most parfyte creature that god & nature wythout comparison wold euer make, in to the grete sorowes where I am noe Inne / Now most I be ferre from her: wolde god not
that ye, myn owne swete lady, wyst that
I am alieue, & how goode a wyll I haue to
socoure you, yf it were to me possible;' 
& in proferryng this wordes, the teeris
fel grete from his eyen in grete haboun-
daunce without ceasse (p. 123).13

In fact, love motivates most of the characters. Alymodes is
besieging Eglantine because he loves her, and his intense hatred of
Blanchardin and refusal to accept ransom for him are caused by his
jealousy. The giant Rubyon challenges Blanchardin to a joust for the
honor of his lady Beatrice. As he tells Blanchardin in their exchange
of remarks before they fight, in the presence of her father Beatrice
has given him her sleeve "to thende that for the loue of her he shuld
do some thynge werby she myghte the better haue hym in her grace"
(p. 84). Even the Prussians, Saracens though they are (as are Alymodes
and his allies), understand the force of love. The king offers
Blanchardin his cousin as reward for his prowess in the war against
the Poles, but immediately understands when Blanchardin turns her
down, saying he is "troughplyght tyl another" (p. 109). Hearing
Blanchardin's constant sorrow, Sadoyne concludes "that it is loue that
so ledes you" (p. 123). Sadoyne even falls in love with Beatrice be-
fore meeting her, merely on the report of her beauty, as Blanchardin
fell in love with Eglantine on hearing about her (p. 139). Later,
when he and Blanchardin are fighting a den of thieves, both fight in
order to be reunited with their "ladyes paramours" (p. 205).

With love as such as important motivating force, it is not
surprising that courtesy should be one of the most-marked virtues of
the characters. This romance could indeed function as a mirror of
courtesy. The behavior of Blanchardin and the fairy knight is marked throughout by courtesy, beginning with the knight's sending Blanchardin a boat so he can cross the river and therefore become acquainted (p. 32-3, 39). The provost's courtesy is praised first as he arms Blanchardin and then as he offers him hospitality (pp. 47, 60). The king of Prussia, too, is praised for the hospitality he offers Blanchardin (p. 100) and then for releasing Blanchardin and Sadoyne so they can rescue Eglantine (p. 126). Eglantine, of course, provides another model of courtesy, evident not only in her behavior toward Blanchardin but also in the occasional feasts she provides (this despite her initial resistance to love; e.g., p. 66 among others). In their courtesy and strong feelings the characters are conventionally romantic. What they do is typically romantic in other ways as well. Again and again ladies watch the fighting--Eglantine and her nurse or Beatrice standing at a window--and are moved to love as they witness a joust or battle. Like many courtly ladies, Eglantine spends much time at the tower window, watching her lover fight and encouraging him to greater deeds, watching him sail to foreign lands, or looking for his return. Similarly, Beatrice back at home in Cassydonye watches as Blanchardin and Sadoyne besiege the town, before surrendering it to them, and then watches again from the
window as Alymodes assualts the city, captures Sadoyne (now Beatrice's love), and prepares to kill him. Closely allied in many romances with the motif of ladies watching their lovers from the tower is the convention of lovers wearing their ladies' sleeves as banners of love and as a kind of armor, a convention which makes visible the very real connection between love and valour, courtliness and chivalry. Blanchardin's wearing a sleeve from the provost's daughter inspires Eglantine's jealousy. Later, he uses Eglantine's crimson sleeve as his only arm guard against Rubyon, for "that day he wold haue therto noon other armour" (p. 83). Still later, Eglantine sends Blanchardin a white damask sleeve, "prayng hym that for her sake & loue, to dye the whyt coloure in to red wyth the blode of her enmyes" (p. 168). Even the Saracen giant Rubyon, receiving a violet satin sleeve from his lover Beatrice, is inspired to challenge the Tourmadians to a joust.

This kind of conventional behavior, coupled with the conventional motifs of action and setting such as the provost's challenge to potential guests and Blanchardin's first adventure with the kidnapped lady, clearly provide examples of what Caxton is discussing in his preface when he promises instruction to ladies and men in behavior in love. But they do more than provide examples of behavior; more significant is that they connect this story with a particular genre, the genre of romance. The juxtaposition of traditional fictional motifs, many drawn from the folk tradition, and traditional courtly attitudes and emotions, (especially the conventional courtly love feelings and behavior), reinforces the impression created by the structure of the narrative that it is indeed a very different kind of narrative from history.
The first adventure that Blanchardin purposefully seeks, to steal a kiss from Eglantine, is described in such detail that it is worth examining more closely. The scheme is the fairy knight's, the method by which he thinks Blanchardin is to win the lady's love. The deed is referred to as Blanchardin's "high enterprise," a "good and fair adventure," "the werke that he hath undertaken"; it is talked of, in short, with all the hyperbole and solemnity appropriate to knightly adventure. Though Blanchardin is fearful, apprehensive, and prayerful as he anticipates the adventure, he and the fairy knight are confident that the ultimate result will be Eglantine's love. After the knight has instructed him, Blanchardin goes forward a little fearfully but determined to fulfill his promise to the knight:

blanchardyn bygan to ryde on a good paas, desiring with all his herte to ouertake the proude pucell in amours, for to fulfyle his desyre and the promesse that he made to the knyght /

So thought he moche in hym self by what manere he myght execute and brynge at an ende the werke that he hath vndertaken, that is to wyte, to kysse the proude mayden in amours, wherof in this manere of thoughte was his noble herte all affrayed and replenysshed wyth grete fere lest he shold faylle of his entrepryse / For wel it was thaduis of blanchardyn that the thyng ought well to be putte in a proffe / syth his promesse was thus made to the knyght. And for this cause entred wythin his thoughte a drede as for to be so hardy that he sholde vaunce hym self for to kysse suche a pryncesse that neuer he had seen byfore / And wherof thacquentaunce was so daunqerouse. But loue, that wyth her dart had made in his herte a grete wounde, admonested hym for to procede constantly to his hyghe entrepryse. And after all varyablenes and debates y-brought at an ende within the mynde of this newe louer, his resolucion
fynall was / that he sholde putte peyne 
for to have a cusse of the proude pucelle 
in amours, al though he deth holde be vnto him adijuded onely for this cause; And herupon went Blanchardyn sayenge: "O veraye god, how well happy shold myn herte be, that presently is ouer moche pressed by cause of myn enterpyre, yf I myght obteyne that one cussynge / And yf myn infortune or feblenes of corage sholde lette me for this aduenture that so sore I desyre / Deth make an ende of me" (pp. 41-41).

The narrator says Blanchardin went "stryuyng in herte, for fere that he had, lest he myght not brynge his entrepryse at an ende" (p. 41). That is, Blanchardin pursues this adventure fully aware of his risk. But the risk here is not loss of life or defeat in battle; Blanchardin faces the "danger" of love. 16

This adventure is described in such hyperbolic terms that it is difficult not to see it as comic. Blanchardin is certainly in no danger: he has already illustrated his unquestionable prowess in killing the first knight he fights, a knight who has already killed another knight. Furthermore, Eglantine and her people are so powerless that her fairy knight has had to go in search of a champion for her. And it is clear, because love has smitten his heart and because he is the hero, that Blanchardin will be that champion. We know, then, as he pursues the adventure of the kiss that the only danger he need fear is the danger of love and that his fears are exaggerated. Hence the tone of the description of this adventure and several others seems to me to be largely comic. At this distance attributing comic tone to a work (other than the fabliau or satiric fable, comic by definition) is a risky venture, lest the modern critic fall prey to
the temptation to impose his own values or exercise over-subtle reading of a work. But to take the medieval writer too seriously is to risk underestimating his skill or sophistication. I have tried to keep in mind both risks in trying to appreciate the way this romance works, and I am unavoidably faced with the conclusion that the description of Blanchardin's quest for the chance to kiss Eglantine must be intentionally comic, given the narrator's exaggerated language and seriousness. When other scenes that seem to share these characteristics are examined, the impression that the humor is intentional becomes overwhelming. 17

The first of these elements is the process Eglantine goes through as she falls in love. A reader of medieval romance knows immediately on hearing of the "proud pucell de amors" that she is destined to fall in love with the hero, for in the romantic milieu a maiden who refuses to love is destined to do so, suffering in an especially acute form all the ills that accompany love sickness. The audience's anticipation of Eglantine's suffering, then, makes her anger at Blanchardin's kiss and her stubborn refusal to think of love all the more entertaining. When Blanchardin steals his kiss, Eglantine's ladies and her nurse are all impressed with his fairness and nobility. Eglantine's reaction in comparison seems excessive: she swoons, falls off her horse, weeps so that "her gowne . . . was therof charged as grete shoure of rayne had come doune from the heuens," and vows to have Blanchardin killed (p. 43). She refuses all comfort and holds her anger in her heart. The episode which Blanchardin hoped was to lead to their love, then, seems to have
hardened the proud damsel even more. Indeed, when she learns on ar­
iving in Tormaday that Blanchardin has preceded her there, her heart
hardens still more, and she suffers in anger the symptoms usually
associated with love sickness.\textsuperscript{18} Eglantine's anger is so excessive
that the audience can scarcely be surprised when, in response to the
nurse's praise of Blanchardin, she "bygan to leue her eerys thurghe a
subtal and soubdayne hete of loue, that perced the veray hert rote
of her / for the delyureance of the yong knyght blanchardyn" (p. 54).
She subsequently debates with herself: her concern for her own good
reputation, her desire to love and be loved, her realization of Blan­
chardin's nobility, her determination not to give way to love all war
within her. Finally, at the end of the chapter that began with love
creeping into her heart, she vows "'neuer, daye of my lyffe, hum nor
other I wyll not loue. So wot I neuer what loue ment, nor what it
is of loue / nor I loke not after to knowe it. For all suche thynges
I repute and take for foly'" (p. 55). We know that any maiden who
makes such a vow is destined to suffer all love's pain, and such know­
ledge combined with our sympathy with Blanchardin and our anticipa­
tion of their union add to our amusement at Eglantine's dilemma. In
fact, the strength of her emotions and language is a fitting parallel to Blanchardin's excessive trepidation during his quest for her
kiss. Eglantine's handling of the provost's daughters provides an
especially amusing example of her refusal to know herself. Unable
to recognize her jealousy when she warns the provost against the two
girls' flirting with Blanchardin and arranges for them to marry two
of her knights, she thinks she is acting only out of an unselfish
concern for their reputation and Blanchardin's nobility. Even the provost sees through Eglantine's self deception, as does her nurse. The narrator also knows better and takes care that we should too.

Eglantine's actions here are those of a conventional romance heroine, but there is more than merely convention at work. Placed in the context of her former refusal to entertain even the thought of love with anyone, even after she has observed Blanchardin, and her extreme anger at his kiss, her intense love emotions are exaggerated and humorous. In contrast are the provost's daughters, who are delighted to turn their love from Blanchardin to the knights Eglantine has chosen for them, and Beatrice, who loves Rubyon until she sees Blanchardin and is evidently glad to love in turn Sadoyne. How convenient that their hearts and wills are so pliable!

Even Blanchardin, generally so serious and dedicated to his knightly deeds and reputation, seems at times aware of humor in what he sees and says. When the provost suggests that Eglantine loves him, Blanchardin answers "wyth a smylyng contenaunce" that he is not interested in love, that Eglantine must be making fun of him if she says she loves him:

's for thus to say, she in a manere mocketh me ... And as to me, suche an vse I seke not; ... loustyng, tournoynge, and behourdyng are my passe tyme / and no wyffe I thynke not to take' (p. 76).

This teasing continues during his interview with Eglantine:

'Madame, myn hoste hath tolde me this daye that ye knowe well my lady paramours, and that she is of your lynage. by my feyth, this thynge semeth me right straunge' (p. 78).
This love scene has several comic moments, and here it seems obvious that Blanchardin and the narrator at least recognize and appreciate the humor. Though Eglantine's love is clear to him and he is burning to confess his, Blanchardin teases her for some time before doing so. He is not testing her love, being secure of it—the provost has told him so and he can see it for himself. No lover, and certainly not so kind and noble one as Blanchardin, could be cruel to his mistress. Thus it seems to me from what he says and from the tone with which it is reported that the episode is humorous.

These humorous episodes seem to have a special kind of comic quality, accessible not just to the jaded twentieth century reader. The humor is not like the farcical, risque humor of the fabliau, cycle play, or moral interlude—relatively clear, depending on easily recognized sexual innuendo, word play, and, in the plays, suggestive gesture. The humor I see in Blanchardin is more subtle, depending on the tone and irony, suggesting that the author of Blanchardyn and Eglantine is playing with the conventions of chivalric romance even as he makes them the basis for his tale. This possibility of humor is significant because it reinforces the fictionality of the work. It fosters the sense of play that we associate with imaginative literature, the sense of an imaginative creator at work shaping his material for the pleasure of an audience, in contrast to the writer of contemplative or didactic works who shapes material for the edification of the audience. Humor is less important for its own sake (after all, fiction may be serious, just as non-fiction may be
funny) than because it reminds the reader that the work has been created. Our consciousness of a creating intelligence in control enhances the fictionality of the work because it reinforces the sense of the work as a creation, as the product of a human mind, rather than as the reflection of a truth which exists independently of a human creator. The humor also, of course, makes the work more fun (hence a better pastime) for the reader. The humor, then, helps fulfill the expectation Caxton creates in his preface when he promises a work that will entertain.

Just as humor can serve to remind the reader of the presence of an imagination controlling a narrative, so can stylistic embellishment. I have already commented on Caxton's apology in the preface of *Blanchardin* for his simple English and, uniquely in this preface, lack of rhetorical knowledge. Though *Blanchardin* is by no means a highly embellished work, in some ways the nature of descriptive passages, the vocabulary, and figures of speech reinforce the work's identification with conventional romance and characterize it as imaginative literature.

Description in *Blanchardin* is very sketchy (there are none of the traditional catalogues of the lady's charms); what there is of it tends to be limited to conventional generalizations. This conventionality results partly because so many elements introduced as part of the narrative are paragons—*Blanchardin* is the noblest knight, Eglantine the fairest maiden—in a kind of hyperbole familiar to readers of romance. Additionally, even when more details of description are provided, the description itself remains conventional, and
the kind of detail that would allow the reader to distinguish one place or person from another is not provided. Thus when Blanchardin sees Tormaday for the first time, "hym semed the most fayre and most riche cyte that euer he sawe / The see was nyghe betyng on the walles atte one syde of the towne, at the other syde were the grete medowes, the fayre vynes and the londe . arable" (p. 45). Tormaday then has the water, meadows, arable land and woods of a typical medieval town, and it has fairer ones that most--but that is all the description provided of a city which is the location of several jousts and battles, an extended siege, and much feasting and rejoicing; the home of Blanchardin's love; and the goal of his quest. Nothing of real or individual specific detail appears. Within, the town presents the same kind of undifferentiatable aspect: "fayre houses and ryche palayces and . . grete edyfycys, as monasterys, chirches, and chapelles . . fayre stretes ample and large. . . [and]the chyeff market place" (p. 45). This is in marked contrast to the city descriptions in Godefroy. In a similar use of conventional detail, the heroine rides a white palfrey (p. 45) and wears white damask.

Other types of stylistic embellishment in Blanchardin are not frequent but appear often enough to contribute to a sense of the work's imaginative quality. Such embellishment usually appear in the form of the quotation of proverbs to explain an action or event and in the use of figures of speech. For example, in reporting how Blanchardin learns about the use of arms, despite his father's command to keep him ignorant of them, the narrator says "it is sayde in comyn langage, that the goode byrde affeyteth hiself" (p. 14). 20 Comparisons and
similes occasionally enhance descriptions: Blanchardin's enemies flee "as the larke doth the sperhauke" (p. 63), Blanchardin fights "lyke as other a tygre or a lyon that is broken loos from his boundes" (p. 88), Blanchardin runs like a mad man (p. 203). Such comparisons occasionally exaggerate the action; the narrator also uses understatement, as when he says "Yf blanchardyn was right glad of this aduen­ture / It is not to be axed" (p. 42) or "Blanchardin ... slept not" in the midst of battle (p. 107). Such devices call attention to the literary form itself, as distinct from the matter being reported—that is, they focus attention on form as well as on content. One or two stylistic embellishments can hardly be said to have a definite effect, but in Blanchardin they appear frequently enough to be noticeable, to enhance the entertainment, and to call attention to the imagina­tive quality of the work.

I have argued that several attributes which characterize Blanchardin and Eglantine seem to direct the reader's attention to the literary, imaginative character of the narrative and, as a result, to its character as fiction—that is, as argumentum or res ficta rather than historia. The first of these is the use of rhetorical devices of amplificatio which function not to make action or charac­ter clearer, but to embellish the work. Such embellishment calls attention to the work as work, a focus it seems to me more appropriate for the imaginative than for the historic or didactic. The second important characteristic is the heavy reliance on conventional romance motifs, so heavy a use of them, in fact, that every episode contains situations, descriptions, and actions the experienced reader
has met countless times before. I would not want to imply thereby that any work seen as romance was ipso facto not seen also as history; the evidence to the contrary is extensive and convincing. Neither should we assume, however, that all romances were perceived as history, regardless of their content and style. What I suggest in the case of Blanchardin is that the heavy use of conventional romance elements and devices puts the work clearly into a definable, recognizable class and so suggests the conscious control of a literary shaper. Such a shaper could work with truly historical events and characters, like Charlamagne, with tales imported from the East, or with more ambiguous materials. Romance elements in and of themselves do not, then, confer fictionality. What I would suggest is that the work's identification with the long-established conventions of romance contributes to its sense of literary shaping as it also defines its quality as a piece of entertainment, the reader meeting familiar situations and sharing with the narrator the superior knowledge of character and event that make so much of the action and dialogue ironically comic. As Caxton says, the work is admirably suited to be a pastime for ladies and gentlemen. Such qualities probably bring us as close as we can come to defining what distinguishes fiction from non-fiction.

In short: since he deals with action that has actually occurred in the "real world," the history-writer's first loyalty is to the truth of what he reports; the didactic function of history lies in the examples (of both good and bad) it provides and in the fame it confers. Given the nature of history, the historian's virtues are likely to be accuracy, comprehensiveness, and clarity, so that what-
ever rhetorical devices are used will function to further understanding or to provide emphasis. In contrast, the fiction-writer's responsibility is to his creation, which he may embellish in whatever style seems appropriate to his effect. That mode of presentation, and the reader's consciousness of it, may provide as much of fiction's appeal as the movement of the plot. While the history-writer can be expected to take pains to make his presentation as understandable as possible, the fiction-writer is likely to be more concerned with eliciting the reader's delight. Caxton's prefaces suggest that he understood that distinction, and the narrative techniques in Blanchardin and Eglantine and Godefroy of Bologne reflect it. We cannot, of course, expect two narratives by themselves to provide a definitive statement on the differences between fictional and historical narrative. The distinctions observed here need a wider application.
2 What Caxton means when he uses the term history is problematic. The MED accounts of history and story suggest confusion in the fifteenth century over whether the terms refer to fictional or historical events. History's early use ("A tale, story, biography, legend"; first citation 1393) carries no assumption of truth or falseness; the MED's earliest example of history's use with its modern meaning of the record of real events of the past is from 1475; ten years later Caxton uses the term in his edition of Paris and Vienne, a romance by our standards: "The brave deeds which our ancestors accomplished, I have undertaken to draw the history for you." What Caxton says in the epilogue, however, does not imply that he saw the narrative as history: "Thus endeth th'ystorye of the noble and a valyaunt knyght Parys and the fayr Vyenne." The related terms historical, historiali, historian, historicalle, all referring to the act of recording true events of the past, appeared in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Story, in contrast, began as a term used for the narrative of real or true events, but by 1500 referred to fictional narratives designed for entertainment. Caxton seems to use the two terms interchangeably to refer to any kind of narrative, from the Polycronicon to the fables of Aesop. See also Paul Strohm, "Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives," Speculum, 46 (1971), 348-359.


5 The earliest use of pastime ("that which serves to pass the time agreeably; recreation, diversion, amusement, sport") reported in
the OED is in Caxton's Eneydos XII, 43. Blanchardin may be earlier; the OED records the use of the word in the text of Blanchardin and Eglantine with the meaning "a pastime: a specific diversion or sport" (Blanchardin calls jousting his pastime, p. 76). This concept will prove important for understanding Malory's Arthur as well.


Note that here, in the classical-medieval tradition, the Troy tapestry has served the purpose of all narrative by providing an example for Blanchardin to imitate.


See also pp. 38, 62, 78, 199-200, 126.

Blanchardin's suffering for love is referred to frequently: cf. pp. 37, 40, 76, 80, 97, 98, 149.

This is, of course, the familiar "locus amoenus" topos (Curtius, pp. 194-202). The conventional identification of the lady with the rose is made even more appropriate in this case because the eglantine is a rose.

See pp. 49, 50, 54, 71, 75, 76, 81, among others.

p. 92. See also, among others, pp. 19, 23, 24, 30, 43, 89, 95, 96, 148, 188, 114.

Margaret Schlauch, Antecedents of the English Novel 1400-1600 (from Chaucer to Deloney) (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 65-67, agrees in seeing humor in Blanchardin, but her focus is different, for she is looking for "social realism" in early works. She sees it in the interviews between Blanchardin and Eglantine.


Eglantine calls the kiss "farce" (p. 54). The meaning of that word in this context is not clear; it could be "force," or it could have some of its modern association with humor. If the double-meaning is intentional, the narrator is undermining the force of Eglantine's protestations.

Nelson, ch. 4, argues that the presence of humor in a narrative suggests its fictionality, when the humor serves to remind us of its independence from truth.

Proverbs are also cited on p. 173 ("neuer noo wodewell dyde brede a sperhawke," "of churles, bothe man and wyff, can departe noo goode fruyte"; and "of a kerle myght nought come but poyson and fylth"); pp. 181-82 ("moche abydeth behynde that a fole thynketh");
and p. 202 ("whosoever rekeneth wythoute his hoste, he rekeneth twys for ones"). Generally such maxims are introduced with the words: "it is said" or "people say." The citation of maxims is one of the means of amplification listed in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova.

21 Other comparisons, similes, and metaphors: the well of peace (p. 11), battle like the four elements fighting (pp. 62 and 163), Eglantine's face as red as a rose (p. 64), care is a guest (p. 67), Alymodes is like a mad man (pp. 87 and 191), Blanchardin fights as if he were a fairy or fiend (pp. 106 and 194), the flail of fortune (p. 121), waves as large as mountains (p. 136), the sea as calm as a river (p. 137), Blanchardin like thunder (p. 169), Eglantine's traitors like wolves (p. 180). These, too, are methods Geoffrey recommends.

22 Cf. "Whan the kynge [of Prussia] had precented this grete worship to blanchardyn, it nedeth not to be asked yf he was therof gladde / or yf he forgate to thanke the kynge for the same;" (p. 101); "'Sure,' sayde blanchardyn, 'as for me ... I shal so moche do, that ... your enmyes shal haue no cause to be glad therof'" (p. 104) and similar structures on pp. 42, 125, 132, 134.
V

HISTORY OR FICTION?: TWO CASES

In the cases of Godfrey of Bologne and Blanchardin and Eglantine the distinction between fictional and historical narrative is evident in both Caxton's judgment and the characteristics of the works themselves. Caxton in his preface to Godfrey appropriately emphasizes the didactic power of real historical events to influence readers, and the narrative itself by its qualities reinforces the impression that the reporting of real events, places, and characters is the narrator's prime concern. In introducing Blanchardin and Eglantine, by comparison, Caxton astutely emphasizes the entertainment quality of the work: its value as a pastime, its emphasis on love, its style.

The nature of history and fiction as far as these two works are concerned is as clear to Caxton as to the modern reader. Although they are the only two works where Caxton's remarks, the qualities of the work, and our own impressions mesh so closely, similar distinctions may be made about The Four Sons of Aymon, Charles the Great, and Malory's Morte D'Arthur. Since they provide further examples of the elements discerned in Godfrey, Four Sons and Charles will be discussed only briefly; Malory's work, more problematic, warrants fuller, separate treatment.
Four Sons and Charles share a number of the narrative traits of Godfrey. Both report in a generally unembellished, matter-of-fact style the military and political exploits of a large group of characters, rarely focusing for very long on only one. Both locate their actions in real, recognizable locales, frequently connecting places, events, and people to contemporary, familiar places and customs. This type of broad, realistic focus, coupled with the more specific characteristics of the works themselves, make the works read more like history than like fiction, though modern readers will recognize that most of the events reported have at best a tangential connection to real events of the past.

Godfrey, of course, is translated history; both Four Sons and Charles descend ultimately from chansons de geste: Four Sons from one of the gestes de Doon le Mayence (on the northern barons' rebellions against Charlemagne), the central section of Charles from Sir Ferumbras (on Charles' adventures in Spain fighting against the Saracens).¹ The modern reader sees in both narratives qualities which may be explained by those origins: not just the plot lines, but also Charlemagne's contradictory characterization, the focus on military exploits (especially fights against the Saracens), and the relationships of the peers. Especially significant for this study is the way in which these qualities, whatever their origins, give the works an essentially historical, rather than fictional, quality. Indeed, traditional speculations about the origins of the chanson de geste place heavy emphasis on their connections to history, especially as associated with
pilgrimage routes. As we shall see, these fifteenth-century prose versions of traditional stories, though far removed from the original chansons de geste, exploit their historical potential fully. However, Caxton shows no evidence of familiarity with the traditions of the chanson de geste. Thus, though modern readers recognize what are essentially literary conventions in both works, Caxton does not seem to be aware of them, in contrast to his obvious understanding of romance conventions. To him they would more likely have been part of the historical tradition surrounding Charlemagne and his followers, and that is how Caxton's prefaces approach them.

Only The Four Sons of Aymon provides relatively clear evidence, in its preface, of Caxton's understanding of the distinction between history and fiction. In his prologue Caxton divides the sources of knowledge into categories: "Some [learn] by Phylosophy, other by Poetrye, and other by Historyes /and cronyikes/ of thynges passed." Caxton immediately refers to "these three," so that it is clear that, here at least, history and chronicle are employed as rough synonyms, though they had been viewed from before the Middle Ages as two different forms of history-writing. This is one more example of Caxton's use of one of his favorite rhetorical techniques, doubling, especially as a way to ornament prose or introduce foreign terms. In this case the doubling supports the interpretation that by history Caxton means "account of the past" rather than "story." Toward the end of the preface he refers again to chronicle and history, beseeching those who "vunderstande the cronycle & history" to correct the crudities of his translation.
The other two categories Caxton cites are less easily defined. All of the preliminary uses of the term philosophy cited in the MED are from the fourteenth century, when already it had a variety of meanings. What all its senses have in common is the emphasis on knowledge. As the rhetorical-grammatical discussions of literature indicate, literary forms are traditionally distinguished from philosophy by their purpose of providing delight in addition to knowledge. Fitting in that tradition, Caxton too separates forms designed solely to instruct (which he calls variously philosophy, science, authority, contemplation, or the works of clerks) from those designed to both instruct and entertain. This distinction fits well with the common characterization of history as an especially useful form because it both teaches and delights.

The third category, poetry, is similarly difficult to assign a precise meaning, both the general definition of imaginative literature and the more specific one of verse being attested before Caxton (the OED attributes its first use in both senses to Chaucer, and there is a long tradition in Latin criticism of the term poesis carrying both meanings). Here, however, appearing as a general term to distinguish some types of writing from philosophy and history, poetry probably refers to any imaginative literature, writing which, while it may convey moral truths, is not literally true. In Caxton's other uses of the terms poet and poetry he seems likewise to be distinguishing imaginative literature from more purely didactic forms. Caxton's list, then, suggests recognition of the difference between fictional narrative and historical and an understanding of
the possible moral dimensions of fiction. The list also suggests that *Four Sons* as a specimen of history is seen as a source of knowledge.

Having introduced his classification scheme and his assumption that several types of writing may provide instruction, Caxton moves to discuss in more detail the nature of history, saying that above all, gentlemen of "hie estate" desire to read "thystoryes / of the ryght noble and hye vertues of the prodecessours / whiche ben digne. . . of remembraunce of perpetuall recommendation." Here Caxton fits into the tradition of seeing history as especially appropriate reading for the nobility so they may both learn from and honor their predecessors. In fact, he refers specifically to a (non-surviving) work previously published for John, Earl of Oxford, the patron of this work, as "the lyfe of one of his predecessoures." *Four Sons* is seen as another work of similar type; it is being published because "my sayd Lorde / desyreth to have other hystories of olde tyme / passed of vertues chyvalry, reduced in lykewyse into our Englishe tongue." Though Caxton's term "chyvalry" might seem to link the narrative to conventional romance, everything else he says of it applies more to historical than to romance narrative, and the tale itself has precious little chivalry about it. Caxton describes this particular history as "thactes / and faytes of warre / doone and made agaynst ye great Emperour and king of Fraunce, Charlemagne, by ye iiiii sonnes of Aymon." Though Caxton's preface provides fewer and less clear clues than his comments on *Godfrey* as to how to view the narrative, what he says is more applicable to history than to
As one of the rebellious vassal stories, *Four Sons* reports in great detail the enmity between Charlemagne and the brothers Reynawd, Richard, Alarde, and Guycharde, eventually joined by their father Aymon. The enmity between the sons and Charlemagne is anticipated in a quarrel between the king and their uncle Benes (Bevis of Aigremont), but really begins some time later, when Reynawd kills Charlemagne's nephew Bertholais in a quarrel during a chess game, leading Charlemagne to besiege the sons' castle of Mountaynford. Though the castle is destroyed, neither side is victorious. Aymon sides with Charles, even fighting directly against the sons, but his wife supplies her sons with food and equipment.

The sons eventually join with King John of Gascony, helping him defeat the Saracens and in return receiving the castle Montaubon. When war between the sons and Charlemagne again breaks out, the sons are nearly defeated through John's treachery, but are magically rescued by their cousin Maugis. A series of captures and rescues ensues, culminating in the sons' capture and release of Charlemagne. Despite this sign of their loyalty, the battle continues, moving eventually to the forest of Arden. Finally, to save the captured Duke Richard, Charlemagne sues for peace, sending Reynawd to the Holy Land (for which the repentant Maugis has already set out) and keeping Reynawd's fantastic horse Bayard (whom he tries to drown).

Reynawd and Maugis help the Christian army in Jerusalem defeat the Persians. Back in France, when Reynawd presents his sons to
Charlemagne, the old enmity threatens to be renewed in the second
generation, but Reynawd and Charles manage to restore order.
Reynawd ends his life disguised as a common laborer working on the
Church of St. Peter in Cologne, where he is killed by his jealous
co-workers. Several miracles occur around the time of and after his
death, and he is eventually canonized.

Characterized by frequent changes of scene, shifts in loyalties,
inconsistencies in characterization, repetitiousness, and a wealth
of unimportant details, the narrative is much more complex and
difficult to follow than this summary reflects. Furthermore, its
awkwardness of treatment makes definitive characterization difficult,
for the reader constantly wonders whether an effect is intentional or
purely accidental. Despite such problems, the narrative's major
focus on political-military action and its lack of conventional
literary techniques are clear.

In discussing Godfrey's nature as historical narrative, I
commented on the ways in which details of character, setting, and
action suggest a connection to the real world, reinforced by the
work's straightforward style. The Four Sons of Aymon, too, in
content and style reflects a sense of connection to the real world.
However, that sense of reality is created in slightly different ways,
and the narrative as a whole does not suggest the kind of authorial
awareness of the work's character that Godfrey does. In its basic
situation, focusing on the potentially tragic consequences of the
split loyalties engendered by the feudal system and in its national
scope, the tale reflects its origin in French epic. However, the
version Caxton printed suggests those origins in no manner beyond that of the basic situation, for it does little to exploit the tragic, heroic, or dramatic possibilities of its situation. Nor does it present the kind of treatment or conventions readers would expect from romance. Despite its origin in a traditional tale, Four Sons does not fulfill the expectations one normally brings to conventional narrative (whether epic or romance). This negative quality is one way in which the narrative lacks the kind of clearly identifiable literary qualities which would more likely characterize fiction than history. Furthermore, the presentation of the basic situation of the divided loyalties inevitable in the feudal system recalls real-world political intrigue more than literary convention, with its real-world emphasis on the struggle for political power. In addition, the work's presentation of confused or mixed motivation allows for the same kind of treatment of moral ambiguity I discussed in Godfrey's presentation of the pilgrims' travels through Hungary. However, the narrator in this case does not share William's understanding of the complexities he presents.

This moral complexity links the narrative with a kind of realism that suggests history and recalls Godfrey. It is frequently difficult to draw clear lines between "good" and "bad" characters or, even more important, to maintain constant sympathy for the four sons. Treachery and thirst for vengeance characterize many characters. Charlemagne's inconsistencies might be blamed on the author's lack of narrative skill, but in other cases contradictions in characters' behavior seem to come from a desire to depict real-life ambiguities.
This is reflected, for instance, in the way the opening actions are presented. Duke Benes (Aymon's brother and Mawgis' father) has clearly acted wrongly in killing Lohier, Charlemagne's son. But Charlemagne and Lohier himself must share responsibility for the death. Charlemagne has already had reason to doubt Benes' loyalty (when Benes did not send troops to Charlemagne's recent action against the Saracens). In fact, Charles begins to regret having sent his son as an envoy as soon as he has left. As his own advisors point out, he has been foolish to expose his own son to so obvious a danger. And Lohier delivers his father's message rudely and defiantly, inviting Benes' anger and provoking an attack he can not withstand. All these characters are quick to anger, easily provoked, heedless of the consequences of their actions. Each is in large part responsible for both his own problems and those of the others, and the narrator presents the actions and dialogues in sufficient detail for us to appreciate this complexity. Even Reynawd, though intended as the hero, shares the faults of these other characters. Though called the best knight, he hardly represents an ideal of knighthood, being quick-tempered, shortsighted, petty, and even treacherous.

Furthermore, the broad focus of the story--seldom on one character for long, moving from group to group--enhances this complexity. Particularly important is the way this tale of a nation and its relationship to a family provides ample opportunity for debates--explorations of political expedience, diplomatic options, shifting loyalties. The courts and family gathered around Charlemagne, John, Reynawd, and Aymon, where such debates occur, form
an integral part of the story. As we read of the debates of Charlemagne's barons and their shifting loyalties and the arguments of Aymon and his wife, we come to appreciate even more fully the moral and political complexity of the action.

The roles women play provide particularly telling instances of this complexity. Though there is not in Four Sons the kind of frequent allusion to women as a mass and as individuals that there is in Godfrey, the women who do appear function in the same kind of real world of conflicting loyalties and ambiguous choices as the men, rather than being removed from or above the political/military maneuverings. These women are real wives and mothers, as concerned about the political situation as their husbands, as astute in their advice as their husbands' counsellors, often more pragmatic than their husbands. Both Benes' and Aymon's wives advise loyalty to the king, reminding their husbands of their vows and of Charlemagne's superior military strength. Aymon's wife, moreover, suffering from the divided loyalties of her family, changes allegiance long before her husband, supporting her sons financially and emotionally even as Aymon remains on the side of Charlemagne.

Despite all this moral ambiguity, even confusion, there is finally some sense of right and wrong. Aymon does at last side with his own sons; Charlemagne and Reynawd do at last reconcile their differences and, more importantly, refuse to allow the cycle of vengeance to continue with their children. Maugis and Reynawd do penance for their rebellion against Charlemagne through their pilgrimage and battles against the infidels, Maugis finally becomes
a hermit, Reynawd suffering a kind of martyrdom. In fact, the story ends with accounts of the celebration of St. Reynawd's feast and his miracles.

That ending is symptomatic of the way the work's structure seems particularly suited to historical telling. Like Godfrey, Four Sons begins with background information, presenting the first stage of Charlemagne's enmity with Aymon's family, before the sons have been presented to him. Like Godfrey, too, Four Sons ends with the miracles and death of its main character, a character who has for long stretches not been at the center of the narrative. Within these limits the action moves slowly forward, reporting, it seems, everything that happens between: there is no sense of selection of incident. There is no structure or design to the plot; the narrative is exceedingly episodic. This quality is especially noticeable in the accounts of the fighting between the four sons and Charlemagne, which form the bulk of the second half. Again and again one side captures someone on the other, who manages to escape before being hung; the barons support the claims of Reynawd against Charlemagne; Reynawd requests Charlemagne's forgiveness and professes his loyalty to him; Charlemagne, despite the barons' wishes, refuses to make peace. Suddenly, it all stops and peace is restored. But this is not the end. The story continues long after what would seem to be the end of the action, finally stopping when Reynawd dies.

The syntactic level also is characterized by a lack of structural shaping, with its heavy reliance on coordination, and serving as the primary connector. This kind of coordinate
structure contributes nothing to logically relating ideas or events and, used almost exclusively, suggests once again the view that the author is merely reporting events as they happened, with no attempt at explication, invention, or imagination. Moreover, the style is plain—there is hardly any use of rhetorical ornamentation or even description. Finally, the kinds of transitions the tale uses—generally incorporating summary of what has preceded and/or forecast of what is to come—do not provide any kind of embellishment, serving entirely to ensure the audience's clearer understanding of what is being reported (especially important in a narrative as repetitious as this one).

Such reliance on plain, clear style focuses attention on the action itself and enhances its believability. This sense of real-life quality in the narrative is enhanced by its heavy reliance on dialogue in reporting the action. In fact, long stretches of action are reported almost entirely in dialogue. Such extensive use of dialogue is important, of course, because it creates a sense of the immediacy of what is happening, of its reality. Further, by placing the reader directly in the action, heavy reliance on dialogue reduces the sense of a narrator shaping and controlling what is reported. Dialogue in *Four Sons* works along with the limited amount of authorial comment to increase the sense of the action's reality. Dialogue increases historicity in another way as well, a way connected closely with the narrative's real-world setting and characters. Because so much of the dialogue records the disagreements among counsellors and families, it serves as one more means of developing those fundamental
conflicts that are at the center of the narrative and that in themselves enhance its credibility. Further, the dialogue focuses attention on the large, national cast involved in the narrative, minimizing the position of Reynawd as individual hero.

Such stylistic traits as these enhance the clarity of the report, ensuring that the audience understand the complex action suggesting the importance of the audience both believing and being able to learn from the narrative--allying the work, thereby, with history. The narrator reflects his concern that the audience believe the narrative in more direct ways as well. One way he does so is by frequent references to the work's source. Generally these take the form of conventional statements like "now sayeth the history," such statements usually functioning as transitions. Occasionally, however, the references to the source suggest not only a merely conventional way of moving from one phase of the action to another, but also a sense of the truth of what is being narrated, as when the author says "Now sayeth the historye, that sithe the tyme of the kyng Alexandre, was none suche herde as this same is/And therfor, fayr lordes, playse you to here Y vnderstande" (p. 68) or "Wyth charlemagne were also many other grete pryncis Y barons/wereof the boke maketh noo mencyon, For it were to longe a thynge to be re-counted" (p. 541). Statements like the last in particular suggest a sense that events exist outside the scope of this particular book, which records only the most important. Perhaps the most notable of these kinds of references is the last: "The memory of [Reynawd] was that tyme put in wrytynge auctentykly; and every yere is there
kepte for hym grete solempnyte & feest" (p. 592). This reference refers to the recording of the very report in which it appears, it asserts that record's authenticity, and it links the events being reported from the past with events occurring in the present. Several times events of that past are similarly linked with the present, as for instance the report that Reynawd's horse Bayard (having escaped Charlemagne's treacherous attempt to drown him) may still be heard roaming the forest of Arden (p. 497). The author seeks to reinforce the sense of the truth of his report also by repeated remarks that seem to call for the reader's assent to the truth of what he says: "wite that," "to say the truth," "I promise you."

The lack of narrative shape or selectivity and the unadorned, forthright style reinforce the sense of the narrative's historicity in ways similar qualities work in the case of Godfrey. Unfortunately, in the case of nearly every one of its attributes, the characteristics of Four Sons seem to be the result at least as much of its author's lack of skill as of a sense of what might be appropriate to its type. It is not possible to assert, as with Godfrey, that elements of narrative style might have been consciously manipulated to achieve a particular effect. Though there is little evidence of authorial control, however, it is possible to identify qualities which led Caxton to see the narrative as more historical than fictional, qualities similar in effect to those so skillfully used in Godfrey.

Charles the Grete offers a different kind of dilemma. It certainly has the qualities identified with Four Sons.
and Godfrey. Despite its being a combination of several sources, it is more controlled and thematically unified than Four Sons. However, determining what Caxton thought of the narrative is problematic, because most of the prologue and epilogue are based on his French source. What is original to Caxton consists largely of pleas for prayers and indulgences in judging the style. Though the prologue and epilogue do provide insights about Charles, therefore, we cannot be sure to what extent Caxton shared the author's assumptions. Nevertheless, that Caxton did accept his author's judgements is suggested by his procedure in publishing Eneydos, whose author also speaks of the work as history. In that case Caxton precedes the author's prologue with his own, where he shifts the original author's emphasis from the history to the eloquence of the work. He also there makes clear the distinction between the author's preface and his own, something he does not do in the case of Charles. Therefore, his handling of the Charles preface implies that he accepts the original author's characterization.

In his introduction the author expounds on the purpose of history as moral and further characterizes the work as history rather than pure contemplation or imagination. His remarks cover several topics: the value of literature in general, especially history; the value of the specific story of Charlemagne; the nature of his translation.

The preface opens with a rather full and traditional defense of history, beginning with references to Paul ("Saynt Poul, doctour of veryte, sayth to vs that al thynges that ben reduced by wrytyng
ben wryton to our doctrype") and Boethius ("Boece maketh mencion
that the helthe of euery persone procedeth dyuercely"). Though the
best instruction in Christian faith and right behavior comes from
reading doctrine, some are better instructed by reading work that
recounts the deeds and acts of men who lived in the past:

Sythe it is soo that the cristen feyth is
affermied and corrobered by the doctours of
holy chyrche, Neuertheles the thynges passed
dyuersley reduced to remembraunce engendre
in vs correction of vunlauful lyf... [The
works of the past] gyue to vs ensaumple to
lyue in good & vertuous operacions digne &
worthy of helth, in folowyng the good and
eschewyng the euyl... In reconntyng of
hye hystoryes the comune vnderstondyng is
better content to the ymagnacion local than
to symple auctoryte to which it is submysed.

We have seen such a view of the instructional value of history in
both discussions of history and defenses of the use of historical
narrative as subject matter for literature. Caxton himself
justifies his translation on the basis of its instructional value,
noting that "the moost quantyte of the people vnderstonde not latyn
ne frensshe here in this noble royame of englond." Such a statement
suggests a fairly broad image of Caxton's audience, and the assumption
that all citizens should understand and learn from the past. It
contrasts also with his emphasis on the courtly audience in
introducing Blanchardin and Eglantine. In fact, Caxton often tends
when ascribing didactic qualities to a work to identify a broad
audience.8

Caxton places this particular narrative, as the story of one of
the Christian worthies, alongside the other lives of Christian
worthies he has published, Godfrey of Bologne and Le Morte Darthur. The story of Charlemagne and his peers "is a werk wel contemplatyf for to liue wel" not only because of "their grete strength & ryght ardaunt courage" but even more because they worked and fought "to the exaltacyon of the crysten fayth and to the confusyon of the hethen sarazyns and myscreaunts." This emphasis on Charles' service to the Church recalls what Caxton said in introducing the story of Godfrey and his and Reynawd's final status as Christian saints. The emphasis, then, is on Charles as a Christian leader more than as a military hero, romantic knight, or great European king. Because the emphasis is on the man Charles and his deeds and virtues the reader will find here "no gaye termes, ne subtyle ne newe eloquence."

Rather, Caxton looks for understanding. This emphasis on example and understanding rather than rhetorical embellishment is typical, also, of the distinction Caxton makes elsewhere between history and fiction.

In the envoy—like the prologue, partly translation and partly original to Caxton—the French author again comments on the value of the narrative in terms appropriate to history. He uses the formula employed again and again by Caxton and many others to praise history, finding in it examples of both good and bad, and he also repeats the common praise of narrative's special power, derived from its specificity and concreteness, to move its readers: "the comune understandyng is more contente to reteyne parables and examples for the ymagynacion locall, than to symple auctoryte, the whyche is reteyyned by vnderstandyng." The author has referred to the superior appeal of "hye hystoryes" over "symple autoryte" in his preface as
well, but in the envoy he develops his characterization of history's power by citing the story of Christ, his miracles, and his followers. As he did in the introduction, the author also lists his sources, suggesting a concern with the authenticity of his narrative. Caxton adds only the conventional apology for his "symple & rude" style.

Charles the Grete is essentially a life of Charlemagne combined with stories of the adventures of his peers fighting in Spain against the Saracens, especially the emir Balan and his son Ferumbras (later Christianized). That dual focus may be attributed to the way the French prose writer combined his major sources, Vincent of Beauvais' Speculum Historiale and one of the Ferumbras chansons de geste. Because, as the author himself says, he has not changed, added to, or deleted from his sources, the narrative is somewhat inconsistent in its handling of the story and in its style and technique, with only the Ferumbras section presenting an extended narrative, the Speculum Historiale sections being more clearly historical. Even in the large central section, however, the recognizably conventional, fictional elements provide no more than a veneer, so that the work taken as a whole is more like history than like fiction.

Like Godfrey and Four Sons, Charles begins with background, focusing mostly on the genealogy from the settlement of France after the Trojan War through the first Christian King Clovis and the conversion of France, Pepin, and finally to Charlemagne himself. This introductory matter reflects a concern with historical context, with understanding the past for its own sake, especially as it fits
into universal and church history. The importance of this historical context, morally speaking, is made even clearer by the attention paid to the conversion of the French. Especially significant are the attempts of Clovis' wife Clotildis to convert him, her persistence in the Christian faith despite his opposition, his final conversion, and the consequent victory over the Germans. The articles of faith are repeated several times in the description of this process, and two instances of heavenly intervention in France's affairs are reported, once in the victory Clovis finally achieves over the Germans and again at his baptism, when a dove brings a vessel of chrism from heaven (the Bishop having forgotten to bring his). By remarking that this same vessel has been used ever since to anoint all French kings, the author provides an important link between past and present which reinforces the connection between the history of France and the Christian church.

The early part of the book establishes a kind of historical context also by providing a brief summary of Charles' major achievements, personality, and appearance, particularly his size, his diet, his personal habits, the education of his children, his conquests, his crowning as Holy Roman Emperor, and his service to the Church: his conquest of Padua, his battles against the Saracens, his standardization of church services, his loyalty to the pope, making him "Ruler of the chyrche and protectour of the fayth."

Like the introductory material in Godfrey, the first book and a half asserts the right of the whole work to be considered as history, for it exploits history's dual appeal as the means of satisfying readers' curiosity about the past and of providing them moral teaching.
Additionally, it introduces themes and motifs that will be repeated again and again, all used to remind the reader of Charles' contributions as Christian king. By placing the story of Charlemagne in the largest possible context, moving from the Trojan War and the settlement of France forward, the author manages to inform us of a wide range of topics. Even more telling, the introductory matter's wealth of personal detail satisfies curiosity about Charles as a human being. Further, and again as in Godfrey, the introductory matter's emphasis on the particularly Christian nature of Charles' achievement provides moral instruction and reiterates what Caxton says in his preface on the position of Charlemagne alongside Godfrey of Bologne and Arthur as a Christian worthy.

This concern with Charles as Christian leader is even more developed in the later parts of the work. The sections on Ferumbras and the Christian-Saracen struggles in Spain (largely, but not entirely, descended from the chanson de geste) assert again and again that the characters' motivations are religious. Sometimes the characters simply call on God for help or swear by Him. Other times, though, their prayers also include a brief summary of the story of the fall and redemption, a kind of mini-cycle of Christian history, thereby providing additional instruction, not just for the Saracens at whom such recitations are sometimes aimed, but also for the reader. The Christians are not the only ones who see the wars in religious terms. Balan and the other Saracens repeatedly refer to their gods, praying to them, asking Christians to convert, asserting supremacy. Several times the question of whose God is legitimate is put to the test of
combat (with the stakes raised every time the Saracen god loses). Both sides seek converts, but only the Christians are successful. Balan's son Ferumbras becomes such a great Christian that he is canonized (St. Floren), and his daughter, too, is converted when she sees the peers destroy her idols to no ill effect. In the narrator's commentary, too, faith is central.

Once Spain has been subdued Charles spends his time endowing churches and leading a contemplative life. In this last section of the book the character of the moral concerns changes. Earlier Christianity had provided the motivation for what were essentially military or at least physical exploits. The narrator at the end, though, becomes increasingly insistent on Charles' spiritual nature and contributions, even quoting at length from pseudo-Turpin on Charles' prayerfulness and on the great churches he endows. Doing so, of course, connects those great deeds and characters of the past with present-day bishoprics and shrines, several of them important pilgrimage destinations.

The importance of religious feeling in the story is reflected also in the numerous cases of divine intervention. In one episode not reported in the meterical versions of the Ferumbras story Richard is enabled to summon Charlemagne to the peers besieged by Balan when the river miraculously rises and he is led across by a white hart (pp. 157-158). Charles is several times forewarned which soldiers will die in battle. Charles, and other characters, receive instructions in visions and dreams. God clearly is acting in this history, as He does in Godfrey.
In addition to providing moral instruction in his focus on Christian history and good and bad behavior, the author makes moral comments, focusing in particular on God's role in one's life, on human nature, or on the greatness of these historical figures compared with those of the present. For instance, the author interrupts his hyperbolic description of the courtesy of Ferumbras and Oliver as they are engaged in combat against one another to compare the behavior of that time with that of the present:

O, what grete loyalte of noblesse was bytwene them whyche were of fayth and creauence contrarye! I suppose that god shold be wel pleased yf there were suche confyauence emonge crysten men and so ful of naturel noblesse (p. 59).

Such comments recall especially the comparison in Godfrey of the past and present state of the Christian faith in Europe. The characters are not always so admirable, however. After their victory against the Saracen Aigolant, the Christians, weighted down with booty, are slaughtered. The narrator uses that occasion to deliver a commentary on covetousness, as he also uses the occasion of Ganelon's being bribed to betray the French (pp. 219, 231). At another time Christians are killed--by God's will--as both punishment and redemption for their drunkeness and lechery (p. 232). And when Charlemagne vainly tries to save the men destined to die in one day's battle by locking them in his chapel, the narrator comments on the futility of trying to escape the fate God has ordained (p. 220). Similar in effect are the narrator's reminders of the importance of faith, as when, speaking of the Christians imprisoned in Balan's dungeon, he says:
the fayth of persones doth greate alegement of tormente, for the saynes of heuen by theyr holy fayth haue obteyend heuen, and many other terryen men victorye of theyr enemyes, and wyth good ryght he that fyghteth for the fayth, and it happe that he be deteyned, the mercy of god is nyghe for to delyuer hym (p. 97).

Besides being concerned with making the morality of the work clear, Charles' narrator takes care in the text (as he did in his prologue and envoy) to assert the narrative's authenticity, referring several times specifically to sources. His emphasis on his own task of clarifying the plan or order of the original and on his faithfulness to its content reflects a desire to make the history both more accessible and more credible. His references to various authorities, too, enhance his veracity and support his didactic intention. The most common citations are to scripture--Paul, Ecclesiastes, sometimes in Latin, sometimes in English. Particularly interesting are the lengthy quotations from Archbishop Turpin's life of Charles (the Pseudo-Turpin). Some of these further the narrative, as when Charles' death is recounted. Others provide exposition. The account of the great churches endowed by Charles, for example, not only contributes to the matter of Charles' life; it also provides important support for the argument of Charles' significance as a Christian king.

The narrator is concerned also with his own veracity and dependability. Describing Ferumbras' swords, the author refers to his source ("that whyche I haue founded by wrytyng," p. 59). Occasionally the author seeks to forestall the reader's questions, as when, describing the rise of the salt water in Balan's prison during a high tide to the men's shoulders, he says, "ye may damaunde me how they
were not drowned seeyng that the water grewe alwaye. ye shal
vnderstonde . . ." He then goes on to describe the pillars on which
the prisoners take refuge (p. 89).

All these characteristics clearly enhance the work's clarity,
believability, and didacticism. Indeed, there is only one quality
which might finally undermine Charles' historicity, and that is also
one of the most memorable characters, Floripas, Ferumbras' sister.
She is introduced with a typical catalogue of feminine charms:

her body . . . whyt & rody as rose in may. hyr
heyre . . . shynyng as the fyne golde . . .
hyr eyen clere as fawcon mued, & sparklyng
lyke ij sterres . . . her chekys rounde, whyt
as the flour de lys . . . her pappes were
reysed after the facyon of ij apples, rounde
and euen as the coppe of a litel montayn'
(p. 90).

Furthermore, her primary motivation for participating in the action
is love for Guy of Burgundy, whom she has seen in Rome and instantly
fallen in love with. She stands at her tower window during Balan's
siege and cheers on the peers in battle, especially Guy. In all
these superficial ways, she seems the typical romance heroine.
Her presence and role might be expected to give the Ferumbras section
at least the veneer of romance.

However, her untypical behavior and character prevent that from
happening. She proves herself a resourceful, strong, powerful young
woman, highly individualized. Both other characters and the narrator
seem nonplussed by her unfeminine behavior. First, her curiosity
about the prisoners' moaning leads to her questions of the porter and
her desire to see them. More significant, in rescuing the imprisoned
Frenchmen, she kills two of her own people, the porter ("she . . .
gaf hym such a stroke on the vysage that she made hys eyen flee oute
of his heed, & after he fyl doun & there she slew hym") and her nurse
("she . . . gaf hyr so grete a stroke that she fyl to the grounde")
(pp. 92, 94). She herself pulls the Frenchmen out of the dungeon
with a rope and heals, clothes, and arms them. During Balan's siege
she is frequently more master of the situation than the peers are,
suggesting when they should sally forth, how they should defend
themselves. She takes complete charge of her father's castle,
displaying the Christian relics Balan had seized in Rome, suggesting
the fighters hurl Balan's treasure as weapons when their stones and
spears have been exhausted, showing off the Saracen idols, deciding
where to take a final stand. She and her maidens actually join in the
fighting. And though her motivation is love, her vision of love is a
rather coarse one, as is seen when she assigns to each prisoner a
damsel and recognizes Gerard as a ladies' man ("I byleue veryly that
ye can wel playe with maydens of eage in somme chaumbre vnnder curteynes
It is mostfitting that she be crowned queen of Spain along with her
husband Guy at the end, for she is as fit to rule as any man. She is
as individualized and unconventional as Aymon's wife or the women in
Godfrey; she seems, finally, like a character from history.

In discussing Caxton's narratives on the Christian worthies in
order of publication (Godfrey, Charles, Four Sons, Morte), Penninger
sees "the development of the prose narrative from factual history to
fiction in the romance tradition." She does not define her criteria,
but her characterization is accurate if one considers only the factual basis of the narratives and their sources. However, if one examines the qualities of the narratives themselves without reference to modern historical knowledge—trying to approach, if only to a limited degree, the fifteenth-century reader's experience—the essential sameness of the first three narratives seems more striking than any gradual development. Caxton's prefaces bear out such a characterization. Although only Godfrey's preface provides clear evidence for an understanding of what Caxton means by history, his remarks on Four Sons and Charles reinforce what Godfrey suggests. In introducing all three, Caxton focuses on the desire to know the past and the moral value of history. The works themselves are characterized, to varying degrees, by a desire for clarity, the development of background information, lack of strong focus on one hero, moralizing comment, and the treatment of women, children, and lower classes as ordinary parts of human society. Furthermore, though they have occasional actions which look chivalric or courtly, these narratives are really not at all like what we might expect from a fictional narrative. They all seem to take place in the real world; they all are generally uninformed of stylistic embellishment or conventional courtly motifs; they all have the tone of flat reporting of actual events. It is probably more than coincidence that they are all connected with figures of the relatively recent European past.

The significance of these qualities becomes evident in contrast to the characteristics of Blanchardin and Eglantine, the one clear
example of fiction among these narratives, which has a stronger sense of structure, a focus more narrowly limited to the hero and heroine and their allies and enemies, stylistic embellishment, an emphasis on qualities that enhance entertainment, and the manipulation of literary convention. Caxton's emphasis, too, is as much on the esthetic effect of the story as on what happens. Because the authors of *Four Sons* and *Charles* do not seem to be in full control of their materials, as the authors of *Blanchardin* and *Godfrey* are, conclusions about the nature of the narratives must be more tentative than in the cases of *Blanchardin* and *Godfrey*. Nevertheless, Caxton seems to have recognized what my analysis suggests: that in subject, style, structure, and narrative technique the two works share more qualities with history than with fiction. The findings of my analysis of *Godefroy of Bologna* and *Blanchardin and Eglantine* have, then, been more widely applicable.
NOTES


3 See, for instance, Caxton's prefices to Game of Chess (Blake, Prose, p. 87), Mirror of the World (p. 114), Canterbury Tales (p. 61), Charles the Grete (p. 66), and Blanchardin and Eglantine (pp. 57-58) for those distinctions.

4 The MED does not distinguish between the two senses of poetry.

5 See the Canterbury Tales (Blake, Prose, p. 61), Chess (p. 87), and Polycronic (pp. 128-30) remarks for other discussions of the distinction between purely didactic and imaginative literature, and recall my discussion, p. 52, note 36.

6 Such women remind me especially of the Paston women as represented in their letters.

8 See Caxton's remarks on Boethius, Cato, Chess, Friendship, Royal Book, Good Manners. The audience for narratives is usually, in contrast, limited to the ruling class. Charles is thus a special case.

9 These are the sorts of details included also in the biographies of Charlemagne by Notker and Einhard, Two Lives of Charlemagne, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969).


11 The lack of stylistic embellishment is less a quality of Charles, where conventional metaphors and description appear with some regularity without, however, changing its essential nature.
My examination of *Godefroy of Bologne*, *The Four Sons of Aymon*, *Charles the Grete*, and *Blanchardin and Eglantine* has suggested that Caxton's characterizations of the works in his prefaces can be connected to qualities of the works themselves. In the *history*, *Godefroy of Bologne*, these qualities create a sense of real action occurring in the real world reported by a narrator whose purpose is to tell us what happened and help us understand its moral significance. Given the rhetoricians' definition of *historia* as the report of what really happened, and the praise of history as a good teacher because it provides positive and negative examples of behavior, Godefroy's emphasis on connections to the real world and the moral significance of events and characters is appropriate, and so are Caxton's remarks on the work. The same types of qualities and characterizations appear, to a lesser degree, in the historical *Four Sons* and *Charles*. The world of *Blanchardin and Eglantine* is very different, with a heavy reliance on convention -- of setting, language, character, action, and structure--which create a clear sense for the reader.
that Blanchardin and Eglantine is not history, that it is fiction—the product of an imagination, not the report of real events. And Caxton's remarks in the preface seem to recognize that difference, for he focuses on the entertainment value of the narrative (though, of course, not failing to claim for it moral value as well) and on its ties to other narratives of the same type—that is, romances of chivalry. My argument, then, is that for at least these works there are clear differences in what Caxton identified as history and as entertainment, differences connected to his rather fuzzy sense of the difference between history and fiction.

My final task is to determine whether that sense applies to the version of the Arthur story Caxton published, a more ambiguous narrative in terms of historicity and fictionality than any of those others. Modern commentators have argued from a variety of approaches for the historicity of Malory's story of Arthur, discussing the widespread medieval and Renaissance belief in Arthur's historical existence, the "historical" or chronicle-like elements of Malory's style, or the work's essential character as a "prose cycle." Malory does at times seem to assume the truth of the action he reports, yet when one reads Le Morte Darthur the overall impression is that it is fiction. The modern reader reacts to the idea of the work's historicity with ambivalence. Caxton's preface shows that he, too, was ambivalent, unable to choose between considering it fiction and seeing it as history. Though he claims finally to believe that the work is history, he qualifies his statement enough to suggest that he does not fully accept his own argument.
Such an idea is suggested in Caxton's report of his motivation in publishing Malory. After he had, as he says,

... accomplishshed and fynysshed dyuers hystoryes as wel of contemplacyon as of other hystoryal and worldly actes of grete conquerours and prynces, and also certeyn bookes of ensaumple and doctryne, many noble and dyuers gentylmen of thys royame of Englund camen and demaunded me many and oftymes, wherefore that I haue not do made and enprynte the noble historye of the Sayntgreal and of the moost renomed Crysten kyg, fyrst and chyef of the thre best Crysten and worthy, Kyng Arthur, whyche ought moost to be remembred emonge vs Englysshemen tofore al other Crysten kynges (p. 1).

Given Caxton's opinion on the central importance and popularity of the Arthurian story, one wonders today, also, why he waited so long to print it, especially in view of his own overriding interest in both narratives and chivalry, reflected in his other prefaces and publication of other romances and instruction books. In addressing this question, Spisak, who detects a note of hesitancy in Caxton's prologue and sees it as a kind of disclaimer, posits the contemporary political situation as an explanation, using that explanation as an assumption for his argument that Caxton did not revise Malory's text. But perhaps Caxton's explanation is wholly satisfactory by itself: confusion about the status of the Arthurian story as history or fiction. As Caxton says:

... dyuers men holde oppynyon that there was no sucheArthur, and that alle suche bookes as been maad of hym ben but fayned and fables, bycause that somme cronycles make of hym no menencyon ne remembre hym noothynge ne of his knyghtes (p. 1).

Caxton's remark here is part of a small but vocal tradition of
doubts about Arthur's existence or about the truth of various stories connected with him. In fact, Caxton's arguments both for and against Arthur are remarkably similar to the familiar ones made in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, which had begun at the time of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Since Caxton never even implies such a doubt about the two other Christian worthies, the very fact of controversy about Arthur's existence would seem to be sufficient explanation for not having published a history of him whom some call the greatest of that group. Still, despite his doubts, Caxton says that someone has persuaded him at least that he cannot neglect Arthur's story. So he goes on with his claim to have been persuaded to believe in Arthur by the evidence his questioners provide: Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury, Boccaccio's treatment of Arthur in the *De Casu Principium*, the round table at Winchester, and other remnants of his reign. The combination of the many books, both in England and in Europe, which mention him and the many physical remains finally amount to enough proof for Caxton to say "I coude not wel denye but that there was suche a noble kyng named Arthur." But several aspects of the rest of the discussion leave some doubt.

Caxton's tone is especially significant as a possible indicator of his belief in the validity of his argument. The compulsion he evidently feels to present all this proof of Arthur's existence insures that there will be doubt in the reader's mind, even if there had not been before. He does not present similar arguments in defense of his telling the stories of Charlemagne, Godfrey, or Troy. The simplest explanation is that Caxton is presenting both
sides of the controversy so no one will be offended and he can appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Similarly, he may be trying to justify both his slowness in printing the story and his final agreement to do so. Or perhaps more significantly, Caxton may be searching for a way to defend the story's utility, not sure he can do so in the usual terms of fiction or history. Doubts are raised, however, by more than Caxton's presentation of the argument and the questions it raises. Caxton finally encourages, rather than dispels, doubt when he says, "but for to gyue fayth and byleue that al is trewe that is conteyned herein, ye be at your lyberte," suggesting that he does not find the arguments for Arthur's existence completely compelling. Further, he adds, "al is wryton for our doctryne," implying that the moral value of the work does not depend on its historicity, reminding us of the frequent use of Paul's dictum to defend fiction.

Furthermore, in his discussion of the work's moral qualities, Caxton focuses on chivalry:

I ... haue doon sette it in enprynte, to the entente that noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyualrye, the ientyl and vertuous dedes that somme knyghtes used in tho dayes, by whyche they came to honour, and how they that were vycious were punysshed and ofte put to shame and rebuke (p. 2).

Like history, these tales are expected to provide example for those who live in the present. However, the examples they provide are of chivalry, always important to both Caxton and Malory, but also a code where the distinction between reality and fiction is blurred, increasingly so in the fifteenth century. Finally, in line with a
typical historical appeal, Caxton asks his readers to "take the good and honest actes in their remembaunce and to folowe the same . . . . Doo after the good and leve the evyl, and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee."

Caxton makes one other remark in the preface that provides clues for determining the work's genre: "for to passe the tyme thys book shal be pleasaunte to rede in," a claim similar to one made for Blanchardin and Eglantine. Any mention of a book's entertainment value is significant, for though history was again and again seen as a pleasant way to learn moral truths, only fiction (and specifically fable) was seen as pastime. Furthermore, he twice specifically addresses women as part of his audience ("noble lords and ladys," "gentylmen or gentylwymmen"). One remembers how Conrad von Hirsau saw fiction as particularly appropriate for ladies, and how Caxton addresses ladies specifically in the prologue to Blanchardin and Eglantine.6

This series of statements are not convincing evidence for anything. But the doubts they raise are reinforced by Caxton's two descriptions of the narrative's content in terms eminently suitable to the romance of chivalry (p. 3): "Herein," he says, "may be seen noble chyualrye, curtosye, humanyte, frendlynesse, hardynesse, loue, frendshyp, cowardyse, murdre, hate, vertue and synne." The beginning of the catalogue, placing courtesy and chivalry first, identifies the prime concerns of the chivalric romance. As he moves through the list Caxton grows more general. All the elements he lists are elements of the Arthurian story, and
the juxtaposition of love and friendship, the presence of love and hate in the same list, admirably capture the complexity of the Arthurian court and the tensions that lead to its destruction. But the last two elements of Caxton's list are virtue and sin; he seems to have moved, then, to the moral value of the work, having worked through its chivalric and tragic appeal. In a second catalogue several lines later Caxton says this book "treateth of the noble actes, feates of armes of chyualarye, prowesse, hardynesse, humanyte, loue, curtosye, and veray gentylenesse, wyth many wonderful hystoryes and aduentures." This list is as comprehensive as the first but emphasizes courtesy, chivalry, gentleness, love, wonder, and adventures, concerns especially typical of chivalric romance. The catalogue reflects Caxton's recognition that the narrative does something other than record acts of the past; it creates a world, the world of a conventional literary form, a world different from our own. This complex characterization suggests one reason the work is not easily categorized as history or imaginative literature: in its moral complexity it encompasses all of reality.

Malory's Morte shares qualities with both the historical and fictional narratives Caxton published. Like a writer of history, Malory takes care to locate the action in real places, past and present, and to provide realistic motivations for much of it. His style is generally unadorned and unobtrusive, appropriate to the reporting of action which is history. Indeed, he and some of his characters share, occasionally, a sense of the historical significance of the action occurring. Yet the actions, characters, and
places are highly conventional, clearly of the milieu of the
courtly romance. Additionally, the humor and irony, structural and
thematic echoes, and a number of literary conventions in the work
create a sense of authorial control. Although Malory's work
contains history-like elements, Caxton's continued doubts about its
historicity are justified, not only by what we now understand about
fictionality but also by the characteristics which identify the book
as a work of the literary imagination. What has been done in this
narrative is unlike what is done in any of the others. At its best
(and the style, narrative control, and effect are uneven) the work
combines the techniques of history and fiction to create a world which
is not ours but is like ours, one which takes hold of the imagination
of the reader so that its events seem more real than real, its
failure more devastating than the failure of a real kingdom. The
Morte's world has the appeal of Blanchardin and Eglantine's, the
complexity of Godfrey's or Four Sons', the admirableness of Charles'.
Yet the story has a forcefulness that none of those has, in large
part because of the combination of those qualities and the degree
to which we are compelled to believe in the world, even as we are
reminded of its fictionality. In short, Malory's mastery of the
techniques of realistic fiction gives his story a special power
arising from its ambiguities. Caxton recognizes the power, but is
unsettled by the ambiguities. Fiction here is no longer just a
way to pass the time or a sop to minds too weak for the harsher
truths of history. But this is an untraditional treatment of fiction/
history, and Caxton does not know what to make of it.
An examination of the qualities of the text suggests how well-justified Caxton's uncertainty is, for the text exhibits characteristics of both history and fiction in its style, its milieu, its action, and its narrator's attitudes. Ultimately, however, the reader's sense of the narrator's control of tone, attitude, and incident compels one to characterize the work as fiction using techniques of history to achieve realism.

Those mixed signals about the story's nature are seen at both the local level of style and the global level of milieu. Malory's style is two-sided, in some ways like the style of history, in others the style of fiction. Lambert and Field argue that the qualities of Malory's style, those of the chronicle tradition, reduce the reader's sense of a narrator, enhancing the sense that the events being reported are real. Field sees in the characteristics he has identified reason to place Malory's work in the tradition of the chronicle. Lambert sees Malory's style as typical of that of his contemporaries and sources, with its effect being to create the sense that the values Malory is describing are fixed and real, that they are important ("central, normative truths"), and that Malory hence sees his role as that of the recorder of history. It is true that Malory's style is generally unadorned, not calling attention to itself, to a narrator in control, or to the action being reported; a plain style, it is appropriate for the simple reporting of events. Its simple diction and syntax do supply a flat, matter-of-fact tone and reduce our sense of the narrator as a mind controlling events and characters; hence, they reinforce the sense of the reality of
This matter-of-fact style seems unconnected to the matter being reported. Even in that most wondrous of tales, the quest of the Holy Grail, the reporting is in the same flat tone.

Nevertheless, the effect of Malory's style is not uniform. Certainly in places we feel that Malory is recording history and that he sees the values his work reflects as important. However, this is true only in part. More important, the reader's sense of Malory's presence in the narrative varies from section to section, becoming especially strong as the narrative develops. The power of the last sections in particular derives in part from the reader's awareness of the narrator's sorrow at what he reports. The effect of our awareness of the narrator is to decrease the sense of the historian merely recording past events, enhancing the sense of the imaginative mind shaping a narrative for some purpose. We can draw no final conclusion on the basis of style as to the historicity or fictionality of the work, largely because the effects of stylistic qualities are not consistent. Caxton's ambivalence seems immediately justified.

Consideration of the narrative's setting, action, and character leaves one equally unsure of how it should be viewed. Some sections--generally these reporting Arthur's battles and conquests--are indistinguishable from true history. Yet other sections are quintessentially romantic, so conventional in setting, character, and action that they can belong only to the world of Blanchardin and Eglantine, the world of fiction.

The opening, for example, seems historical, placing the action
as it does in a specific time of the past (the days of Uther Pendragon) rather than in a mythical "once upon a time." Malory even adds realistic details like Merlin's instructions to Uther that he not speak during his visit to Igraine so that she will not realize he is not her husband. Such a detail seems to reduce the power of Merlin's magic and to locate the action more securely in the naturalistic world.\(^9\) The opening of the third section, which recounts the series of adventures connected to the wedding of Arthur and Guenevere, also locates the action securely in the real world, for it recounts the political situation Arthur faces. It recalls some of the circumstances surrounding Arthur's ascendancy and moves quickly to the major concern, the pressure on Arthur to marry and Arthur's request for advice from Merlin. Though Arthur insists on marrying Guenevere for love, against Merlin's advice, most of the considerations are political rather than romantic.

Perhaps the most history-like of all the Morte's chapters, in terms of the type of action, the way it is reported, and the types of characters, is the fifth. This is especially so in the version Caxton published. In revising the Alliterative Morte Arthure for this section the author reduced its scope, treating only Arthur's conquest of Europe and his crowning as emperor by the pope, omitting the Alliterative Morte's account of Arthur's destruction, and reducing the amount of discourse, description and alliteration as he turned verse into prose. The account is a straight-forward, relatively unadorned one. Such a narrative style would suggest that the events reported are regarded as true. Ironically, it is those
events which were most frequently singled out as unlikely by medieval historians, who noted that Arthur's victories and Emperor Lucius were not mentioned in continental accounts.

Such history-like elements and way of approaching the narrative are not confined to the early sections of the Arthurian tale, for Malory in several additional ways connects his tale to the real world. One of the most obvious techniques by which he does so is to supply place-names connecting Arthur and his deeds to contemporary England. Camelot is repeatedly identified with Winchester, and events are frequently located in real geographical places. Such specificity is not limited to England; in reporting the disruption of the Round Table Malory connects Lancelot's allies with sections of France, and Arthur's route through France in his conquest of Europe echoes Henry V's route from England to Calais (Vinaver, Works, p. 1397). These kinds of connections of the setting to the real world are like the proofs of Arthur's existence Caxton assembled; because they connect Arthur's court with reality they seem to argue for his authenticity. Of course, they do not prove it, but they are different in kind from the obviously fictional settings of Blanchardin.10

In a number of other ways Malory reduces the wonder and mystery of the Arthurian Story, seemingly allying it with history. He rarely leaves characters who are anonymous in his source nameless, almost always providing them with a name, frequently with a lineage. He often identifies characters as soon as they appear, when the French source might wait several pages or chapters before doing so.
Action, too, is made less mysterious as Malory reduces the element of the wondrous and explains events that in the French remain mysterious; makes motivations clearer, more real-life-like; and unweaves the threads of the interlaced French narrative, making the record of events much more straightforward and easy to follow. All these kinds of changes have the effect of linking the action more closely to the everyday world and of making it easier to understand, effects more appropriate to history than to fiction. Caxton's confusion becomes increasingly understandable with the repeated juxtaposition of the highly conventional and mysterious with the mundane and matter-of-fact, making it difficult to determine whether this is history or fiction. In fact, there are some actions which seem more appropriate to the real world than to the fantasy world of conventional romance. Some of these are original to Malory; occasionally they may be traced to his source. In the early books the dissension and factional argument accompanying Arthur's accession to the throne remind the reader of real-life political intrigue (like the actions of four Sons and Charles), as do the means by which Mordred and Lancelot collect allies against Arthur at the end of the work. Though kings may face troublesome subjects in other romances, there is seldom such attention paid to factionalism among the barons or the role of the commons. We see the barons at work again when Angwych of Ireland demands ransom and Mark seeks the advice of his barons, as did Arthur in a similar situation (p. 202). Sometimes connections to the real world are made simply by introducing realistic details, as when the Round Table knights released from
Yet to focus only on the work's realism--much of it, admittedly, introduced with Malory's changes to the French source--is to ignore the "hoole book" of King Arthur, with its emphasis on "feates of armes of chyualarye . . . cortosye, and veray gentylnesse, wyth many wonderful . . . adventures." Again we must remember that Caxton's prefatory catalogues encompass historical and fictional qualities, and so does Malory's romance. Despite its military and political realism, Malory's Morte still occurs in the traditional romantic world, where rivers, forests, meadows, fountains bring adventures to the knights who ride in search for them; where the desire to cross a bridge or find lodging at a castle or inn is likely to bring with it a challenge; where military prowess and love are inextricably, causally linked. That world is introduced in the first book, which, despite its history-like tone, has a setting so conventional that there is no doubt in the reader's mind about what universe it occupies. Its conventionally literary elements will become increasingly pervasive: a milieu clearly romantic (hence largely fictional), conventional folk-tale motifs, Merlin's magical control of the action (including his ability to prophesy and Arthur's marvelous conception and accession to the throne), the courtly view of love, the first appearance of the questing beast, and the series of adventures (many by wells or fountains). As early as the second book, the adventures of Balan and Balin introduce more specifically the elements of knightly adventure to be repeated again and again: a lady riding into Arthur's court in search of an
adventure-hungry knight, the power of love as motivating force, adventure coming apparently by chance. Foretold also, in Balin's cutting off the head of the Lady of the Lake and in the mortal duel of the two brothers, are some of the basic problems which will plague and ultimately destroy the Arthurian world, problems stemming from that search for glory which will increasingly motivate the knights. The future of that world is even predicted in the prophecies that appear repeatedly in Book II--fortelling Tristram, Lancelot, the dolorous Stroke, the Sankgreall, Arthur's death, Mordred's threat, Galahad--as well as in the book's events. As Arthur says in a different context, these are the kinds of adventures that befall errant knights (p. 103).

The second book, then, prepares for the Arthurian court's dedication to adventure, which is made explicit in the third book, the record of the strange and marvelous adventures associated with Arthur and Guenevere's otherwise realistically presented wedding. Pellynore, Gawain, and Torre (a knight initially mis-identified as a cowherd) pursue the adventure brought to Arthur's court by a lady whom Arthur is glad to see gone, "for she made suche a noyse" (p. 83). Arthur's attitude is perhaps amusing, but Merlin's rebuke places the adventure in its appropriate context in Arthurian romance: the adventure, like all future adventures which precede or interrupt Arthur's meals, must be pursued for Arthur's worship. Hereafter the search for worship becomes a leading motivation for Arthur's court. As important as the character of the adventures themselves is what they teach: Gawain becomes a defender of ladies after having refused
to spare one, Pellinore and Torre learn of the power of love, and at the end of it all, the adventures having been reported at his court, Arthur defines his code. Malory says Arthur instructed his knights and:

\[\text{charged hem never to doo outragyousyte nor mordre, and alweyes to flee treason. Also by no meane to be cruel, but to gyue mercy vnto hym that asketh mercy, ... and alweyes to doo ladyes, damoysels, and gentylwymmen socour. ... Also that no man take noo batails in a wrongful quarel. ... Vnto this were all, the knyghtes sworne of the Table Round (p. 92).}\]

The tale of Sir Gareth is especially instructive as an example of conventional romance, especially if it is Malory's creation. The structure of the narrative is prototypical, encompassing a knight's questing and ending with a tournament and wedding. The pattern of Gareth's adventures is highly conventional: a knight sets out from Arthur's court in response to a summons from a lady, defeats numerous knights including his own allies, rescues ladies, wins his love at a tournament, and finally marries the lady he has been serving. A narrative pattern so highly conventionalized, so predictable, identifies the work with others of its kind, drawing attention to the work as literary creation. Such focus seems more appropriate to fiction than to historical narrative. The world of the tale is equally conventional. Arthur finds adventure simply by wishing for it. Indeed, the focus of his own life has become the witnessing of marvels, rather than the ruling of his kingdom as we might expect from a real king, and when marvels do not come to him, he seeks them out. Because Arthur's knights are so bent on
adventure, Beowmaynes easily finds opportunities to fight and
Lyones knows her tournament will be well attended. The negative
side of this adventurism, which will ultimately destroy Arthur's
world, is seen in the prophetic comment of the Red Knight of the
Red Lands: he has killed so many knights because he has been
seeking vengeance on behalf of a lady against Gawain or Lancelot
(p. 176).

Even in the most straightforward, military/political, and
"historical" of the books, IV and V, conventional motifs repeatedly
undercut the sense that real history is being reported. During the
actions closing Book IV (after the War with the Five.Kings), the
adventures of Gawain, Uwain and Marhaus in the forest of Array, the
role of ladies and dwarfs, shields hanging on trees, and the search for
lodging as causes of adventure are highly conventional. The whole
purpose of the forest, in fact, seems to be to provide adventures,
as is suggested when three damsels tell the three knights that they
are there to "teche [erraunt knyghtes] unto straunge auentures"
(p. 110). Similarly, the tale of Arthur's Conquest of Lucius (Book
V) has at least one typically romantic adventure, when "Gawain took
his horse and stole away from his fellowship to seek some adventures"
(pp. 228ff). Again and again in what look like historical accounts
the value system and landscape of romance dominate.

The two manners by which setting and character are presented
help account for Caxton's uncertainty (and ours) about the
historicity or fictionality of Malory's work. Some realistic,
mundane details do connect the world of the narrative with the world
of everyday life; yet despite such moments of realism, the narrative obviously occurs in the literary world of conventional romance. Just as Caxton felt constrained to close his arguments for Arthur's existence with the caveat that the reader should decide the matter for himself, so a modern reader might feel that all the piling up of realistic detail does not change the work's basic fictive character. As Caxton says in the Epilogue to the Order of Chivalry, "that is a world or as thyng incredyble to byleve." Indeed, in ways Malory's use of realistic details has the opposite effect: rather than connecting the world of the narrative to the real world, the realistic details remind us of how foreign that world is, by encouraging us to juxtapose it with our own. Thus is the poignance (hence the recreational and moral value) of the work enhanced. For example, in an original passage on the retirement of Lancelot's allies after the destruction of Camelot, Malory says, "and soo their horses wente where they wolde, for they toke no regarde of no worldly rychesses" (p. 596). Focusing on the remark's enhancement of realism, Vinaver points out that the passage reflects "the attitude of a man who knows from experience the value of a horse to a knight-warrior [reflecting] the thought . . . that the moment a knight has ceased to take care of his horse his worldly life is ended" (p. 1659). In view of the importance of the knight's horse in romance—particularly, the frequent conventional references to "mares' sons" in Malory and the problems caused Lancelot and Perceval by the lack of a horse—Malory's statement gains special power as it suggests the completeness of the destruction of the Arthurian world. That power
of feeling seems more significant than the statement's realistic attitude. Similarly, the presence of robbers on the final battlefield (p. 590) recalls the Old English beasts of battle convention while it suggests the completeness of the breakdown of social order, already dramatically and realistically evoked in the remark (original to Malory) that many have sided with Mordred because "than was the comyn voys emonge them that wyth Arthur was none other lyf but warre and stryffe, and wyth Syr Mordred was grete ioye and blysse" (p. 585). This remark reflects the contemporary political turmoil with which Malory and Caxton were both intimately familiar; equally significant is the fact that the contrast with Arthur's earlier widespread popular support increases the tragedy of his split with Lancelot. Just as the historical quality of Malory's plain style is undercut by his strong presence as narrator, so his realism is given special power in its juxtaposition with romantic convention. Neither realism nor plain style turns the narrative into history; they do, however, make its character as fiction problematic.

Even when characters and narrator make direct references to their own sense of history, the Morte gives mixed signals. This historical consciousness seems to be clustered in the early and late books and in the story of the Sankgreall, in each section serving a slightly different function. In the early sections, combining prophecy with historical record-keeping, it prepares for what is to come. In the Sankgreall section, historical commentary (sacred and secular) provides theological instruction to the Grail
knights, while in the final section the record-keeping helps create the sense of tragic closure. The historical sense of characters is clearest when they record their deeds in chronicles, on tombs, and on the monuments they erect; that of the narrator when he refers to his source or removes himself from the events he is reporting to comment on them. In addition to serving the typical romance function of providing instructions for a knight's quest, letters sometimes inform characters of the past of their literary world. This sense of the past appears in other contexts as well. In Book V, for instance, when Lucius' messengers come to demand Arthur's ransom, Arthur refers to his understanding of the past to make his claim to the empire (p. 122). Lancelot, on being forced to leave England, compares the mutability of his fortunes to that reported by "many old cronkles of noble Ector, and Troylus, and Alysander... and many moo other" (p. 575). Though the characters of the Morte certainly have a sense of their place in their own history, their history is not necessarily to be perceived as the reader's. The Camelot characters' sense of their own existence in time may convince the reader that he is reading a true account of real events; it also provides narrative and thematic continuity, thus enhancing the literary quality of the work. Deciding which effect is primary is difficult.14

Occasionally the narrator himself enters the story. Once again, his entrances seem at first glance to suggest a historical attitude, but may be interpreted differently. For instance, while the narrator's references to his source may seem on the surface to
promote the historicity of the work, Vinaver's finding that such references frequently mark places where Malory has departed from his source does not bear out such an impression. Also, references to the French or Romance book are so frequent in romances from the earliest days that it seems at least likely that the audience would have recognized them as a convention of the genre, much as one recognizes the eighteenth-century novelist's habit of indicating place and family names by an initial. Malory's willingness to amplify or change his sources suggests at least that he might have viewed the convention so. His several references in the last books (592, 598, 509) to disagreements among his sources are more troubling, for his dissatisfaction with apparent contradictions suggests a desire to see the deeds as historic. Yet his attributing some of that disagreement to the "favour of makers" suggests that he recognized the story's fictionality. The narrator's conventional claims for the historicity of the work are, then, ambiguous at best. Perhaps more convincing evidence that the narrator viewed the world he recorded as real is provided by his references to the times before and after those reported in the narrative. Early in the work he refers to the time after Arthur's death, when Constantine (here made regent during Arthur's absence in Europe) will be Arthur's heir (p. 124). Again, at the end of the "whoole book" Malory provides a summary of the fate of the knights remaining after Lancelot's death, recording their return to the secular world and the duties of rulership. He also occasionally explains action by referring to the customs of "those
days." But even in considering these kinds of statements a reader is reminded of the Victorian novelist's habit of wrapping up action in the last chapter and so wonders whether Malory might not have been playing the same kind of game.  

This kind of possibility may explain the significance of Merlin's role in Book I as the major historical record-keeper as well as shaper of the action. It is through Merlin that the deeds of the early days of Arthur are recorded, for Merlin goes home and tells his master Bloyse of what happens:

And soo Bleyse wrote the bataill word by word as Merlyn told hym, how it began, and by whome, and in lyke wyse how it was endyed, and who had the werre. All the bataills that were done in Arthurs dayes Merlyn dyd his maister Bleyse do wryte. Also he did do wryte all the batils that euery worthy knyght dyd of Arthurs courte (p. 52).

Though this passage seems at first to suggest a historical way of viewing the narrative, with Merlin and Bloyse as chroniclers, the matter is more complex. Here, Merlin's role as magician is complicated by the role he takes as reporter of events; he controls them as they happen, but he also shapes the way they are preserved for the future. In so doing Merlin, who at first seems to be simply a magician, comes to be more like an artist. In his control over the action Merlin is like Malory the writer, and here he is seen to share the writer's recording role. Whether as representative of the author or not, Merlin has at once a sense of the past and a sense of the future, an imagination much like that of the fiction writer. Furthermore, Merlin not only records the past, shapes the present, and prophesies the future. His doing so provides the work a measure
of imaginative coherence. When such prophecies occur as a tomb is
decorated with the circumstances of a character's death, past and
future are united in an imaginative present. Merlin's prophecies
of the stories of Tristram, Lancelot, the dolorous stroke and
the Sankgreall, and Gawain's revenge of his father's death provide
a kind of unifying element for the loosely connected sections of the
Arthur story. Such prophecies also remind us of Merlin's control
over the action, reinforcing the sense that the world of the Morte
is not the world we inhabit.

Merlin's prophecies are especially important in connection with
the story of Balin, which does more than provide a negative comment
on the tragedy that may result when a knight single-mindedly
pursues honor. It prepares for and sets in motion the story of the
fall of Camelot through the dolorous stroke, the entrance of King
Mark, the prophecy of Gawain, and the prophecy of Mordred's
treachery and Arthur's death. More than that, even, it imposes a
kind of artistic unity, uniting the early days of Arthur with his
court's days of glory and disintegration, and it for tells the three
great stories--of Tristram and Isolde, of Lancelot and Guenevere, and
of the Quest of the Sankgreall--associated with it. By introducing
a kind of self-conscious literary quality, the story of Balin
reduces the historical quality of the work, and by introducing us to
Merlin and a narrator so clearly shaping the whole, the story reduces
the sense that the work records objective, real, "true" events.

That sense of artistic control, introduced by the dual role of
Merlin as writer (shaper and recorder) and illustrated by the
functions of the story of Balin, is enhanced by the author's nostalgic tone, another literary technique which creates that double sense of both history and fiction: on the one hand, it contributes to the sense of historical significance and so may be taken as evidence of the work's historicity; on the other, it is a literary convention to write of a lost golden age, and Malory uses that convention to good effect to increase the emotional appeal of his tale. In fact, though comparisons of past and present occur in Godfrey and Charles, none of them have the nostalgic tone or power to move the reader of Malory's. Nor are the comparisons used, as Malory's are, for literary purposes. In the histories, such comparisons are clearly didactic, designed to encourage the reader to better behavior. Malory's comparisons are more complex in effect, for they prepare for the coming destruction of Camelot, becoming part of what makes it tragic, as they remind us that the world being destroyed cannot exist.

Even those elements of style, action, detail, and attitude which are characteristic of historical writing do not serve as unambiguous evidence, for they also enforce the work's literary qualities; that is, they help make it more moving and entertaining. In Caxton's prefatory remarks, the sense of history struggles with the sense of fiction, in that Caxton can never unequivocally decide what he thinks of Arthur. The same happens in the narrative, the work's fictional qualities undermining its claim to be considered history.

If the characteristics discussed thus far have at least an
ambiguous effect on our sense of the work's truth or fictionality, there are other elements which seem to me much clearer in effect. These are ones which remind the reader, less equivocally than the qualities already discussed, of the presence of a controlling imagination and so reinforce the impression already suggested by the romantic emphasis on adventure that the work is fiction. They help the work fulfill the critical tradition's characterization of fiction as being distinguished by the manipulation of literary elements used to tell the story, so that the writer can fulfill his primary obligation to his creation. Such manipulation by its very nature calls the reader's attention to the narrator. In Blanchardin and Eglantine evidence of such care is seen in the use of conventions, humor and irony, and literary figures. In the Morte the careful control of theme, structure, and tone, combined with the use of humor and irony, suggest such shaping. Through such techniques the presence of the narrator is emphasized, a narrator controlling events, characters, and setting for a specific purpose. The role of the literary maker suggested in Merlin's position as both shaper and recorder of Arthur's story is reinforced again and again by the narrative's fictional qualities until, like Caxton, the reader finds it hard to accept the work as history. We come to feel that the truth of the narrative lies in its moral perceptions, rather than in its events. The humor and irony also increase the entertainment value of the work, and any of the types of literary manipulation mentioned may serve to highlight the theme more clearly, increasing the work's instructional quality as well.
One of the most delightful of these marks of authorial shaping is the occasional use of humor and irony, more appropriate to fiction than to history, reminding us of the narrator in a way inappropriate for the author who aims simply to report what happens. The use of humor and irony also increases the distance between the work and the audience—reinforcing the sense created by fiction's conventions that the world of the work is not the world of read life. As I said in discussing humor in Blanchardin and Eglantine, the identification of humorous or ironic passages in a work so distant is risky. And the humor in Malory is not pervasive; his tone is in general too earnest and his story too tragic. Nevertheless, there are occasional humorous moments and two sections that are humorous at some length. The first of these, and the most consistently humorous book, is Book VII, "The Tale of Gareth," unique to the Morte.

One of the major motifs of "Gareth" is the conventional romance assumption of the inherent nobility of one of noble blood, evident even when he travels in disguise. Indeed, that premise may be said to be the moral of "Gareth." But Malory also uses the principle for ironic effect, contrasting the understanding of the narrator, audience and some characters with the willful misunderstanding of others. Experienced readers, recognizing the conventional situation, can foresee from Gareth's first arrival that he will prove an exceptional character—and Malory takes no chances, as he has Arthur immediately guess Gareth's nobility and tells us himself, two pages later, that Gareth is of Gawain's family. The laughable stupidity of Kay, then, in assuming that Gareth is a
villein because he has asked for food and lodging (a noble, Kay says, would have asked for a horse) is immediately obvious, and Kay's mocking (as in naming Gareth "Beawmaynes") receives its fitting response when Gareth defeats him in a joust.

The humor is less broad, but the irony continues in Gareth's journey with Lyonet as she repeatedly upbraids him, tries to divorce herself from him, ridicules him, and shames his opponents as they are defeated by the "kitchen knave." But the romance goes beyond simply basing its story in the convention that nobility is always obvious, even in a supposed kitchen knave; it also uses the convention as an occasion for laughter. The apparent moral, then, becomes the means by which the entertainment value of the work is increased as the narrator exploits the convention by introducing characters who apparently do not operate within the dictates of normal conventional behavior. More than merely failing to recognize Gareth's nobility, moreover, Lyonet and Kay ironically go out of their way to insult him.

Humor is not restricted to the treatment of the conventional motif of the disguised knight's nobility, however. Gareth's attitude to his winning Lyones' love is rather crassly blunt: "'I am sure I have bought your love with part of the best blood within my body'" (p. 177). His love seems not to be very strong, though, for when Gareth unknowingly meets Lyones "arayed lyke a pryncesse," he falls in love again. Thus the conventional test of the knight-hero's faithfulness is turned upside down, but with no lasting ill effect, for Gareth's apparent faithlessness seems to give no one pause.
The young couple's courtship, too, presents a humorous treatment of courtly love, as the real-life problems of "hote lustes" intrude on the conventional romance. When Gareth and Lyones plan a midnight rendezvous, because "they were but yonge bothe and tendyr of age, and had not used suche craftes toforne," their plans reach the ears of Lyonet, who twice sends a marvelous knight to prevent the couple's liaison. The episodes juxtapose a rather earthy treatment of sexuality in the behavior of Gareth and Lyones (behavior more appropriate to the fabliau than to the idealized world of romance) and the magical world of conventional romance, reflected in the knight surrounded by light and impossible to kill and in Lyonet's magical healing power.  

Book X is similar in its ironic and frequently humorous commentary on the meaning of knighthood, provided mostly by Dynadan. Again and again his comments on the behavior expected of knights introduce a kind of practicality unusual in romance, humorous in contrast to chivalry's obvious limitations. Dynadan's comments provide yet another example of the way the imposition of realism, by contrast, can highlight the very unrealistic character of the action and setting. Though when faced with unavoidable combat he proves himself a courageous and skillful fighter, Dynadan whenever possible runs away from trouble rather than seeking it as other knights do. When a damsel seeks help for Lancelot against the treachery of Morgan, Dynadan's response is "'What will ye do? Hit is not for vs to fyghte with thynty knyghtes, and wete you wel, I wylle not thereof'" (p. 267). His remarks on love are similarly
scornful. He also jokes with the other knights, running about in disguise, egging them on, teasing them, as when "by wyle" he tricks King Mark into jousting with Arthur's fool Dagonet (pp. 304ff). As Tristram tells Isolde, "'he is the best bourder and iaper... that I knowe... and alle good knyghtes loue his felauship'" (p. 356). The other knights respond to his pragmatic attitude with japing of their own. In the Tournament at Surluse, for instance, Lancelot disguises himself as a woman and attacks Dynadan. In response, Guenevere and all the company fall down laughing (p. 346). Dagonet, Arthur's fool, provides similar occasions for humor, as when Arthur's court laughs at the report of his chasing King Mark through the forest (p. 315).19

Other occasions of humor and irony are more scattered and less clear-cut. Perhaps Arthur's inability to recognize Merlin (p. 55), Royn's request of Arthur's beard to complete his mantel decoration (p. 60), Sir Dynas' anger with his paramour's stealing his dogs (p. 287) are humorous. Certainly two episodes which are similar to the attack of Lancelot disguised as a woman on Dynadan are comic: Alexander is badly wounded by a lady dressed as a knight (and when he learns her sex, he calls it "good game"), and Lancelot is wounded "in the buttok" by a lady hunter (pp. 335; 532). In some cases the characters themselves give us clues of comedy, as when the court laughs at the deeds of Gawain, Dynadan, Dagonet, or Kay, or when Arthur smiles seeing the disguised Lancelot readying to enter a tournament. It seems likely that other episodes are humorous: Arthur being glad the lady who brought adventures has left the
Round Table, "for she made suche a noyse" (p. 83), or the rough-bearded Belleus' kissing Lancelot, having mistaken him for his paramour (p. 141).

Like the humor in Blanchardin and Eglantine, most of the comic language and episodes in the Morte depend for their effect on the reader's familiarity with traditional romance and ability to recognize departures from and exaggerations of its conventions. Such play with convention enhances the work's fictional character. These kinds of conventions are used in more serious ways as well, heightening entertainment, imposing structural unity, and highlighting them. That is, in some places the narrative seems to be reported less for its own sake, as straight narrative, than for some literary reason. As apparent digressions such episodes are not part of the central narrative, but on closer examination they do seem to have a specific purpose.

One clear example, discussed in part earlier, is the second book, which reports the story of the brothers Balan and Balin. The tale is more than just a continuation of the history of Arthur, for it provides a crucial link between the tale of Arthur's birth and accession and the later tales of the great deeds associated with Arthur's court. This apparently conscious manipulation of the tale as a unifying device adds to the impression created first by its substance that it is an imaginative work, fictional more than historical in conception. Lending further support to this impression is the inherently tragic nature of the Balan-Balin story: it is in a sense an artistic condemnation of the very world
celebrates, for through their adherence to the courtly code the two brothers kill one another. Further, Balin's dolorous stroke sets up the Grail situation, to be relieved only at the expense of the great suffering (and ultimate destruction) of Arthur's court. The story prepares for the suffering to follow by its very nature as well as through the prophecies it contains. Finally, the tragic killing of friend by friend or kin by kin due to blind adherence to a heroic code is a traditional literary theme. Similarly, in the story of Arthur and Guenevere's wedding, the report of a series of conventional romance adventures provides a definition of the courtly code and the purpose of Arthur's court. Equally important are the failures of Gawain and Pellynore when chivalric action is demanded and their destructive search for vengeance.

Such use of an individual tale to reinforce the thematic concerns of the whole work is perhaps most striking in the section which on the surface seems most outside the regular narrative thread of the Arthurian story, the Tristram section. Most significant are the parallels of Tristram's and Lancelot's story, alluded to again and again. The major one, of course, is the basic situation of the knight as lover to his king's wife. The characters themselves call attention to it: Isolde sends Palomides to Guenevere with the message that there are but four lovers in the world, Guenevere and Lancelot and Tristram and Isolde (p. 230); Merlin prophesies the "grettest bataille betwixt two knyghtes that was or euer shall be, and the truestlouers" (p. 68); Tristram and Lancelot share honors as the greatest knight in the world, once even sharing the prize at a
tourney (p. 388). Lancelot himself movingly calls attention to
the parallels between the two when he must rescue Guenevere from
being burnt for treason: "by Sir Tristram I maye haue a warnynge.
For whanne by meanes of tretyce Sir Tristram brought augeyne La
Beale Isoud vnto Kynge Mark from Ioyous Gard, loke what befelle on
the ende, how shamefully that fals traitour Kyng Mark slewe hym.
As he sat harpynge afore his lady" (p. 562). The similarities
between the situations of the two sets of lovers, which the
characters are fully aware of, are strengthened by the nature of the
relationship among the four, especially as expressed in letters and
in the dealings as knights errant between Tristram and Lancelot (and
Lancelot's kin). Other parallels in the action which the
characters do not call attention to help strengthen the unity of
the whole, making the apparently unrelated Tristram story a more
integral part of the tale of Arthur: the wounded Lancelot and
Tristram both bloody their ladies' sheets (pp. 213, 544-45); Mark
and Arthur are both faced with demands of tribute (pp. 121, 202);
Tristram and Lancelot must both rescue a kidnapped lady (pp. 214ff,
539ff). Tristram and Isolde's time together in the forest (pp. 234)
and in Lancelot's castle Joyous Gard (pp. 349ff) parallels
Lancelot's time with Elayne le Blank at the Joyous Isle (p. 419).

Additionally, both knights suffer madness as a consequence of
their love in episodes relying on the conventional flight to the
woods and failure of the lady to recognize her "wild wood" lover.
The convention's second treatment in Books XI and XII, on the
madness of Lancelot, is longer lasting and more detailed. One use
of such a literary convention might not be remarkable, but its repeated appearance enhances other similarities between the stories of Tristram and Lancelot which have already been alluded to in the narrative. Further, the episodes are important not just because they are parallel, but also because the wild man of the woods, driven mad by love and reverting to the natural state, is a literary convention. These echoes help impose artistic unity on the whole work and are another clearly literary way of treating the themes of the Arthur story. In so doing, they provide yet another example of artistic shaping of the narrative for particular effect.

That such echoes of situation and action were important to the author is suggested by some changes Malory made to his source. Caxton, of course, would not necessarily have been aware of them, and they probably did not affect his view of the work. But they might help us in coming to terms with the work's imaginative impact. Many of those changes strengthen the ties between the Tristram section and the rest of the Morte. Perhaps the Tristram-Isolde story had to be included because it had become part of the whole legend; in any case, Malory seems to be trying to link it imaginatively, thematically, relying not just on links of narrative. That is, he is exercising control, treating the work as fiction. Malory shortens dramatically the background on Tristram's pedigree and his relationship to King Mark, and in describing the political situation at Tristram's birth he mentions Arthur as the most powerful king of the area, immediately giving Tristram's story an Arthurian context, with even Merlin playing a part when he
gets Tristram's father Melyodas out of prison. Frequent allusions to Arthurian knights provide reminders of that context, as do Tristram's deep admiration for Lancelot, the letters Guenevere and Isolde exchange, and the episode of the magic horn which identifies unfaithful wives sent by Morgan le Fay to Arthur but intercepted by Lamorek and sent to Mark instead. Such connections reinforce the effect of the parallels discussed above.

Literary techniques, then, make the Tristram story a part of the Arthur corpus. That coherence in itself calls attention to the shaping imagination of a narrator. In addition, it calls attention to that narrator in another way, as the Tristram story provides valuable commentary on the central themes of the whole work. In some cases, events of the Tristram narrative foreshadow events of the Arthur story; in other cases, they contrast with them and so enhance the tragic character of the whole. In these ways the Tristram sections provide yet another means by which the narrator may inject commentary without speaking directly in his own voice. The most important of the contrasts is in the character of the two kings. Mark is throughout depicted as a ruthless, foolish, and cowardly ruler who tolerates Tristram's presence only because he needs the knight's prowess to maintain power.25 Whereas Arthur condemns Guenevere only when he has no choice and wages war against Lancelot most sorrowfully, Mark is eager to burn all the faithless ladies of his kingdom (p. 233) and treacherously plots against Tristram nearly from the beginning (before his marriage to Isolde) to the end of their relationship. Similar to Mark's debased kingliness is
the character of Cornish knights, everywhere reviled as cowardly. Such contrasts heighten the reader's sense of loss when Arthur's world is finally destroyed. That Tristram and Isolde should be destroyed seems inevitable, given the character of their king. That Lancelot and Guenevere's love should lead to ever greater bitterness and destruction is even more tragic than it would be without the comparison. So the story of Tristram serves important thematic and aesthetic purposes, providing the narrator an opportunity to comment on the narrative while making it more literary through the increased use of literary convention, cross-references, and allusions.

Just as the parallels in the Tristram story seem to reinforce by repetition or foreshadowing themes or structures of the whole work, a number of other minor parallels work together to unify the work in effect and so to enhance the sense of control by a narrator, and thus of the work's quality as a literary creation rather than as a report of past deeds. The investiture of Lancelot's illegitimate son, Galahad, parallels that of Bors' illegitimate son Elyne le Blanke, reported in an original digression from the Elaine story. These situations are bound to recall for the reader Bors' and Lancelot's adventures at Pelles' castle and to anticipate the Grail quest and increasingly close relationship of Lancelot and Bors after the quest. The difference between Lancelot and Bors is also reinforced, for Bors' affair with Brandegory's daughter is his only violation of chastity (as we are repeatedly reminded), while Lancelot has never been able to be virtuous for long. A similar parallel is that between Perceval's saintly sister and Elaine of
Astolat, both placed on ships after death to sail to their place of burial. Further, the Elaine of Astolot episode recalls Lancelot's relationship with Elayne, daughter of Pelles and mother of Galahad. The contrast in motivation between the two ladies whose behavior is so similar (both wooing Lancelot, willing to sacrifice themselves for love) again reinforces the Grail's message, for Pelles' daughter's motivation is Christian and mystical, Elayne le Blank's purely courtly and worldly. Again and again, in both the Sankgreall and Tristram sections, these types of repeated episodes, motifs, characterizations (whether original to Malory or translated from his sources) suggest authorial control, the work of an imaginative maker of fiction, as they reinforce the work's themes and provide a measure of cohesion to what would otherwise be an even more rambling, structureless narrative. In fact, they impose a kind of unity lacking in Godfrey, Four Sons, Charles.

Similarly effective is the apparently original and untypical adventure of the Healing of Urre, which has been perceptively analyzed by earlier scholars. What is important in my terms is the way it functions in the narrative as a whole. It provides Lancelot his last moment of unadulterated glory and the last view of Arthur's unified court. In the catalogue of knights who search Urre's wounds Malory also finds an occasion to remind and inform us of other glorious deeds of the Arthurian story, including the Sankgreall, to mention knights who have died in adventure, and to inform us of events like the deaths of Tristram and Isolde that he has not reported in detail. Finally it prepares for the report of the last
days of Camelot, where the telling of the book is at its most skillful. Malory's stunning achievement in this report of the destruction of the Arthurian world results in part from the combination of fictional and historical technique. The striking quality of Malory's combination of realism and artistic, imaginative control contributes to the skill with which the end of the story of Arthur and the Round Table is told: the building sense of tragedy, the ambivalence about right and wrong, the overwhelming sense of loss, all of which characters, narrator, and reader feel.

The extent to which Malory's control of the narrative is deliberate is suggested by a change in his customary manner of using sources. Now his changes are not mostly reduction; he amplifies several scenes, providing dialogue merely suggested in earlier versions, and invents specific details. Though he has made these kinds of amplifications before, he never has done so to the extent he does here. He also invents whole paragraphs, something he has rarely done in earlier books. The section is deeply moving, and as Vinaver points out in his introduction to his eighth book, most of Malory's amplifications contribute to the sense rather than the matter of his narrative. That is, the section is moving at least in part because Malory made it so, working as a literary artist shaping his material for a specific effect. Of course, Caxton could not know of all this invention on Malory's part. But what he could recognize is the strongly unified effect of tragedy that the section creates. This care given to effect places the work in the category of fiction, for chapters which serve such important thematic
functions belong in a work of the imagination where there is a theme to be developed through motifs, actions which can be arranged, revised, and shaped to make a point. The author of such a work does not merely report what has happened: he creates a world; his imagination controls it. Despite his use of the accoutrements of history and the traditional claim that the story is history, such imaginative shaping seems to be what Malory is doing.

None of these qualities I have discussed is telling in and of itself, but the effect of them taken all together is to increase the sense of a narrator, conscious to some degree, shaping his tale for better effect. Despite historical evidence of the general acceptance of Arthur's reality, despite the generally unadorned nature of Malory's prose style, despite his reduction of interweaving and other alterations in the sources which enhance clarity and ease of understanding, and despite all Caxton's evidence of Arthur's existence, the reader, like Caxton, remains unconvinced that the whole is not at least to some degree a "feined fable." Other accounts of the Arthurian story may be historical and this one may share some of the qualities of historical narrative. However, it is not history-like as a whole, for it bears too much evidence of a controlling imagination, shaping and occasionally creating a narrative for both instruction and delight.
NOTES


3Spisak, p. 603. Caxton's most lengthy discussion of chivalry is in his preface to the Order of Chivalry.

4Debate over Arthur's existence began even before Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain was written and intensified with its appearance, in the twelfth century works of William of Malmesbury, William of Newburgh, and Alfred of Beverley. All try to distinguish between the true history of Arthur and the "lies" or "fables" in circulation. Caxton would have known of the debate at least from his own publication, probably three years before publishing the Morte, of Trevisa's translation of Higden's Polycronicon, for Higden several times doubts Geoffrey's veracity, much to Trevisa's distress. The debate intensified during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, beginning with the works of Thomas Rudborne, Robert Fabian, John Rastell, and Polydore Vergil. More attention has been given to the Tudor/Elizabethan debate than to the earlier periods, but it is treated in passing in several works. See Geoffrey Ashe, From Caesar to Arthur (London: Collins, 1960); Richard Barber, King Arthur in Legend and History (Totowa, Nj: Roman and Littlefield, 1973); Joseph P. Clancy, Pendragon: Arthur and His Britain (Washington: Praeger, 1971); Antonia Gransden, Historical Writing in England, I and II (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974 and 1982); Robert W. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth (New

5 See Richard Barber, The Knight and Chivalry (Ipswich: Boydell, 1974) and Diane Bornstein, Mirrors of Courtesy (Hamden, Ct.: Shoe String Press, 1975), on the fifteenth century as the great age of romantic chivalry, with French and English kings imitating the tournaments and jousts of chivalric romance.


7 D.S. Brewer, "The Present Study of Malory," FMLS, 6 (1970), 89; and Scudder, pp. 192-96, observe that Malory's style is not consistent.

8 The clear sense of the narrator's character has contributed to the current problems of identifying Sir Thomas Malory, readers of Le Morte Darthur being unwilling to believe that he could be a violent, even criminal man.

9 In fact, Vinaver (pp. 1278-79) finds that Malory has reduced the role of the supernatural. See also Eugene Vinaver, Malory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929); C.S. Lewis, "The English Prose
Morte," in Bennett, pp. 7-28; Brewer; and Scudder on ways Malory increases the immediacy or realism of his sources.

For examples see pages 158, 350, 514, 515, 576, and 584. See also Bert Dillon's dictionary of names and places, Spisak, vol. II.

On the reduction in interweaving see Vinaver, Works, lxiv-lxxiii and passim. Other increases in realism are too numerous to list; see, e.g., greater clarity in naming of characters, pp. 54, 82, 203-204, 219, 307, 420, 546-47; reduction of the wondrous and clearer explanations of action, 82, 159-160, 204, 250, 400, 508, 514, 539, 546; life-like motivation, pp. 140ff, 210, 338, 440, 529, 563; realistic details, pp. 37, 199ff, 212, 423, 426, 507-08, 544, 561, 577-9, 584. The emphasis on the commons recalls Godefroy.

Vinaver calls these words "perhaps the most complete and authentic record of Malory's conception of chivalry. ... To [the rules against murder and treason and for battles fought for good purpose] he seems to attach more importance than to any other aspects of 'gentleness'" (Works, p. 1335).

Vinaver, Works, pp. 1427-34, discusses the origin of "Sir Gareth." Some scholars have proposed that the tale is Malory's invention; Vinaver believes it has a lost French source connected to the Tristram romances. If it is original to Malory, as is at least plausible, its character and invention illustrate the fictional nature of the Morte.

There are many other examples of record-keeping. History is "entered" on pp. 72-73, 505, 547.. Monuments and tombs are built pp. 68, 71-73, 78, 400, 466, 494. Letters record history on pp. 360, 493, 530, 586-87. Such letters are, of course, a conventional element in romance. History in the Grail quest instructs the questing knights, as on pp. 484ff and 490.

Frequently, Malory's references to his sources are associated with departures from the source, generally for original matter, sometimes for a turn to a different source. See, e.g., pp. 136, 153, 156, 197, 202, 235, 334, 351, 387, 495, 538, 541, 549, 551, 556, 557, 592, 598, 599. These constitute about half Malory's references to his sources. Compare also the end of the Tristram story (p. 426), the end of "The Knight of the Cart" (p. 554) and the death of Arthur (p. 592) where Malory accurately tells us that he is departing from his source(s).
Unfortunately, the surviving ending of Blanchardin and Eglantine is from a late sixteenth century edition, with humanistic revisions, so we do not know how the version Caxton published actually ended. Thus among the works examined in this study, the Morte in its treatment of the post-narrative events is clearly allied with historical narrative.

References to the Arthurian past or its customs occur on pp. 62, 158, 199, 219, 354, 453, 509, 512, 521, 536-37, 539, 557, 562, 585, 598. Most of these are not nostalgic; in fact, the words on faith then and now (p. 453) make a comparison unfavorable to the past; the words on the English propensity for "newfangledness" (p. 585) identify the propensities of the past with those of the present.

The more usual explanation for such an episode would be Malory's lack of sympathy with or understanding of courtly love. The opening episodes of the story of La Cote Male Tayle (Sir Brunor) parallel in humorous ways Gareth's story. Wilfred L. Guerin, "'The Tale of Gareth': The Chivalric Flowering," in Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of Le Morte Darthur, ed. R.M. Lumiansky (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1964), p. 109, sees the tale as revealing the happiness of Arthur's court, and she sees the tale of love as ironic. In contrast, Charles Moorman, The Book of Kync Arthur: The Unity of Malory's Morte Darthur (Lexington: Univ. Kentucky Press, 1965), sees it as a commentary on the unreality of courtly love, the moral being that true love is wedded love (pp. 19-22).

On Dynadan, see Vinaver, Works, p. 1485. Dynadan ridicules the chivalric code on pp. 268, 272, 297-98, 343, 382; he ridicules courtly love pp. 354ff; his "japing" with other knights is reported on pp. 302ff, 343, 361-62, 377, 381. Dagonet appears also on pp. 245, 262, 306 and 315.

Other possible humor appears on pp. 286, 291 and 516. Irony is also an occasional device, especially in various characters' ridicule of Tristram as a Cornish knight. See pp. 207, 215, 218, 257, 294, 321, 515, and 546.

Moorman, too, sees the Balin story as central, calling it the "first real clustering of the three great themes" of the tragic failures of love, religion, and chivalry (p. 66).

Thomas C. Rumble, "'The Tale of Tristram': Development by Analogy," in Lumiansky, pp. 145-83, and Moorman, both discuss some of
the parallels of the Tristram and Lancelot stories, Rumble arguing that the story of Tristram underscores the moral degeneration of Arthur's court and so helps elucidate its tragedy, Moorman seeing the Tristram-Isolde story helping define the Lancelot-Guenevere story by allusion.


24 Vinaver, Works, p. 1471, discusses Malory's indebtedness to Sir Orfeo in his account of Lancelot's madness. The disappointed lover gone wild is Stith-Thompson number T 93.1. Examples from medieval narrative, besides Sir Orfeo, occur in Yvain and Gawain and Valentine and Orson. The wild man living in the woods like a beast (Stith-Thompson F 567, probably a motif Celtic in origin) and the madness of love (Stith-Thompson T 24.3, a familiar part of the courtly love/Petrarchan tradition) are related motifs. See Richard Bernheimer, Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology (1952; rpt. New York: Farrar Straus Giraux, 1970) and Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Noval, eds., The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1972).

25 For Mark's treachery see pp. 214, 218, 231, 300ff, 305, 310, 317-18, 328ff (the story of Alexander), 346ff, 551-52, 561-62. Mark's falseness and treachery are as well-known to the characters as to the narrator.

26 There are other motifs repeated in the Grail episodes, as when Perceval and Bors are both nearly seduced by the devil in the shape of a beautiful woman and when Bors' and Lancelot's sons appear in the same book. Another whole set of parallels informs the stories of Gareth (Bewmaynes) and Brunor (La Cote Mal Tayle).

27 See Benson (pp. 225-31), Lambert (chapter 2), and Edmund Reiss, Sir Thomas Malory (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 170-72, for fuller discussions of the function of the Sir Urre episode.
Le Morte Darthur has proved especially appropriate for ending a study of historicity and fictionality in medieval narrative. The arguments that have raged around the work and its author—and continue to do so—illustrate admirably the dilemmas facing anyone who tries to draw a line between fact and fiction. For modern readers the fiction of the knight-prisoner who mourns the passing of chivalry and the newfangledness of modern times seems to contradict the possible fact of a mercenary imprisoned for raping and looting, just as in the Middle Ages the fiction of Arthur's prophesied return seemed to contradict the fact of his grave at Glastonbury. For medieval historians like William of Malmesbury, Higden, and Caxton the fictional European conquests of Arthur (fictional because unreported by Continental chroniclers) seemed to contradict the many stories and artifacts of his reign. Modern historians can be no less passionate in their debates over the kernel of truth in the Arthurian legend, arguing over matters like his ancestry, style of fighting, and degree of political power, as well as the general question of his political and military significance. Our use of evidence may be more sophisticated, but the debate is in some cases as heated as it was in the Middle Ages and Tudor periods and in all cases illustrates the difficulty of separating fact and fiction, especially when they are
used for didactic (whether moral or political) purposes.

The case is similar with the stories of Charlemagne: the kernel of truth about a great king who performed valuable military, political, and religious service has been embroidered to preach a moral, explain a modern custom, advertise a locale, move the reader, or entertain. Even the most purely historical Godefroy reports more than merely literal truth, its moral impact strengthened by William's comments and reports of miracles. Where truth stops and fiction begins is impossible to say, though clearly a narrative like Blanchardin and Eglantine is different in effect and appeal from the others. Furthermore, the fictionality even of Blanchardin is more complex than that of the fable, intended only to make a moral point. It is that of the res ficta, reporting events that could have happened, but did not.

It is possible, however, to suggest general principles for discussing fictionality and historicity in medieval narrative, as I have begun to do in this study, where I have argued that some of Caxton's narratives reflect evidence of a distinction between fiction and history in line with the discussions of the rhetorical-grammatical tradition. Analysis of Godefroy of Bologne and Blanchardin and Eglantine shows how the works themselves operate and, in a larger context, how fiction might be distinguished from literal truth, not only for medieval times, but also for our own. Just as Caxton in his preface to Godefroy emphasizes the power of real historical events to teach later readers moral lessons, so the narrative's qualities reinforce the impression that the events, places, and characters
reported on are real and that the author's prime concern is the reporting of that past reality in order to help us understand its moral significance. By comparison, in speaking of Blanchardin and Eglantine Caxton emphasizes entertainment, focusing on the work's value as pastime, its qualities as courtly romance, and its style. The narrative itself has the structure and conventions of traditional romance and a style which enhances its value as pastime; there is no attempt to connect its setting, characters, or theme to the world of everyday life.

The two Charlemagne stories, Charles the Great and the Four Sons of Aymon, provide further evidence about the nature of historical narrative. Caxton emphasizes their moral qualities as stories of the past, and both narratives place more emphasis on reporting action than on providing entertainment; both are reported in a relatively straightforward, unembellished style; both report the actions of a large, varied, and complex group of characters; both devote a substantial part of the opening material to providing background information. Though occasionally informed by literary convention, neither work depends on convention for structure, characterization, or major theme, and neither suggests much literary shaping. Both, in short, are more like Godefroy than like Blanchardin.

Analysis of fictionality and historicity has proved important not just for its own sake and as a means of better understanding the workings of these narratives, however; it has proved useful also in better understanding Malory's work, Caxton's most important legacy to later centuries. Caxton's apparent uncertainty about the Morte, while
it may have arisen from contemporary attitudes, finds support in the nature of the narrative, for though in style and some motifs it is history-like, it is at least as much like fiction as like history. Further, approaching the narrative by analyzing elements of fiction and elements of history allows us to gain a new appreciation for Malory's power as a writer. Such an approach suggests that even as the well-documented Renaissance tendency to separate fact and fiction was beginning, productive confusion of the two could occur as well. The issue has never been simple.

What of romance, the literary form I set out to explore and define? In the case of Caxton's narratives, at any rate, it is certainly not a term that can be used to describe *Godefroy, Charles,* and *Four Sons* on the one hand, and *Blanchardin* and *Eglantine* on the other. In fact, the so-called Charlemagne romances seem to share nothing--not literary technique, or effect, or milieu, or characterization--with *Blanchardin* and *Eglantine.* And though *Le Morte Darthur* continues to be a complex work to characterize, it does not seem to belong in the same class with *Godefroy, Charles,* and *Four Sons.* The old system of defining romance on the basis of chivalric or courtly characteristics is perhaps more useful than at first appears. In the case of these narratives, at any rate, the ones which rely on literary convention more heavily are also the ones which seem to be informed by other qualities of fiction: the careful structure, the literary style, the thematic control, the use of humor, irony and other devices for esthetic effect. From all these qualities we get
a sense of the shaping power of the literary maker in sharp contrast to the historian's role as reporter. And our understanding of those distinctions must make our reading of extended narrative richer.


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