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37
AN ANALYSIS OF THE
FEAST SCENE IN THE MIDDLE
ENGLISH METRICAL ROMANCES

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Dissertation submitted to the
University of Ottawa, Department
of English in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Phyllis J. Leonardi, Ottawa, 1979

Abstract

This study is a functional analysis of the feast scene in the Middle English romance. Seventy-two romances were used for this study, their feast scenes analyzed and categorized according to function. The dissertation contains an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and an appendix which gives the line references for the scenes.

The study shows that in the narrative of the Middle English romance a feast scene will function in one of three ways: as a method of introduction; as a type of recognition; or as a means of resolution. As introduction, the feast scenes function to present the major characters and their relationships to one another, often, presenting the love interest of the plot. An introductory feast scene may also give the motivation for future action; as in the case of challenges made during a feast. It can also function to add atmosphere to the romance and to immediately appeal to the audience and gain their attention. Not every introductory feast scene will function in all these ways, but all will function in at least one of these ways.

The second function of a feast scene is as a type of recognition. In this capacity, a feast scene is used to acknowledge some important or worthwhile aspect of the major character; it may also function as a scene of reward in which either major characters are honored or minor

characters are repaid for their loyalty. Other forms of recognition include self-recognition, acknowledgment of a unique characteristic, an acknowledgment of love, or the actual recognition of a disguised loved one.

Lastly, a feast scene may function as a scene of resolution, which will often include a reunion of lost lovers or parted families. The wedding feast commonly functions as a method of concluding a romance. When explanations are given at the final feast, then the scene functions as the denouement of the tale.

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Acknowledgments

I should like to acknowledge the Interlibrary Loan Department of the University of Ottawa, the National Library of Canada and Stirling Memorial Library of Yale University for their aid in obtaining many of the editions necessary for this work. I should also mention that Mr. Fernand Duguay and Ms. Pierrette Landry, graduate students in the Department of French, University of Ottawa, gave me many helpful suggestions.

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Introduction

The tradition of using feasts to mark significant moments in both the life and literature of the western world is an old and accepted one. Perhaps this is so because feasts reflect the ideal of community among men, for they are occasions for celebrating and for coming together, and least for a time and for a specific purpose. They are also significant in their ceremonial import, such as wedding and funeral feasts. As well, feasts are times at which important things happen, since a feast includes a ready-made audience.

Feasts have always been an important part of both classical and Christian literature. In The Odyssey, the moving scene of recognition between Odysseus and his old nurse, Euryclea, occurs at a time of feasting.¹ In the New Testament, Christ's public life is enclosed between two most meaningful feasts: the Wedding Feast at Cana and the Last Supper. Spectacular feast scenes open and close the medieval work, Cleanness, and feast scenes are an often-present and familiar part of the Middle English metrical romances. One need only recall the opening feasts in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the alliterative Morte Arthure to realize that these scenes add enormous appeal to the works. The feast scene is part of what is expected from the genre, along with chivalrous knights, courtly ladies, jousts, tournaments and the occasional giant.

However, scholarly commentary on feast scenes in the Middle English romances is both eccentric and rare. Several books dealing with the medieval feast from a social, cultural, historical or nutritional point of view do offer some information on the feast scene and its relation to the romance. Bridget Ann Henisch's Fast and Feast: Food in Medieval Society² and Madeleine Pelner Cosman's Fabulous Feasts: Medieval Cookery and Ceremony³ point out the importance of feasting and eating in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. In The English Medieval Feast,⁴ William Edward Mead refers to several romances and their descriptions of feasts. Edmund Dale, in National Life and Character in Mirror of Early English Literature,⁵ uses quotations from some feast scenes to demonstrate his thesis. But none of these books is concerned with the feast scene as an element of narration.

When feast scenes are mentioned in some of the major studies of Middle English romances it is only in passing and again, rarely if at all, are they considered as important parts of the narratives. Dorothy Everett mentions feasts in "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romance"⁶ as one of the common characteristics of the romances. Dieter Mehl, in The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,⁷ remarks on some feast scenes in his rather full discussions of individual romances and even discusses the function of one feast scene in the romance Guy of Warwick. John Speirs also comments on feast scenes in Medieval English

Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition⁸ but only in his discussion on Ywain and Gawain and King Horn.

Some scholars, in their studies on specific romances, have commented in detail on particular feast scenes and how they contribute to the work as a whole. Except for Robert W. Hanning's article on Havelok the Dane,⁹ however, this commentary is largely limited to the eating and feasting in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the opening feast in the alliterative Morte Arthure. J.A. Burrow's A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight¹⁰ discusses the descriptions of both the Christmas and the All Saints Day feasts and gives interpretations for the eating festivities and pledges at Bercilak's castle. W.R.J. Barron's introduction to his edition of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight¹¹ contains comments on the two feast scenes in the poem, but neither Burrow nor Barron discusses the function of these scenes in the narrative structure of the romance.

It is John Finlayson who comments on the actual function of a feast scene in the introduction to his edition of the alliterative Morte Arthure, where he states that "the first section of the poem (ll. 1-553) serves roughly the same function as the opening scenes of a play."¹² He also notes the similarity between this feast scene and the first feast in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in that both are highly descriptive passages and both are interrupted episodes. George P. Keiser enlarges upon Finlayson's ideas in "Narrative Structure in the Alliterative Morte Arthure, 26-720."¹³ In viewing these lines as a

structural device, Keiser gives a full discussion of the feast scene and refers to it as an "introductory passage".¹⁴ Robert W. Hanning looks at all the eating and feasting episodes in "'Havelok the Dane': Structure, Symbols, Meanings" to see how they work in the context of a single romance. Although he acknowledges that "feasts often occupy an important place in the narrative of medieval romances," his article stresses the "symbolic value" and the "nutritional function" of the eating and feasting scenes in Havelok.¹⁵

Even those who have written on the narrative structure of the Middle English romances have neglected to investigate the feast scene as part of that structure. Bruce A. Rosenberg's article, "The Morphology of the Middle English Metrical Romances,"¹⁶ establishes a system of classification for twenty-two romances. In many ways, this article is similar to G.V. Smithers' "Story-Patterns in Some Breton Lays"¹⁷ and Kathryn Hume's "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance,"¹⁸ except that Rosenberg maintains that "if, in fact, the stories do contain any consistent and discernible patterns, a morphological analysis is necessary to uncover them."¹⁹ The outcome, though, is the same as Smithers' and Hume's: the categorizing of only some Middle English romances according to their general story-patterns or types of plot, but nothing on feasts or scenes.

On the other hand, Susan Wittig's book, Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romances studies twenty-seven romances in order "to provide a linguistic-based

model for the analysis of a narrative genre."²⁰ Unlike Rosenberg, Smithers and Hume, she works inductively, by first identifying the formulaic statements that make up scene-patterns then moves on to type-scenes and finally type-episodes. Wittig therefore concludes that "the structure of Middle English romances is ... very highly formulaic."²¹ Even though Wittig is not concerned with function, she does show that scenes are basic to the narrative structure of the romances. She never discusses feast scenes, but it is possible that her method of reducing a scene to formulaic statements could be applied to the feast scene as well.

Function is considered an important element of narrative structure in Eugene Dorfman's The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic: An Introduction to Narrative Structures.²²

Dorfman's theory of narrative structure is succinctly stated in the first chapter of the book when he writes: "the structure of a narrative depends on the arrangement of the incidents making up the story; each incident is a structural unit, with its own specific function to perform."²³ The importance of Dorfman's study is that it is a functional analysis, although of certain incidents called narremes and not of certain scenes.

The importance of a functional analysis in the study of narrative structure was first made clear by Vladimir Propp in his Morphology on the Folktale.²⁴ Propp's study was published in Russian in 1928, but was not published in English until 1958.

Essentially, this work is a structuralist study of the Russian folktale made by classifying the function of the characters in the stories. As the author explains, "a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages. This makes possible the study of the tale according to the functions of its dramatic personae."²⁵ The goal of Propp's study was to classify the Russian folktale according to type. He succeeded in doing this because of his rigorous methodology which proved that "tales with identical functions can be considered as belonging to one type."²⁶ It is the methodology that is most striking in this work: Propp states that "the accuracy of all further study depends upon the accuracy of classification."²⁷

Although I received some of my ideas or the beginnings of ideas from Rosenberg, Dorfman, Wittig and Propp, my study is in fact a literary analysis and not a structural or linguistic analysis. My aim is not a morphology nor is it a structuralist study, it is simply to identify and to categorize the feast scenes in the Middle English metrical romances according to their function. But I do not use the word "function" here the same way it would be used in a structuralist or functionalist study. By function, I mean the noun equivalent for the phrase, "how it works", and I use it only in this context throughout my study.

The first problem in such a study is to define or characterize a feast scene. This must be done in a twofold manner: by what constitutes a feast and by what constitutes a scene. In the first instance, I allowed the work itself to define a

feast; that is, only certain words could be considered as referring to a feast, and other words were ruled out. According to the glossaries of the editions used and according to the Middle English Dictionary, the only words (with variants included) which applied to feasts were "feste", "gestenere", "mangere" and "brydale", a word which applies only to wedding feasts. Words which applied only to eating or to meals, such as "mete", "at mete", "diner" and "soper", were eliminated. There will always be arguments about the exact meanings of words, but the first four listed above were always found in the context of the romance to mean feasting and the last four were found to mean simply eating.

According to Klein's Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language and The Oxford English Dictionary, the Middle English word "feste" is related to the Old French "feste" and to the Vulgar Latin "festa", which meant festival and holiday as well as feast. The Middle English Dictionary states that the word "gestenere" is from Old Norse, specifically from the Old Swedish "gestning"; that the word "mangere" is from an Old French form of "mangier"; and that "brydale" comes from the old English word for bride, "bryd".

The second problem of definition is to decide what constitutes a scene. At first, it seemed that length would be the determining factor here, but this idea proved misleading, for some scenes were quite short yet filled with a dramatic tension that made them an obvious scene, such as the final

feast scenes in Le Bone Florence discussed in Chapter Three. Other passages were longer but so poorly described that categorizing them was either difficult or impossible (see fn. 6, Chapter Three on the scenes in Kyng Alisaunder). Another problem is that there are many feasts scattered throughout the romances which are not scenes, as in Beves of Hamtoun. Many wedding feasts which occur at the end of the tales are only that -- feasts, but not complete scenes. Although these feasts appear in such diverse romances as Torrent of Portyngale, Eger and Grime, Amoryus and Cleopes, and Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne, a representative example of a feast that is not a scene occurs at the end of Lybeaus Desconus:

The myrrour of that brydale
 No man myght tell with tale,
 Jn ryme nor in geste:
 Jn that semely saale
 Were lordys many and fale
 And ladies full honeste.
 There was riche service
 Bothe to lorde and ladyes
 To leste and eke to moste;
 Thare were gevyn riche giftis
 Euche mynstrale her thriftis,
 And some that were vnbrest.

Fourty dayes thei dwelden
 And ther here festis helden
 With Arthur the kyng.
 As the Frensshe tale vs tolde,
 Arthur kyng with his knyghtis bolde
 Home he gonne hem brynge.²⁸

This is a static description with no dialogue, no action, no interest and no center or focus to it.

The essential characteristics of a scene were not considered to be any formulaic statement or pattern, nor was the style or length of the passage considered important. Rather, I discovered that the major determining factors were a sense of dramatic tension and a sense of expansion; temporal, spatial or both. Dramatic tension could be provided by action, as in the interrupted feast scene of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; or by controlled emotion, as in The Knight of Curtesy; or even by dialogue, as in Ipomedon. Expansion was often accomplished by means of a description which gave an added dimension to the narrative, as in the alliterative Morte Arthure; or by means of a narrative device, such as the story-within-a-story of Ywain and Gawain.

Once the scenes were identified, the process of classification began. Each scene was studied to see how it worked within the narrative of its respective romance and then classified by its function. Through this process of identification, I found that the feast scenes in the Middle English metrical romances functioned in one of three ways: as a method of introduction; as a type of recognition; or as a means of resolution. Further classification within these categories could then be made by a close analysis of each individual scene. Since there is a great variability within the feast scenes, the major part of this study is a full discussion of every feast scene to show exactly how it works in the narrative and why it belongs in the category of introduction,

recognition or resolution.

Since the Middle English metrical romances are a difficult and elusive group of material, I found that it was necessary to keep a close and clean focus to my material. This work takes into account all of the seventy-two metrical romances listed in Severs' A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500, I: Romances.²⁹ I have excluded those listed as fragments since it is impossible to identify the function of a scene unless the work is fairly complete. I have also excluded ballads and Scottish works since I have limited my study to only Middle English romances. However, within this broad category, I have omitted the Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy, The Seege of Troy and The Laud Troy Book, because I am in complete agreement with Dieter Mehl that they "are rather bookish compilations and cannot properly be described as romances."³⁰ I have not dealt here with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales nor with Troilus and Criseyde because these works are so large in scope that only individual studies can do justice to them and their feast scenes.

Each of the following three chapters gives a full definition of the function under consideration and then complete analyses of the feast scenes. However, each chapter approaches its material differently, since the functions have different characteristics and require distinct modes of explication. Thus in the first chapter the introductory feast scenes are analyzed by moving from the simplest to the most complex, but the second chapter,

is organized around the various forms of recognition feast scenes. The final chapter analyzes its scenes according to the type of resolution or conclusion given.

Footnotes

¹For a discussion of this scene, see Erich Auerbach's Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 3-6.

²(University Park, Pa.: The Pen State Univ. Press, 1976).

³(New York: George Braziller, 1976).

⁴(1937; rpt. London: Allen and Unwin, 1967).

⁵(Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1907).

⁶In Essays on Middle English Literature, ed. Patricia Kean (Oxford, Clarendon, 1955), Ch. 1.

⁷(London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

⁸(London: Faber and Faber, 1941).

⁹"'Havelok the Dane': Structure, Symbols, Meaning" in Studies in Philology, 64 (1967), 586-603.

¹⁰(London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

¹¹Manchester Medieval Classics, G.L. Brook, ed. (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 1974).

¹²York Medieval Texts, Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall, eds. (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 15.

¹³Chaucer Review, 9 (1974), 130-44.

¹⁴p. 131.

¹⁵p. 594.

¹⁶Journal of Popular Culture, 1 (1967), 63-77.

- ¹⁷Medium Ævum, 22 (1953), 61-92.
- ¹⁸Philological Quarterly, 53 (1974), 158-80.
- ¹⁹p. 63.
- ²⁰(Austin, Texas: Univ. of Austin Press, 1978), p. 6.
- ²¹p. 179.
- ²²(Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969).
- ²³p. 5.
- ²⁴2nd ed. rev. Louis Wagner (Austin, Texas: Univ. of Texas Press, 1968).
- ²⁵Propp's italics, p. 20.
- ²⁶p. 22.
- ²⁷p. 5.
- ²⁸M. Mills, ed., Lybeaus Desconus EETS OS 261 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), MS. Lambeth, ll. 2181-98.
- ²⁹(New Haven, Conn.: The Conn. Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967).
- ³⁰The Middle English Romances, fn. 56, p. 267.

Chapter One: Introductory Feast Scenes

There are four separate functions of increasing complexity which can be found in an introductory feast scene. The first includes the presentation and description of the principal characters and their relationship, either to each other or to other characters in the romance. A second and more dynamic function is identifiable when the feast scene serves as the point of initiation of a future action, or where the motivation for a future action is given. A third, more complex function exists when the scene is used to establish the social and cultural ambience of the romance; this includes setting the tone and mood, giving contrasts and comparisons among the characters and describing the setting. The fourth function is the most sophisticated and occurs when the feast scene contains a lively method of narration and detailed descriptions which immediately appeal to the audience and win its attention and favor.

Any single feast scene may function in one or more of these ways. The more functions included, the longer and more complex the description will be. A scene which contains all four functions will have full descriptions of the characters, the food, the setting and all that is said and done at the feast. The feast scenes to be discussed in this chapter have been arranged in order of increasing complexity, from the simplest to the most elaborate.

The most basic of the introductory feast scenes is found in The Romans of Partenay. It serves to present a major character named Raymond and to establish his relationship as the adopted son of a wealthy earl. Raymond later weds Melusine and fathers the children who figure prominently in much of the romance. The Romans of Partenay begins by introducing Amery, the wealthy Earl of Poitiers, and his cousin, the Earl of Forest. Amery wishes to help his cousin, so he invites him to a feast:

At peiters made A roial gret feste,
 A more worshipful neuer sayn with eye;
 After tho he send the Erle of forest,
 Of poiters The erle commaunded so fullie,
 And other Barons lyke-wyse verilye,
 Which of hys seignorie landes gan hold
 Of this noble erle A-forne spoke and tolde.¹

The Earl of Forest arrives at the feast with three of his sons, and Amery offers to take one "and for euermore ryche man shal hym make" (1.78). The Earl is thankful and offers Amery his choice of the boys. Amery chooses Raymond, the youngest, and his father describes him as the sweetest and quietest of the three:

"My lord, men hym cal Raymound good & fyn,
 The fair, the swet, the gentill, the curtoys,
 Off all thre best thaught, still, not moche of uoys."
 (96-98)

This feast scene functions to introduce Raymond into the story and to describe his adoption. As soon as this is accomplished, the scene ends. The description states that the feast lasted for three days, and then there is a sad parting

as Raymond is left behind, to remain in the story while his family disappears until much later in the romance.

When thys roiall Feist was endyd and done,
 Ryght so As it fell vppon the thyrd day,
 The Erle of foreste toke hys leue to gone;
 Tho thes brethen thre to-geders kyssyd thay,
 Entercommaundyng to god other ay,
 At ther departson had thay gret dolour;
 Thys Raymound Abode with hys lord that Houre. (99-105)

There are two introductory feast scenes in Amis and Amiloun, one which occurs near the beginning of the romance and one which occurs some 350 lines later. Although the first feast scene comes early in the story, we have already been informed that Amis and Amiloun are handsome boys of the same age, but not related. The boys accompany their parents to a feast given by a duke for his fellow noblemen. The occasion is a religious one, but it is nothing specific, simply a feast to honor Christ:

Frely he let sende his sonde,
 After erles, barouns, fre and bond,
 And ladies brygt in boure;
 A ryche fest he wolde make,
 Al for Ihesu Cristes sake.²

In the midst of the feasting and celebrating, the boys are admired by all the guests and their similarity in appearance is remarked upon:

And al þey seide with-out lesse
 Fairer children þan þey wesse
 Ne sey þey neuer ȝere.

.....
 Ne knew þe hend children tway
 But by þe coloure of her cloþ (82-96.)

The feast lasts for fourteen days, and is filled with

good food and much revelry:

Fourtenniȝt, as me was told,
With meet and drynke, meryst on mold,
To glad þe bernis blipe;
þer was mirpe & melodye
& al maner of menstracie
Her craftes for to kipe. (100-105)

The next day, when the guests are leaving, the duke asks both sets of parents to leave Amis and Amiloun with him. He promises to provide for them and to make them knights of his court. So this first feast scene is used to describe the similar fine looks of Amis and Amiloun and to lead up to their adoption by the duke. Thus the two boys are brought up together and so begin their close friendship, which is the subject of the romance.

The next feast scene in Amis and Amiloun serves to introduce the duke's daughter, Belisaunt, into the story and to give cause for her falling in love with Amis. Again the duke gives a feast, and again he invites many noble guests and serves them well:

þe riche douke lete make a fest
Semly in somers tide;
þer was mani a gentil gest
Wip mete & drink ful onest
To serui by ich a side. (410-14)

In the middle of the description of the feast, the narrator presents and describes Belisaunt:

þat riche douke, þat y of told,
He hadde a douhter fair & bold,
Curteise, hende & fre. (421-23)

He then returns to the feast and tells us that Amis, now the

duke's butler, was the finest knight there:

Pan was þe botēler, sir Amis,
Ouer al yholden flour & priis. (439-40)

After the guests leave, Belisaunt asks her maids for the name of the best young man at the feast. She is told that it is Sir Amis, and she falls in love with him. The description of the feast is vague, and it is not clear whether Belisaunt attended the feast and wondered who the young knight was, or if she falls in love with him because he is considered by others to be the finest. Whichever, it is still the feast scene which is used to introduce a new character and a love interest into the story. Therefore this feast scene functions as an introduction, even though it occurs later on in the text.

A similar feast scene is found in Emaré. It too appears well into the romance, beginning with stanza 33 of an 86 stanza work. As in Amis and Amiloun, this scene introduces a new character and a love interest into the story. Emaré has already been presented to the reader, along with details of her past. Her mother having died when she was a child, Emaré was sent away to be raised. Later her father calls her back to court and falls in love with her to the extent that he receives permission from the Pope to marry her. Emaré refuses and is punished by being sent out to sea in a boat with only her cloak, magnificently decorated with images of famous lovers. She is found in another land by Sir Kadore who permits her to

live at the castle of his lord, the King of Galys. The king himself is not introduced into the romance until he and Sir Kadore give a feast:

Syr Kadore lette make a feste,
That was fayr and honeste,
Wyth hys lorde, be kyng.³

This scene is also used to introduce Emaré to the king, for she serves him at the meal and her mantel enhances her beauty:

The lady, pat was gentylle and smalle,
In kurtulle alone serued yn halle,
By-fore pat nobulle kyng.
be cloth vpon her shone so bry3th,
When she was per-yn y-dy3th,
She semed non erdly pyng. (391-96)

The love interest is presented in the next stanza, as the king falls in love with Emaré while looking at her:

The kyng loked her vp-on,
So fayr a lady he sy3 neuur non,
Hys herte she hadde yn wolde.
.....

She was so fayr and gent,
The kyniges loue on her was lent. (397-404)

So again we have a feast scene which, although not appearing at the beginning of the work, still serves to introduce a new character and a love interest into the tale.

An introductory feast scene found in The Lyfe of Ipomydon functions in the same way as the one in Emaré. It is different because it comes near the beginning of the work and because its introduction of the new character and love interest is more subtly done. Ipomydon's father, the king, holds his annual Whitsunday feast to which a great many are

invited from far and near:

Every yere the kyng wold
 At whytsontyde a fest hold;
 Off dukis, erlis and barouns
 Many there come frome dyuers townes;
 Ladyes, maydens, gentill & fre,⁴
 Come thedyr frome ferre contre.

We are then told that his son Ipomydon has become an attractive young man, for all the women at the feast admire him:

Ipomydon bat day servyd in halle,
 All spake of hym, bothe grete & smalle,
 Ladies & maydens byheld hym on:
 So godely a man they had sene none. (95-98)

The new character, the maid of Calabria, is presented to the reader by means of the after-dinner conversation. As the guests are milling about the hall, they ask one another for information about mutual acquaintances, and one question is about the king of Calabria:

And somme in the halle stode
 And spake, what hem thought gode.
 Men, that were of that cyte,
 Enquered of men of other contre,
 Of Calabre-lond who was kyng. (107-11)

The conversation is used to give the background information about Calabria to the reader. We learn that the king is dead, and that his daughter and heiress is a desirable woman:

She is be feyreste, bat may bee:
 For, thoughe a man wold all bis day
 Hyr beaute discryve, he coude not sey
 All hyr worshyp ne hyr porture;
 She is a lady of grete honoure;
 In all bis world is non so wyse. (118-23)

Furthermore, this anonymous conversation tells us that she has refused to marry kings and emperors, and will have only

the strongest, whose existence is doubted:

But she will non, þat is on lyffe.
But he doughtyeste be of hande,
That suche on is non lyvande. (128-30)

The talk of this lady fills the hall, and Ipomydon overhears it all until he is overcome with desire for her, and decides he must see her.

Ipomydon drew hym nye tho
And ofte he herkenyd to & fro;
When he herd of hir so speke,
Hym thought, his herte wold tobreke,
But if he myght se þat mayde. (139-43)

Ipomydon pines away for the lady for a few days, and then he starts making plans to get to Calabria to try to win her. The conversation at the feast scene has skillfully introduced the maid of Calabria to both Ipomydon and the reader simultaneously. It has also been used to motivate Ipomydon's later attempts to prove himself the doughtiest man living, for this conversation planted in the young man's head the idea of winning the maid.

The Southern version of Octavian has an introductory feast scene which functions only to establish the relationship of the characters. It is an example of a wedding feast which is placed near the beginning of a romance and which functions as an introduction. This scene is used to celebrate the marriage of Octavian, the Emperor of Rome, to Florence, the daughter of the King of France, and begins with a description of the music which accompanies the feast:

Ther myȝt men here menstralcye,
 Trompys, tabours and cornettys crye,
 Roowte, gyterne, lute and sawtrye,
 Fydelys and othyr mo.⁵

The wedding makes everyone so happy that, directly after the meal, their dancing begins and spreads into the streets of Paris, stopping only because of curfew:

And after mete þe lordys wyse,
 Euerych yn dywers queyntise,
 To daunce wente þe ryght asyse
 (The Frensch þoȝt telle)
 In euery strete of Parys
 Tyll curfu belle. (79-84)

At the end of this feast which last forty days, all the guests return home, and the newlyweds go off to Rome to begin their life together:

And at þe forty dayes ende
 Hy token lene for to wende,
 Ech lord to hys owene kende,
 Of crystendome;
 The emperour and Florence hende,
 Wenten to Rome. (85-90)

By its joyful tone and emphasis on revelry, this feast scene also tells the reader that the union of Octavian and Florence is a happy one. Thus the scene functions to establish both the fact and the quality of the relationship.

The Northern version of Octavian uses a feast scene to initiate the major action of the story from which all subsequent actions derive, that is, the banishment of Florence and her twin sons from the court. Before this feast scene, which begins on l.184 of the romance, the mutual love of Octavian and his wife has been well-portrayed; however, Octavian's mother manages to trick her son into believing that the birth

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of twins is evidence of Florence's adultery. Octavian calls a feast for his fellow noblemen in order to have them decide the proper punishment for his wife, and makes sure to include Florence's father, the King of Calabria, as one of the guests:

The emperowre made a feste, y undurstonde,
Of kyngys, that were of farre londe,
And lordys of dyuers stede.
The kyng of Calabur, wythowt lees,
That the ladys fadur was,
Thethur was he bede. (C 184-89)

The feast is described as a successful, convivial meeting with plenty of music and food:

Kyngys dwellyd then alle in same;
There was yoye and moche game
At that grete mangery,
Wyth gode metys them amonge,
Harpe, pype, and mery songe,
Bothe lewte and sawtre. (C 193-98)

The contrast between the joy of the feast and the sadness of its occasion is commented upon by the author when he states:

Ther was neuer so ryche a getherynge,
That had so sory a pertynge. (C 202-203)

After seven days of feasting, Octavian asks the kings for their advice, but keeps secret the identity of the woman concerned. It is a cruel irony that the king of Calabria recommends death by burning for the mother and sons. It is also a very dramatic end to the feast scene as Octavian accepts the king's advice and reveals to him that it is his own daughter he has condemned:

When the emperowre had hys tale tolde,
The kyng of Calabur answeere wolde,
He wyste not, what hyt mente;
He seyde: "Hyt ys worthy, for hur sake

Whythowt the cyte a fyre to make
 Be ryghtwyse yugement;
 When the fyre were brennyng faste
 Sche and hur II chyldren perin to be caste.
 And to dethe to be brente."
 The emperowre answeryd hym fulle sone:
 "Thyn own doghtur hyt hath done,
 Y holde to thyn assent!" (C 217-28)

This feast scene marks the point of estrangement between husband and wife, since before this Florence has had no knowledge of the charges against her. Following directly after the feast scene is the scene of the fire where Octavian is so touched by his wife's prayers that he sends her and the children away rather than let them die. It is the feast scene, however, which serves to start Florence and the two boys on their various adventures which make up the rest of the romance.

Another feast scene which functions to initiate a major action of the plot appears in Richard Coeur de Lion. Like the second feast scene in Amis and Amiloun, it does not come at the beginning of the story; however, this is a long work of over 6,000 lines and the scene does begin on l.1341. It is the first feast scene in the romance and introduces the crusade for which Richard gained fame. It begins when Richard calls together members of the Church and the nobility for a feast at Westminster:

In heruest, afftyr be natiuite,
 Kyng Richard wip gret solempnite
 At Westemynstyr heeld a ryal ffeste
 Wip bysschop, eerl, baroun honeste,
 Abbotes, knyghtes, swaynes strong.⁶

After the meal, Richard stands and speaks to all the guests, telling them that Pope Urban has asked that the Christians fight off the Saracens who are now at Acres. After a rousing speech about the dangers to Christendom, he pledges himself to do battle against the pagans and asks for aid:

Wherefore myselff, j hause mente,
 To wende pedyr, wip sweredes dente
 Wynne þe croys, and gete los.
 Now, ffrendes, what is youre purpos?
 Wole 3e wende? Says 3e or nay! (1371-75)

Of course, the answer is unanimous, as all accept the challenge and vow to follow Richard:

Erles, barouns, knyghtis, and alle þat maye
 Sayde: "We ben at on acord
 To wende wip þe, Rychard, oure lord!" (1376-78)

Although Richard has gone on other adventures before this crusade, this is the only one introduced by a feast, perhaps because it is his greatest adventure. The feast scene gives to the reader a sense that this adventure is different and more important than the previous ones. For these reasons, this scene must be considered an introductory feast scene, even though it does not appear in the normal position for such a scene.

King Horn contains a feast scene which is similar to the one in Richard Coeur de Lion. It also functions to introduce an important action in the plot and it occurs well into the romance; it begins on l. 853 of approximately 1640 lines. The scene occurs shortly after Horn has arrived in Ireland using the name Cutberd and is now in the services of King Thurston.

At the king's Christmas celebration, a giant pagan interrupts the feast.

Hyt was at Cristesmesse,
 Naper more ne lesse.
 Pe king hym makede a feste,
 Wyt hyse knyctes beste.
 per com ate none,
 A geaunt swiþe sone,
 Armed of paynime.⁷

The intruder tells the king that one pagan will fight any three of his knights with the king's lands going to the winner. Although Thurston chooses Cutberd and two others to protect his lands, Cutberd insists on fighting alone. Even in the simple language of King Horn, the point is well made: for a nobleman like Horn it is a question of honor that the battle be equal:

"Syre kygeking, hyt no ry3cte,
 On wiþ þre to fy3cte.
 At wille ich alone,
 With outen mannes mone,
 Mid my swerd wel heþe
 Bringen hem alle to deþe." (L 885-892)⁸

The next day Horn fights and slays the pagan alone. The importance of this action is revealed in the midst of the battle when Horn, along with the reader, discovers that this pagan is the man who killed his father. Thus the feast scene has initiated the action which allows Horn to revenge his father's death.

More elaborate than The Lyfe of Ipomydon, Ipomedon gives us a longer and more intricate introductory feast scene. Ipomedon and the lady of Calabria have both been introduced into the romance before the feast scene, but as separate and unconnected characters. At a feast given by Ipomedon's

father, the guests begin to talk about this beautiful woman:

And on a tyme he made a feeste
To men, that worthy were;
When they wer set & seruyd all,
The worde spronge in the hall
Of Calabrye the fere;
Than sayd a knyghte of bewte:
"So fayre, so good at all degre
Was non levand to her!" (173-80)

Ipomedon is serving at the feast and overhears these comments. In the best traditions of courtly love, he immediately falls in love with the lady, becomes weak and cannot eat:

Whene he to his mette was sett,
He myghtte nother drynke ne ete,
So mekyll on her he thoughte;
He wax wan and pale off hewe. (193-96)

His teacher, Tholomew, sees Ipomedon's distress and goes to his side. Ipomedon then asks his aid in convincing his parents that he should leave the court to travel and seek adventure, for

The wyse man and the boke seys:
In a cowrte who so dwell always,
Full littill good shall he con. (220-22)

He also tells Tholomew that he wishes to go to Calabria to meet the woman he has heard about:

"Maystur", he sayd, "ye harde full wele
Of that dereworthy damysell,
The knyght spake of langare:
The semely fere of Calabyre,
The way thethur will I spere.
To se the maner thare." (247-52)

Tholomew says he will help Ipomedon and that he will request permission from his parents so that they both may leave together.

This conversation between Ipomedon and Tholomew is quite long, lasting from line 202 to line 264; and is filled with pledges of mutual devotion and courteous questions.⁹ Although it takes place at the feast, as Ipomedon sits down to eat, it soon takes over the scene itself, so that the reader becomes totally involved with the conversation. There is no obvious end to the feast scene; as Tholomew seeks out Ipomedon's father we still sense that they are in the hall. However, a few lines later, Ipomedon's father goes to his wife's chamber to seek her advice, and then all sense of the feast scene disappears. Tholomew is successful and he and Ipomedon set off for Calabria. The feast scene, then, with its overheard comments about the lady of Calabria introduces the love interest of the story. But this scene also serves to initiate a major action, because the conversations about knightly duty lead directly to Ipomedon's starting off on his adventures.

Another feast scene which introduces both a love interest and motivation for future action appears in Guy of Warwick. The major characters and their relationships have already been presented to the reader: the earl's daughter, Felice, and Guy, son of the earl's steward. This scene differs from others which function in the same way because it gives a detailed description of Guy's feelings and fears about his love for a woman who is his superior. The feast is given by the earl as a Whitsunday celebration:

On Witsondaye called Pentecoste
 The Erle helde a grete feste
 In Warrewik, that good Citee.
 As it euer was wonte to bee.¹⁰

In the description of the guests, romance is quickly emphasized as each man and woman chooses his lover:

Many a mayde there chese hir loue anone
 Of knyghtes that thider were come,
 And the knyghtes also their lemans there
 Of the maidens that there were. (C 193-96)

And love remains the subject of this feast scene, for it is here that Guy first sees Felice and falls in love with her. Guy is chosen by the earl to serve his daughter, and once he meets and talks with her he can think only of her:

Wele to serue he did his myghte
 Moo than thirty maidens brighte;
 That all they anamoured were
 On Guye for his faire chere.
 And he therof rekked noughte,
 For vpon another was his thoughte:
 On Felice with the nebbe so brighte. (C 237-43)

In the true fashion of a courtly lover, Guy is made ill by his love for Felice. At first he decides to reveal his love to her and risk the pain of rejection:

Bot streight to hir woll y goo,
 And in hir mercy y shall me doo;
 And if she woll, she may me slee,
 And hir wille doo with me. (C 289-92)

But then he realizes a further risk this love brings him, for the earl may get angry at the presumption of his liege man and may punish him. Guy dwells on the various forms this punishment might take, all horrible and deadly, such as burning and hanging. Then he realizes the trap he is in,

for he loves the very thing that can destroy him:

For my lordys Doughter she is,
 And y his norry ywis;
 Therfor the more beholding to him y bee,
 And neuere noo-wher his harme to see.
 If y hir loued and wite might he,
 And therwith he may take me,
 Brenne he me wolde, or the hede of smyte,
 Or highe hange for that dispite,
 Or allto-hewe with swerdes kene,
 And y him did suche a tene.
 Allas, y wrecche! what may y doo?
 I loue hir that is my foo. (C 297-307)

All this is too much for the young man, so he takes to his bed for the duration of the feast:

Thus lyueth Guy in grete turmenta
 • Till the feest was ouer wente. (C 325-26)

It is Guy's realization of his problems with loving Felice that motivates further action. Both his feelings and his fears motivate him to request knighthood, for once he has proven himself to her and to her father, they can be married. In order to prove his worth, he must perform deeds of valor, and shortly after the feast scene, he sets out as a knight errant.

The feast scene in Kyng Alisaunder serves to introduce a new character into the romance and to initiate further action. It is, however, somewhat different from the other introductory feasts because it is largely a town festival, made up of a procession and public games which are emphasized in the description. By means of the feast scene, Queen Olympias is presented and described to the reader and her first meeting with Neptanebus takes place. While her husband

is away in April, the queen calls a feast to which she invites all levels of society:

Jn bis tyme faire and jolyf,
Olympyas, pat faire wijf,
Wolde make a riche fest
Of knigttes and lefdyes honest;
Of burgeys and of jugelers,¹¹
And of men of vche mesters.¹¹

It is quite clear that she called the feast in order to show herself to everyone and to receive praise for her beauty:

Mychel she desirer to shewe hire body,
Her faire here, her face rody,
To haue loos and ek praisynge. (B 163-65)

To achieve this end, Olympias rides through the town in a grand procession on a white mule, while the people bow down before her:

Foure trumpes toforne hire blew.
Many man pat day hire knew-
An hundreþ þousand and ek moo,
Alle alouten hire vnto. (B 185-88)

Although Olympias makes certain that she is the center of attention at the feast, there is much revelry, music, dancing and various other entertainments for the people:

Wipouten þe tounes murey
Was arered vche manere pley.
Þere was knigttes tourneying,
Þere was maydens carolyng,
Þere was champouns skirmyng,
Of hem, of opere also, wrestlyng,
Of lyons chace, of bere baityng,
A-bay of bore, of bole slatyng. (B 193-200)

As the queen rides through the crowds, she and Neptanabus exchange glances. He is staring at her, and she realizes that he is a stranger among her people:

Jn hir he loked stedfastlyk,
 And she in hym, al outrelyk.
 She hym avised among þe pleye
 For he was nouȝth of þat contreye. (B 219-22)

Olympias demands that he identify himself, and Neptanabus tries to reassure her that he has come, not as a thief, but to tell her "þe soop." But his mysterious reply frightens her even more; she fears he will shame her, so she quickly rides away from him and decides to deal with him at a later time:

She was adrad he shulde telle
 Þing of shame, and nolde duelle.
 More she þouȝth þan she spaak.
 Away she roode from hym, good shak,
 And þouȝth she wolde hym yhere
 Whan she was of leysere. (B 229-34)

This tense meeting between Olympias and Neptanabus is the point at which the feast scene ends. It is also the point at which a future action is initiated, for Olympias does see Neptanabus later, when he tells her that she will have a great son and that the king will soon reject her for another woman.

So this feast functions in three ways: to introduce and describe a new character of the romance; to present Neptanabus to Olympias; and to initiate the further action of their later meeting when Alexander's birth is prophesied to the Queen.

In Sir Launfal the feast scene depicts a relationship, Guinevere's hatred of Launfal, which serves as the motivation for future action. It also functions to initiate Launfal's

leaving Arthur's court and setting off on his own. The feast is actually the celebration of Arthur's marriage to Guinevere. Launfal disapproves of the wedding because he knows Guinevere is an adulteress, but he says nothing. The description of this feast scene begins by emphasizing the nobility of the guests:

Noman ne may telle yn tale.
 What folk þer was at þat bredale,
 Of countreys fer & wyde.
 No noþer man was yn hälle ysette
 But he wer prelat oper baronette.¹²

The scene continues on after the meal, as wine is served to the guests, a feature common to other Arthurian romances:

And whan þe lordes hadde ete yn þe halle,
 And þe cloþes wer drawn alle
 (As ye mowe her & lyþe),
 The botelers sentyn wyn
 To alle þe lordes þat wer þeryn,
 Wyth ðere boþe glad & blyþe. (61-66)

When the guests are happy and at ease, Guinevere gives gifts to Arthur's knights. But she does not give anything to Launfal, thus signifying to him that she knows that he disapproves of her:

Euerych knyȝt schē ȝaf broche oper ryng,
 But Syr Launfal schē yaf noþyng:
 Þat greuede hym many a syde. (70-72)

Guinevere's rejection of Launfal makes the Knight realize that he can no longer stay at Arthur's court, and so he leaves as soon as the wedding feast ends.

Not only does this feast scene give the motivation for the knight's leaving, but it also gives the reason for action

that occurs later in the plot, towards the end of the romance. The resulting tension between Launfal and Guinevere which is portrayed in the feast scene is the direct cause of Launfal's departure and the cause of the mutual antipathy between Launfal and Guinevere which resurfaces seven years later when he returns to court. This time, Launfal rejects Guinevere and she turns on him and tries to get Arthur to punish him. It is in the earlier feast scene where the motivation for her anger has been introduced to us, so that her hateful attitude towards Launfal at the end of the story is easily understood and accepted by the reader.

In the Arthurian romances of Sir Perceval of Gales, Yvain and Gawain, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the alliterative Morte Arthure, we have examples of introductory feast scenes which contain all four functions. In addition to presenting and describing characters and their relationships, these feast scenes also initiate or motivate future action, give the individual ambience of the romance and appeal to the audience through the various details and emphases which differ in each work. These Arthurian scenes contain more specific functions and they add depth and expansion to the introductory feast, not only in the description itself, but also in the spatial and temporal qualities in the narrative. In this sense, then, each romance is a reflection and enlargement upon the feast scene and all that happens there. For instance, in Sir Perceval of Gales, the two introductory feast scenes contribute to the

atmosphere and tone of the story because their emphasis on jousting reflects on Percival's knightly adventures which form the bulk of the romance. In Ywain and Gawain the description of the feast itself is short, but the conversation afterwards extends the time of the scene into the past and future of the story. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Morte Arthure, there is a spatial expansion of the banquet scenes so that there is extended description of the food, people, conversation and atmosphere which gives the audience a feeling of recognition, and even reality, of the society and culture of the court.

Sir Perceval of Galles contains two feast scenes which follow one another closely and which work together as an introduction to the romance. The first is a wedding feast, similar to those of the Southern Octavian and Sir Launfal, which serves to establish the relationship of the previously introduced bride and groom. The elder Perceval, one of Arthur's favorite knights, is wedded to Arthur's sister, Acheflour. A tournament is part of the festivities and Perceval issues a challenge to all other knights:

A grete brydale pay made
 For hir sake, pat hym made
 Chosen to hir make;
 And after with-owtten any lett
 A grete justyng per was sett:
 Off all þe kempes, þat he mett,
 Wolde he none forsake.

Wolde he none forsake,
 The rede knyghte ne þe blake,
 Ne none; þat wolde to hym take
 With schafte ne with schelde.¹³

The tournament is the focal point of this scene, just as knight errantry is the focal point of this romance. Through the tournament we are introduced to the Red Knight who plays an important part in the rest of the story as the enemy to both Percevals. At this tournament, the Red Knight is unhorsed by the elder Perceval along with some sixty other knights he defeats as his new wife watches:

Sexty schaftes, I say,
 Sir Percyvell brake pat ilke day,
 And ever pat riche lady lay
 One walle and by-helde;
 Pofe be rede knyghte hade sworne,
 Oute of his sadill is he borne
 And almoste his lyfe forlorne,
 And lygges in the felde. (57-64)

The sight of the Red Knight lying stunned in the tournament field so fills the other knights with fear and awe that there are no further challenges to Perceval. In a fitting end to his own wedding day, Perceval is declared the best knight, and rides off with his proud and happy wife:

Pay gaffe sir Percyvell be gree;
 Beste worthy was pat fre,
 And hamewardez pan rode he,
 And blythe was his bryde. (77-80)

This first feast scene introduces a new character into the story and gives the motivation for later action, for the Red Knight's defeat leaves him so angry that he swears vengeance on Perceval. Ironically, his chance for revenge comes at another feast - the celebration of the young Perceval's birth. Again, it is a tournament that is the most important part of the feast scene:

The knyghte was fayne, a feste made
 For a knave-childe, pat he hade,
 And sythen with-owtten any bade
 Offe justynges pay telle. (109-12)

Perceval holds the tournament not only because he likes jousting, but also because he wishes to give his young son a glimpse of his future:

A grete justynge was per sett
 Of all þe kempes, þat þer mett,
 For he wolde his son were gette
 In þe same wonne. (117-20)

But Perceval is never to see this future, for the Red Knight succeeds in his revenge and mortally wounds Sir Perceval at his own tournament.

This feast scene gives the cause for the young Perceval's strange behavior later on in the romance. Acheflour watches the Red Knight kill her husband and vows to protect her son from the same end by raising him alone in the forest:

And now is Percyvell þe wighte
 Slayne in Batelle and in fyghte,
 And þe lady hase gyffen a gyfte,
 Holde if scho may,
 Þat scho schall never mare wone
 In stede with hir gonge sone,
 Þer dedez of armez schall be done,
 By nyghte ne þe daye;
 Bot in þe wodde schall he be,
 Sall he no thyng see,
 Bot þe leves of the tree
 And þe greves graye. (161-72)

In complete contrast to her husband's wishes, Acheflour plans to keep Perceval away from all contact with knighthood, so that he will have no desire for it:

Schall he nowper take tent
 To justez ne to tournament,
 Bot in þe wilde wodde went,
 With bestez to playe. (173-75)

Achefflour leaves the court immediately, but the romance tells us that she is unable to keep Perceval from his heritage, although she does keep him ignorant of the chivalric life for a time.

These two introductory feast scenes also serve as a point of reference for the rest of the story, sometimes by helping to explain later events and sometimes by adding meaning to an occurrence. For example, when Arthur later recognizes the young Perceval, it is understood that the father's characteristics are present in his son. Again, when the boy decides to win his knighthood by punishing the Red Knight for taking Arthur's cup, our interest is heightened by the irony of his gesture: Perceval is not aware that he is seeking his father's killer, but Arthur is and so are we.

Through their emphasis on knight errantry, these two feast scenes add to the chivalric atmosphere and tone of the romance, and by referring back to these earlier feast scenes, we can also gain insight into the whole work. At both scenes, we see that Perceval's father valued his knightly abilities and delighted in proving and defending them by calling tournaments. He defeated the Red Knight in fair battle, and he was slain by the Red Knight in the same way. However, when the young Perceval kills the Red Knight, he does so in an un-knightly manner, by throwing a weapon, and throughout the

romance he acts in a rough and unchivalric fashion. Thus these feast scenes serve as points of contrast and comparison between the father's proper understanding of knighthood and the son's attempts at it.

The introductory feast scene in Ywain and Gawain also emphasizes the meaning and importance of knighthood, but in a less direct fashion than a tournament. At Arthur's Whitsunday feast, the royal guests gather in the hall after the meal:

Als it byfel to swilk a kyng,
He made a feste, be soth to say,
Opon þe Witsononday
At Kerdyf þat es in Wales,
And efter mete þare in þe hales
Ful grete and gay was þe assemble
Of lordes and ladies of þat cuntre.¹⁴

The conversation which follows is about knightly valor and skill, and it sets the tone for the whole romance which is about chivalry and knightly companionship:

Fast þai carped and curtaysly
Of dedes of armes and of veneri
And of gude knightes þat lyfed þen,
And how men might þam kyndeli ken
By doghtines of þaire gude ded. (25-29)

A direct appeal for the audience's goodwill and attention is then made by the poet's comparison of the past and present in his claim for the truthfulness of his story. This claim is presented through the narrator's comments about the authenticity of stories which were told in Arthur's days and which the people at the feast are telling. He states that the story of Ywain which he is about to tell differs from stories told

by his contemporaries which are filled with falsehoods. His tale will be told in the same sense of truthfulness practiced by Arthur's court at this feast, for they were the best:

Pai tald of more trewth þam bitwene
 Þan now omang men here es sene,
 For trowth and luf es al bylaft;
 Men uses now anoþer craft.
 With worde men makes it trew and stabil,
 Bot in þaire faith es noght bot fabil;
 With þe mowth men makes it hale,
 Bot trew trowth es nane in þe tale.
 Þarfore hereof now wil I blyn,
 Of þe Kyng Arthure I wil bygin
 And of his curtayse cumpany;
 Þare was þe flowre of chevallry. (33-44)

This interpolation prepares us for the whole romance which is about Ywain's developing sense of chivalry, and for the tale-within-a-tale told by Sir Colgrevice. This tale is told in the leisurely atmosphere of a small group of knights who sit after the meal and talk together while guarding the king's chamber. This group, of course, is made up of several major characters of the romance:

Knyghtes sat þe dor to kepe:
 Sir Dedyne and Sir Segramore,
 Sir Gawayn and Sir Kay sat þore,
 And also sat þare Sir Ywaine
 And Colgrevice of mekyl mayn. (54-58)

Before Colgrevice can tell his tale, there is an interruption by Sir Kay. Guinevere comes out of the chamber and joins the group, but only Colgrevice sees her and stands for her. Kay berates Colgrevice while trying to defend himself and the others for not rising. The queen must warn Kay not to be so angry towards a fellow knight, but then Colgrevice gets so angry at Kay that he refuses to tell his story:

So it fars by þe, Syr Kay;
 Of weked wordes has þou bene ay.
 And, sen þi wordes er wikked and fell,
 Þis time þarto na more I tell,
 Bot of the thing þat I bygan. (99-103)

This interruption functions to give a sense of reality and of immediacy to the feast scene. We see Kay as his traditional "karping" self, and Guinevere as a graceful queen. This time Guinevere assuages Colegrevice's anger and courteously requests that he begin his tale, so he does:

Taunted by Kay and urged by the queen, who has joined them, he tells of meeting a hideous chure in a wood, who directed him to a well in the forest, where he was to pour water in a golden basin and cast it upon a stone. A sudden storm breaks after he has done so, and a strange knight appears, overthrows him in a joust, and bears away his horse.¹⁵

With this tale-within-a-tale there is further temporal expansion of the feast scene. The telling of a tale makes the reader refer back to the poet's comments about such tales earlier in the feast scene: they are first stories of knightly adventures; and second, they are true. Now Colgrevice is telling just such a tale and it must be assumed that it is as true as the story of Ywain which the poet himself is telling. We later discover that Colgrevice's information was indeed true, because Ywain's experiences bear it out. So this tale reflects back upon previous statements as well as anticipating future events of the romance.

Colgrevice's tale is the most important part of the feast scene, for it initiates Ywain's leaving the court to seek the

enchanted well. As soon as Colgrevance ends his story, Ywain pledges to avenge his fellow knight's defeat. But Kay insults him by telling him that:

Mare boste es in a pot of wyne
Pan in a karcas of Saynt Martyne. (469-70)

Once again the queen must warn Kay not to turn on his companions, but Ywain reassures her that he is unperturbed by Kay's rudeness:

Lates him say halely his thoght;
His wordes greves me right noght. (507-508)

This statement by Ywain contrasts with Colgrevance's angry reply to Kay's crude behavior. It shows that Ywain is capable of behaving courteously in the worst circumstances, and this behavior will stand him in good stead as he starts out on his own adventures. He does so shortly after the end of Colgrevance's story, because he does not want Arthur and the other knights to get to avenge Colgrevance first. So Ywain seeks both the adventure and the honor alone:

Bi him allane he thoght to wend
And tak þe grace þat God wald send. (547-48)

Taken as a whole, the feast scene introduces the characters, actions and topics that are important and integral parts of the romance. It also serves as a place where the narrator can comment upon the ideals of the past, that is, true tales and make a claim for them in his own narrative. By using the technique of a tale-within-a-tale, the narrator gives temporal expansion to his own story. This technique also allows him to contribute to the atmosphere of the romance in a subtle and

leisurely manner. The elements of temporal expansion and narrative commentary add to the feast scene the further function of gaining the attention and good will of the audience.

But the leisurely style of the scene belies its complexity. There are reflections upon reflections in this feast scene, as if the reader is standing in a hall of mirrors and sees the same thing, but reflected in various ways. The narrator's first interpolation in the feast scene looks forward to Colgrevice's story, and Colgrevice's story both reflects back on the poet's earlier statement and looks forward to Yvain's adventure. Then Yvain's finding the magic well reflects back upon Colgrevice's story and authenticates it. So the tale-within-a-tale which is at the center of the feast scene is also at the center of these reflections, just as the well serves as a central point in the romance.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the alliterative Morte Arthure contain greatly expanded and highly descriptive introductory feast scenes which have similar characteristics. The feasts are part of the Christmas celebration at Arthur's court; both are interrupted by uninvited strangers;¹⁶ and these interruptions lead to the further adventures of the hero. But here the similarity ends, for the feast scenes are also quite distinct from one another. For one thing, the intruders in the Morte Arthure are simply foreigners whose challenge to the court is one that can be answered through a battle. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, of course, the intruder is a

mysterious creature, an alien whose challenge is all the more threatening because of its magical quality.

The atmosphere of the two feast scenes is also quite different; in the Morte Arthure, the tone emphasizes the majesty, power and authority of Arthur, whereas in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the emphasis is on the games and revelry attending the festivities. When the Christmas feasting is first mentioned in Sir Gawain, it is described in terms of the activities associated with such a celebration; that is, jousting and caroling:

Per tournayed tulkes by tymeze ful mony,
Justed ful jolile pise gentyle knyghtes,
Syben kayred to be court caroles to make.¹⁷

The emphasis for this feast scene is on the carefree nature of the activities, so the tone established is one of fun and play, not seriousness:

For per be fest watz ilyche ful fifteen dayes,
With alle be mete and be mirbe pat men coupe avyse;
Such glaum ande gle glorious to here,
Dere dyn vpon day, daunsyng on nyghtes. (44-47)

There is also a difference in the spatial qualities of these two introductory feast scenes. The scene in Sir Gawain presents to us a small enclave of joy and revelry, more like the walled garden of the Romance of the Rose and unlike the extended empire stressed in the Morte Arthure. It is the contained world of Arthur's court, made up of the finest knights and the fairest ladies, complete unto itself:

Al watz hap vpon hege in hallez and chambrez
With lordes and ladies, as leuest him pozt.
With all be wele of be worlde pay woned per samen,

þe most kyð knyȝtez vnder Krystes seluen,
 And þe louelokkest ladies þat euer lif haden,
 And he þe comlokest kyng þat þe court haldes;
 For al watz þis fayne folk in her first age,
 on stille,
 þe hapnest vnder heuen. (48-56)

Another difference between the two feast scenes is that women are an important part of the Gawain feast. This is in keeping with the different forms and atmosphere of the two romances -- the ladies need not be included in the Morte Arthure, which is about war and knightly deeds, but they are essential to Sir Gawain, a romance about courtesy and courtly behavior. In the description of the New Year's Day feast, Guinevere is presented before Arthur, is, with a full account of her dress given:

Whene Guenore, ful gay, grayped in þe myddes,
 Dressed on þe dere des, dubbed al aboute,
 Smal sendal bisides, a selure hir ouer
 Of tryed tolouse, of tars tapites innoghe,
 þat were embrawdred and beten wyth þe best gemmes.
 þat myȝt be preued of prys wyth penyës to bye,
 in daye. (74-80)

The characterization of Arthur in Sir Gawain is that of a boyish king who loves games, quite unlike the King Arthur of the Morte Arthure. At this New Year's Day feast, it is not Arthur's renown as a warrior that is noted but rather his youthful, almost nervous, excitement:

Bot Arthure wolde not ete til al were serued,
 He watz so joly of his joyfnes, and sumquat childgered:
 His lif liked hym lyȝt, he louied þe lasse
 Auper to longe lye or to longe sitte,
 So bisied him his ȝonge blod and his brayn wylde. (85-89)

After Guinevere and Arthur are described, Gawain is

briefly introduced into the story, seated at a place of honor and importance, next to Guinevere: "There gode Gawan watz grayped Gwenore bisyde" (109).

The meal itself is accompanied by music and the laughter of the guests, as the super-abundance of food causes a "delightful confusion."¹⁸ In this description we have a good example of the way in which the author attains the favor and attention of his reader. The palpable nature of the scene appeals to our sense of hearing as well as sight, and the narrative allows us to experience everything as fresh and immediate:

Ben þe first cors come with crakkyng of trumpes,
Wyth mony baner ful bryȝt þat þerbi hengeȝ;
Nwe nakryn noyse with þe noble pipes,
Wylde werbles and wyȝt wakned lote,
Þat mony hert ful hiȝe hef at her towches.
Dayntes dryuen þerwyth of ful dere metes,
Foyoun of þe frēsche; and on so fele disches
Þat pine to fynde þe place þe peple biforne.
For to sette þe sylueren þat sere sewes halden
on clothe.

Iche lede as he loued hymselfe
þer laght withouten lope;
Ay two had disches twelue,
Good þer and bryȝt wyn bope. (116-29)

Into this world of carefree pleasure steps the Green Knight, shattering the spell of security and mirth.¹⁹ This creature is not, like the Roman messengers in the Morte Arthure, from another part of Arthur's empire. Rather, he is from another place, a place far beyond the experience and comprehension of the members of the court. The threat here is not of war, but of the unknown. It is not that Arthur's authority is

questioned, but that the happiness of the court is endangered by the Green Knight's very presence.

All these ideas are contained in the long description of the intruder which lasts from line 136 to line 220. Not only his color, "oueral enker-grene," but also his size stress the alien nature of this being:

Per hales in at þe halle dor an aghlich mayster,
On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe. (136-37)

When the Green Knight rides his horse into the hall, all music, laughter, and eating cease. The court lapses into a stunned silence as he challenges them all to his game of exchanging blows. Finally, Arthur agrees to the contest, but Gawain interrupts with a courteous request to take the challenge himself. By their response to the Green Knight, the court is revealed as frightened, Arthur as reticent and Gawain as loyal and perhaps even daring. Thus the feast scene gives the reader important knowledge about the major characters, knowledge that is added to throughout the rest of the scene.

After the beheading game is played, the Green Knight's instructions on meeting for the return blow are called out to Gawain as the man and horse leave. Although the sight of the severed head still speaking is both marvellous and terrifying, Arthur seems unperturbed by it all. He is merely grateful that, now that the marvel he awaited has appeared, he can return to his meal:

Wel bycommes such craft vpon Cristmasse,
Laykyng of enterludez, to laze and to syng,
Among þise kynde caroles of kny3tez and ladyez.

Neuer þe lece to my mete I may me wel dres,
For I haf sen a selly, I may not forsake. (471-75)

But the Green Knight has profoundly disturbed the equilibrium of Arthur's court. Although the great axe is hung above the dais for all to see, it is actually a grim reminder both of the court's new vulnerability and of Gawain's future meeting. And although the people return to their fine foods and music once again enters the scene, it does not mean, as the poet's interpolation shows, that Gawain or the court can ever forget what has just happened:

Þenne þay boȝed to a borde þise burnes toȝeder,
þe kyng and þe gode knyȝt, and kene men hem serued
Of alle dāyntyez double, as derrest myȝt falle;
Wyth alle maner of mete and mynstralcie boȝe,
Wyth wele walt þay þat day, til worped an ende
in londe.

Now þenk wel, Sir Gawan,
For woȝe þat þou ne wonde
þis auenture for to frayn
þat þou hatz tan on honde. (481-90)

The episode which begins at the New Year's Day feast will not be resolved until the end of the romance. Gawain must somehow successfully complete the challenge, and only then can joy return to the court. Gawain is able to return alive and well to the special place he left, and this act alone may restore the carefree attitude of the court, as their laughter at the end of the poem shows.

Obviously, this whole scene contains all the possible functions found in an introductory feast scene. It introduces some new characters and describes them and their relationships, and it initiates future action. Through its full description

of the activities, sounds and sights of the court, it establishes the atmosphere and setting. Through its emphasis on games and laughter, it gives the ambience to the work. And through its distinctive narrative and realistic interpolations by the poet, it appeals directly to the reader. Throughout the rest of the romance, this feast scene serves as a constant backdrop for the rest of the action of the story. It gives us the characterizations we need for understanding of this future action and it serves as a constant reminder to us and to Gawain of what he once had and may never return to again.

In two shorter and less successful works, The Grene Knight and Arthur, there are two feasts which correspond to the introductory feast scenes found in the larger works of Sir Gawain and the Morte Arthure. However, they are not discussed here because both scenes are so ill-formed and inferior as to defy categorization. The scene in The Grene Knight is apparently meant to be similar to the New Year's feast in Sir Gawain, but the word "feast" is never used. Much of the scene in Arthur is a cataloguing of the various noble guests, and its style is sparse and stilted in comparison to the alliterative work.

The New Year's Day feast in the Morte Arthure introduces character and action and sets the elevated tone for the whole work. It serves as a preparation for the future heroic action by emphasizing Arthur's power and nobility. In the

introduction to his edition of the Morte Arthure, John Finlayson states that "the first section of the poem (1.1-553) serves roughly the same function as the opening scenes of a play: it establishes the position of the hero through its picture of Arthur's court and the extravagant feast which occupies the centre of the proceedings."²⁰ As in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, this feast scene acts as a backdrop for future action; however, in this romance, the later knightly deeds are consistent with the perfect behavior of the court throughout the holiday feasting. Although this feasting extends in time from Christmas until Epiphany, it does not, like Ywain and Gawain, extend into past and future times. The emphasis in the Morte Arthure is on spatial and not temporal expansion.

This spatial quality is reflected in the very beginning of the romance by the extensive cataloguing of all the lands which Arthur has conquered, so that the reader gets a sense of geographic expansion, of a realm stretching from England to Europe and beyond.²¹ Now at the height of his fame and power, Arthur gathers his men together for the Christmas celebrations. Once again, there is a sense of expansiveness with this calling together of the various levels of nobility. The membership of Arthur's court includes the upper and middle levels of the nobility as well as members of the church, and even novices from all areas:

Thane aftyre at Carlelele a Cristynmese he halde,
 This ilke kyde conquerour, and helde hym for lorde,
 Wyth dukez and dusperes of dyuers rewmes,
 Erles and ercheuesqes, and other ynowe,
 Byschopes and bachelers, and banerettes nobille.²²

At the New Year's Day feast, Arthur's court is interrupted by an entourage of sixteen knights and a senator from Rome:

Bot on the newgere daye, at the none euyne,
 As the bolde at the borde was of brede seruyde,
 So come in sodanly a senatour of Rome,
 Wyth sextene knyghtes in a soyte, sewande hym one.
 (78-81)

This interruption is similar to the one in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: it culminates in a challenge which will lead directly to the further action of the romance. As Finlayson notes, "the abrupt entry of the 'senators' with their arrogant embassy has almost as disruptive an effect as the entry of the Green Knight into Arthur's court in Sir Gawain and, as in the latter poem, dramatically reveals the nature of the forthcoming action."²³ But in the Morte Arthure, the interruption and challenge are totally in keeping with a poem about heroic action; they are a test of Arthur's power, for the senator demands that Arthur pay tribute to their emperor Lucius for lands which Arthur considers his own.

This challenge from Lucius threatens to diminish Arthur's power and the greatness of his Round Table. It threatens both the expansiveness and the inclusiveness of Arthur's domain. If he were to go to Rome to explain, his

power would be diminished by acknowledging someone above himself. If he were to pay tribute, then he would admit that his domain is partially Rome's domain. But note that this threat is made at the very beginning of the feast, before the first course has even been served. Thus Arthur can reply to this challenge by statement and by show, and he does both well. First, he refuses to answer until he has consulted with all his knights and second, he invites the Romans to stay and partake of the feast. This courteous gesture is also ironically inclusive, for now the Roman senator must sit at Arthur's table. Arthur is able to impress the Romans not only by his angry refusal to answer them immediately, but also by his magnanimous invitation, which, by acknowledging their nobility, both honors and disarms them:

Sone the senatour was sett, as hyme wele semyde,
 At the kynges owne borde; twa knyghtes hym seruede,
 Singulere sothely, as Arthure hym seluyne,
 Richely on the ryghte hannde at the Rounde Table;
 Be resoune that the Romaynes whare so ryche holdene,
 As of the realeste blode that reynede in erthe.

(170-175)

The feast which follows cannot fail to give good evidence of Arthur's wealth, for it is a feast of impressive opulence and plenty. The description of this feast is the longest and most expansive in all the Middle English romances. Various dishes of meat and fowl are pictured in detail, along with their different sauces, and the serving platters of silver and gold. It is breath-taking in its abundance and variety:

There come in at the fyrste course, be-for
the kyngeseluene;
Bareheuedys that ware bryghte, burnyste with syluer,
Alle with taghte mene and towne in togers fulle ryche,
Of saunke realle in suyte, sixty at ones;
fflesch fluriste of fermysone with frumentee noble,
Ther-to wylde to wale, and wynlyche bryddes,
Pacokes and plouers in platers of golde,
Pygges of porke despyne, that pastured neuer;
Sythene herons in hedoyne, hyled fulle faire;
Grett swannes fulle swythe in silueryne chargeours,
Tartes of Turkey, taste whame theme lykys;
Gumbaldes graythely, fulle gracious to taste;
Seyne bowes of wylde bores with the braune lechyde,
Bernakes and botures in baterde dysches,
Thareby braunchers in brede, bettyr was neuer,
With brestez of barowes, that bryghte ware to schewe;
Seyen come ther sewes sere, with solace ther-after,
Ownde of azure alle ouer and ardant them semyde,
Of ilke a leche the lowe launschide fulle hye,
That alle ledes myghte lyke that lukyde theme apone;
Thane cranes and curlues craftyly roasted,
Connygez in cretoyne coloured fulle faire,
ffesauntez enflureschit in flammande siluer,
With darielles endordide, and daynteez ynewe. (176-99)

Then the many wines are recounted along with the clever methods
of serving them in fountains and faucets:

Thane clarett and Creette, clergially rennene,
With condethes fulle curious alle of clene siluyre;
Osay and algarde, and other ynewe,
Rynisch wyne and Rochelle, richere was neuer;
Vernage of Venyce vertuouse and Crete;
In faucetez of fyne golde, fonode who so lykes.
(200-05)

Finally, a sixty-piece set of gold drinking cups is described;
they are decorated with jewels to prevent poisoning, and there
is apparently one man in charge of them:

The kynges cope-borde was closed in siluer,
In grete goblettez ouergylte glorious of hewe;
There was a cheeffe buttlere, a cheualere noble,
Sir Cayous the curtaise, that of the cowpe seruede;
Sexty cowpes of suyte fore the kyng seluyne;
Crafty and curious, coruene fulle faire,
In euer-ilk a party pyghte with precyous stones,
That nane enpoysone sulde goo preuely ther-vyndyre.
(206-13)

This detailed account of the spectacular food and drink and serving dishes, is followed by a description of Arthur, "the conquerour hymselfe," clothed in gold and wearing his royal crown, "ffore he was demyde the doughtyeste that duellyde in erthe" (1.219). Just as the richness of the food is reflected by the dishes and the cups, the wealth of the whole feast is reflected by Arthur and is an expression of his power and kingship. There is nothing lacking in the feast and there is nothing lacking in the man who commands it. Arthur is the only man both worthy of and capable of such a show of greatness.

This description is used by the poet to gain the absolute attention and interest of the reader, and at the same time, to impress both the reader and the Romans with its size and surfeit. It appeals to the reader mostly through his sense of sight; there is no musical accompaniment here, as in Sir Gawain, but there is much minute detail that is striking. And so the reader easily identifies with the awed Romans. Finlayson states:

The list of dishes served at Arthur's feast impresses by its plenitude and the exotic nature of some of the food. By the time one has passed from the 'pacokes and plovers in platers of golde' (182) to the 'condethes full curious all of clene silvyre' (201) one is dazzled by the splendour and wealth of Arthur's court, as are the Roman ambassadors. The richness of the detail dramatically conveys Arthur's power at a very early stage in the poem. This description, like most others in Morte Arthure, is affective in function; it both provides a local centre of interest for the audience of an

intensely visual nature and, at the same time, contributes to the total structure of the poem by adding to our already growing sense of the wealth, power and civilization which Arthur represents.²⁴

As the Romans take in all that they are being presented with, namely Arthur's majesty portrayed through the very food and plates in front of them, Arthur adds to their discomfiture with an apology.²⁵ This tactic of ironic understatement shows his complete control over the situation, and them:

"Sirs, bez knyghtly of contenance, and comfurthes
 your seluyne,
 We knowe noghte in this countre of curious metez;
 In thees barayne landez, bredes none other;
 ffore-thy wythowttynne feynynge, enforce 3ow the more
 To feede 3ow with syche feble as 3e be-fore fynde."
 (222-25)

The Romans are struck by the incongruity of the remark with the obvious surfeit they have witnessed. When the leader of the entourage replies with a remark which implies that Arthur's power is superior to Lucius', the reader knows that he has triumphed over these Romans and will do so with Lucius as well:

"Sir," sais the senatour, "so Criste motte me helpe!
 There ryngnede neuer syche realtee with-in Rome walles!
 There ne es prelatte, ne pape, ne prynce in this erthe,
 That he ne myghte be wele payede of thees pryce metes!
 (227-30)

As the meal is completed with spiced wine, Arthur calls his followers together for a council. Again, there is an expansiveness in this meeting since it includes many various members of the court:

Thane the conquerour to concelle cayres there-aftyre,
 Wyth lordes of his lygeaunce that to hym selfe langys;

To the geauntes toure iolily he wendes,
 Wyth iusticez and iuggez, and gentille knyghtes.
 (243-46)

The council agrees to fight against Lucius for the honor of Arthur and the Round Table. The knights promise to follow Arthur anywhere and are pleased with the idea of going to battle again. In turn, Arthur is fortified with his council's show of loyalty and support. When they return to the feast, they are accompanied by music and continue feasting until Epiphany, which marks the end of the Christmas holidays:

Qwhene they tristily had trefyd, they trumppe
 vp aftyre,
 Descendyd doune with a daunce of dukes and erles;
 Thane they semlede to sale, and sowpped als swythe,
 Alle this semly sorte, wyth semblante fulle noble.
 Thene the roy realle rehetes these knyghtys,
 Wyth reuerence and ryotte of alle his Rounde Table,
 Tille seuen dayes was gone (407-13)

In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Morte Arthure, the major characters are both challenged and tested at the introductory feast scenes. Both Gawain and Arthur manage to succeed in or to complete their tests. At the time of the challenge, much important information about their characters, strengths and weakness is revealed. These feast scenes permit the poet to reveal his characters, to establish them as believable to the reader, and to establish them in their own surroundings. Thus the introductory feast scenes in these romances are an important part of the narrative, not only for initiating action, but also for creating strong characterizations which must survive, literally, the many adventures of the romance plot. These feast scenes also establish the

individual atmosphere of the work, and appeal to the reader so that both the ambience and the interest remain throughout the work, to strengthen and to unify it.

Footnotes

¹Walter W. Skeat, ed., The Romans of Partenay, rev. ed., EETS OS 22 (London: Kegan Paul, 1899), ll. 50-56. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

²MacEdward Leach, ed., Amis and Amiloun, EETS OS 203 (London: Humphrey Milford, 1937), ll. 64-68. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

³Edith Rickert, ed., The Romance of Emare, EETS ES 99 (London: Kegan Paul, 1906), ll. 385-87. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

⁴Eugen Koebner, ed., Ipomedon (Breslau: Wilhelm Koebner, 1889), ll. 83-88. Further quotations from the romances of The Lyfe of Ipomydon and Ipomedon are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

⁵Gregor Sarrazin, ed., Octavian, Altenglisch Bibliothek 3 (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1885), ll. 67-70. Further quotations from both the Southern version and the Northern version of this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; a C or an L before the line number signifies respectively the Cambridge or the Lincoln Cathedral MS of the Northern version.

⁶Karl Brunner, ed., Richard Löwenherz, Wiener Beiträge zur englischen Philologie, Bd. 42 (Vienna, 1913), ll. 134-45. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

⁷George H. McKnight, ed., King Horn, Floriz and Blauncheflur, EETS OS 14 (1901; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), ll. L 853-59. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; a C or an L before the line number signifies respectively the Cambridge University or the Laud Misc. MS.

⁸Since the editor has numbered the lines of the Laud Misc. MS to correspond with the lines of the Cambridge MS, it appears as if there are two lines missing at this point; however, there is no gap in the Laud Misc.

⁹Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 67, notes that Ipomedon "is something of an alien in Middle English literature, more akin to the Anglo-Norman courtly tradition than to the English Romances."

¹⁰Julius Zupitza, ed., The Romance of Guy of Warwick, EETS 42, 49, 59 (1883, 1887, 1891; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), ll. C 185-88. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; an A or a C before the line number signifies respectively the Auchinleck or the Caius College Cambridge MS.

¹¹G.V. Smithers, ed., Kyng Alisaunder, EETS OS 227 (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1952), I, ll. B 155-60. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; an A or a B before the line number signifies respectively the Lincoln's Inn 150 or the Laud Misc. 622 MS.

¹²A.J. Bliss, ed., Sir Launfal, Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), ll. 52-56. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹³J. Campion and F. Holthausen, ed., Sir Perceval of Gales, Alt-und Mittelenglische Texte, Bd. 5 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung and New York: G.E. Stechert, 1913), ll. 42-52. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹⁴Albert B. Friedman and Norman T. Harrington, ed., Yvain and Gawain, EETS OS 254 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), ll. 14-20. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹⁵Helaine Newstead in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500, J. Burke Severs, gen. ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967), I, 64.

¹⁶Gerald Bordman, Motif-Index of the English Metrical Romances, FF Communications, No. 190, 2nd. ed. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1972), pp. 76-77, lists the following as containing "feast interrupted by man (by green Knight; by

giant; by beautiful lady and Knight) offering challenge":
The Awyntyr off Arthure, Guy of Warwick, King Horn, Lancelot of the Laik, Sir Ferunbras, Sir Gawain and The Turke and Gowin.
 I do not consider The Awntyrs or Ferumbras or Guy as having feasts here, because, according to the line reference given by Bordman, the authors do not use the word "feast;" I have not considered Lancelot because it is Scottish, nor Turke because it is a fragment. Bordman also lists Arthur as containing a "feast interrupted by man demanding tribute," yet he does not list the alliterative Morte Arthure as containing this same motif.

¹⁷J:R: Tolkien and E:V: Gordon, ed., Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 2nd. ed. rev. Norman Davis (Oxford: Glarendon, 1967), ll. 41-43. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹⁸Bridget Ann Henisch, Fast and Feast (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1976), p. 176.

¹⁹As strange a figure as the Green Knight is, Madeleine Pelner Cosman, Fabulous Feasts (New York: Braziller, 1976), p. 33, states that there were real-life comparisons found in records of medieval feasts: "While the literary King Arthur's demand for marvels before meals and the figure of the Green Knight both have long heritages in legend, folklore, and fertility myth, command for the incredible and its appearance were typical of the feast entertainments of the day. Two of the more outlandish elements of the appearance of the Green Knight his riding horseback into the hall and his arrogant boisterous challenge mid-feast - are paralleled by chronicles of medieval life. At the banquet celebrating Baldwin, Archbishop of Triers, for example all courses were carried by mounted servitors, ceremonially passing from stable to table. At the coronary festivity for King Henry IV in 1399, a knight on a horse barded with crimson interrupted the feasting to challenge any who denied the king's right to rule. This Champion thereby reaffirmed it by startling the audience to reassert its loyalty in public display. Entertainment and public policy thus joined in the Winchester banquet hall."

²⁰York Medieval Texts, Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall, eds. (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 15.

²¹See George P. Keiser, "Narrative Structure in the Alliterative Morte Arthure, 26-720," The Chaucer Review, 9, (Fall, 1974), 131: "Turning now to the Morte Arthure, we find that the poet begins his narrative in a traditional way: he

establishes the background against which his characters will move. Telling us that Arthur is at this time lord of most of western Europe, he offers a catalog of Arthur's conquests, which was undoubtedly inspired by Wace's list of the kings and nobles attending Arthur's coronation."

²²Edmund Brock, ed., Morte Arthure, EETSOS 8 (1871; rpt. London: Kegan Paul, 1906), ll. 64-68. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

²³York Texts, pp. 15-16.

²⁴York Texts, p. 21.

²⁵William Matthews, The Tragedy of Arthur (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960), p. 22, states: "The great feast that Arthur gives for the ambassadors is almost entirely the poet's addition: the chronicles have little to match this lordly display of wealth and magnificence, and nothing of Arthur's mock modesty over it."

Chapter Two: Recognition Feast Scenes

There are four different forms of recognition feast scenes which occur in Middle English romances. First, there is the feast scene which acknowledges someone's value or worth and may include a reward, such as the knighting of a loyal companion. The second type is self-recognition and takes the form of a person's rewarding himself with a feast, as in Gamelyn. The third type is the recognition of someone's special characteristic, either good or bad, which is divulged at some point in the feast scene. The fourth form of recognition is concerned with love: either the realization of the emotion, or the discovery of a loved one. This final form may also include a reunion of lovers as it does in Horn Childe and King Horn.

The recognition feast scene always appears in the middle of a romance plot, that is, in the midst of the action, never at the beginning or end. These scenes are only spatially, not temporally, oriented to the work. There is stasis, to be sure, but as soon as the recognition is accomplished, the next action or scene follows closely. What these scenes seem to accomplish is transition, by providing an end of the events up to the point of the feast. Like the introductory feast, the recognition

feast may take the form of a wedding banquet and like the resolution feast, it may contain reward or reunion.

However, the recognition feast scene is never so complex and seldom as long as either the introductory or resolution feast scenes. For this reason, the feast scenes discussed in this chapter have been grouped according to the form of recognition.

A recognition feast scene which includes several rewards occurs in The Lyfe of Ipomydon. Some years after Ipomydon has returned from serving his lady in Calabria, his father the king decides to knight him. The dubbing of Ipomydon and others takes place at a ceremony and is appropriately accompanied by jousts and tournaments:

The kyng his sonne knyght gan make
And many another for his sake.
Justes were cryed, ladyes to see,
Thedyr come lordys grete plente,
Turnementis atyred in the felde,¹
A ML. armed with spere and shelde.

The knighting is the reward which acknowledges Ipomydon's personal worth, but it may also be considered a reward for his work at the court of Calabria. Further recognition of Ipomydon's abilities and skills occurs during the feast when he conquers everyone on the field:

Ipomydon þat day was victoryus
And there he gaff many a cours,
For there was non, that he mette
And his spere on hym wold sette,
That not aftir with in a lytell stounde
Hors and man bothe went to ground. (539-44)

Again Ipomydon is rewarded, this time with money and the judgment that he is the best knight present:

The heraudes gaff þe child þe gree,
A Ml. pownd he had to fee. (545-46.)

Another reward mentioned at this feast comes at the end of the description of the scene, when the minstrels are given gold for their services:

Mynstrellys had yiftes of golde,
And fourty dayes pys fest was holde. (547-48)

The various rewards at this feast scene are all forms of recognition, and so the scene as a whole functions to acknowledge Ipomydon's knightly worth.

Knighting also appears as a reward during a feast scene in Havelok the Dane. The scene serves as an acknowledgment of Havelok's true worth, which is that of a king, not a mere servant as he has been considered throughout the previous parts of the story. After a battle, Earl Ubbe takes Havelok to his castle to recuperate and there sees the light emanating from Havelok's mouth. He recognizes the young man as Birkabene's lost heir and makes him king of Denmark. This proper recognition of Havelok is marked by a feast of forty days duration which includes all types of amusement -- games, music, and romance reading:

Hwan he was king, þer mouhte men se
þe moste ioie þat mouhte be:
Buttinge with þe sharpe speres,
Skirming with talevas þat men beres,
Wrastling with laddes, putting of ston,
Harping and piping, ful god won,
Leyk of mine, of hasard ok,
Romanz-reding on þe bok.

There is a surfeit of food and wine that flows like
 water at this extravagant feast:

Pere was swipe gode metes,
 And of wyn, þat men fer fetes
 Riht al so mikel and gret plenté
 So it were water of þe se.
 Þe feste fourti dawes sat,
 So riche was neuere non so þat. (2340-45)

Now that Havelok is king, he in turn knights his
 three faithful companions, Robert, William and Hugh Raven.
 He rewards them and their good service to him with titles,
 lands and retainers:

Þe king made Roberd pere a kniht,
 þat was ful strong and ek ful wiht,
 And William Wendut ec, his broþer,
 And Huwe Rauen, þat was þat oper;
 And made hem barouns alle þre,
 And yaf hem lond, and oper fe,
 So mikel, þat ilker twenti knihtes
 Hauede of genge, dayes and nihtes. (2346-53)

With this act of reward, then, Havelok makes his first
 important gesture as king: the gifts to his men for
 their past loyalty also secure their future loyalty.³

The action of rewarding his men is not only expected
 of a king, but it is also necessary because it seals his
 future aid and protection by the retainers. This concept
 of mutual recognition is illustrated in another feast
 found in Richard Coeur de Lion. At this feast, to which
 King Phillip of France has been invited, Richard distributes
 rich presents to the entertainers:

So beffel þat Kyng Richard
 Kyng Phelyp to feste bad;
 Afftyr mete, þoo þey were glad,
 Rychard gaff gyfftes, gret wones,
 Gold, and syluyr, and precyouse stones;
 To herawdes, and to dysours,
 To tabourrers, and to trumpours.⁴

In turn, the king's gentility and generosity are praised by the men:

Brow3 here cry his renoun ros,
 Hou he was curteys and ffree.
 Fful noble was pat ensemble. (3780-82)

Richard then gives lands and manors to his noblemen, from which they can make their own living:

Kyng R. gaff castelles and tounnes
 To hys eerlys and to barounnes
 To haue perjnne her sustenance. (3783-85)

The idea behind the feudal system is explained when Richard advises Phillip to give generously to his men so as to ensure their service and loyalty in times of need and during war:

Kyng Richard bad þe Kyng of Ffraunce:
 "Geue off þy gold and off þy purchase
 To erl, baroun, kny3t, and servaunt off mace!
 Ffrely aquyte þou hem here trauayle,
 Þey swonke for þe in bataylle;
 3yff þou haue efft wiþ hym to done,
 Þey wole be þe gladdere efftsone
 To helpe þe at þy nede." (3786-93)

The rest of this feast scene, to line 3848, is taken up with a discussion of how to fight and kill Saracens, so essentially the recognition is made up of Richard's rewarding his men and his explanation to Phillip of the reason for the rewards. The scene also contains mutual recognition when Richard's men acknowledge their king's generosity as a sign of his nobility. Since Richard's actions and his words to Phillip function to emphasize his wisdom and goodness, this feast scene also serves to acknowledge these kingly qualities in Richard.

Two wedding feasts which function as scenes of recognition appear in The Romance of Guy of Warwick and in The Romance of Sir Beves of Hamtown. Both serve to acknowledge someone's value by means of reward, but in an indirect fashion and with rewards of a different type than those discussed so far. In Guy of Warwick there is a short scene which is a barely described wedding celebration. Guy's friend, Terri, has been prohibited from marrying his love, Oisel, by her father who had the young man imprisoned. Guy rescues Oisel from wedding a man her father dislikes, then rescues Terri from prison and reunites the lovers. Oisel's father is so pleased by her rescue that he happily gives her to Terri along with half his property:

Gret joie pai maden in þe cite
 Þat hij so fair acorded be.
 Þe douk gaf Tirri his douhter þo,
 And half his lond wip hir also. 5

The two are wed in a gathering which includes many noblemen from various levels of aristocracy and from different places:

Bifor barouns & knyghtes fre,
 Þat þer were of mani cuntre:
 Bridal sone pai han y-hold:
 Of erls, & of barouns bold,
 & of emperours, & of king
 Nas neuer non so riche gestening. (A 6705-10)

Thus the feast serves as a way of acknowledging Terri's worth by rewarding him with both a new wife and her fine dowry. It also serves as an indirect reward to Guy since Terri is his good companion.

In Sir Beves of Hamtoun an entirely different type of wedding feast functions to honor Beves in an indirect fashion. Unlike most marriage celebrations, this one is sad for it marks Josian's marriage to King Yvor, yet she loves Beves who is imprisoned in another country. Although the poet refuses to describe the feast itself, he does describe the leave-taking which is an important part of a feast scene. There is a mood of anticipation to this scene, as the guests are gathered together, preparing to leave and Josian is brought into the hall in a carriage:

Of þat feste nel ich namor telle,
 For to hige wip our spelle.
 Whan al þe feste to-ȝede,
 Ech kniȝt wente to is stede,
 Men graipede cartes & somers,
 Kniȝtes to horse and squiers,
 And Iosian wip meche care
 Peder was brouȝt in hire chare.⁶

Josian's father, King Ermin, is angry at Beves and is the one responsible for his imprisonment, so he decides to give Beves' horse, Arondel, and his sword, Morgelay, to King Yvor:

And nom his swerd Morgelay;
 Wip Arondel a-gan it lede
 To king Yuor, & þus a sede:
 'Sone, a sede, haue þis stede,
 Þe beste fole, þat man mai fede,
 And þis swerd of stel broun,
 Þat was Beues of Hamtoun! (1494-1500)

Although the king means to honor his now son-in-law with these gifts, his action works in an ironic way to honor Beves. Ermin is acknowledging the value of the

things Beves owned and cared for by using them as rewards or presents. Since the horse and sword are symbols of knightly prowess, he is actually acknowledging Beves' value as a knight.

Another recognition which occurs at a wedding feast appears in The Romans of Partenay, but it is not accomplished by a reward. Raynold, a son of Raymond and Melusine, weds a princess and the celebrating continues for fifteen days, in the company of many noblemen:

The mariage don And finished that day
 Beforne the syght of all the Baronage;
 Thys fest ther roiall fourged by thosage;
 Hit days fiftene endured largely.⁷

During this time a great many noblemen gather to compete in tournaments, as the ladies look on:

Also ther had thes honourous kinges
 Ioustes, tornementes full excellent
 In presence of ladies courtois And gent.
 Presently ther had A thousand of contre.
(2439-42)

It is through the jousting contests that Raynold achieves recognition, just as Ipomydon did.⁸ Raynold wins over a thousand others and is awarded the prize. But the real acknowledgment of his worth comes from the many people there, both commoners and aristocrats, who call to the new king and salute him as a "man", that is, a man who has triumphed over many others and thereby proved himself worthy of their worship:

But Raynold ther-thens bare the grette honour

 Ther saing al with O wis pat hour,
 "Lif, lif oure noble kinge reurent!
 For A man hym know vnto All entent!"

(2444-48)

The Romans of Partenay also includes a feast which is itself a reward and therefore functions as a scene of recognition. It is given for Raynold and his brother, Anthony, by a duchess because they save her from an unwanted marriage to the king of Alsace. He had continuously attacked her country in order to force the marriage until the two brothers capture him and present him to the duchess. She then invites Raynold and Anthony to her castle and provides them with a great feast of fine foods and wines:

Ther tho had was An excellent feste,
 A more honester neuer sayn with eye,
 Of vitail and als winès of the best. (1842-44)

As a prisoner of high rank, the king of Alsace is also at the feast and "sette was he moste hy." During the after-dinner conversation, the king throws himself on the mercy of the brothers who agree to forgive him if he apologizes to the lady. He does so, and then praises Raynold and Anthony as truly chivalrous gentlemen in front of the attendant barons:

Then ful lowde he spake And full hautaynly,
 And sayd the Barons, "ful glad mow ye be
 yif such a neighbour puruely myght I
 As on of you to to haue uerily,
 Which bene so chiualous in your doing,
 And which for to do is preisable thyng."
 (1906-11)

Thus the brothers are rewarded by the feast for saving the

duchess and her country from the king of Alsace. The king is then recognized as a worthy opponent by his place on the dais and is rewarded with his life. He in turn acknowledges the courtesy of Raynold and Anthony with a laudatory speech.

A strange sort of recognition occurs at a feast scene in Kyng Alisaunder. When King Phillip sees that his Queen, Olympias, is pregnant, he calls a feast to gather advice from all his men, for he knows he is not the father:

A day it fel þe kyng a feste
 Wolde helden, swiþe honeste,
 Of dukes, of princes, of barouns,
 Of kniȝttes of his regiouns,
 And after make bymenyng
 Of his wyues mysdoynge. 9

At the end of a royal banquet, a dragon enters the hall. The poet refuses to "swynk" over the description of the meal, for he would much rather tell of more exciting things:

To þe mete þay weren ysett,
 Ne miȝtten men ben serued bett,
 Noȝer in mete ne in drynk;
 Bot þere-aboutenyl ich swynk.
 Ac þoo þai shulde bere vp þe cloop,
 Vche of hem so bycom wroop,
 For a dragon þere com jn fleen,
 Swithe griselich on to seen. (B 539-46)

At the sight of the terrifying beast, the king and all his men run out of the hall. But suddenly the queen enters and immediately calms the dragon, which gently lays its head on her bosom:

Þe kyng had wel grete hawe;
 Alle his barouns to chaumbre drawe.
 Þe lefdy gede vnto þe drake.
 He lete his rage for hire sake,
 And laide his heued in hir barme,
 Wiþouten doynge of any harme. (B 553-58)

Then the people draw round the queen and the dragon, but it magically turns into an eagle and flies away:

Also þis folk abouten þrest
 Forto see þis selcoupe beest,
 On erne he bycam and out fleiþ
 Jn to þe skyes þat vche man seiþ. (B 559-62)

The feast scene abruptly ends here, but there is further description of fantastic occurrences which are interpreted by Phillip's clerk to portend Alexander's birth. Since it is the sight of a dragon hatching from an egg that directly leads to this prediction, it is obvious that the dragon which interrupted the feast also signifies the birth. Thus the strange and ominous happenings of the feast scene act as a recognition of the importance of Olympias' pregnancy.

Three feast scenes in the romance Of Arthour and Of Merlin revolve around the recognition of royal birth as in Kyng Alisaunder. In this romance it is not magic but sheer force that settles the question of whether Arthur is the true heir to Uther Pendragon's title or if he was conceived in adultery. The first scene is Arthur's coronation celebration and marks the beginning of his reign. Although the feast serves as a recognition of Arthur's kingship, it does not resolve the problem of his acceptance which is far from total and which must be achieved by force. The scene begins with Arthur's being crowned in front of all the nobility of England, after which they turn to the banquet:

Biforn hem al þe bischop Brice
 Arthour crouned and dede þe office;
 Þo þe seruise ydon was
 To mete þai turned her pas
 Þai founde al redi cloþ and bord. 10

The feast itself is rich and plentiful with its dishes of various meat and fowl and a choice of wines. As befits the occasion, Arthur is served first, then the other nobles are served according to their rank, from the high to the low:

Vp first ȝede þe heigest lord
 Men hem serued of gret plente
 Mete and drink of gret deynte
 Þer was venisoun of hert and bors
 Swannes pecokes and botors
 Of fesaunce pertris and of crane
 Þer was plente and no wane
 Þer was piment and clare
 To heige lordinges and to meyne. (3116-24)

During the meal several kings become jealous of Arthur and angry at the reverence paid to him. They refuse to acknowledge his kingship and accuse him of being of lowly birth and not of royal blood:

Vp þai stérten wiþ gret bost
 Euerich king wiþ al his ost
 And seyð an herlot for noþing
 No schuld neuer ben her king. (3137-40)

Although Merlin tries to intervene by explaining "hou Arthour was biȝeten and bore" (l. 3148), he only succeeds in angering the kings more with his story of witchcraft. Finally, the feast scene ends as the kings are driven out of the hall by Arthur and his men:

Wiþ swerdes and kniues sone anon
 Out of halle þe kinges fon. (3165-66)

This feast scene, then, begins as one of recognition since its occasion is Arthur's coronation, but it ends with a refusal to acknowledge Arthur's kingship. It takes battles and another two feast scenes before Arthur is fully recognized as king.

Several battles follow this scene as Arthur and his men set out to win the homage of the kings by force, but they fail to do so. Merlin then instructs Arthur to call his knights to a feast in London:

Sone after seyn Iones misse
 Be king lete bidden more and lesse
 Into Londen to his fest
 Swiche he made and held onest
 Purth be conseyl of Merlin. (3391-95)

When all the men are together, Merlin tells them that they must enlist the aid of King Ban and his brother Bohort in order to have enough power to conquer the kings who oppose Arthur. Merlin sends Sir Ulfin and Sir Bretel to find the two brothers who were pledged to Uther Pendragon and who will therefore swear allegiance to his son, Arthur.

This scene is made up entirely of Merlin's speech to the knights and his warning to Ulfin and Bretel to make certain they are well prepared for their important journey:

'Loke 3e ben atired wel
 Wiþ gode armes on gode stede,
 Þerto 3ou worþ a litel nede
 An 3e comen o3ain to ous—
 Now hei3eþ 3ou for loue of Ihesus!' (3434-38)

Since the scene is placed between two other feast scenes

of recognition, it is not as strong as the other two. The recognition in this second scene is in Merlin's assumption that Ban and Bohort will follow their acknowledgment of Uther Pendragon with an unquestioning acceptance of Arthur.

It is in the third and final feast scene where the recognition and acceptance of Arthur is made complete. The feast begins with the return of Ulfin and Bretel accompanied by King Ban and King Bohort. Merlin and several of Arthur's knights swear that Arthur is the legitimate son of Uther and Ygerne, therefore the rightful heir to the throne:

Herafter sone Merlin swore
And sir Vlfen and sir Antore
And sir Kay and sir Bretel
Tofore be king on o messel
Bat Arthour was Vter stren
Bi Ygerne bat was his quen. (3571-76)

Then Ban and Bohort agree to accept Arthur as their king, pledging their "hold-op", or allegiance to him:

Perafterward sone forsop
Be kinges swore Arthour hold-op
And deden him also swiþe omage
So it was riȝt and vsage. (3577-80)

Once fealty is made to Arthur, the celebrating begins and lasts for fourteen days:

And þo held Arthour fest apliȝt
Bat last ful fourteen niȝt
Of ich riches and deinte
Certes þer was gret plente. (3581-84)

The feast ends with a tournament and the cataloguing of several knights who take part, including the familiar Kay and "Lucan be boteler". Thus the scene which resolved

the question of Arthur's royalty is itself ended on a royal note as the poet states:

No man no herd of fairer
Turnament no nobler. (3603-604)

This last feast scene acts as a balance to the first one because the two powerful kings acknowledge Arthur's claim to the crown, and accept his birth as royal. With the support of Ban and Bohort and with the aid of his own knights, Arthur later conquers all his enemies. The three scenes together function to recognize the true value of Arthur's lineage and to get him established as the king to whom all others owe allegiance.

The last feast scene to be discussed among those which serve as recognition of someone's worth is in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and occurs near the beginning of the second fitt. It is the All Saints' Day feast given by Arthur for Gawain on the day before the knight must set out on his "aniours uyage":

3et quyl Al-hal-day with Arþer he lenges;
And he made a fare on þat fest for þe frekez sake,
With much reuel and ryche of þe Rounde Table.¹¹

But the revelry of this feast never really develops and the description never expands; instead, the scene seems to contract so that Gawain stands alone by the end of the passage. In A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, J. A. Burrow states:

"The description of the All Saints' Day feast never really gets under way, however, and it is cut off, somewhat abruptly, after only one stanza. The poet does not -- to use his own ex-

pression (l. 1009) -- 'point' the revels here, partly, no doubt, because we have already had a good deal of revelling in the first fitt, but also because these revels are not relevant to his purpose anyway. For one feels here -- as one did not even at the end of the first fitt -- that Gawain, though still for the moment among the 'company of the court', is no longer quite of it."¹²

There is a sense of foreboding that comes through clearly to the reader as the members of the court try to be cheerful for Gawain's sake:

Knygtez ful cortays and comlych ladies
 Al for luf of pat lede in longynge þay were,
 Bot neuer þe lece ne þe later þay neuened bot merþe:
 Mony ioylez for pat ientyle iapez þer maden.

(539-42)

The gloomy atmosphere is maintained as Gawain goes "with mourning . . . to his eme" (l. 543), to take leave of his king:

'Now, lege lorde of my lyf, leue I yow ask;
 3e knowe þe cost of þis cace, kepe I no more
 To telle yow tenez þerof, neuer bot trifel;
 Bot I am boun to þe bur barely to-morne
 To sech þe gome of þe grene, as God wyl me wysse.'

(545-49)

W. R. J. Barron, in his introduction to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, notes that Gawain appears "excessively tight-lipped" here and further states that "there is, perhaps, a note of despair here, disguised as knightly self-control."¹³

Now the knights of the court come to speak to Gawain, expressing their sorrow and concern for him, as well as consternation that he may never return from his journey:

Alle þis compayny of court com þe kyng nerre
 For to counseyl þe knygt, with care at her hert.
 Pere watz much derue doel driuen in þe sale
 Pat so worthé as Wawan schulde wende on þat ernde,
 To dryge a delful dynt, and dele no more
 wyth bronde.

(556-61)

This feast scene serves not only as a recognition of Gawain's value as a member of the Round Table, but also of his worth as an individual. All the members of the court are quite aware that Gawain goes to seek the Green Knight alone and is no longer protected by his membership in the court. As Burrow states, "the very fact that the feast is made in his honour ('for þe frekeȝ sake') suggests that he is now set apart by virtue of his impending 'errand'."¹⁴ Although Gawain tries to be cheerful, he, too, seems well aware of his own danger and loneliness at the end of this scene as he submits to his fate:

þe knyȝt mad ay god chere,
 And sayde, 'quat schuld I wonde?
 Of destines derf and dere
 What may mon do bot fonde?' (562-65)

A feast scene in Kyng Alisaunder seems to fall between the categories of self-recognition and recognition of someone's value. Essentially, the scene presents a picture of Alexander's enemy, Darius, as a powerful king and, therefore, a worthy opponent. The scene begins with a description of Darius presiding over a great feast while holding court with other nobles:

Darrye sitteþ at mete, þe riche kyng,
 And holdeþ riche gestenyng,
 Of dukes, erles, and ammyraile,
 And of soudeyns also, sauh fayle. (B 1777-80)

The feast is interrupted by messengers who come to report on Alexander's greatness;

"Sir," hij seiden, 'it is nō fals sclaunder
 þat goop by londe of Alisaunder.
 Jt is an hardy flumbarlyng,
 Wijs and war, in al þing.' (B 1785-88)

The messengers continue in their description of Alexander's might by listing the countries he has conquered and finish their speech by telling Darius that Alexander intends to conquer him next:

"But he seide mychel wers—
 Pat he shulde of þe werlde and þee
 Taken tol and maister bee." (B 1798-1800)

When Darius hears this challenge to his power, he becomes so enraged that he puts an end to the feast by violently pushing over his table. He then leaps over the other tables while uttering threats, and screams for his chancellor to prepare for war:

Darrie from hym þe table shett,
 Pat it wendeþ in þe flett.
 He broweþ legges ouere oper,
 And makeþ pretynges, ful a foper,
 And clepeþ his chauncelere,
 And hoteþ hym sende fer and nere
 To hise justises lēttes hard,
 And hij þe contreies taken - ferd. (B 1805-12)

Although the scene serves to recognize Alexander by the message and the challenge, it is more a feast of self-recognition in the form of self-revelation. As the scene begins, it shows Darius in all his strength; as it progresses, it allows Darius to reveal himself in all his foolishness through his display of anger and his rash decision to do battle with Alexander.

Two full self-recognition feast scenes occur in The Tale of Gamelyn and are also filled with anger and pride. In this work, the value of the hero is unacknowledged and virtually ignored by others, so the feast serves to affirm

the hero's sense of his own value.¹⁵ Gamelyn's celebration of the self occurs after he wins a wrestling match and invites the spectators home to partake of the food and wine stored in his brother's cellar. His brother has steadily mistreated and degraded Gamelyn by forcing him to serve as his cook. Gamelyn's wrestling victory has restored his sense of self-worth and he turns on his brother and forces his way into the cellar. The feast is also an act of self-assertion as Gamelyn demands that all his "guests" feast with him and help him avenge his brother's past selfishness:

I wil not that this compaignye parten a-twynne,
 And 3e wil doon after me whil eny sope is thrynne;
 And if my brother grucche or make foul cheere,
 Other for spense of mete or drynk that we spenden heere,
 I am oure catour and bere oure aller purs,
 He schal haue for his grucchyng seint Maries curs.
 My brother is anyggoun I swer by Cristes ore,
 And we wil spende largely that he hath spared gore.¹⁶

The feast lasts for a merry seven days and nights, but once it is over a gentle, almost chastised Gamelyn appears. Like any other good host, he asks his guests to stay and finish whatever remains; however, one senses that he simply does not want to be left alone to face an angry brother:

Erly on a mornyng one the eighte day,
 The gestes come to Gamelyn and wolde gon here way.
 'Lordes,' seyde Gamelyn 'wil ye so hye?
 Al the wyn is not 3et dronke so brouke I myn ye.'
 Gamelyn in his herte was he ful wo,
 Whan his gestes took her leue from him for to go.
 (331-36)

Indeed, after the poet interrupts the narrative to admonish his audience to "Litheth, and lesteneth and holdeth youre

tonge" (l. 341), he states that

Tho Gamelyns gestes were riden and i-goön,
Gamelyn stood allone frendes had he noon.

(347-48)

Gamelyn's brother punishes him by tying him to a post and refusing to feed him. When Gamelyn's friend, Adam, comes to free him, the two work out a plan of revenge: Gamelyn is to pretend that he is still tied during a feast that his brother is giving, then he and Adam will attack the crowd. When the day of the feast arrives, the brother tells all the guests lies about Gamelyn:

The false knight his brother ful of trechery,
Alle the gestes that there were atte mangery,
Of Gamelyn his brother he tolde hem with mouthe
Al the harm and the schame that he telle couthe.

(463-66)

All the guests are members of the Church, but their cruel refusal to aid a pleading Gamelyn prepares us for the brutal attack upon them. This second feast scene is an even greater act of rebellion than the first one because here Gamelyn defies the most important form of authority, the Church. There is a long description of Adam and Gamelyn beating the clergymen as "Gamelyn sprengeth holy-water with an oken spire" (l. 503). Of course, it is quite a comical scene, similar to the comic book heroes who beat a series of villains senseless, even though the villains keep coming. In this romance, Adam and Gamelyn continue pummeling the arriving clergy who are immediately carted off insensible:

Thider they come rydyng iolily with swaynes,
And hom agen they were i-lad in cartes and in waynes.

(527-28)

Finally, Gamelyn ties up his brother; then he and Adam sit down to their own feast served to them by servants who are either frightened or pleased by their behavior:

As swithe as they hadde i-wroken hem on here foon,
 They askeden watir and wisschen anoon,
 What some for here loue and some for here awe,
 Alle the seruantz serued hem of the beste lawe.
 (541-44)

This meal marks Gamelyn's physical triumph over his brother's brutality and the clergy's indifference.

The two feast scenes in The Tale of Gamelyn function as scenes of self-recognition. In them we see a hero asserting himself and expressing a sense of self-worth. The small feast served to Adam and Gamelyn "of the best lawe" is a fitting conclusion to both scenes, for now Gamelyn has forced others to notice him. By the end of the second scene Gamelyn is a free man who knows his own value.

The Romans of Partenay contains a feast scene at which a different form of recognition takes place, the recognition of a special characteristic. In this case, a fantastic characteristic of Melusine's is acknowledged by her husband, Raymond, when he sees her serpentine body. The feast is given by Melusine and Raymond, although she does not appear at it. The guests include the royalty of the countryside and Raymond's brother, the Earl of Forest:

Vnto this feste cam Barons full many,
 Which notable were And ryght ful honeste,
 Ther welcomyng the Erle of foreste,
 Als of lades cam grett fusion,
 Whos comyng was the festes encheson. (2740-44)

After the meal, the Earl of Forest speaks to Raymond about Melusine's habitual absences once every week. Raymond had earlier promised to accept these absences without question, but his brother urges him to discover whether they are for adulterous or magical purposes:

And what knowen ye what she doth pat'day?
 Men sain ouerall, so god my soule saue,
 That all disordring is she All-way;
 That day hir body Anothir man shall haue,
 To you trayteresse, other so to craue;
 And som other sayn she is off the fayry.
 Go thys day, brother, And know it veryly. (2766-72)

Raymond finds his wife in her room and quietly discovers her in the bath. For the first time he sees her fully naked and realizes the cause for her secrecy is that her lower body is actually a serpent's tail:

The body welle made, frike in ioly plite,
 The visage pure, fresh, clenly hir person,
 To properly speke off hir faccion,
 Neuer non fairer ne more reuerent;
 But A taill had beneth of serpent! (2803-807)

Raymond is horrified by the discovery, but his loyalty and love for his wife overcome him. When he returns to his brother that same day, he is angry only that he allowed the Earl to make him doubt his own wife and to break his promise to her. The scene ends with Raymond chastising the Earl and forcing him to leave:

A more wurthier woman is ther non,
 ye haue made me do such A manere thyng
 Torn contrary will Again my person.
 A-non part here; hens, foule rebaude being,
 For, by my feith, full litill is failling
 That presently here that I you not sle;
 Forth depart you hens, by concell of me. (2836-42)

A much more human characteristic is recognized during a

feast scene in the Southern version of Octavian. Florent, the son of Florence and Octavian, is now a young man who is both knighted and married in a single celebration. The man who raised Florent is a greedy merchant named Clement and this feast scene reveals the extent of his greediness. The poet briefly describes the double feast, then tells us that it is Clement we shall hear about:

Seuen dayes ylyke hyt leste,
 Be bredale and be dubbyng feste.
 Per was many a ryche jeste
 Of Rome and Fraunce.
 But now of Clement ye mowe leste
 A wonder chaunce!¹⁷

On the final day of the feast, Clement decides that the royal guests must pay for their meals. To make sure that they do so, he takes their cloaks and tells them that they must pay to get them back:

Be last day, hy wer at mete yset,
 Clement har manteles hap byschet.
 He seyde, þey most rekene bet
 To pay har scot
 Of mete and drynke, þat was yfet,
 To quyte ech grot. (1279-84)

Of course his actions simply reveal Clement as both a fool and a miser. In earlier parts of this romance, Clement appears as a satire of the money-hungry merchant, and this feast scene functions to further emphasize his avaricious nature.

The guests do not, however, allow themselves to be perturbed by Clement's demand for payment. The emperor offers to calm Clement by paying for everything, and he returns the cloaks. The feast ends on a joyous note, as

the guests good-naturedly give away their cloaks to the minstrels and set off for dancing:

Be knygtys logh yn be halle,
 Be mantellys þey yeue mēstrales alle.
 Lauor and basyn þey gon calle,
 To wassche and aryse,
 And syth to daunce on þe walle
 Of Parys. (1297-1302)

The knights are also laughing at Clement for his stupidity, and by giving away the very cloaks he intended to use for payment, they express their contempt of him. By contrasting the nobles' generosity with the merchant's greed, the feast scene functions to acknowledge the comic and satirical aspects of Clement's characterization.¹⁸

During a feast scene in Sir Launfal the envious and adulterous nature of Guinevere is portrayed. Although these characteristics were also displayed in the introductory feast scene, this scene functions primarily to expose them and to force the reader to fully acknowledge them. The feast takes place at Arthur's court; Launfal has been asked by Arthur after a seven years' absence to serve as steward. Launfal leaves his fairy mistress behind, for no one at the court is supposed to know of her existence, and he enjoys himself at the long celebration in his former home:

Launfal toke leue at Triamour
 Forto wende to Kyng Artour,
 Hys feste forto agye:
 Per he fond merthe & moch honour,
 Ladyes þat wer well brygt yn bour,
 Of knyghtes greet companye.
 Fourty dayes leste þe feste,
 Ryche, ryall & honeste.¹⁹

On the last day of the feast, Launfal is chosen to lead

the dance and Guinevere's attention is focused upon him. She sees that he is handsome and unattached, and she falls in love with him, thereby revealing her lustful and adulterous character:

'Of alle þe knyȝtes þat y se þere
He ys þe fayreste bachelere -
He ne hadde neuer no wyf;
Tyde me good oþer ylle,
J wyll go & wyte hys wylle:
Y loue hym as my lyf.' (649-54)

Guinevere expresses her love for Launfal while dancing with him, but he refuses her by refusing to be disloyal to his king:

Þanne answerede þe gentyll knyȝt,
'J nell be traytour, þay ne nyȝt,
Be God þat all may stere!' (682-84)

His noble rejection so enrages the vain queen that she insults the knight by calling him a coward and denounces him as unworthy of any woman's love:

Sche seyde, 'Fy on þe, þou coward!
Anhongeþ worþ þou, hye & hard!
Þat þou euer were ybore,
Þat þou lyuest, hyt ys pytē!
Þou louyst no woman, ne no woman þe:
Þow wer worþy forlore!' (685-90)

Guinevere's vicious attack pushes Launfal into revealing his secret love and into insulting the queen further by boasting of Triamour's beauty:

'Hyr lōþlokste mayde, wythoute wene,
Myȝte bet be a quene
Þan þou, yn all þy lyue!' (697-99)

This final affront to Guinevere's vanity arouses her anger so much that she becomes ill and takes to her bed. The scene ends with her planning such great revenge on Launfal that all

the country will hear of it:

And anon sche ley doun yn her bedde;
 For wrethe, syk sche hyr bredde,
 And swore, so moste sche thryue,
 Sche wold of Launfal be so awreke
 Pat all be lond schuld of hym speke,
 Wythjinne þe dayes fyfe. (702-708)

The primary function of this feast scene is to fully acknowledge Guinevere's adulterous and angry character which was only subtly expressed in the introductory feast scene. In this second scene we are given a complete description of the Queen's hatred for Launfal which has festered for seven years and is now uncontrolled. In both scenes, and throughout the romance, Launfal remains true, so this feast scene functions in a lesser way to recognize his noble and loyal nature. This second scene, then, reflects back upon and magnifies some aspects of the introductory feast.

The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell contains a feast scene of recognition in the sense that it includes an acknowledgment of love. The knight and the lady have pledged chaste love to one another, for the lady is wed to the knight's overlord. However, the lord is informed by one of his men that the two are involved in an adulterous love. He decides he must send the knight off to fight the pagans, in hopes that he will be slain during his adventures.

The feast is well set out so that the reader can recognize the conflicting emotions of the three characters. Although many others have been invited to the feast, the knight, the

lord and the lady are seated together so the focus of attention is on them from the very first:

Than let he do crye a feest
 For euery man that thider wolde come,
 For euery man, bothe moost and leest;
 Thyder came lordes, bothe olde and yonge.

The lorde was at the table set
 And his lady by him that tide;
 The Knight of Curtesy anone was fet
 And set downe on the other syde.²⁰

The lord has called the feast in anger, in order to hurt the two people who have hurt him. The two lovers have no idea that such a pleasant occasion will make them unhappy, until the lord speaks and tells his knight to go adventuring:

Theyr hartes should haue be wo-begone,
 If they had knowen the lordes thought;
 But whan that they were styll echone,
 The lorde these words anone forth brought:

"Me thinke it is fyttinge for a knight
 For auentures to enquirye,
 And nat thus, bothe day and night,
 At home to sojourne by the fyre." (141-48)

After chastising the knight for staying too long at home, the lord orders him to fight for the "Christen fayth" in faraway countries.

The Knight of Curtesy responds by accepting his duty, which is to obey his lord and to bring him honor. He also knows that in doing so he may lose his life, even though his deeds will also bring honor to the woman he loves:

Than spake the knyght to the lorde anone:
 "For your sake wyl I auenture my lyfe,
 Whether euer I come agayne or none,
 And for my ladyes sake, your wyfe." (157-60)

This is a very condensed speech, made at a public occasion in front of many other guests. It is not merely an acceptance

of duty, it is actually the knight's open declaration of his love and the futility of it, for his lady is his own lord's wife. The knight follows this sad acknowledgment with a statement which recognizes his place as a retainer: "If I dyd nat, I were to blame" (l. 161).

The fair lady is deeply hurt by their predicament, and the scene ends with a lovely description of her sorrow:

Than sighed the lady with that worde;
In dolour depe her herte was tane
And sore wounded as wyth a sworde. (162-64)

Thus the scene contains acknowledgments of love from both characters. Because the declarations are made in public, and especially because the lord is present, they are discreetly made. But nothing can hide the emotional tension of the scene which is only heightened by the lovers' realization that they must soon part.

The next three feast scenes to be discussed also include acknowledgments of love, but in a much happier way. In the recognition feast scenes of Generydes, Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild and King Horn, the ladies of the romances all recognize their disguised lovers and are reunited with them. The heroes of these three romances come for their lovers' wedding feasts disguised as beggars and their true identities are discovered by means of some token. In Generydes, the recognition takes place at the pre-nuptial feast for his love Clarionas, who is betrothed to King Gwynan. This period of celebration begins as soon as the king goes to meet Clarionas on her arrival in his land:

The Citee made grete festis in euery place,
 his knyghtes went to mete here on the way,
 hym self come after in full good Arraye.²¹

The King's men are called to attend his wedding, and the feasting begins:

To the Citee came All his Baronage:
 And as it is the custom and vsage
 All way for princes shortly to device,
 The ffest was made in right solempne wise.
 (4218-21)

At this point in the romance, the scene shifts to Generydes' preparing his disguise. He exchanges clothes with a beggar and sets off to find Clarionas. Generydes is able to see his loved one because of an old custom of King Gwynan's land: that the husband-to-be must not see his betrothed until the wedding, when the feasting is over. Generydes must, like Horn Childe and King Horn, be disguised because the groom is his enemy. All three heroes choose to appear as beggars, since beggars are always allowed in the main hall during a feast.

As Generydes awaits Clarionas, he slips on his finger the ring which she gave him as a love-token. Clarionas recognizes the ring and is prompted to ask the beggar for news of her lover:

The ryng vppon his fynger sone she knewe;
 'I shall,' thought she, 'here sum tidynggez newe.'
 (4283-84)

She takes the strange man to her chamber in order to hear him in private.

Clarionas has no idea that the man is Generydes for he has further camouflaged himself to look like a leper. It is

not until he identifies himself as her lover and proves it
by washing his face, that she recognizes him:

'This ryng,' quod she, 'I know it veryly,
Butt of your persone yet I mervell more.'
With hym he had a water ther redy,
And from his face he wessh away it thore,
he was as faire as euer he was be fore,
And whanne she sawe his vesage fayre and clene,
She toke hym in hir Armys as I wene. (4313-19)

After their reunion, the two lovers plan their escape, and
Clarionas declares her love to Generydes in a fitting manner
as she tells him that no king can take his place:

'Generides,' quod she, 'I haue mervell
That ye putt dought in eny thing
As to meward, for though he were a kyng
Of reames x, And so fourth to endure
yet wold I goo with yow, I yow ensure.' (4329-33)

It is King Horn which has one of the most detailed and
interesting recognition feast scenes. The reader is prepared
for the reunion of the lovers even before the feast scene
begins as Horn, on his way to Rymenhild's wedding celebration,
meets a palmer who describes the bride's sorrow:

'Be bride wepe sore,
And pat is muche deole!' ²²

This news makes Horn all the more upset: he quickly changes
clothes with the palmer, blackens his face and forces his way
past the porter into the hall. He takes his place with the
other beggars and watches as Rymenhild pours wine and ale for
the royal guests from a white horn:

Rymenhild Ros of benche,
Wyn for to schenche,
After mete in sale
Bope wyn and ale.
On horn he bar anhonde,
So laze was in londe. (C 1185-90)

When Horn calls to Rymenhild to hurry over and serve the beggars as well, he refuses to drink from any other vessel except the horn. In Medieval English Poetry: the Non-Chaucerian Tradition, John Speirs notes that "this is not simply assertion of personal pride on Horn's part. It is the beginning of a series of riddles which he puts to Rymenhild, leading up to her recognition of him."²³ Horn then hints about a dream Rymenhild had seven years ago in which a fish escaped her net. She rightly feared that it was a portent of their separation which occurred soon afterwards. First he tells her that he is not a beggar, but a fisherman come from the east, from where he has, indeed, just come:

Horn tok hit his ifere,
And sede, "quen so dere,
Wyn nelle ihc, Muche ne lite,
Bute of cuppe white.
Pu wenest i beo a beggere,
And ihc am a fissere,
Wel feor icome bi este,
For fissen at þe feste." (C 1209-16)

He then tells her that he has left his fishnet for seven years and has returned to see if there is a fish in it:

Mi net lip her bi honde,
Bi a wel fair stronde.
Hit hap ileie þere
Fulle seuē gere.
Ihc am icome to loke
Ef eni fiss hit toke. (C 1217-22)

Finally, he puns on the word horn, as he tells her:

Drink to me of disse.
Drink to horn of horne,
Feor ihe am i orne. (C 1226-28)

With each successive hint, the reader is carried along, eagerly awaiting Rymenhild's recognition of her disguised lover.

Although that does not come until later, nothing takes away from the skill with which Horn makes his allusions. The passage reaches a perfect climax with the final pun. Speirs states: "The connexion between the name of the hero and the drinking-horn is explicitly made in what is perhaps the most significant line in the poem -- 'drink to Horn of horne'"²⁴.

With Horn's last statement, Rymenhild's curiosity is aroused, and she asks the palmer if he knows of her lover. His response is to place a ring she once gave him into the vessel of horn. Rymenhild goes off to her chamber, recognizes the ring, and calls for the palmer, hoping for news about Horn. He tells her the worst possible news, that "Horn was sik and deide" (C 1271). Rymenhild's reaction to this is her testimony of love for Horn, as she falls on her bed weeping and reaches for her knife:

Rymenhild sede at þe furste,
 "Herte, nu þe berste,
 For horn nastu namore,
 Þat þe haþ pined þe so sore."
 Heo feol on hire bedde
 Þer heo knif hudde. (C. 1277-82)

This acknowledgment of love from Rymenhild moves Horn to cease his teasing and to remove his disguise:

He wipede þat blake of his swere,
 And sede, "Quen so swete and dere,
 Ihc am horn þinoȝe;
 Ne canstu me noȝt knowe?
 Ihc am horn of westernesne;
 In armes þu me cusse." (C 1291-96)

It may seem that Horn is being unnecessarily cruel in this scene, but his teasing is a mode of testing. Before he

can reveal himself, Horn must first discover whether or not Rymenhild still loves him. As Speirs says, "Horn first tests her, telling her of his death. The effect is as he would wish; she attempts to kill herself. He rubs the black off his face. The recognition takes place."²⁵

Directly afterwards, Horn gathers his men and attacks the guests at the feast, killing many. He then forces the king who intended to wed Rymenhild and others to swear fealty to him. After the lovers' reunion and Horn's victorious battle, he weds Rymenhild. The feast scene culminates in another feast, as all celebrate the marriage of Horn and Rymenhild:

Per was brydale swete;
Riche men per hete.
Tellen ne My3te no tonge
Be joye þat per was songe. (L 1349-52)²⁶

The tale of Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild is similar, but inferior to King Horn. It too contains a recognition feast scene in which Horn returns to Rimnild disguised as a beggar at her wedding feast. She also recognizes him by means of a ring placed in a cup, then she retires to her chamber to await her rescue which follows shortly. But there is little exchange between the lovers and no mutual acknowledgment of love as in Generydes and King Horn.

In many ways these last three feasts are the truest form of recognition feast scene because they function to unmask a character and to reveal him to another character. In other words, these are the only feast scenes which deal

with the identity of the entire character, not just his value or his special trait. In these scenes the heroes are disguised and later recognized, appropriately enough, by their lovers as the people they really are.

Taken as a whole, however, it is evident that the feast scenes discussed in this chapter are considerably less dramatic and interesting than those in the previous chapter. Many of the recognition feast scenes occur in works of questionable literary merit, although why this is so is difficult to say. These scenes fail to inform or enlighten as do the introductory and resolution feast scenes. Except for a few, the recognition feast scenes are less intrinsically valuable to the romance and lack narrative force.

Footnotes

¹Ll. 531-36. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 4.

²Walter W. Skeat, ed., The Lay of Havelok the Dane, 2nd ed. rev. Kenneth Sisam (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), ll.2320-27. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

³For a discussion on the importance of eating and feasting in Havelok, see Robert W. Hanning, "'Havelok the Dane': Structure, Symbols, Meaning," Studies in Philology, 64 (1967), 586-605.

⁴Ll. 3772-78. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 6.

⁵Ll. A 6701-704. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 10.

⁶Eugen Kölbing, ed., The Romance of Sir Beves of Hamptoun, EETS OS 46, 48, 65. (London: Kegan Paul, 1885, 1886, 1894), ll.1483-90. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; all quotations are taken from the Auchinleck MS.

⁷Ll. 2432-35. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 1.

⁸An earlier wedding feast in The Romans of Partenay is similar in form to this one. It is the marriage celebration of Raynold's parents, Raymond and Melusine, where jousting also follows the banquet. However, it appears to be more a scene of simple celebration than one having a clear and categorizable function. The description is lengthy, lasting from line 946 to line 1021, but much is a cataloguing of the wines served, from line 968 to line 983. The remark that Raymond does well in the jousting contests could be considered a slight form of recognition:

After thys diner, men to ioustes went;
Be-syde the fontain ful fair ioustes had;
But Raymound iousted strongly and feruent,
certainly myghty ioustes ther he made. (988-91)

But there is no further commentary on his ability in arms, nor is it at all clear that he is the best knight there. The rest of the description (ll. 995-1015) is taken up with the newlyweds' preparation for bed until the poet abruptly ends the scene:

Into hir chambre goodly went to bed.
Euery man went to hys erbigage,
But som all night dysported And solas led,

Singing, dauncing, disporting with longage;
 Many fayr songis songe that compernage.
 Off thys noble feste no more you will breke.
 (1016-21)

⁹Ll. B 531-36. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 11.

¹⁰O.D. Macrae-Gibson, ed., Of Arthour and of Merlin, EETS OS 268 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), I, ll.3111-15. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; all quotations are taken from the Auchinleck MS.

¹¹Ll. 536-38. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 17.

¹²(London: Routledge, 1964), p. 36.

¹³(New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 9-10.

¹⁴A Reading, p. 36.

¹⁵In Sir Launfal there is brief mention of a feast which could be classified as self-recognition, but it is not a scene. After Launfal wins a tournament given by Arthur, he celebrates by giving himself a feast:

And þan þe noble knyȝt Launfal

Held a feste, ryche & ryall,

þat leste fourtenyȝt;

Erles & barouns fale

Semely wer sette yn sale

And ryaly wer adyȝt. (493-98)

Like Gamelyn, he, too, has been ill-treated and this feast is a recognition of his own worth.

¹⁶Walter W. Skeat, ed., The Tale of Gamelyn, Clarendon Press Series (Oxford: Clarendon, 1884), ll.317-24. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹⁷Ll. 1273-78. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 5.

¹⁸Maldwyn Mills, in his introduction to Six Middle English Romances (London: Dent, 1973), pp. xvi, states: "Clement, obsessed with merchandise, is the great comic character of the romance...."

¹⁹Ll. 625-32. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 12.

²⁰Elizabeth McCausland, ed., The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell, Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, vol. 4, no. 1, 1922, ll.133-40. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

²¹W. Aldis Wright, ed., Generydes, a Romance in Seven-Line Stanzas, EETS OS 55,70 (London: N. Trübner, 1873, 1878), ll.4212-14. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text..

²²Ll. C 1129-30. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 7.

²³(London: Faber, 1971), p. 186.

²⁴Medieval English Poetry, p. 187.

²⁵Medieval English Poetry, p. 187.

²⁶I have here quoted the Land Misc. instead of the Cambridge-Univ. MS because the Cambridge reads: "þer was brid and ale suete" (l. 1349). The Harley MS also agrees with the Land Misc.: "þer was þe brudale suete" (l. 1349)

Chapter Three: Resolution Feast Scenes

The feast scene of resolution is a method of concluding a romance by bringing together the major characters after all their various adventures have been successfully completed. It may also function as the denouement if the scene includes explanations or solutions to previous problems and conflicts in the plot. Often, though, the clarifications are made prior to the feast so that the banquet serves only as a final confirmation of all that has happened. The resolution feast scene always functions as a concluding celebration which ends the tale on a strong and positive note.

Feast scenes which function as resolution may, like those which function as recognition, include elements of reunion and reward. However, because there are no further changes or complications to come, the resolution feasts differ in tone from recognition feasts. The feast scenes found at the end of a work have a tone of finality about them; and since everything has been explained and resolved, the tone is positive and reassuring.

Most often, the resolution is achieved through a wedding, which is the ultimate bringing together of the hero and his lady. In this chapter the feast scenes are divided according to the type of conclusion they give to the work. First, there are wedding scenes of celebration which end the romance with a simple, joyful act. Second, there are the feasts which emphasize reunion and reward, and which are often wedding feasts. Finally, there are the scenes of denouement, which

may or may not include a wedding, but which resolve through explanation and clarification.

The wedding feast of simple conclusion differs from other resolution feast scenes in that it occurs only after the conflicts of the plot have been solved and after the major characters have been reunited. Therefore, this type of feast scene functions only to confirm and conclude the action of the story after all rewards, reunions and explanations have been made. It also ends the romance on a joyous note by joining the hero and heroine in marriage and celebrates the resolutions already made with a final public act.

The shortest and most basic of the wedding feasts of simple conclusion is found at the end of Partenope of Blois, a long romance of 12,195 lines.¹ The first half of this work emphasizes Partenope's love for the enchanted lady, Queen Melior. The second half tells of his estrangement from her because of a broken promise: he used a magic lantern to see her after he promised to allow her to remain invisible for a set time. After many adventures Partenope is finally forgiven by Melior and the two are fully reunited by their marriage which "in haste is sette" (l.12150). At the same time, Partenope is crowned king so as to make him equal in rank to Melior.

After the wedding and coronation take place there is a great feast for the royal couple,

Pipes and makers so many assemble,
As though all þe worlde shuld tremble.
The feste is holde full royally,

And also served they be stately,
 As suche persones oweth to be.²
 Of mete pere laketh no deynthe.

The rest of the description of the feast is made in an ironic fashion through the use of the rhetorical device of occupatio, informing by refusing to inform. In this way the poet lists the various members of the nobility who attend the celebrations

It nedeth not to make reheresynges
 Of þe names þat ben þer of kynges,
 Ne of dukes, Erles, ne of baronny,
 Ne of þe nombre of grete chivalry,
 Of patriarkes and Erchbisshoppes also. (12172-76)

But his seriousness returns when he closes the scene by referring to the love-making of Partenope and Melior and leaves them in their happiness:

But lete us tell, when þe feste was do,
 How þes hote lovers to chamber go,
 And after how they ben brought to bedde,
 And how þat nyght her life they ledde,
 And in what Ioy then they be. (12182-86)

This lengthy romance ends first a few lines later so the whole work concludes on a joyous note. The final feast scene also establishes a permanent and moral relationship for the hero and his lady, who had become lovers much earlier in the story, thus concluding the work with a proper as well as a happy ending.

Another wedding feast of simple conclusion is found at the end of Sir Eglamour of Artois, a romance of a family torn apart and finally reunited. It is also a story of great confusions amongst lost lovers, fathers and sons and even mothers and sons. As we near the conclusion of the work the lovers, Eglamour and Christabelle, are brought together after

many years of separation. Their son, Degrebelle, has mistakenly married his mother but this is quickly discovered and corrected. Sir Eglamour takes his family back to his homeland and prepares for his wedding feast:

And þus in Artasse are þay lent;
Eftir þe emperour þay sent
To þat mangery so free.³

Then Eglamour finally marries Christabelle in a service attended by members of the aristocracy:

There was mony a lord of pride;
Kyngus led hyre on euery syde -
Hyt was a semyly syȝt!
Sythen a byschop gan hem wedde. (C 1351-54)

To add to the joy of the occasion and to tie up all ends of the plot, Degrebelle is wed to Organato, a young woman once promised to Eglamour. It is fitting that the maiden weds the son, thus balancing Degrebelle's earlier mistaken marriage with a correct and proper one:

•Sythe to wedde gon þey go
Syr Degrebell and Organato -
He was a full fayr knyȝt. (C 1357-59)

Commentary on minstrels and the music and entertainment they provide is a common feature of the wedding feast. Here, we are told that the minstrels came from far away to attend this feast and that they are well paid:

Mynstrelles come fro fere lond:
Thay hadde ryche gyftes, I vnþurstond:
Im hert þey were lyȝt. (C 1363-65)

Apparently the celebration is then taken indoors and continues for two weeks more:

Sythen to þe castell gon þey wende
To holde þe brydale to þe ende:
Hyt lasted a fowrtenyȝt. (C 1366-68)

The scene ends with a brief description of the guests departing and mentions again the fine gifts given to the minstrels. Then the whole romance is quickly brought to a finish with a brief prayer to Jesus, to "bryng vs to hys blys" (l.1375).³

As in Partenope of Blois, this concluding wedding feast functions to bring the romance to a fitting end by marrying the hero and his lover, thereby legitimizing both their relationship and their son. Moreover, as Dieter Mehl rightly notes in The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, the feast also brings the action of the plot full circle, for "Eglamour's love is the starting point of the action and this is never lost sight of throughout the poem, until the marriage-feast at the end brings the final fulfilment of Eglamour's desire."⁴

A similar wedding feast occurs in the romance of Sir Degrevant, once again after the major complication of the plot has been resolved. Sir Degrevant actually contains only one major conflict: the hero of the story is in love with his enemy's daughter. Finally, Degrevant is allowed to marry his lady Melidor after her mother persuades her father to make peace. This work contains a more detailed description of the wedding feast which celebrates both the love of the devoted couple and the end of hostilities.

The marriage ceremony itself is performed by a cardinal, after which the regal guests gather in the hall for the feast. The men and the women are described by the poet as both impressive and beautiful:

Pan be semelede be sale,
 Kyng and cardynale,
 And be Emperour ryale
 With barnus ful bolde.
 So dud ladies by-dene,
 Both contasse and qwene,
 Bry3th burdys and schene
 Was joye to be-holde.⁵

The banquet begins with wine which is abundantly available to everyone:

Fro be mangery by-gan
 Wyn in condyt ran,
 Redy tyll yike man,
 Take ho so wolde. (1865-68)

A unique and humorous form of entertainment occurs in this scene as a dance is performed by members of the French nobility:

P̄er com in a daunse
 IX Doseperus of Fraunce. (1869-70)

The festivities last a fortnight and include jousting and merry-making, accompanied by much drinking. Then the guests depart for their own homes:

Ylke day pat fourtyny3th
 Justyng of seryd kny3thus,
 To reuele he best my3th
 With wyn and with ale.
 And on be fyftenbe day,
 Pus in romaunce herd Y say,
 Pey toke her leue and went her way,
 Thys worpely to wale. (1881-88)

There are two more concluding stanzas to Sir Degrevant which complete the description of the guests' leave-taking and tell of the long and happy life of Degrevant and Melidor.

The romance of Guy of Warwick contains a wedding feast which functions as a scene of conclusion even though it occurs in the midst of the action of the whole work.⁶ That is, the

wedding of Guy and Felice actually concludes that part of the story which narrates Guy's adventuring for the love of Felice. After the marriage, Guy decides to dedicate himself to God and the rest of the romance relates his life as a hermit. Guy's marriage to Felice takes place only after he has proven himself worthy of her love through a series of successful adventures.

The feast scene begins after the marriage ceremony and starts, as in Sir Degrevant, with a description of the nobility who attend the celebration:

When he hadde spoused þat swete wiȝt
 Þe fest lasted a fourtenniȝt,
 Þat frely folk in fere
 Wiþ erl, baroun, & mani a kniȝt,
 And mani a leuedy fair & briȝt,
 Þe best in lond þat were.⁷

Many musical instruments are listed along with the story-tellers and entertainers so that, at this banquet, the emphasis is on the music and revelry which add to the joyous atmosphere:

Þer was trumpes & tabour,
 Fiþel, croude, & harpour,
 Her craftes for to kiþe,
 Organisters & gode stiuous,
 Minstrels of mouþe, & mani dysour,
 To glade þo bernis bliþe.
 Þer nis no tong may telle in tale
 Þe ioie þat was at þat bridale.
 Wiþ menske & mirþe to miþe. (A 17, 1-9)

This feast also lasts a fortnight and the guests leave on the fifteenth day. The poet then ends the scene by reminding us of the couple's love-making, as in Partenope of Blois:

On þe fiften day ful ȝare
 Þai toke her leue for to fare,
 & þonked hem her gode dede.

Pan hadde Gij, þat gentil knight
 Feliis to his wil day & night
 In gest al-so we rede. (A 18, 6-11)

Guy matches the fifteen day wedding feast with fifteen more days of happiness with his new wife. But then he decides that he must live the rest of his life in the service of God and so he leaves Felice. Although he still fights battles as a knight, he does so for God and not for any earthly love. When he dies, he is mourned by Felice and leaves a son, Reinbrun, whose adventures make up a separate romance.

The story of Guy of Warwick began with a feast scene which introduced Guy's love for Felice and his pledge to prove himself worthy of her. Once Felice is married to Guy, the major conflict of the first part of the romance is resolved, and the wedding feast celebrates this fact. Up to this point, the tone has been that of a secular work, a chivalric romance of a knight who must win a lady's love. The wedding feast acts as a conclusion to this part, for the tone of the work changes drastically after the end of the scene, becoming that of an essentially religious work.⁸ That is, although it is still a romance of Guy of Warwick, it is a different Guy, a knight of God instead of a knight of chivalry, whose adventures we follow. Thus the feast scene is similar to those in Partenope of Blois, Eglamour of Artois and Sir Degrevant: it functions to conclude the romance by celebrating the marriage of the hero and his lady.

Other concluding wedding feasts include reunion and reward as part of the scene and, therefore, function to resolve

the action through the use of either or both of these. The reunion may be of the lovers themselves, or it may be among other characters of the romance. The rewards are usually given to faithful companions or to those who aided the hero or heroine in times of need. Sometimes the hero himself is rewarded at the feast by being knighted or crowned.

The most basic of the wedding feasts which include both reunion and reward is found in Generydes. This scene is not expansive nor is it well-described, but it does make it clear that the hero is reunited with three comrades who befriended him and fought for him in several adventures throughout the story. These old companions, as well as Generydes' brother, come to his marriage celebration and are individually named:

Gwynan the kyng was atte marriage,
The kyng of Trace also without lese,
Whiche callid was Ismaell the savage,⁹
Broder he was onto the kyng Generydes,

The third companion is Darell, the prince of Cesare, who is made steward of the banquet hall:

And so to gide and gouerne all the prece
Appoynted was, likke as thei thought it best,
The prince of Cesare cheff stiward of yc fest.
(6916-18)

By being thus honored, Darell is rewarded for being Generydes' loyal ally throughout the story. The feast continues with jousting contests and other games to please the crowds:

Whiche came to se the fest of yong and old,
it was a very wonder to be hold. (6924-25)

Two concluding feast scenes in Le Bone Florence function respectively as scenes of reward and reunion. The first feast

is an example of a resolution feast scene which is not a wedding; it is a celebration made after various reunions have occurred. A complicated weaving of circumstances has brought together and reconciled Florence and her husband, the emperor of Rome. Florence has also been reunited with Tyrre, a man who once befriended her. After the reunions and explanations have been made, there is a feast of celebration:

Soche a feste as pere was oon,
In pat lande was neuyr noon.¹⁰

The first reward given is gold for the nuns who took Florence in when she was lost and allowed her to remain for several years; in fact, this scene takes place at the nunnery. But note that, as generous as the Emperor and his wife are, they realistically withhold enough money for their trip back to Rome:

They gaf the nonnes rente,
And all per golde, wythowt lesynge;
But vnnethys pat pat myzt þem homë brynge,
And þankyð þem for that gente. (2130-33)

Then Florence requests a reward for Tyrre, and so her husband gives him, fittingly enough, the entire city of Florence:

Florence seyde, 'Syr, wyth yowre leeve,
Tyrre some þynge muste yow geue,
That me my lyfe hath lente.
He gaf hym þe eyte of Florawnce.' (2134-37)

The second feast is a wedding feast to celebrate the remarriage of the royal couple and includes the mention of minstrels and gifts common to most descriptions of wedding festivals:

Soche a brydale as pere was oon
 In that lande was neuyr noon,
 To wytt wythowten wene.
 There was grete myrpe of mynstrals steuyn,
 And nobull gyftys also geuyn. (2152-56)

This stanza emphasizes the reunion of the empress with her people, who are pleased and thankful for her return:

They loouyd God wyth mygt and mayne
 That þe lady was comyn agayne,
 And kept hur chaste and clene. (2161-63)

Le Bone Florence then concludes with two more stanzas, just as does Sir Degrevant, describing the heroine's happy life and praising her constancy. The two feast scenes work together to show that the central character has survived her hardships well and can now proceed to happiness. These final feasts are a fitting commemoration for a tale which was mostly made up of the difficulties and hardships endured by the good Florence.

King Horn contains a wedding feast which, like its previous wedding feast of recognition discussed in Chapter Two, marks Rymenhild's marriage to someone else. However, this later feast functions as a scene of resolution since it comes at the end of the romance and since it contains the final reunion of Horn and Rymenhild. Horn's friend Fikenhild has turned traitor and instead of guarding Rymenhild while Horn was away, has married her. Horn is symbolically warned of this treachery in a dream and sets out across the sea to rescue his lady. He arrived just at dawn when, unbeknownst to him, the feast begins:

þe feste hi bigunne,
 Er þat ros þe sunne.
 Er þane horn hit wiste,
 To fore þe sunne vpriste.¹¹

He is met on the shore by Arnoldin who directs him towards the castle where the feast is being held. Arnoldin explains to Horn the full extent of Fikenhild's disloyalty and prays that he will soon rescue Rymenhild:

"Horn, nu crist þe wisse,
Of Rymenhild þat þu ne misse." (C 1575-76)

Horn takes his harp and some of his knights and, once again, gains entry to the feast by means of a disguise; this time as "harpurs" and "gigours" (ll. 1591-92). He then plays a sad song for Rymenhild who faints, probably because she recalls it:

He sette him on þe benche,
His harpe for to clenche.
He makede Rymenhilde lay,
And heo makede walaway.
Rymenhilde feol yswoge. (C 1595-99)

The sight of Rymenhild fainting fills Horn with love for her and anger at Fikenhild; he looks down at the ring she gave him and by which she recognized him before, and slays Fikenhild with a single blow:

He lokede on þe ringe,
And þohte on Rymenhilde.
He 3ede vp to borde,
Wip gode suerdes orde.
Fikenhildes crune
þer ifulde adune. (C 1603-608)

Then Horn rewards Arnoldin, who so faithfully and hopefully awaited Horn's arrival on the beach, with the Kingship of Westernesse, after King Aylmer:

Horn makede Arnoldin þare
King, after king Aylmare,
Of al westernesse,
For his meoknesse. (C 1613-16)

Horn and Rymenhild are not parted again and he soon makes her his queen.

It is clear that this feast scene has many similarities to the recognition feast scene in Horn previously discussed: the problem of Rymenhild's marriage to another man, the disguise and the ring. Even the dream which Horn has prior to the scene reminds us of the recognition feast scene at which Rymenhild's warning dream is referred to. These elements all balance the two feast scenes with each other; in turn, the scenes serve as structural elements which encase the thematic elements of loyalty and love. The differences between the two scenes are those of function and placement in the story. The earlier scene occurs in the midst of the action and is essentially a scene of recognition, the later scene occurs at the end of the action and is essentially a scene of reunion. The function of the last feast scene in King Horn is to resolve the romance by a final and lasting reunion of the lovers.

The Squire of Low Degree ends with a wedding feast which delights the reader because the two lovers so deserved to marry. Both the squire and the king's daughter have suffered and proved their love for each other, the squire through his chivalric deeds and the daughter through her seven years' keeping of the chest which she mistakenly believes contains the corpse of her beloved squire. After the king has accepted the squire as a worthy mate for his daughter, he reveals the daughter's mistake to her and reunites the lovers. Then he

calls together the nobility of his land to attend the joyous feast which lasts forty days:

With myrth and game and muche playe
They wedded them on a solempne daye.
A royall feest there was holde,
With dukes and erles and barons bolde,
And knyghtes and squyers of that countre,
And sith with all the comunalte:
And certaynly, as the story sayes,
The revell lasted forty dayes.¹²

Included in this final feast scene is a reward for the squire when he is made a king. The crowning makes him equal in stature to his new wife and is well deserved, for the squire's seven years of loyal duty have made him worthy of the honor and the office:

Tyll on a day the kyng him selfe
To hym he toke his lordes twelfe,
And so he dyd the squyer
That wedded his doughter dere,
And even in the myddes of the hall
He made him kyng among them al. (1115-20)

All the noblemen present pledge loyalty to their new king. Apparently, the crowning takes place on the last day of the feast, and after celebrating the guests all leave:

And all the lordes everychone
They made him homage sone anon;
And sithen they revelled all that day,
And toke theyr leve, and went theyr way. (1121-24)

The two acts of the crowning and the marriage establish a positive resolution to this romance, which ends only a few lines after the scene itself ends. The combination wedding-coronation feast concludes the story on a happy note and with an assurance that the suffering of the squire and his lady is over for now they are joined both in marriage and in royal office.

The resolution feast scene in Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle includes reward and the wedding of Gawain and the Carl's daughter. The feast takes place at the end of the romance, after the explanations for the problems and conflicts of the plot have already been made. It is essentially a joyous celebration of the lifting of a twenty-year curse over the Carl, and a positive conclusion to the tale. During the course of the romance, the Carl tests the courtesy of three of Arthur's men: the Bishop of Bawdwyn, Sir Kay and Sir Gawain. Only Gawain is courteous enough to do exactly as the Carl bids, no matter how strange the deed. Gawain's behavior breaks the curse which had forced the Carl to murder all his previous guests, so in gratitude the Carl promises to welcome future visitors to his land. The three men return to Arthur and deliver the Carl's message of hospitality, so the whole Round Table decides to travel to visit the Carl and are greeted by a grand feast.

There is a festive tone to this scene and an abundance of everything, especially music. The scene begins as King Arthur enters the castle gates with an impressive musical accompaniment:

Trompettis mette hem at þe gate,
Clarions of siluer redy berate,
Serteyne wythoutyn lette;
Harpe, fedylle, and sawtry,
Lute, geteron, and menstracy
Into þe halle hem fett.¹³

The Carl's new-found courtesy is displayed as he greets Arthur with grace and ease:

The carle knelyd downe on his kne,
 And welcomyd þe kyng wurtherly
 Wyth wordis ware and wyse. (601-603)

Music accompanies Arthur as he sits down to the banquet. The food befits the occasion and is reminiscent of the foods served at the introductory feast in the alliterative Morte Arthure:

Trompettys trompid vp in grete hete,
 The kyng lete sey grace and wente to mete
 And was iseruyde wythoute lette.
 Swannys, fesauntys, and cranys,
 Partrigis, plouers, and curlewys
 Before þe kyng was sette. (616-18)

The Carl so impresses Arthur with his hospitality and with his feast that the king knights him and rewards him with the land known as Carlisle:

The kyng swore, 'By seynte Myghelle,
 This dyner lykythe me as welle
 As any þat euyr Y fonde.'
 A dubbyd hym knyght on þe morne,
 The contre of Carelyle he ȝafe hym sone
 To be lorde of þat londe. (625-30)

In the midst of this celebration, Gawain marries the Carl's beautiful daughter. The wedding is actually a reward to Gawain from the Carl for his aid in breaking the curse:

On the morne hit was daylyght
 Syr Gawen weddyd þat lady bryght,
 That semely was to se. (634-36)

The feast last a fortnight "wyth game, myrthe, and playe" (l. 642). At the end of this time of rejoicing and reward-giving, the king and knights of the Round Table return home:

And when þe feste was brouȝte to end,
 Lordis toke here leve to wende
 Homwarde on here way. (645-48)

A series of reward-givings takes place at the concluding wedding feast in The Lyfe of Ipomydon. As in Guy of Warwick,

the hero of this romance is about to marry his lady who was first presented to him through an introductory feast scene. The feast is prepared for well in advance, for it is expected to last forty days and many guests have been invited:

Dis fest was cryed longe byfore,
Fourty dayes it shold laste, with oute more;
Metis were made grete plente, ¹⁴
For many a man pere shuld bee.

Ipomydon who is now a king and the Lady of Calabria are married and then all return to the hall where the banquet, music and entertainment await them:

The archebisshopp of pat land
Weddyd theyme, I vndirstand.
Whan it was done, as I you say,
Home they went with oute delay.
By pat they come to be castelle,
There mete was redy euery dele;
Trumpes to mete gan blow tho,
Claryons & other menstrellis mo. (2247-54)

The rewards begin after the meal, commencing with Ipomydon's rich payment to the minstrels for their entertainment, and including other gifts to some unidentified others:

Ipomydon gaff in pat stound
To mynstrellis V.C. pound,
And othyr yiftes of grete nobley
He yaff to other men pat day. (2269-72)

But these gifts are mere preliminaries for the rewards which follow. To his brother who aided him in some battles, Ipomydon gives the kingship of Poland, less one earldom:

Ipomydon his brother lette calle,
There he stode in the halle,
And yaff hym all Poyle-land,
But on erledom, I vnderstond,
And of that land made hym kyng. (2275-79)

Of course, all this generosity is done at the feast, in full

view of the noble lords and ladies from other lands, so that Ipomydon as a new king can gain favor and popularity with his fellow aristocrats. This is nicely expressed with a look behind the scene as Ipomydon's brother goes off to tell a friend of his about the reward. He finds his friend in a room, talking to some ladies and when he announces his good fortune, the women commend Ipomydon's goodness:

He told of the yefftes fayre,
 Off Poyle-land how he was eyre;
 The ladyes answerd all on one:
 "Souche a man in the world ys non!" (2287-90)

Not only is this an effective interlude to expand the scene, but it also reflects back to the introductory feast scene discussed in Ch. One, which showed Ipomydon being introduced to the Lady of Calabria through the same narrative technique: the conversation among the guests at the feast.

Ipomydon continues his reward-giving by calling forth his old teacher, Tholomew and by giving him the earldom in Poland plus a young wife:

Ipomadon, there he stod in hall,
 Tholomew he lette to hym call
 And yaff hym an erledom fre
 And a mayde, hys leff to bee. (2291-94)

Similarly, to his faithful friend, Sir Jason, Ipomydon gives both lands and a wife:

To hym he gaff bothe ferre & nere
 Grete londes, as ye may here,
 To hys wyff a fayre may. (2305-309)

The end of this feast scene comes after more rewards are given to some anonymous "men many moo" (l. 2312). However, another interesting feature of this scene is the long leave-taking of

the guests. The end of the scene seems to be announced on lines 2313-2314, "Whan this feste was comyn to be end;/Euery man busked him, home to wend." But from line 2315 to line 2326, there is a description of an emperor and others who come to say goodbye to Ipomydon and his new queen:

The emperoure his leve hathe tone
At be kyng Ipomydon
And at be quene fayre and free,
So dyd many mo than hee. (2323-26)

Then the most common ending to a feast scene is repeated; as the guests' parting is described and the scene ends at line 2330.

William of Palerne, the romance of "William and the Werwolf," also ends with a feast scene which has an even more extensive and detailed description of the guests' leave-taking. Yet this feast is only the last of two concluding feast scenes: the first is a wedding celebration and the second is the feast of William's coronation as emperor of Rome. Both scenes function to resolve the romance and all occur after the main problem of the plot, that is, the curse of the werwolf, has been lifted. Since William of Palerne is without feast scenes until these, it seems as if the work fairly bursts into a long celebration as it nears the end.¹⁵ William's identity as the Queen of Palermo's son has recently been established, so he can now wed his love Melior, daughter of the Roman Emperor. The werwolf has been converted back to his human form as Alphonse, son of the King of Spain, who is to wed Florence, William's sister. Finally, Alexandrine, the good friend to Melior and

William, is betrothed to another son of the King of Spain, Braundnis. All three weddings are performed at the same ceremony and the scene begins with a long description of minstrelsy and of the nobility who attend the feast:

alle þe clerkes vnder god coupe nouȝt descriue
a-redili to þe riȝtes þe realte of þat day,
þat was in þat cite for þat solempne fest,
& of alle men þat manerli miȝt ouȝt gete
of any god gaili to greiþe hem midde.
to munge of menstracie, it miȝt nouȝt be aymed,
so many maner minstracie at þat mariage were,
þat whan þei made here menstracie eche man wende,
þat heuen hastili & erþe schuld hurtel to-gader,
sô desgeli it denede þat al þerþe quakede.¹⁶

The use of occupatio characterizes the description, for the magnificence of the guests and the noise of the music is beyond explanation. This narrative technique is continued as the poet attempts to picture the brides' finery, and of course, cannot do so:

But trewþe now for to telle whan time come of daye,
þat þe blisful brides schold buske to cherche,
of here a-tir for to telle to badde is my witte,
for alle þe men vpon mold ne miȝt it descriue
a-redili to þe riȝtes so riche it were alle. (5022-26)

After the ceremony, a reward of lands and manors is given to Alexandrine's new husband:

& after þe lawe of þe lond lelliche to telle,
þei were þer wedded worchipfulli and fayre.
& lelli, for alisaundrines lord ne hæde non londes,
þer were tit ȝif hem to treuli fele townes,
comli castelles and coup and cuntres wide,
to liue wiþ worchip & wele in world all here liue.
(5049-54)

The banquet itself is the usual surfeit of food and drink and once again, the poet uses occupatio to impress with a short description:

It were toor forto telle treulli al be sope,
 & to reherce be aray arigt of pat riche feste,
 for-pi i leue þis ligthli ac leueþ þis for treupe,
 þer miȝt no mon it amende a mite worp, i leue.
 (5066-69)

However, he is able to describe in some detail the end of the feast as the "bordes were born a-down & burnes hade waschen" (l. 4070) and afterwards the fine rich payment given to the minstrels:

Men miȝt haue seie to menstrales moche god ȝif,
 sterne stedes & stef & ful stoute robes,
 Gret garisun of gold & greiþli gode iuweles.
 (5074-76)

This feast is the only triple wedding feast in any of the romances. It also ends with a rather long description of the leave-taking, as did the scene in The Lyfe of Ipomydon. William's mother bids her brother, Partenedon, farewell and William and Melior also come to the city gates to see him off to Greece, his home land:

& william wiþ his wigos went him wiþ on gate,
 & semli siþ alla solas to þe see him brouȝt,
 & his menskful moder meliors, & his suster.
 (5080-82)

The farewell lasts for a few more lines, to line 5090, as the Queen of Palermo sends with her brother a message of goodwill to their father. Although several pages of ceremonious farewells follow this one, the narration waivers between the description of the farewells and relating the various home-comings. For instance, we follow Partenedon to his arrival in Greece, then return to the farewell between Melior and her father. Then the fond leave-taking between William and Alphonse is narrated, and afterwards we hear of Alphonse's

being crowned king of Spain upon his return. In all these goodbyes followed by descriptions of arrivals, the sense of the end of this feast scene is a muddled one indeed.

The final feast scene is a reunion and reward feast as William and Melior return to Rome where, as in Le Bone Florence, they are reunited with their city and their people. The occasion for the feast is the crowning of William and Melior as emperor and empress of Rome, for her father has died. In this description, the poet's use of occupatio balances this previous use of the technique, but in a more condensed way. In just five lines he tells that he cannot describe the royalty, the finery, nor the banquet, for all are beyond description. In fact, the first lines of both scenes are very similar:

per nis no clerk vnder crist pat coupe half descriue
 be reaulte pat was araied in rome for pat fest,
 Ne be tippedel of hire atir to telle be rigt,
 for al be men vpon mold it amende ne miht,
 nougt pat fel to swiche a fest forsope, half a mite.
 (5344-48)

The poet continues in a much more detailed manner to list the payment in horses and mantels received by the minstrels:

no tong miht telle be twentipe parte
 of be mede to menstres pat mene time was zeue,
 of robes wip riche pane & oper richesse grete,
 sterne stedes & strong & oper stoute giftes,
 so pat eche man per-mide miht hold him a-paied.
 (5354-58)

The reward of this scene takes place when William calls forth the cowherd who had raised him as his own child until William was kindly taken in by the Emperor of Rome when only seven. There is also an element of recognition here, as William stands a full emperor before the cowherd and asks if he recognizes him.

The old man does and replies:

"3a ! lord, wip 3our leue ful litel i 3ou knewe.
I fostered 3ou on mi flet for sope, as me pinkep,
& seide 3e were my sone seuen 3er and more."

(5367-69)

Then, in front of all, William rewards the good man and his wife with a magnificent castle and land so that they will never be poor again:

& bi-fore kud knigtes and oper kene lordes;
he gaf to be kowherde a kastel ful nobul,
be fairest vpon fold pat euer freke seie,
& best set to be sigt him-selue to kepe;
and al pat touched per to a tidi erldome. (5380-84)

Now the fifteen day feast is over and "eche a lorde full loueli his leve gan take" (l. 5399), but the leave-takings are more extensive than those described in any other feast scene in any other romance. First, all the noblemen must pay homage to their newly crowned emperor and promise him fealty:

but omage arst of hem alle hendeli he tok,
Mekli as be maner is his men to bi-come,
to come keneli to his kry as to here kinde lord.
(5403-405)

The three couples who married at the previous feast scene have also come together for this coronation feast, and now gather to bid each other farewell:

& king alphouns a-non after alle were went,
& his worchipful wif be-fore william comen,
& braundyns his broper and alisaundrine his burde;
at emperour & emperice euereche on at ones
loueli laugten here leue to here lond to wend.
(5409-413)

Again, William and Alphonse bid each other farewell, just as they did at the end of the previous feast scene. Then William's mother and the Empress Melior advise the young brides, Florence

and Alexandrine to love their "lords" and to serve them well:

"loueli dougter, leue lif loue be lord enere,
& be euer busili aboute him buxumli to serue.

(5439-40)

Finally, amidst tears and kisses, the couples part:

& time was atte laste atwinne forto de-parte,
per was siking & sorwe on bope sides sadde,
weping & wringing for wo at here hertes,
& clippings and kessing bei caughte oþer,
bi-kenned hem to crist þat on croyce was peyned,
& soute sepe on-sunder pough it hem sore greued.

(5450-55)

Although the two feast scenes are several hundred lines apart, they do act together to end the romance with joyous reunions, perhaps quite well-balanced by the long and sorrowful farewells. The triple wedding feast resolves by celebrating the fact that everyone is quite happily and satisfactorily married off. The coronation feast adds a further note of resolution through its reward for the cowherd which seems such a well-deserved one. The reunion of the young couples is also important to the final feast scene and to the resolution of the whole romance. When they meet this second time, Alphonse is King of Spain, Braundinis is Prince of Spain and William is Emperor of Rome; thus all three men and their wives are fortunately situated as the romance draws to a close.

Reunion also plays an important part in the concluding feast scenes of Sir Triamore and of Octavian, both Northern and Southern versions. These feast scenes differ markedly from the others previously discussed because they function as the denouement of the stories; that is, the unravelling of the plot complications occur during the feast. The feasts in

these works are not celebrations of the resolution, nor do they occur after the major conflicts have been resolved; instead the scene and the unravelling of the conflicts are simultaneous events. In this sense, these feast scenes are the most complete form of the resolution feast scene.

The concluding feast in Sir Triamore is a celebration of both his marriage and his coronation and yet it also includes the reunion of his estranged parents. Prior to his wedding, Triamore's mother, Queen Margaret, has divulged the identity of the father he never knew: King Arradas, a man Triamore often aided in battle. Triamore plans for the reconciliation of his parents by inviting King Arradas to the wedding. The reunion of Queen Margaret and her husband takes place at the feast where they have been seated beside each other, perhaps a further ploy by their son:

Ye may welle wete certeynly
That there was a great mangery,
There as so many were mett:

Qwene Margaret began the deyse;
Kyng Arduus wyth-owtyn lees,
Be hur was he sett.¹⁷

During the meal, the king turns to the woman at his side and notices a familiar face. Although probably meant seriously, it is certainly humorous enough, as Arradas wonders who she is:

King Arradas beheld his Queene,
him thought that hee had her seene,
shee was a ladye fayre. (1558-60)

He blithely asks her name and Margaret answers quickly and concisely, telling Arradas who she is and exactly why he has

not seen her for years. It is the king's own fault, for he believed his steward's lies about Margaret's being an adulteress:

"my Lord," sayd she, "I was your Queene;
your steward did me ill teene;
that euill might him befalle !" (1564-66)

The King wisely says no more until after the banquet is finished, "till the clothes were drawn from the bords" (l. 1568). Then he takes Margaret aside so that she can explain everything to him. Their reunion, however, apparently takes place in front of all at the feast who join in their happiness:

then was there great Ioy & blisse !
when they together gan kisse,
then all they companye made Ioy enough. (1573-75)

Triamore's wife is especially glad of the reunion because it means "that shee a Kings sonne to her Lord had" (l. 1577).

Like Le Bone Florence and Sir Degrevant, this work also ends two stanzas later, after telling us how happily the parents and the son lived. Although the denouement in this feast scene is not extensive, it is obvious that the parents' reunion and the Queen's blaming the steward resolve an important conflict of the plot. Thus the feast is both a celebration of the resolution and the resolution itself.

The Northern version of Octavian ends with a feast scene which occurs after the reunion of the family, but which resolves other conflicts. Octavian is a story of a family broken apart, of the adventures of the individual members and, finally, of their reunion.¹⁸ The duplication of names makes the tale confusing: Forence married Octavian, the Emperor of Rome, and bore him twin sons, Octavian and Florent. The emperor's mother,

convinced her son that the twins meant that Florence had been unfaithful, so he sent her and the boys away (see Chapter One for the discussion of the introductory feast scene at which this occurs). Although the young Octavian always remained with his mother, Florent is separated from them and raised by the merchant, Clement. The story actually emphasizes the adventures of Florent who, during one episode, is reunited with his father.²⁰ The reunion of the rest of the family takes place soon afterwards and is celebrated with a feast:

A ryche feste þe emperour made there
Of kynges, þat were farre and nère,
Of many londys thede.²¹

Although this is not a scene, it is a preliminary to the wedding feast which functions as the resolution to the tale. Once we have had the reunion of the family there remain two more problems of the plot yet to be solved: Florent's love for the pagan Marsabel and the punishment due Florence's mother-in-law for causing the separation of Florence and Octavian (see Chapter One). The final feast scene quickly resolves both problems. Marsabel is soon baptized, "crystenyd sche was on a sonday" (l.C 1699), and married to Florent in a huge celebration in Rome:

Soche a brydale þer was there,
A ryaller þer was neuer noone here,
Ye wot wythowten lees.
Florent hym selfe can hur wedde,
And yn to Rome sche was ledde
Wyth pryncys prowde yn preeß. (C 1702-707)

Sometime during the feast, Octavian asks advice of the noble guests as to how his mother should be punished. This action is a parallel to the introductory feast scene, but this time

the justice is for a real sin and the correct person is to be burnt:

The ryche kynges gaue jugement,
The emperours modur schulde be brent
In a tonne of brasse. (C1711-13)

But Octavian's mother kills herself before the judgment can be carried out. As soon as the noblemen hear of her death, there is further rejoicing and then they leave in a flourish of song and music:

Therat alle the kynges loghe,
What wondur was, powe per were no swoghe?
They toke per leue pat tyde;
With trumpys and wyth mery songe
Eche oone went to hys owne londe
Wyth yoye and wyth grete pryde. (C 1720-25)

The punishment and death of the mother-in-law brings the action full-circle, for it was her accusations and lies that began the family's separation. Thus we have a romance which opens and closes with two well-balanced feast scenes: the first begins the problems and conflicts of the plot and the last resolves them and ends the romance happily.

The final feast scene in the Southern version of Octavian is the most complete of the resolution feast scenes, since all the plot conflicts are resolved at the feast itself and since it also contains elements of recognition, reunion and reward. It is quite a different feast scene from the one in the Northern version, although the characters and the substance of the story are the same.²⁰ The Southern Octavian's resolution feast begins as a reward scene, the feast of Clement's dubbing. Once again, a highly improbable set of circumstances has brought

Florence and Octavian to the feast where Forent and his father are. The reunion of the whole family takes place at this feast and begins with Florence's suddenly recognizing her husband:

pat day Clement was made knygt
 For hys er dedes wys and wygt.
 Atte hys feste Florence brygt.
 Beknew her lord. (1807-10)

As in Sir Triamore, the wife identifies herself to her husband, and tells him a little about her past troubles:

I am by wyf, pat hat Florence;
 pat ys my fader, be kyng of Fraunce.
 Idryus y was poruz greet destauce
 From ken and kyth;
 I wene no woman mor myschaunce
 Ne hadde neuer syth. (1819-24)

However, hers is a more convoluted and detailed story which she commences to tell the elder Octavian. She explains how their sons were separated in infancy, and in doing so she reunites the father to his son Octavian by pointing him out:

"pat on ys be knygt, pat stondyth par,
 pat oper becam, y nyst neuer whar
 In pat forest.
 Pys day ys fyfe and twenty yere,
 pat y sawe hym last." (1826-30)

The curious circumstances of the boys' separation outdoes even the strange episodes that brought them together again, for Octavian was taken by a lioness and Florent by an ape. Florence continues with her rather tedious narration of all the events leading up to her finding Octavian, how the lioness protected them both, her life in Jerusalem where the king aided her. She completes her tale by relating Octavian's knighting, the death

of the lioness and finally blames her mother-in-law for causing her such misfortune and woe:

"Be kyng my sone made knygt
And me sustenede day and nygt.
My lyonesse was slayn yn fygt,
Bat doþ me greef.
By modyr tresoun hap me dygt
All þys myschef." (1867-72)

Her husband, apparently touched by her story, forgives her. But notice that the poet refers to the emperor as having a cold heart, probably because of his past action towards Florence, although it may also explain why Florence told him her whole plaintive history:

Bo Florence hadde her tale ytold
Before þe lordes yonge and old,
Be emperour, with herte cold,
Octouyan,
In hys armys he here fold
And keste her þan. (1873-78)

After Florence and Octavian are reconciled, she notices a young knight at the feast, who is actually her son Florent.

The emperor remarks on the resemblance between the two and then turns to Clement, wisely taking him aside to ask the truth about Florent:

Be emperour and knyges þre
Tok Clement yn pryete
And seyde to hym with hert fre:
"Now, syr Clement,
Telle vs þe sob, for charite,
Of syr Florent." (1897-1902)

Clement now tells his tale: how he purchased the child for "syxty florencys" (l. 1910) from some outlaws and raised him as his own. There is a nice ironic touch to this story, for Clement is a merchant who bought Florent for money called "florences". Clement's admission clarifies the contrast

between Florent's courtesy and Clement's boorishness, which came out in the recognition feast scene discussed in Chapter Two. Maldwyn Mills states that "a central issue here is the conflict between Florent's inborn nobility of nature, and the essentially bourgeois ethos of the butcher Clement, who has brought the boy up."²²

Once the truth has been divulged by Clement, other complications disappear because of another coincidence among the guests at the feast. One of them is the very knight who rescued Florent from the ape, but then lost him to the outlaws. His testimony gives credence to Florence's story, for the knight says that his adventure occurred at the same time he first heard of Florence's being banished:

"bat tyme byfyll me bys destresse,
bat fayre Florence, þe emperesse,
Was ydryue with greet falsnesse
Out of Rome." (1939-42)

The feast ends as the emperor kisses his two sons, and then everyone else at the feast kisses them:

Þanne hem keste kyng and knyȝt,
Erlys, barons and ladyys bryȝt. (1946-47)

The scene seems to close here, although there are further thanks and commendations to God. Two stanzas more end the romance itself, one of which tells us that the mother-in-law is properly punished by being burnt "for her tresoun" (l. 1955).

The resolution feast scene of the Southern version of Octavian ends the romance most satisfactorily. It is as if we are seated in front of a theatre while we watch the final act

of a drama when all the characters discover their connections to each other. It is both unbelievable and believable at the same time, both comic and serious at the same time. The feast scene allows for both the setting and the time for all these unravellings to take place. It is the right spot for the denouement of this work.

Indeed, a feast scene seems a particularly fitting way to conclude a romance. Since a feast is a public and a social occasion, it is a time for declaring commitments and affiliations. Thus weddings, reunions and rewards become events which can be both celebrated and witnessed by an approving public. Finally, a feast is also a healing occasion, a time for the various conflicts and difficulties of the story to find harmonious resolutions at a peaceful feast.

5

Footnotes

¹There are also concluding wedding feasts in the romances of Eger and Grime, Torrent of Portyngale and Libeaus Desconus. These are not discussed in this chapter because they do not constitute scenes, although they are more than brief reference. The problem of differentiating between a feast and a feast scene has been discussed in the Introduction, with the example of the concluding feast of Lybeaus Desconus given. I am including the texts of the wedding feasts from the other two romances for further reference:

& there Sir Egar, that Noble Knight,
Marryed winglayne, that Ladye Bright.
the feast it Lasted fortye dayes,
with Lords & Ladyes in royall arrayes;
& att the 40 dayes end,
euerye man to his owne home wend,
eche man home into his countrie;
soe did Egar, Grime, & Pallyas, all 3.

(Eger and Grime, Percy MS., 1389-96)

The Emperoure of Rome,
To that gestonye he come,
A noble knyght on hyge.
Whan all thes lordys com were,
Torrent weddid that lady clere,
A justyng did he crye.

(Torrent of Portyngale, 2626-31)

²A. Trampe Böttker, ed., The Middle English Versions of Partenope of Blois, EETS ES 109 (London: Kegan Paul, 1912), ll. 12166-71. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; all quotations are taken from the British Museum MS.

³Sidney J. Herrtage, ed., Sir Eglamour of Artois, EETS OS 256 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), ll. L 1348-50. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; an L or a C before the line number signifies respectively the Lincoln Cathedral or the Cotton Caligula MS.

⁴(London: Routledge, 1969), p. 81.

⁵L.F. Casson, ed., The Romance of Sir Degrevant, EETS OS 221 (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1949), ll. 1857-64. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; all quotations are taken from the Cambridge University Library MS.

⁶There are two feast scenes in Kyng Alisaunder which also appear in the midst of the action, but which actually function as scenes of resolution. The first is a pre-nuptial feast given by King Phillip when he decides to wed Cleopatra. Phillip has imprisoned Queen Olympias nearby and made his plans while his son is away. But Alexander arrives home as the feast is proceeding:

To þe paleys he comþ ryde,
And fyndþ þis feste and al þis pride. (B 1079-80)

He is enraged at what he sees, so before sitting down to eat Alexander promises his father that there will be yet another feast where Phillip and Olympias will be together again:

And seide, "Fader, whan my moder is quene,
Þou shalt at hir bridale bene."
He wassheþ and sitteþ at þe fest;
Men hym serueþ of þe best. (B 1093-96)

This feast ends when Alexander has a fight with a guest who teases him about Olympias. Then he sends Cleopatra away and frees Olympias. Alexander holds a second feast at which he effects a reconciliation between his mother and father:

So riche fest no man ne say
So Alisaunder held þat day.
Kyng Philippe þere-myð was,
And acorded wip Olympias. (B 1157-60)

As this feast proceeds, messengers interrupt with a message for the king:

Also þai seten at þis gestenyng,
Comen messages to Philippe þe kyng. (B 1161-62)

The message tells of a problem in Phillip's realm, and Alexander is dispatched to solve it.

These are two special feast scenes because they contain elements characteristic of recognition, and introductory feasts as well as being scenes of resolution. They function as scenes of recognition because Alexander arrives home fresh from a victory and then proceeds to take charge and force a reconciliation between his estranged parents. Since the interruption of the second feast presents a new adventure for Alexander, it functions as a scene of introduction. However, the two scenes do seem to function together as scenes of resolution by means of reuniting the family.

⁷A St. 16, ll. 1-6. These quotations are taken from the stanzaic continuation of the Auchinleck MS and are cited

parenthetically by both stanza and line number in the text; for complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 10.

⁸Interestingly enough, Dieter Mehl in The Middle English Romances, p.226, sees this feast scene as more of "an introduction to the story of Guy's pilgrimage," and "as a preliminary to Guy's sudden conversion." He goes on to remark on the difference between the two parts of the romance to suggest that "for the English adaptor there was no inconsistency in the juxtaposition of courtly romance and saint's legend; the legendary second part of the poem arises out of Guy's sudden realization that all he has done so far has been for his own glory, not for the honour of God."

⁹ll. 6912-15. For complete citation, see Ch. Two, fn. 21.

¹⁰Carol Falvo Heffernan, ed., Le Bone Florence, Old and Middle English Texts, G.L. Brook, ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976), ll.2128-29. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹¹C ll.1549-52. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 7.

¹²William Edward Mead, ed., The Squyr of Lowe Degre: A Middle English Metrical Romance (1904; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973), ll. 1107-14. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹³Auvo Kurvinen, ed., Sir Gawain and The Carl of Carlisle in Two Versions, Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, ser.B. tom.71 (Helsinki, 1951), ll.595-600. Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text; all quotations are taken from the Porkington MS.

¹⁴ll.2231-34. For complete citation see Ch. One, fn. 4.

¹⁵As Dieter Mehl states in The Middle English Romances, p.248: "The last thousand lines (that is to say, a fifth of the whole work) consist almost solely of ceremonial receptions, messages and reunions, because the actual plot has come to an end with the disenchantment of the Werwolf (after l.4457)."

¹⁶Walter W. Skeat, ed., The Romance of William of Palerne: otherwise known as The Romance of "William and the Werwolf", EETS ES 1 (1867; rpt. London: Kegan Paul, 1898), ll.5005-5014.

Further quotations from this romance are taken from this edition and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹⁷Hales, John W. and Frederick F. Furnivall; eds., Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances, Vol. II (1868; rpt. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968). Although these six lines are taken from the "Cambridge text" (see Furnivall's fn. 1, p.134) and are unnumbered, all further quotations are taken from the Percy Folio MS and are cited parenthetically by line number in the text.

¹⁸Emaré is similar to Octavian in that it, too, reunited a family at the end of the story. However, this scene is in no way specified as a feast, although it is a dinner of some kind. After the reunions are over, there is a feast which does not constitute a scene:

A grette feste ther was holde,
Of erles and barones bolde,
As testimonyeth
thys story. (1027-29)

¹⁹Maldwyn Mills, Six Middle English Romances (London: Dent, 1973), p.xvi states that "there is a third part to the romance, lying between the story of the mother and the final battles, and this is altogether more interesting for this tells . . . of the upbringing of Florent, the twin who grows up away from his mother, and the real hero of Octavian."

²⁰C 11.1690-92. For complete citation, see Ch. One, fn. 5.

²¹Derek Pearsall, in "The Development of Middle English Romance," Medieval Studies 27 (1965), p.111, describes this version of Octavian as "independently derived from the same original French source and is usually called the 'Southern' Octavian, though it might be more convenient to call it Octovian. This version is throughout cruder and more popular in appeal, and develops the comedy of social situation with less concern for its narrative point than for its fardical possibilities."

— ²²Six Middle English Romances, p.xvi.

Conclusion

By first identifying and then classifying all the feast scenes in the Middle English metrical romances, this study has shown that they function as scenes of introduction, recognition or resolution. This analysis also reveals a relationship between the function of a scene and its placement in the narrative. As the Appendix shows, the introductory feast scenes usually appear at the beginning of a romance; of the eighteen feast scenes which serve as introductions, all but four come at or near the beginning of a tale. The recognition feast scenes occur somewhere in the vast middle of a romance and, except for one, the resolution feast scenes come at or near the end of a work.

In her article, "The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance", Kathryn Hume states that "we need to uncover more of the underlying rules if we are to grasp how a romance writer would have viewed the genre and planned his own effort."¹ The importance of this analysis is that it cuts across all the differences in the corpus of the Middle English metrical romances and shows us some of the similarities in the narratives of all these works. This study may give us important clues to some of the heretofore unknown "underlying rules" of the composition of these tales, such as why a feast scene appears at a certain place in the plot, what it does and how it works in the narrative of the romance.

In Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature, W. P. Ker writes that "the authors of that romantic school, if ever they talked shop, may have asked one another, 'Where do you put your Felon Red Knight? Where do you put your doing away of the Ill Custom? or your tournament?'"² In many ways, we now have some of the answers to such questions. If we extend Ker's idea, we can even say that we now know the answers to such questions as "How do you introduce the hero to his lady? How do you end your story? What is a good way to gain the audience's attention?" For not only do we know the functions served by the feast scenes, but we also know where these scenes are located within the romance narrative.

Although this work is essentially a preliminary study, it is also a work which opens up entirely new areas in the study of Middle English literature. Both by its subject matter and by its methodology, this analysis provides a solid foundation for the future study of feast scenes in the genre of medieval romance and for expansion into other types of Middle English works. To begin, an analysis of feast scenes in the Middle Scots romances should be made, followed by one of the Middle English prose romances. One could also extend this study to include the continental romances, both in prose and poetry.³ Beyond the genre of romance lies the Middle English poem, Cleanness, which contains two significant feast scenes yet to be analyzed from the point of view presented in this study.⁴

Other works which should now be explored in the light of this study include Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Troilus and Criseyde and The Legend of Good Women. The similarities between the opening feast scenes of "The Squire's Tale" and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight have already been discussed,⁵ but "The Knight's Tale" also contains an opening feast scene which, in that it is interrupted by intruders, resembles the feast scene in the alliterative Morte Arthure. Another feast scene in "The Knight's Tale" may well be a scene of recognition, but has never been studied as such. "The Merchant's Tale" contains two wedding feasts which seem to be comic contrasts to the usual wedding feast found in the metrical romances.⁶ It would also be interesting and worthwhile to investigate the feast scenes in Troilus and Criseyde and in The Legend of Good Women.⁷

The methodology presented in this study should be used to analyze other elements of Middle English literature. There are many dining scenes found throughout The Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde that may have various similar characteristics to feast scenes. There are also many significant meal scenes in the metrical romances that should be examined, such as the exotic meals shared by lovers, as in Sir Degaré and Sir Degrevant, and the eating and drinking scenes in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.⁸

This methodology could also be applied to an investigation of the type characters found in the Middle English metrical romances, such as the evil steward, the jealous mother-in-law

and the faithful companion, to see how they work within the romance narrative. Of course, this idea like the others mentioned here could also be extended beyond the genre of the Middle English metrical romances. All the suggested expansions of this preliminary study would yield more knowledge and enlighten our study of medieval English literature and medieval literature in general.



Footnotes

¹Philological Quarterly, 53 (1974), p. 169.

²(1896, rpt. London: Macmillan, 1922), p. 342.

³For example, in the works of Chrétien de Troyes (Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes, trans. W.W. Comfort, New York: Everyman, 1913), there are several feast scenes. Yvain contains an opening feast scene (vv. 1 ff.) that is, of course, similar to the one in Yvain and Gawain discussed in Chapter One. Erec et Enide contains two feast scenes, a wedding feast (vv. 6810 ff.), and Lancelot also has an opening feast scene (vv. 31 ff.).

⁴There is, however, interesting commentary on the wedding feast in Charlotte C. Morse, The Pattern of Judgment in the Queste and Cleanthess (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978) pp. 138-45.

⁵See C.O. Chapman, "Chaucer and the Gawain-Poet: A Conjecture", Modern Language Notes, 68 (1953), 521-24.

⁶The following line references for feast scenes in The Canterbury Tales are taken from F.N. Robinson, ed. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton, 1957): "The Squire's Tale", ll. 45 ff.; "The Knight's Tale", ll. 892 ff., ll. 2190 ff.; and "The Merchant's Tale", ll. 1709 ff., ll. 1890 ff.

⁷In F.N. Robinson's edition, the line references are: Troilus and Criseyde, Bk. I, ll. 161 ff., Bk. IV, ll. 435 ff.; Legend of Good Women, "Legend of Dido"; ll. 1098 ff., and "Legend of Philomela", ll. 2244 ff.

⁸See the following: Sir Degaré in W.H. French and C.B. Hale, eds. Middle English Metrical Romances, 2 vols. (1930 rpt. New York: Russell, 1964), ll. 813 ff.; Sir Degrevant, ed. L.F. Casson, EETS OS 221 (London: Cumberlege, 1949, ll. 1396 ff.; and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, eds. J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, 2nd ed. rev. Norman Davis (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), ll. 995 ff., ll. 1648 ff., ll. 1952 ff.

APPENDIX

Introductory Feast Scenes

Amis and Amiloun (64-108) (410-40)

Emaré (385-408)

Guy of Warwick (C 185-326)

Ipomedon (173-264)

King Horn (L 853-92)

Kyng Alisaunder (B 155-234)

The Lyfe of Ipomydon (83-143)

Morte Arthure (64-413)

Octavian, Northern (C 184-228, L 196-231)

Octavian, Southern (67-90)

Partenay (50-105)

Richard Coeur de Lion (1341-86)

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (41-490)

Sir Launfal (52-72)

Sir Perceval of Galles (42-80) (109-75)

Ywain and Gawain (14-548)

Recognition Feast Scenes

Arthour and Merlin (3111-66) (3391-438) (3571-606)

Gamelyn (311-48) (459-544)

Generydes (4212-340)

Guy of Warwick (A 6701-13)

Havelok the Dane (2320-53)

Horn Childe (950-1006)

King Horn (C 1147-352)

The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell (133-64)

Kyng Alisaunder (B 531-62)(B 1777-1812)

The Lyfe of Ipomydon (531-48)

Octavian, Southern (1273-1302)

Partenay (1835-1936) (2432-50) (2740-842)

Richard Coeur de Lion (3772-848)

Sir Beves of Hamtoun (1475-1506)

Sir Launfal (625-708)

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (536-65)

Resolution Feast Scenes

Generydes (6912-25)

Guy of Warwick (A, St. 16-18)

King Horn (C 1549-1618)

Le Bone Florence (2128-39) (2152-63)

The Lyfe of Ipomydon (2231-330)

Octavian, Northern (C 1702-25², L 1594-1617)

Octavian, Southern (1807-1950)

Partenope of Blois (12164-86)

Sir Degrevant (1857-96)

Sir Eglamour of Artois (L 1348-63), C 1348-74)

Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle (595-648)

Sir Triamore (ca. 1550-78)

The Squire of Low Degree (1107-26)

William of Palerne (5005-5090?) (5344-455)

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