Varieties in Translation: Adaptation and Translation between French and

English Arthurian Romance

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Abstract

EUAN DREW GRIFFITHS: "Varieties in Translation: Adaptation and Translation between French and English Arthurian Romance"
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The dissertation is a study of the fascinating and variable approaches to translation and adaptation during the Middle Ages. I analyze four anonymous Middle English texts and two tales from Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* that are translations and adaptations of Old French Arthurian romances. Through the comparison of the French and English romances, I demonstrate how English translators employed a variety of techniques including what we might define as close translation and loose adaptation. Malory, in particular, epitomizes the medieval translator. The two tales that receive attention in this project illustrate his use of translation and adaptation.

Furthermore, the study is breaking new ground in the field of medieval studies since the work draws on translation theory in conjunction with textual analysis. Translation theory has forged a re-evaluation of translation as a literary medium. Using this growing field of research and scholarship, we can enhance our understanding of translation as it existed during the Middle Ages. For the medieval writer, translation was a fluid concept, and modern theoretical approaches are also highlighting the variety of approaches to translation. Thus, this project reveals that medieval translation is not only a distinct and important literary genre, but also provides new ways to think about translation and adaptation.

To my parents, Ian and Carol Griffiths, thank you for your encouragement and support in the course of my writing. To my dissertation advisor, Professor Edward Donald Kennedy, I am forever grateful for your commitment to this project and honored to be your last graduate student advisee.

Contents

Introduction

As Roger Ellis writes in his preface to *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English,* "almost everything written in the medieval period could be presented as a translation in one sense or another."[1] This dissertation will show in what "sense" we may view several medieval English translations of French Arthurian romances. Today, we may have specific preconceptions as to what constitutes a translation. For writers during the Middle Ages, the concept was more fluid. We must, accordingly, take a different view of translation during this period. Translation was often faithful to the source, and at other times it was not. We have, therefore, a variety of translation in the Middle Ages that demonstrates varying degrees of difference and correspondence between a source and its translation.

The growing field of translation theory provides the medieval scholar with new and exciting ways to approach medieval works since originality generally consisted of adapting older works rather than creating a story that was entirely new. Indeed, translation and adaptation were often intrinsic to literary works created during the Middle Ages. Medieval "translation" could range from a close translation (e.g., the English Prose *Merlin*) to a free adaptation (e.g., the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*). Between these extremes, there are several types of translation. This idea is not exclusive to the medieval period. As Eugene Nida argues "Traditionally, we have tended to think in terms of free or paraphrastic translations as contrasted with close or literal ones. Actually, there are many more grades of translating than these extremes imply."[2] Thus, some medieval translations may be nearer to what we may define as close translation, whereas others vary so significantly in comparison to their

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[1] *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. I to 1550, edited by Roger Ellis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2-3.

[2] "Principles of Correspondence," *Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2002), 153.

source that they become an adaptation. Others offer a combination of approaches including both translation and adaptation.

Close translation can be determined by the degree of equivalence between source and text. The term "equivalence," or an "equivalent translation," refers to the parity in both language and narrative content between source and translation. When the author of the translated text follows the source closely, it is evident in the lexical choices, structure of the narrative and, ultimately, the minimal differences identifiable between the original and translation. By extension, the translation mirrors the source, yet we may differentiate between them by the language used, i.e. Old French and Middle English. In most other respects, the narrative remains the same, and the translation is, therefore, an equivalent of the source.

By contrast, the more a text differs from its source will make it lean towards the label of an adaptation. Although medieval translators may reference their sources and adhere to the main themes of the original, an adaptation may still differ significantly from the source in both form and content. Thus an English translator may eliminate the interwoven plots of a French source or translate from prose to verse, since the latter was more popular for narratives in England until the mid-fifteenth century. There may be significant omissions or a re-ordering of the narrative. In addition, the translator may condense or "reduce" his source, which means that the narrative function of an episode serves the same purpose, yet it does so without extraneous detail. This practice was particularly in evidence with the English translators who dispensed with what they apparently considered superfluous elements of their French sources to streamline the narrative. An adaptation is freer in its use of the source. As I will demonstrate, medieval translators had considerably more freedom than modern translators to change the works they were translating. This dissertation will also illustrate the importance of the source to the translator. Even with obvious divergence from the

source, a medieval author will still reference the authority of the original to add legitimacy to the newer version.

The popularity of Arthurian romance in the Middle Ages spread tales of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table across Europe, and they were translated into the region's many languages. Arthurian romance became popular first in France and then in other literary traditions. Thus we find examples in Latin, Old French, Middle Dutch, Middle High German, Norwegian/Icelandic, Anglo-Norman, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, and Middle English. This dissertation will study some French Arthurian romances that were translated into English. In chapter one, I compare the English verse *Of Arthour and Of Merlin* and the English *Prose Merlin* to their source, the French prose *Merlin*. This chapter will introduce and exemplify some of the primary differences between an adaptation and a translation. Chapter two is a comparison of the English *Ywain and Gawain* with Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yvain*). The chapter explains that *Ywain and Gawain* includes elements of adaptation and translation. Chapter Three examines the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* in relation to *La Mort Le Roi Artu*. Here, I will demonstrate that the stanzaic *Morte* is an adaptation of its source, yet the story bears distinct similarities in terms of narrative progression. Chapters Four and Five are studies of two tales from Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. Chapter four compares *La Queste del Saint Graal* to Malory's *The Tale of the Sankgreal* (Tale Six). The final chapter concerns the relationship of Malory's *The Most Piteous Tale of King Arthur's Death Sanz Guerdon* (Tale Eight) to the English stanzaic *Morte Arthur* and the French *La Mort Le Roi Artu*.

These examples of the variety in translation perform two significant functions. First, medieval authors were proficient translators. They fully understood their sources and the language of their sources. Medieval translators translated and adapted according to their own wishes and aspirations for their version. English translators recognized that since even many members of the

English upper classes could no longer read or understand spoken French, there was an audience for English translations of Old French romances and sought to provide for this audience. Second, Arthurian romances, although regarded as fiction, were associated and celebrated as a national legend. Thus, the English authors perceived the importance in reaffirming the Arthurian legend, not only as part of country's literary heritage, but also to enhance the stature of English as a literary language.

As this dissertation will demonstrate, medieval writers made less of a distinction between a translation and a work of literature. Moreover, it is the purview of this study to gain a better appreciation of how and to what extent medieval writers used sources. By taking a selection of romances that share a common root, i.e. the two English versions of the French Prose *Merlin* or Malory's version of the *Mort Artu* in comparison to the stanzaic *Morte*, we may increase our understanding of medieval conceptions of translation.

Chapter 1

The *Prose Merlin* and *Of Arthour and of Merlin*: A Translation and an Adaptation

The issues concerning the translation of literature in the Middle Ages often present the same problems for modern translators and translation theorists. Translators cannot avoid changing the original since they must attempt to render the incomprehensible for a particular readership into something understandable. By implication, therefore, the translator becomes, to paraphrase Lawrence Venuti, the perpetrator of a violent act on the original.[3] Although Venuti's language suggests the destructive potential of translation, the process of translating a source represents an attitude to translation and an emergence of the issue concerning the extent to which the translator exerts control over the original material. By means of the terms "translation" and "adaptation" we are able to qualify the extent of control. The English *Prose Merlin,* written in the mid fifteenth century, demonstrates a close connection to its source and can be viewed as a translation.[4] That is to say, there is a high degree of linguistic and thematic equivalence when compared to its source, the French Vulgate *Merlin* (*VM*).[5] The thirteenth-century *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, however, can be

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[3]Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation, (*New York: Routledge, 2008), 18. In this study concerning the role of the translator, Venuti argues that violence "resides in the very purpose and activity of translation." He proceeds to qualify the statement by suggesting translation is "the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target language reader." Although Venuti's comments concern modern translation, it is without question that a text must be broken apart linguistically in order for it to be rebuilt. The manner in which the process takes place would be the same in the Middle Ages.

[4] Citations to the English *Prose Merlin* will be to *Prose Merlin*, ed. John Conlee (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998). This edition will also serve as the primary source for all citation of the *Prose Merlin*. Further references will be in parentheses and use the abbreviation, the *PrM*.

[5] The Vulgate Cycle was a series of five French romances that focus on the story of Lancelot and the Grail. The term "vulgate" refers to the language of the text that it was written in the vernacular as opposed to Latin, the lingua franca of the period. Citations to the *VM* are from *The Vulgate version of the Arthurian romances vol. 2*, ed. H. Oskar Sommer (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1908). I have included the modern English translation with each quotation of the French. The modern English translations are by Rupert T. Pickens in

considered an adaptation of the same source since it varies in both form and content from the Vulgate.[6] In the case of *A&M*, the text displays an approach to translation where the author adapts his source by creating a new tone and narrative style. The authors of the English and French works discussed in this chapter are all anonymous.

A concern for scholars of medieval literature is the definition of translation. The contention arises from the fact that the contemporary understanding of translation may not correlate with that of the medieval period. Ivana Djordević defines the issue concerning early translation theory when she states:

> The attitude was that, biblical translation aside, in the Middle Ages there was no translation as we know it: either because medieval writers had no notion of what translation was, and thus produced all sorts of more or less free adaptations in the belief that they were actually translating, or because they did share our equivalence-based concept of translation but lacked the intellectual equipment necessary for its practical application.[7]

I agree with Djordević in her view that theorists have historically not taken into account the idea of dynamic versus formal equivalence; yet in light of the *PrM*, we have evidence of an attempt at formal equivalence. More importantly, an examination of *A&M* and the *PrM* indicates the differences between adaptations and translations. Djordević suggests the differences with her concepts of "free" adaptation and "equivalent" translation. These distinctions are relevant for a discussion of the *PrM* and *A&M* since they identify the relationship between source and translation. A translation is considered a reflection of the source whereas an adaptation is freer to change the source as the writer wishes. The *PrM* is even more conspicuous since equivalence between source

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Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post Vulgate in Translation, vol. 1 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).

[6] All citations to this text will be from *Of Arthour and of Merlin,* ed. O.D. Macrae-Gibson, 2 vols, Early English Text Society o.s. 268, 279 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973-1979). I will henceforth refer to *Of Arthour and of Merlin* as *A&M.* The cited text is the Auchinleck MS (National Library of Scotland, Advocates' 19.2.1) since it is the most complete of the extant copies.

[7] Djordević, "Mapping Medieval Translation" in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation,* ed. Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 9.

and version was not common in the Middle Ages. Instead, we find a predominance of "free" adaptations that account for the assumption that translation was not a common literary mode.

As a means to approach the *PrM* and *A&M*, I will contextualize them in terms of their literary milieu and then determine facets of the texts that indicate practices of translation and adaptation. The English versions of the *VM* are part of a legacy of Arthurian Romance that bridge linguistic, cultural and historical boundaries. By situating them in relation to the wider spectrum of source material as well as to other versions, we are more informed of their inheritance from and contribution to the genre of Arthurian Romance. From there, it is pertinent to identify and assess examples from both source and version that illustrate the similarities and differences in narrative technique between the *PrM* and *A&M*.

Despite their affiliation to the broader sphere of Arthurian Romance, the English versions exist as singular texts and ignore the cyclical, interlaced coherence of the Vulgate Cycle. The *PrM* and *A&M* are important for the study of translation in the Middle Ages since they represent the repeated selection of a single text for translation, independent from the other Vulgate romances. The relationship between the translations and their source will provide insight into the treatment of source and varieties in translation. With this relationship in mind, the study of practice in translation between these works is relevant, not only for the understanding of the translations as literature in their own right, but also of medieval translation as a sophisticated process. They illustrate contemporary modes of translation and challenge the notion that, in the Middle Ages, all translation was adaptation.

O.D. Macrae-Gibson refers to *A&M* in the introduction to his edition as a "a version of that part of the 'Vulgate' French prose Arthurian cycle known as the *Merlin Ordinaire*, the French prose

Merlin, Lestoire de Merlin, or simply *Merlin*".[8] The text is therefore, in the words of its editor, a version of its source. By labeling it a version, Macrae-Gibson implies that our approach to the text must be one where we view it as an adaptation rather than a translation. If the story is adapted, there should be substantive evidence that the author has altered elements of the narrative. In the case of *A&M*, the story is significantly altered although the text maintains substantial elements of the plot as well as its progression. Examples of changes that were made are eliminations of minor narrative threads, occasional changes in character names and a focus on battle scenes.[9] The result of the changes means that the author has, to a determinable degree, imposed his interpretation on the themes and structure of the original.

A separate, although nonetheless significant, difference in authorial choice is the format of *A&M*. The poem is written in Middle English four-stress couplets.[10] Verse was the traditional and accepted literary form at the time *A&M* was composed.[11] The choice to adapt it to the conventional domestic form demonstrates a deliberate effort by the *A&M* poet to appeal to an English audience. Consequently, the poet needed to adjust the language of the original in order to incorporate rhyme as well as meter. The two languages, Old French and Middle English, as well as their prevailing literary

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[8] Macrae-Gibson adds here that he considers the other two "versions" of the Vulgate *Merlin*, the *Prose Merlin* and that of Henry Lovelich, to be "closer and less interesting" than *A&M*. Introduction to *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, vol. II, EETS 279 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 2.

[9] Macrae-Gibson describes the style thus: "It is the main scenes of action which receive fullest treatment; chiefly battles and other violence, though feasting often attracts the poet." Macrae-Gibson adds that there are passages of "fluent, skilful but quite close translation." The impression provided by the editor is a translator that, as a whole, is selective in the degree of closeness to the original. Ibid, 9.

[10] Helen Cooper points out that *A&M* was the first of the Vulgate romances to be "adapted" into English and that the use of verse continued long afterwards with the *Lancelot of the Laik* poet choosing five-stress couplets at the end of the fifteenth century. "Romance after 1400" in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature,* ed. D. Wallace (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 692.

[11] Rosalind Field writes that tail rhyme, a combination of four-stress couplets followed by a single three-stress line, was, "the preferred form for much ME [Middle English] popular romance". "Romance" in *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, ed. Roger Ellis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 296-331.

forms, are not compatible.[12] The shift not only represents an appeal to the domestic audience and conformity to the literary norm but also a rejection of the Vulgate Cycle's prose tradition.

The author of *A&M* refers to his French source on several occasions in the form of "as ich finde in boke" although he clearly signals his desire to render the work in English:

> Auauntages þai hauen þare
> Freynsche and Latin euerywhare.
> Of Freynsche no Latin nil y tel more
> Ac on I[n]glisch ichil tel þerfore:
> Riȝt is þat I[n]glische vnderstond
> Þat was born in Inglond
> Freynsche vse þis gentil man
> Ac euerich Inglische Inglische can,
> mani noble ich haue yseiȝe
> þat no Freynsche couþe seye,
> Biginne ichil for her loue
> Bi Ihesus leue þat sitt aboue
> On Inglische tel mi tale. (lines 17-29)

In the preamble, the author acknowledges the literary dominance of French and Latin. He informs the audience that although some noble men use French, many others do not.[13] English, moreover, has the advantage of being understood by everyone born in England. He is, therefore, writing for those who do not understand French.[14] The author identifies English with England and, by extension, the language becomes synonymous with national identity.

With the author's intention for the adaptation established in his introductory stanzas, the verse form is a logical choice. In addition, the use of verse offers the opportunity to promote the

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[12] Burton Raffel explains this incompatibility by the fact that English is a "stress-timed language" whereas French is "syllable-timed". "Translating Medieval Poetry" in *The Craft of Translation,* ed. John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 50.

[13] John Burrow adds, "The author of *Of Arthour and of Merlin* reported that already in his time many nobles could speak no French; yet many fourteenth-century noblemen still favoured French, both in their reading and their talk." "The Languages of Medieval England" in *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English,* vol. I, ed. Roger Ellis (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.

[14] Thorlac Turville-Petre refers to this section of *A&M* as a reflection of the Auchinleck manuscript as a whole. He affirms that the manuscript was designed "for the household" and "If some of the family knew French or Latin, all understood English." *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity 1290 to 1340* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 136.

English language. In this case, the language as literature represents an effort to elevate English into the sphere dominated by, as stated in *A&M*, "Freynsche and Latin". These two languages, as the preeminent literary discourse, are indicative of social class and educational background. French in particular was a powerful influence for the English since it remained the primary courtly language until Chaucer began writing for the court in the late fourteenth century.[15] Thus, those without the status and education to know French were prevented from understanding literature that may have been of interest. The author of *A&M* recognizes this disparity and attempts to fill part of the literary and cultural void and simultaneously assert English as a literary medium.[16]

The later English *PrM*, on the other hand, demonstrates a different style. Written in the fifteenth century not long before Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, the text offers an example of comparative equivalence in medieval translation. Equivalence, often equated with fidelity to the original, represents a practice in which the translator seeks to replicate the source. As John Conlee states, "[T]he Middle English *Prose Merlin* offers a straight-forward and fairly accurate translation into English of a single source, the *Merlin* section of the Old French Vulgate Cycle".[17] The desire to closely reproduce a text, albeit in a different language, highlights an aesthetic in the practice of translation. In this case, the aesthetic is a value placed on the original and an appreciation of its inherent literary qualities. The modern translator believes the qualities of the original can be conveyed across languages and that the skill of the translator resides in the degree of equivalence to the original. The *PrM* demonstrates that its author ascribed to the same set of principles.

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[15] Trapp, Gray and Boffey attest: "Throughout the Middle Ages, French taste in literature and the arts prevailed, especially in southern English noble and royal circles." *Medieval English Literature*. 2nd edition, ed. J.B. Trapp, D. Gray and J. Boffey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), xii.

[16] Rosalind Field notes with regard to the Auchinleck manuscript that it is "unique amongst the several manuscript compilations of the period in that it is entirely in English and it is this, as much as the nature of the contents, which marks it as a significant witness to the growing acceptability of English as a literary language." *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, 303.

[17] Introduction to the *Prose Merlin* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), 1.

The *PrM* is, according to Conlee, "first and foremost, the history of Merlin".[18] *A&M*, however, as implied in the title, shifts the focus away from Merlin and reorients the focus toward Arthur. The *PrM,* believed to have been written near the middle of the fifteenth century, is, on the other hand, a tribute to its French source in the limited authorial intervention between the *PrM* and the Vulgate *Merlin*. Although the author of the *PrM* makes no explicit claim as to his motivation, it is clear that the form and content of the source takes precedence over the translator's capacity to make changes to the original. The *PrM* stands alone with respect to English prose versions of the Vulgate Cycle. Unlike Malory's *Morte Darthur*, which is a collection of Arthurian texts in prose, the *PrM* does not have prose translations to join it and form an "English Vulgate Cycle". Indeed, with the rise of the House of Lancaster as the dominant political power, the stage was set for the transference of French texts into English.[19] The mid-fifteenth century was characterized by an increased interest in the development of English literature and we see examples such as the translations of Melusine and Caxtons' translations of the Charlemagne romances that would follow the *PrM*. Consequently, the *PrM* becomes part of a tradition that emphasizes English as the literary medium yet draws on source material from the French. It conforms to the growing practice of translation from French to English yet exists independent of the Vulgate texts available to readers of French in England at this time.[20]

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Susan Crane explains, "[T]he reigns of Edward II and Richard II (1327-99) see both a resurgence of mainland French influence in English Literature and the beginning of a decline in the role of insular French; under the Lancastrians Henry IV and Henry V a decisive shift away from using French in England takes place" and "Most visible in the careers of John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer, the turn to writing in English anticipates a broader shift under the Lancastrians that is related to the heightened contact and competition with France of the Hundred Years War." "Anglo-Norman Cultures in England" in *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. Wallace, 52.

[20] Since *PrM* was written shortly before Malory's *Morte Darthur* and not long after the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, some French Vulgate romances were evidently accessible for translation in England.

It is likely the existence of the *PrM* as an individual text is due to the English audience's

familiarity with the Merlin story. The *PrM*, just as with *A&M*, was born from the chronicle tradition

originating with Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136). This text, a quasi-

history of Britain, whose 215 extant manuscripts are testament to its popularity also served to inspire

a literary genre in the form of Arthurian Romance.[21] Furthermore, the story of Merlin features as a

prominent element in Geoffrey's work, and Merlin's prophecies were considered relevant until the

end of the Middle Ages.[22] The *PrM*, as an episode of the Vulgate Cycle in English prose, aligns itself

with the chronicle tradition and resonates with the English conception of the legend.[23]

In addition to the *PrM* and *A&M*, it is important to note a less well-known version of the

Vulgate *Merlin* by Henry Lovelich, a skinner of London. The text, a metrical version of the Vulgate

Merlin composed circa 1430 in conjunction with Lovelich's verse translation of the *Estoire del Saint*

Graal, is not considered to be a "good" translation of the French and, like the *PrM*, has not received

much scholarly attention.[24] Lovelich's Merlin, like the *PrM,* follows the content of the Vulgate

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[21] Helen Cooper informs us, "[T]he supposedly factual siege of Troy, Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-history of Arthur and the historical figure of Charlemagne between them give rise to a high proportion of all medieval romance." *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature,* ed. Wallace, 713**.** Julia Crick confirms in her catalogue of the *Historia* manuscripts that "the list of 187 manuscripts of the *Historia* published by Acton Griscom in 1929 had grown by 1985 to 215 (a total which still stands despite additions and deletions)." *Historia Regum Brittanniae III* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), vii.

[22] W. R. J. Barron states: "Numerous chronicles in verse and prose link past and present in an unbroken continuum, using Merlin's prophecies to imply a national destiny, projecting Arthur as the archetypal ancestor, embodiment of strong rule, a model for contemporary kings and a measure of their achievement." Introduction to *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature,* rvsd., ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), xiv.

[23] Catherine Batt and Rosalind Field affirm, "From the fourteenth century onwards French Romance is re-interpreted for an English audience for whom Arthurian material is inescapably historic and iconic." "The Romance Tradition" in *The Arthur of the English,* rvsd., ed. W.R.J. Barron, 69. Merlin and Arthur were, largely thanks to Geoffrey's work, cultural and quasi-historical "icons" and since the Vulgate Cycle centers itself on Lancelot and the Grail, it is logical that the Merlin section of the cycle was specifically selected for translation.

[24] Rosalind Field states, with regard to Lovelich: "his lengthy and often clumsy works have not received much attention, but do offer a recognizable voice and a civic context for an ambitious attempt to translate earlier

Merlin closely. Both texts are incomplete: Lovelich's version ends after the battle with Claudas and the *PrM* ends with Gawain's return to Arthur's court after the encounter with the imprisoned Merlin.[25] Despite these similarities, Lovelich's version is more representative of the narrative trend at the time in its versified, performance-oriented form. Consequently, the *PrM* becomes a pioneering text in its prose and anticipates the popularity of the prose romances that appear in the second half of the century.

Although the Vulgate *Merlin* is the second installment in the cycle, it is believed to have been composed last.[26] It provides the background for the stories in the Prose *Lancelot*, the *Queste del Saint Graal* and *La Mort Le Roi Artu*.[27] The events of these three prose romances thus influence the events in the *VM*. The *VM* contextualizes the initial trilogy and develops narrative elements from the earlier texts.[28]

Merlin is mentioned only briefly in the Prose *Lancelot*, the *Queste* and the *Mort Artu* yet his description in the *Queste* as the creator of the Round Table positions him as a pivotal factor within the cycle. His contribution to the Arthurian kingdom demanded a back story, amply provided by the author of the *VM*. A significant theme replicated by the author is the conflicting parentage in his

works into the language and milieu of fifteenth-century England." "Romance" in *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English,* ed. Roger Ellis, vol. I, (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 308.

[25] Karen Hodder explains, "Both English Romances are incomplete, lacking leaves at the ends of their respective manuscripts." Hodder is not specific in the number of leaves that are missing. Karen Hodder et al., "Dynastic Romance" in *The Arthur of the English*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 80.

[26] Rupert Pickens states: "[A]lthough the Merlin proper, in its independent form, was undoubtedly the earliest of the components of the Vulgate Cycle to be composed, the Vulgate *Merlin* as a whole was perhaps the latest." "Lancelot with and without the Grail" in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature,* ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 284.

[27] The *Estoire del Saint Graal*, like the *VM*, was written after the Vulgate *Lancelot*, *Queste* and *Mort Artu*. See *The Arthur of the French*, ed. Burgess and Pratt, 277.

[28] Norris J. Lacy writes, "Though written later, these two [*Estoire del Saint Graal* and the *VM*] stand before the three others in terms of their chronological schema, and they thus provide a retrospective introduction to the cycle." *The Lancelot-Grail Reader* (New York: Garland, 2000), x.

virtuous mother and demonic father.[29] His function and narrative impact, therefore, have a direct influence on his interpretation in the ensuing chapters of the cycle. In this respect, the *VM* has a seminal significance within the cycle as the background for the creation of the Arthurian world and the interplay of virtue and vice that will lead to its downfall.

The French prose text establishes a link between Arthur and Merlin when Merlin's birth resembles the birth of Arthur in the deceptive nature of his conception. Merlin's mother unwittingly has intercourse with a devil, and Merlin arranges for Igerne to unwittingly have intercourse with Uther by having Uther assume the appearance of the duke of Tintagel. In this guise, Uther sates his lust for Igerne, and she unwittingly conceives a son out of wedlock. Again, an echo of the demonic deception leading to Merlin's birth, Arthur's story is strikingly similar to that of Merlin and his accession to the throne is contingent upon Merlin's intercession. After Arthur's birth, Merlin disappears from the court.[30] His return starts at the beginning of the continuation when Arthur's reign is threatened by the barons. The *VM* then proceeds to detail how Merlin engineers Arthur's accession to the throne.

The manner in which Arthur emerges from obscurity and assumes the title of king is central to the *VM* and the theme features as prominently in *A&M* as we might expect in the *PrM*. He is raised in ignorance of his heritage. As orchestrated by Merlin, the enchantment over the sword that serves as the symbolic inheritance of the kingdom holds until Arthur draws the sword and proves his right to the throne. Naturally, the right to the inheritance is contested, and Arthur's claim requires blood to be shed on the battlefield. The *VM* necessarily includes a great deal of political intrigue in this episode since Arthur is, by this account, a bastard child.

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[29] Merlin's father in Geoffrey of Monmouth was an incubus; he first became a devil in Robert de Boron's verse *Merlin*.

[30] In Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, Merlin remains at court with Utherpendragon. Merlin's departure at this juncture is the point at which the author of the *VM* no longer follows Robert's template.

The analogous elements between events in the first three texts of the cycle to be composed (the Prose *Lancelot*, the *Queste* and the *Mort Artu*) and the *VM* extend beyond the characters of Arthur and Merlin. The French text establishes the character of Mordred who, like Arthur and Merlin, is born due to a case of mistaken identity when King Lot's wife believes Arthur to be her husband when Arthur surreptitiously gets into bed with her.[31] Merlin is not involved with the birth of Mordred. Instead, Mordred features as a latent narrative element whose function begins retrospectively in the *VM* and resurfaces significantly in *La Mort Le Roi Artu* as the primary agent of his father's demise.[32]

The background of the characters Merlin, Arthur and Mordred as they relate to the Vulgate Cycle occurs in the *VM*. Their histories are integral to the cycle as a whole and their comparable introductions to the Cycle, as depicted in the *VM,* gives greater depth and context for the events that occur in the Vulgate *Lancelot*, *La Queste del Saint Graal* and *La Mort Le Roi Artu*. It serves as a point of interest, therefore, that we have several versions of this part of the French translated into Middle English independent of the other episodes.

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[31] "& artus qui bien sestoit prins garde que li rois sen estoit ales se leua & sen ala au lit de la dame & se coucha auoec lui. & quant il fu couchies si se tourna & retourna que autre cose nen osa faire. & il auint chose que la dame sesueilla & se tourna deuers lui comme feme endormie si quida uraiement que ce fust ses sires si lenbracha. & quant cil voit quele la enbrachie si pense bien quele ne se prendoit garde de lui. si lenbracha & iut o lui tout plainement si li fist la dame moult grant ioie & bien li fist. car ele quida que ce fust ses sires. & en tel maniere fu mordres engendres." (*VM*, 129)
[And Arthur who had noticed that the king had gone away, got up and went to the lady's bed and lay down with her. And after he had got in bed with her, he turned his back to her, for he did not dare do anything else. And it so happened that the lady awoke and, still half asleep, turned toward him, for she truly thought that he was her husband, and she put her arms around him. When Arthur saw that she had embraced him, he understood that she had not noticed who he was, so he put his arms around her and lay with her fully, and the lady gave him much pleasure, and she did it willingly, for she thought that he was her husband. And this is how Mordred was conceived.] *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, vol. I, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1993), 237. In the *VM*, King Lot's wife is Arthur's half-sister as the daughter of his mother, Ygerne and the Duke of Cornwall.

[32] It is important to note that the author of the *VM* took the story of Mordred's birth and the incestuous nature of his conception from the Vulgate *Lancelot*. In *La Mort Le Roi Artu*, Arthur announces that Mordred is his son and yet does not reveal the identity of his mother.

A&M demonstrates some specific practices in adaptation as a facet of the translation process. As an adaptation, the story preserves narrative elements of its source although there are several factors that define the version as an adaptation. One of the significant narrative changes made by the author of *A&M* is the process of *compression.*[33] The reduction of content, or *compression*, is an authorial intervention that involves the selection of source material that the translator considers pertinent. In the case of *A&M*, the compression serves two main purposes. The first is to streamline the narrative and thereby reduce superfluous elements. The second is to establish focus in the storyline. The focus highlights specific narrative content that the translator wishes to present. In this manner, there is both a process of exclusion and inclusion. The streamlining or omissions remove content whereas the commonalities between source and translation indicate that the author has chosen to include elements from the source.

One important example of compression is the battle between Ulfin and Bretel and the seven knights. The journey that Ulfin and Bretel take to Little Brittany, or *petite bertaigne,* is of prime importance since they are to enlist the help of Kings Ban and Bors.[34] The fealty won by these knights is significant for the cycle for their allegiance is great support for Arthur's claim to the throne. The background and reasoning for Ulfin and Bretel's journey in the *VM* is described thus:

> Et dautre part en la petite bertaigne a ii rois qui sont frere & ont a feme ii serors germaines cil doi roy aront enfans & seront cil boin cheualier qui en nule terre ne trouera on millors li aisnes des ij freres qui roy sont a non li rois bans de benoyc & et li autres anon behors de gaunes (*VM,* 97)

> Across the water in Little Brittany are two kings who are brothers, and their wives are sisters. Those two kings will have sons, and they will be good knights, no one could find

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[33] Macrae-Gibson uses this term in relation to the author's practice of reducing the length of the source material and the modification of original content.

[34] "Et li rois artus enuois querre le roi ban de benoic & son frere le roy bohort de gaunes par ulfin & par bretel. & lor manda si chier com il auoient samor & si uolient iamais ester bien de lui quil veneissent a lui a logres en grant bertaigne a la tous sains." (*VM,* 98)
[And King Arthur sent Ulfin and Bretel for King Ban of Benoic and his brother King Bors of Gaunes, and he bade them, if they held his love dear and wanted to be his friend forever, come to him in Logres in Great Britain on All Saints' Day. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 221)]

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better anywhere. The elder of the brothers who are kings is called King Ban of Benoic, and the other's name is Bors of Gaunes. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 220)

In this extract, the narrator informs the reader of the significance of the king's sons as future members of Arthur's court. By contrast, *A&M* simplifies and condenses the reasoning for the journey to Brittany:

> Mi lord Vter Pendragon
> Wan vnder him the king Ban
> And his broþer Bohort also
> No better bodis no mowe go
> Þai were sworn to Vter mi lord,
> To hem ich rede sende word
> To lesse Breteine, for it is nede,
> Þat Vter pendragon is dede. (lines 3413-3420)

The result is a variation in focus for the journey. In *A&M*, the reason is clearly established that Ulfin and Bretel must leave in order to give the news that Uther Pendragon has died and the historical allegiance between the two kings and Arthur's father is justification for their fealty. There is no mention of the children who will become "good knights". The *VM*, on the other hand, displays a broader significance. The revelation of the two sons has deeper implications for the Vulgate Cycle and the addition of this detail reflects the cyclical nature of the story. The example is a clear illustration of the independence of *A&M* since the significance of the two sons has no bearing within the boundaries of the English translation.

Also relevant to the background presented by Merlin in the *VM*, the episode details some of the history concerning the conflict between Claudas and the two kings. The scene is effectively set, therefore, so that the reader is aware of the ongoing conflict that Ulfin and Bretel are about to enter. Once the situation is established, they arrive in Trebes and encounter their first battle at the hands of

Claudas's seven knights. The scene is accompanied with extensive detail as Ulfin and Bretel display

their martial prowess.[35]

A&M, however, omits the background concerning Claudas and we find another example of

its independence as a romance. The narrative skips immediately between Merlin's request for Ulfin

and Bretel to bear the message and the encounter with the seven knights. The transition between the

motivation for the journey and the conflict with the seven knights is indicative of a style in narrative

flow. The progression is easier to follow and the storyline segues swiftly yet smoothly into action.

The introduction to the battle between Ulfin and Bretel and the knights serves as a *mise en scene* in

itself:

> And sir Vlfin and sir Bretel
> Wele hem atired sikerliche
> and went forþ wel hastiliche.
> Þo þai com þe se biȝounde
> A gret wildernisse þai founde
> Bitven Fraunce & Breteyne,
> Þai seiȝe mani mounteyn & pleine,
> Þo þai seiȝe a litel hem aboue
> Seuen kniȝtes y-armed come
> Of wiche to her steden smiten
> And to hemward gun priken. (lines 3440-3450)

No sooner do Ulfin and Bretel ready themselves for the expedition, they meet the seven knights who

wish to stab them and knock them off their steeds. The impetus to action is reflected in the greater

detail concerning the battle.

The *VM* describes the battle extensively and includes a preliminary exchange between the

two sides. In this exchange, the background concerning Claudas is explained as well as the fact that

the seven not only wish to defeat Ulfin and Bretel, they also intend to rob them of their horses and

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[35] The *VM* explains that Arthur's two knights fight very bravely and kill a few of the seven and force the rest to flee. (*VM*, 99-100)

arms.[36] The brief discussion and the background to the conflict reiterate the distinction of *good* and

bad between the knights of Arthur and those of Claudas respectively. The dialogue is representative

of the narrative style in which each action requires background as reasoning and justification. We

see, therefore, a continual pattern of detailed explanation followed by action in the *VM*.

  A&M, by contrast, is different in its narrative approach since the degree of detail in the

build-up to action is greatly reduced and compressed. As in the instance explained concerning the

seven knights in the *VM*, the explanation and insight into the intentions of the robber knights are not

included.[37] Instead, Bretel immediately engages one of the seven in combat.

> Bretel tok his launce and scheld,
> Þat o kniȝt sone he mett
> & wiþ his scharp launce him gret
> He bar him þurth þe þrote anon
> Þat ded he fel, ded so ston. (lines 3452-3456)

Despite the abrupt transition between first encounter and action between the knights in comparison

to the Vulgate *Merlin*, the description of the battle is quite similar. In the passage above, we see

Bretel pierce his foe through the neck, and the enemy knight is knocked from his horse. In the *VM*,

Bretel pierces him through the left shoulder, and he is knocked unconscious from his horse.[38]

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[36] "Quant li vij cheualier virent les ij messages si dist li vns al autre vees quels ij cheuaus cil doi cheuauchent moult serons maluais se nous lor laisons ensi mener & si ne me samble mie fait li vns quil soient de cest pais car il ne portent mie les armes teles con fait en cest roialme."(*VM*, 99)
[When the seven knights saw the two messengers, they said to one another, "Look at those two horses they are riding! We would be bad indeed if we let them take them away!" "It doesn't seem to me," said one, "that they are from this country, for they are not wearing armor like what is made in this kingdom." (*Lancelot-Grail*, 222)]

[37] In fact, the allegiance that the seven knights hold with Claudas and the ongoing conflict with Ban and Bors is not revealed in *AM* until after the battle is concluded (lines 3491-3494) "þis ich kniȝtes four & þre, Wiþ Claudas hadde ybe, Wiþ Claudas hadde werred oȝan þe king Bohort & þe king Ban;".

[38] "[B]retel fiert lui a la rauine del cheual si grant colp quil li met parmi la senestre espaule le fer del glaiue si que li tronchones en parut dautre part plus dune toise & il lenpaint si durement quille porte du cheual a terre tout enferre." (*VM*, 99-100)

[Bretel spurred his horse forward and dealt him such a great blow that he drove the iron tip of his lance right through his left shoulder, so that the broken pieces of his shield came out the other side more than a yard, and

Interestingly, in the ensuing combats, Bretel does pierce a knight through the throat.[39] The fact that this detail is reproduced, albeit in a different instance, demonstrates the practice of compression. In this case, the author of *A&M* relocates the detail and the more visceral "throat-piercing" image adds significance to the initial combat.

We see a second detail reproduced as it relates to Ulfin. In the *VM*, Ulfin's first combat involves him striking his enemy off the horse by piercing him through the hauberk and the sword emerging between the shoulder blades.[40] In *A&M*, Ulfin also strikes his foe off the horse yet the fatal blow involves the knight's neck breaking upon impact:

> Þe oþer oȝain Vlfin brac his spere
> Ac he no miȝt Vlfin dere.
> Vlfin him ȝaue a din[t] of wo
> Þurthout þe membre & sadel also,
> Stede & kniȝt ouerþrewe anon;
> Þe kniȝt brast his nek-bon,
> Vlfines launce tobrac. (lines 3469-3475)

This detail of the neck breaking also occurs in the *VM*.[41] The difference between the texts is that, as in the case of Bretel, the breaking of the neck happens when three of the seven have already been defeated. Consequently, the manner in which the author of *A&M* presents the specifics in description is similar to his practice of maintaining narrative flow.

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he hit him so hard that bore him from his horse to the ground impaled on his lance, and the horse fainted from the pain. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 222)]

[39] Macrae-Gibson refers to this attack as an "unusual thrust" which lends weight to the argument that the author of *AM* is using specific details from his source.

[40] "[U]lfins fiert le sien que parmi lauberc li fist passer le fer del glaiue parmie lespaule doutre en outre & labat ala terre du cheual tanat comme hanste li dure." (*VM,* 100)

[Ulfin hit his man so that the tip of his lance went through his hauberk and come out the other side between his shoulder blades; he brought him down to the ground from his horse with the lance still in him. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 222)]

[41] "[U]lfins encontre le sien si durement quil porte a terre cheualier & cheual tout en j mont & al chaioir quil fist brisa le col." (*VM*, 100)
[Ulfin came against his man so hard that he brought both the rider and his horse down in one heap; the rider broke his neck in the fall. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 222)]

The results of compression show a trend in the selection of details that are reproduced. Some instances of background material such as the historical link between Arthur, Ban and Bors are entirely omitted and again, are evidence of separation from the source and the assertion of *A&M* as an independent romance. Elsewhere, details such as the reasoning for the journey to Brittany are streamlined into a single, simplified explanation.

Furthermore, the transitions between explanation and description of action follow a similar pattern. Where we receive extensive insight into the situation into which Ulfin and Bretel will enter in the *VM*, *A&M* dispenses with such detail and directs the narrative flow into immediate action. The action, in the form of the battle between Ulfin and Bretel and the seven so-called robber knights, is similar in some specifics, yet other details are left out. Extraneous elements such as the manner in which the knight is struck off the horse in the French are not reproduced in the English. The fact that Bretel's blow hits him so strongly that the lance pierces the neck is, however, a detail both faithfully and distinctively translated. The same is true of Ulfin when his lance penetrates the hauberk, knocking the knight off the horse and causing his neck to break upon contact with the ground. The significant factor is the order in which the detail occurs. By placing these details in the first combat for both knights, the narrative asserts their prowess and establishes the point of the battle. The other battles become akin to repetition. Consequently, we see how the author of *A&M* filters his source to reflect a more concise narrative approach.

In a manner similar to the battle between Ulfin, Bretel and the seven robber knights, the battle between Yder and Soriondes presents a distinct narrative rearrangement. In this case, the difference between the source and translation is the order of the scenes. As opposed to the practice of compression, the nature of this adaptive process concerns the sequence in which the scenes occur instead of the distinction between inclusion and exclusion of details as seen in the battle with the seven knights. In this episode, Yder is battling the Saxons and we first learn of the forthcoming

conflict in the *VM* when he encounters Soriondes's rearguard. In this combined action with King Urien's sons, Soriondes is caught in a vice.[42] The narrative is a precursor to the forthcoming conflict between Yder and Soriondes since, at this juncture, the story passes to Merlin's message to Gawain appealing for aid in the battles against the Saxons.

Once the detail concerning the letter has been explained, the story returns to Yder in a fashion that highlights the ongoing action: "Mais atant se taist ore li contes des senses qui chevauchent vers le pont diane si retourne a parler du roy yder qui se combat moult durement" (*VM*, 192, 24-27). ["But now the story falls silent about the Saxons who were riding toward the Diana bridge and begins speaking again about King Yder, who was fighting very hard." (*Lancelot-Grail*, 272)]. The line is representative of many other transitional sentences that move the action between characters.[43] In this example, the language reveals a narrative style that references prior events and guides the reader to understand that events are occurring simultaneously. This type of narrative technique is common in French romance of the period and enables a story to follow concurrent storylines in a non-linear fashion. The style, also known as *entrelacement* or 'interlace', is particularly relevant in the Arthurian romances such as the *Merlin*, since the tradition often includes the stories of a large host of characters.

A&M dispenses with this narrative style in favor of a more linear approach. In the case of Yder's battle with Soriondes, Yder encounters the rearguard and begins to fight with them.[44] Instead

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[42] "Dautre part se recombat li rois yders & fist tant quilen a atourne a discomfiture & nen fust ia piet escapes quant soriondes retourna arriere cele part a toute se grant ost." (*VM,* 191)
[Meanwhile, King Yder also attacked them, and he succeeded in putting twenty thousand of them to rout. None would have got away, but Soriondes came back around with his huge army. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 271)]

[43] Yder is mentioned in the letter in relation to the battle with the Saxons, yet the focus of the narrative is squarely on Gawain.

[44] The author of *A&M* includes the character of Morgalant (Margalant in the French) as the principle opponent for Yder in this battle. In the same way as the battles of Ulfin and Bretel against the seven knights, the author of *A&M* repeatedly uses a focus in the description of battles. Each combat has a one-on-one element that serves to concentrate the action.

of the transition to another character, such as Gawain, the author of *A&M* elects to remain with the

story and progress to the point at which Soriondes hears of the battle and assemble his men to fight

Yder:

> Þis herd Soriandes þe soudan,
> Of fourti þousand þe tventi he nam
> And sodanliche on our smot
> And alle hem slouȝ ner God it wot,
> Ac king Yder fram þe deþe
> Scaped wiþ a fewe vnneþe
> Wiþ wepeing and wiþ gret wailing,
> Ac he no hadde ascaped bi Heuen-king (lines 7767-7774)

In this extract we witness the conclusion of this particular battle. Soriondes with his superior force

succeeds in overcoming Yder and driving him off.[45] As evident in the example, the English version

describes the battle in very brief terms. The important information divulged includes the

overwhelming defeat of Yder and the detail that he barely escapes alive.

This reordering of narrative flow establishes continuity. By contrast, the French has a

tendency to 'layer' progression by overlapping the sequence of episodes. The simultaneous nature of

events is reflected in the use of *entrelacement* as a narrative technique. The author of *A&M*, by

contrast, favors a more consecutive presentation. Combined with the aforementioned technique of

compression, the English version affords a more direct and, principally, more focused rendition of

the *VM*.

At the next level of adaptation, *A&M* includes a consistent rearrangement in a series of

narrative elements. This is a development of the adaptive techniques of compression and

rearrangement, as indicated in the previous examples, since they are a repeated process spread over a

substantial portion of the story. In the *VM*, we see a pattern where many young squires, soon to

become integral members of the Round Table, choose to become knights and set out to achieve their

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[45] In an interesting common detail between the two texts, the author of *A&M* is specific in the correlation of the size of force: an army of forty thousand divided into two.

goal. These squires include Galescin, Gawain and his brothers, Sagremor, Yvain, Kay and Kehedin. Interspersed between these repeated sequences of resolve and then departure, the *VM* includes other events and episodes. The separation in the detail as to what happens between the decision to leave and the description of their journey is further evidence of the practice of narrative interlace. Instead, *A&M* presents the resolve and departure as consecutive elements. As such, the author of *A&M* demonstrates a sustained and concerted effort to streamline the original material.[46] By way of illustration, I will use the three examples of (1) Galescin, (2) Gawain and his brothers and (3) Yvain.

The first resolve occurs in the *VM* with Galescin. In this instance, the text states: "Quant Galescin enetent les dis de sa mere si dist que ia bien ne voldra a cels qui contra le roy artu seront. ne ia fait il ne me laist diex morir deuant che quil mait fait cheualier" (*VM*, 127-128) [When Galescalain heard his mother's words, he said that he bore no good will toward any who were against King Arthur. "And may God never let me die," he said, "before King Arthur has made me a knight."] (*Lancelot-Grail,* 236). The decision to seek Arthur and either die or become his knight is then concluded with a transitional element: "Mais atant se taist ore li contes a parler de lui chi endroit si vous dirons des rois qui sont remes a sorhaut" (*VM* 128). [But now the story falls silent about him right here, and we will tell you about the kings who stayed behind at Sorhaut. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 237)] The narrative focus passes to the three kings and ceases to provide further information as to the resolve of Galescin.

At this point, the story shifts to King Lot's sons: Gawain and his brothers, Agravain, Guerrehet and Gaheriet. Again, the *VM* establishes the motivation for the young squires to seek knighthood at Arthur's court: "quant gauains lentent si dist comme debonaires bele mere ore ne vous

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[46] With direct reference to authorial intention concerning the resolve and expedition, Macrae-Gibson posits "In these rearrangements, as in his omissions, the poet is plainly seeking – and with skill and success – a coherent and straightforward narrative. It is his constant wish." Introduction to *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, vol. II, 15. I agree with Macrae-Gibson that the author of *AM* has consciously changed the narrative style of the original. I would add to Macrae-Gibson's point that through the combination of reduction and compression, the author has been selective in his use of the source. Not simply streamlining the narrative progression but clearly creating a more focused storyline.

chaut que par la foi que ie vous doi ie naurai iamias espee chainte ne hiaume lachiet en teste dusques a tant que li rois artus le me chaigne" (*VM,* 130) [And when Gawainet had heard it, he said very courteously, "Dear mother, now don't you worry. By the faith I owe you, I will never wear a sword at my waist or a helmet laced on my head before King Arthur girds me with arms." (*Lancelot-Grail*, 238)] Gawain's brothers follow in his stead, and again we see an almost exact reproduction of the transition: "Mais or se taist j poi li contes daus & de lor mere si vos dirons des rois qui estoient remes a sorhaut" (*VM*, 131) [But here the story falls silent for a while about them and their mother, and we will tell you about the kings who had stayed behind at Sorhaut. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 238)]

Interestingly, the details pertaining to the journeys of Galescin, Gawain and his brothers are combined. Galescin sends a message to Gawain concerning the need to help Arthur. Fortuitously, the two squires had already started on the same quest, and they meet in Orkney:

> Quant galescins loi si ne fu onques mais si lies. Si li cort les bras tendus & li fist ausi grant ioie comme se tous li mondes fust siens & et dist por autre cose ni lauoit il mande. Si li conta mot a mot comment sa mere li corages li estoit venus par la parole sa mere. Et gauaines li raconte comment sa mere li auoit dit. Lors deuiserent quil moueroient dedens quinsaine. (*VM,* 134)

> [When Galescalain heard him, he had never been happier. He ran to him with open arms, and he showed him as much joy as if the whole world belonged to him. He said to him that he had sent for him for no other reason! And he told him word for word how his mother had encouraged him, and Gawainet told him in return what his own mother had said to him. And they made their plan to set out together within two weeks time. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 240)]

The squires set off together and the story details their journey and culminates with them arriving in Logres before it turns once more to Arthur and his support of King Leodegan.[47]

Yvain's decision to leave occurs much later in the story although the details of the choice are similar to those of Galescin and Gawain. In a comparable fashion, Yvain the Great speaks to his mother regarding his desire to be knighted by Arthur:

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[47] The squires are well received and they are no longer troubled by the Saxons. The end of the action signals the end of the journey (*VM,* 140).

Et il dist dame pour dieu merci ia tesmoigne tous li mondes & le cuer me dist quil [Arthur] est uostre freres & mes oncles & mi cousin sont ia ale en sat ere & moult seroie recreans se ie chi demoroie en lieu ou ie nule proece faire & se iou ne li aidoie sa terre a maintenir autre si comme mi cousin font. (*VM,* 167)

[And he said, "Lady, for God's sake, everyone can vouch for the fact that King Arthur is your brother and my uncle, and my heart tells me this is so. My cousins have already gone to his lands, and I would be very cowardly indeed if I stayed behind where I couldn't do anything worthwhile and help keep him in his lands as my cousins are doing." (*Lancelot-Grail,* 258)]

Although the focus of this thread is squarely on Yvain, the example above links his resolve to that of Gawain and his brothers. Since his cousins have already set out on the journey, Yvain's resolve demonstrates a chronological progression and an additional layer of narrative interlace. The sequence of discussion with the mother and decision to leave for Logres is repeated with similar characteristics. It occurs, however, as a result of prior events since the actions of Gawain and his brothers inspire Yvain to follow in their stead. With the resolve described, the tale of Yvain and his brother shifts to King Neutres.

The story returns to Yvain and his brother later after the details concerning Kings Neutres and Clarion, Dodinel the Wildman and Duke Escant. The two squires arrive in Arundel and, at this point, their narratives converge with the primary plot when they engage in battle with the Saxons at Bredigan. Yvain the Great and Yvain the Bastard are thrown into the web of storylines as their journey combines with that of Yder since they fight Soriondes' vanguard whilst Yder and his men attack the rearguard.

In this manner, the author of the *VM* weaves together seemingly disparate plot elements that occur at separate intervals. The text feeds the various plot skeins to the audience in a progressive yet non-linear fashion. As the examples above demonstrate, there is a practice of repetition of the sequence of events in the presentation of narrative in the *VM*. This style of presentation is representative of *entrelacement* at its most complex. The *VM* includes, as described above, multiple threads linked to one primary plotline. The story includes a veritable host of characters whose

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individual journeys converge and diverge at many instances. The three examples of Galescin,

Gawain and Ywain are but a few illustrations of this narrative technique.

In marked contrast to the *VM*, *A&M* dispenses with the disconnected arrangement of resolve

and journey with Galascin, Gawain and Yvain. The adventures of Galascin, as the first of these

instances, are representative of a sequential rendering of the decision to leave and the journey. The

romance recounts the discussion between Galathin and his mother as he states his intention to be

knighted by Arthur:

> Galathin swore wiþ wordes bold
> He nold neuer oȝain [him hold]
> And seyd he wold of him afong
> Helme & swerd and launce strong
> And of him be dubbed kniȝt (lines 4593-4597)

Where the *VM* changes the focus to the three kings at this stage in the story, *A&M* remains with

Galascin. The subsequent detail describes the message that Galascin sends to Gawain that they

should meet at Brocklond.[48] The significance of this arrangement is the sequential link between his

decision and departure to that of Gawain. The message serves as a transition between the decision of

Galascin and Gawain. Gawain receives the message and, after discussion with his mother, he

declares his intention to serve Arthur:

> Y bihote þe king of blis
> No schal y neuer armes afong
> Bot of king Arthours hond (*A&M*, lines 4638-4640)

Again, the consecutive flow of narrative continues into the detail about the expedition. The journey

that the squires take to Brocklond is both a linear and compressed version of the French. As I have

indicated concerning the *VM*, the journeys of Galathin and Gawain converge, although this takes

place after other events have been recounted. The detail of the meeting between Gawain and

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[48] The forest is known as *Broceliond* in the *VM*.

Galescin is the same in both cases. The difference, again, is the compression of detail and the order

of presentation:

> Þerafter sone bi Godes sond
> Galathin went to Brocklond,
> Oȝain him com Wawain þe fre
> Wiþ his gentil breþer þre
> & in her togider coming
> Þai maden ioie & gret kisseing. (lines 4651-4656)

A&M dispenses with the detail that the characters share about their mothers and, instead, the author

includes the joy of their meeting and proceeds to relate their combined wish to seek knighthood by

Arthur.

The version of Ywain's resolve and departure in *A&M* occurs, as in the *VM*, substantially

later in the story than for Galescin and Gawain. Ywain announces to Gawain's mother his intention

to go to Arthur. With her blessing, Ywain sets out with his brother, Ywain the bastard, towards

Arundel in Cornwall. The focus of the narrative then shifts to Soriondes before returning to Ywain

when the two forces meet:

> Now þe childer y spac of bifore,
> Ywain þe hende and Ywain bastard ybore
> And Ates an orped kniȝt
> Wiþ four hundred ȝong men wiȝt,
> Weren passed þe forest
> Toward Arundel souþe-west (lines 7779-7784)

The narrative flow may seem, on the surface, to transfer between characters in a similar way to the

French style of interlace. The storyline is, however, consecutive. Where the *VM* shifts the focus to

King Neutres and others, *A&M* remains focused on the events surrounding the conflict near Arundel.

The story segues smoothly back to Ywain as he encounters Soriondes' men four miles outside of

Arundel. We see, in this episode, a contained and cohesive order of resolve and journey. It is an

example of a character's introduction in the form of a resolve. The resolve establishes the motivation

and desire to join the primary plot and culminates in the intersection of the overarching narrative in

the journey to England. The effect is an arrangement of original elements in a condensed and sequential form.

Where there are several adaptive processes at work in *A&M*, the *PrM* presents less adaptation and more translation. As I have mentioned previously, modern views of translation debate the degree of fidelity to the original. With the *PrM* as the example of translation in this case, we can expect evidence of adherence to the narrative form and style of the source. Indeed, the prose form of the *PrM* is the first indication of fidelity. The PrM differs in three further ways: (1) the presentation of Merlin's background, (2) Arthur's accession and (3) the depiction of his character, with particular reference to the battles with King Rion. These examples illustrate not only adaptation in the *A&M* but also equivalence in the *PrM*.

The first, and possibly the most significant, difference between *A&M* and the *PrM* is the rearrangement of the birth of Merlin. The birth of Merlin is important, particularly when we remember that this component of the story features prominently in Robert de Boron's *Merlin*. In *A&M*, the story begins with the death of King Constance (Constantine), Uther Pendgragon's father, and the conflict between King Constance's eldest son Constance (King Moyne) and Vortigern.[49] However, the introductory chapter of the *PrM*, just as in the *VM*, provides the audience with the story of the demonic plot in which a council of demons brings about the impregnation of a virgin, Merlin's mother. The distinction between the presentation of background and history is vital to an appreciation of the contrast between translation and adaptation since the *PrM* places more emphasis in the beginning of the story on Merlin whereas *A&M* directs attention towards Arthur.

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[49] *Vortigern* becomes *Fortiger* in *A&M*. In Geoffrey and the chronicles, Constantine from Brittany became king of Britain and had three sons: Constance, Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon. In *A&M*, Constantine and his eldest son, Constance, who is known as Moyne after his coronation, have the same name, Constance. The beginning of *A&M* is confusing in this regard since this part of the Auchinleck manuscript is fragmentary. Macrae-Gibson has included annotations in the appendix of his edition that include a "tentative reading or interpretation of certain material" to fill in the gaps of the manuscript. Appendix to *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, vol. II, 266.

Both the *VM* and the *PrM* use the introductory chapter to demonstrate the diametrically opposed circumstances of Merlin's birth. He is born of both a devil and a virtuous woman. This contrast is vital to the understanding of the *VM* and the whole cycle since he is the architect of the Arthurian world. Furthermore, his entrance into the Arthurian legend originates at a higher spiritual level. He was intended to be a form of anti-Christ as expressed in the *VM* by the demon council: "Mais comment porons nous avoir i homme qui parlast & desist nos sens & nos proeces & nos afaires & eust pooir ensi com nous auons de sauoir les choses faites & dites & alees" (*VM*, 4). [But how can *we* have someone who might speak out and tell about our aims, our deeds and our way of life – who might have the power, like us, to know things done and said and past? (*Lancelot-Grail*, 167)] In an almost identical fashion, the *PrM* conveys the background for Merlin's birth: "[but] how myght we have a man of oure kynde that myght speke and have oure connynge and [maystrie] worke, and have the knowleche as we have of things that be don and seide, and of thynges that be past, and that he myght be in erthe conversant with these other?" (*PrM*, 20). Both texts begin with the legend of the anti-Christ. Each text presents the wish on the part of the demons to create a man in the likeness of themselves with knowledge of the past. The inclusion of this background as the introduction to the *PrM* is essential to the chronology within the text and establishes a tension between good and evil that will play out in the story.

A&M, on the other hand, presents Merlin's background as supplemental detail and offers a significant contrast with the *PrM*. The character of Merlin appears in the metrical version at a much later point than in the *PrM*. The introduction of Merlin to this romance is, however, logical and appropriate although a notable departure from the original. *A&M*, in starting the story with the stories of Uther and Vortigern, makes a narrative leap to Merlin's childhood in which he is the portentous child whose blood will cause Vortigern's tower to stand firm:

And þo þai com þe king bifore
Þai seyd a child on erþe was bore

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> Wiþouten mannes biȝeteing
> Þat wist wel neiȝe al þing
> 'Do him sle wel sodanliche,
> Þe blod to þe is tresore riche,
> Were ȝour werk ysmerd þerwiþ
> Euer it wold stond in griþ.' (lines 593-600)

The passage denotes the arrival of Merlin to the story. Merlin's role as the portentous child suggests the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth since his introduction in Geoffrey's *Historia* is initiated by the search for a child without a father. The *Historia* explains how Vortigern's prophets recommend the construction of a tower that will protect him should his other fortresses fall. In order to ensure the foundations of the tower, the prophets, or magicians, tell Vortigern to find a boy without a father (Merlin) and kill him, sprinkling his blood on the stones and mortar. In *A&M*, instead of the demonic plot, the initial setting is the conflict between the legitimate heirs to Constance's throne and Vortigern. *A&M*, therefore, leads the story with a tension that is more political than morally or theologically based.

The circumstances surrounding Merlin's birth are included in *A&M* yet the presentation of these details appears as an afterthought:

> And are ich telle more ȝou
> Of þis romaunce, y wil now
> Þat ȝe vnderstond and wite
> Hou þis child was biȝete (lines 625-629)

In an uncharacteristic manner for this author, the narrative flow is interrupted with the inclusion of background material in the form of Merlin's birth. The wording of the example makes it clear that Merlin's background is not part of the romance. Instead, the supplementary insertion of the content concerning Merlin's history is another example of rearrangement and an authorial change that modifies the focus of the text. The author of *A&M* ascribes precedence to Uther Pendragon and realigns the focus to Arthur, not Merlin, as the child who will grow up to have an impact on the fate of Britain.

In a similar vein to the introduction of Merlin, the presence and significance of the character of Mordred in *A&M* is greatly reduced in comparison with the *PrM*. The *VM* includes Mordred as Arthur's son with his half-sister, also the wife of King Lot. The begetting of Mordred features extensively in both the *VM* and in the *PrM*. The French refers to the background of Mordred's birth and states its importance to the Arthurian world:

> de cele dame issi gauains & agrauains & guerehes & gaheries icil furent fil au roy loth & dautre part en issi mordret qui fu li maines que li rois artus engendra si vous dirai comment. car ausi vaudra miex lestoire se iou vous fais entendant en quel maniere il fu engendres de lui car maintes gens len priseroient mains qui la uerite nen sauroient. (*VM,* 128)

> [This lady gave birth to Gawainet, Agravain, Guerrehet, and Gaheriet, who were all King Lot's sons. Furthermore, she also bore Mordred, who was the offspring whom King Arthur fathered. And I will tell you how, for the history will be more worthwhile if I make you understand how Mordred was sired by him, for many people would find King Arthur less worthy because of it if they did not know the truth. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 237)]

The French author takes it upon himself to explain the background concerning the conception of Mordred. The text suggests that should readers not know the details, they may think less of Arthur. With adherence in both content and language, the *PrM* echoes the authorial interpolation when it states:

> And of the wif of Kynge Loot com Gawein and Agravayn and Gaheret and Gaheries. These four were sones to Kyng Loot. And of hir also com Mordred that was the yonghest, that the Kyng Arthur begat. And I will telle yow in what manere, for so moche is the storye, the more clere that I make yow to undirstonde in what wise he was begeten of the kynge, for moche peple it preyse the lesse that knowe not the trouthe. (117)

The authorial "I" is repeated in this case. The author of the *PrM*, in translating the French so closely, has restated a narrative position. The position speaks directly to the reader regarding the correct manner to view Arthur but also emphasizes the lineal inheritance of Mordred. Being born of both King Arthur and King Lot's wife, combined with the close relationship to notable siblings integral to the Arthurian world, Mordred has a considerable presence in the story.

Unlike the *VM* and *PrM*, it is notable that Mordred has such a minor appearance in *A&M*. Details of Mordred's conception are omitted in *A&M* and his function in the story amounts to only a simple reference as Gawain's young brother (lines 8405-8416). Such a prominent exclusion from the text is conspicuous. I would concur with Macrae-Gibson in his assessment when he suggests "In this case it is possible that the A&M poet knew and followed a specific tradition of Mordred's legitimacy".[50] The author is following the chronicle tradition arising from Geoffrey, where Mordred and Gawain are brothers without mention of the incest. It also serves to highlight *A&M* as an independent romance not tied intertextually to the Vulgate Cycle. By extracting any inference of Mordred's incestuous conception, the author of *A&M* circumvents any question of Mordred's illegitimacy or Arthur's incest. In either case, the author of *A&M* attempts to avoid damaging the audience's perception of Arthur.[51]

The story of Arthur's accession to the throne is also significant as an illustration of authorial intervention and *A&M*'s concern for legitimacy. In the *VM*, the symbolic key to the kingdom is the sword in the stone. Arthur's legitimacy as heir to the throne is, in this case, an issue of being chosen by God: "Et puis sabaissa & uit lettres al perron qui toutes estoient dor si les lut. Si disoient les letres que cil qui osteroit [ceste espee] seroit rois de la terre par lelection ihesu crist."(*VM,* 81) [Then he leaned down and saw on the stone writing that was all of gold, and he read it. The writing said that the one who pulled this sword out would be king of the land by the choice of Jesus Christ. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 212)] In an equivalent manner, the *PrM* expresses the French as: "And the archebisshop lowted to the swerde and sawgh letteres of golde in the stiel. And he redde the letteres that seiden, "who taketh this swerde out of this ston sholde be kynge by the eleccion of Jhesu Crist" (74). The

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[50] Introduction to *Of Arthour and Of Merlin*, vol. II, 8.

[51] Instead of the authorial intervention as seen in the *VM* and *PrM*, the *A&M* poet uses omission in which the audience does not need to question Arthur's morality or Mordred's legitimacy since he provides no reason for such speculation.

English is almost a word for word version of the French where the gold lettering inscribed on the sword denotes unambiguously the celestial significance of the object for earthly power.

A&M has an alternative emphasis in the depiction of the episode. In this case, the author reveals some of the nationalistic bias of his adaptation:

> Þe bischop com and it seyʒe
> And þonked Ihesu Crist on heiʒe.
> Ichil wele þat ʒe it wite
> On þe pomel was ywrite
> 'Icham yhot Estalibore
> Vnto a king fair tresore.'
> On Jnglis is þis writeing
> 'Kerue stiel & iren & al þing.'[52] (lines 2813-2820)

The example is very clear in the addition of the "Inglis" writing. The language, therefore, becomes as symbolic as the sword itself. It is an English message to legitimate an English king. In *A&M* the celestial focus that exists in the *VM* and *PrM* is tempered by more political influence:

> Þe bischop seyd to hem anon
> 'Þis swerd who drawe of þe ston
> He schal be our king ymade
> Bi Godes wille & our rade' (lines 2821-2824)

In the example, the bishop states that this is the will of both God and the Church. We also see, in the depiction of the sword, a temporal addition. The fusion of secular and spiritual legitimacy imbued in the sword occurs in *A&M* when it states that "Al þat was born in Inglond, On þis swerd cast his hond" (lines 2835-2836), thereby emphasizing the sword as a national symbol that belongs to an English heir. There is a cogent significance to the change in the writing and the bishop's words. The authorial change denotes the synthesis of earthly, i.e. legal, and heavenly right as a reflection of a specifically English inheritance.

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[52] Macrae-Gibson points out here that the *VM* states the letters on the sword give it the name "Escalibor", which, according to the *VM*, is the Hebrew word for "trenche fer et achier" or "cuts iron and steel". Commentary to *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, vol. II, 104.

It is compelling that lineage plays as important a role in Arthur's accession as divine providence. For example, when Antor speaks to Arthur after drawing the sword from the stone, *A&M* qualifies the event in the revelation of Arthur's parentage:

> Arthour listen now me to,
> Seþþen þou were born verrament
> Ich haue ȝouen þe norisement.'
> & þer he teld him al þe cas
> Hou he biȝeten & born was,
> Hou his fader was þe king (lines 2936-2941)

In the extract above, Antor clearly states that Arthur was raised by him yet his father was the king. Antor reveals this truth to Arthur at the church in the vicinity of the sword in the stone. The news of his royal heritage and the detail that it takes place at a Church reinforce the dual role of God and blood succession in Arthur's claim to the throne.

If we compare this episode to the *VM* and the *PrM*, a notable difference emerges. The source states that: "Et antor li respond vostre peires sui iou comme de noureture mais certes iou ne sai qui vos engendra ne qui fu uostre mere" (*VM,* 83) [Antor answered him, "I am your father for having raised you but in truth I do not know who sired you or who your mother was." (*Lancelot-Grail, 214*)] In the *PrM*, Antor explains: "Sir, youre fader I am as in nurture, but certes, I dide yow never engender, ne I wot never who dide yow engender" (78). There is a subtle difference between the *VM* and the *PrM*. The French Vulgate informs us that Antor did not know the identity of either Arthur's father or mother. The *PrM* simply states that Antor knew he was not the father but was not aware of who sired Arthur. In both cases, however, we notice a stark contrast with *A&M*. The *PrM* has preserved the ignorance of Arthur's lineal inheritance whereas *A&M* includes it as an important component in his accession.

The contrast in emphasis between divine ordination and legal right between the texts continues in the events prior to Arthur's coronation. Just before the ceremony is to take place, the *VM* uses the archbishop as the advocate of Arthur's right to the throne:

& li arceuesques les manda tous en son palais por conseiller & et quant il i furent tout uenu si lor retraist ce que il veoit que la uolente ihesu crist estoit que li enfes eust le regne si lor dist les boines teches quil ot en lui ueues pus quil lacointa ne nous ne deuons pas ester fait il contre la volente nostre seignor. (85-86)

[And the archbishop called them all into his great hall for a meeting. When they had gathered, he told them what he saw the will of Jesus Christ to be, and it was that the lad should have the kingdom; and he told them about the good qualities he had seen in him since he had known him. "We must not be against the will of God," he said.] (*Lancelot-Grail,* 215)

The *PrM* carefully preserves the sense of clerical advocacy when it states: "the archebisshop drough hem alle to his paleis and rehersed hem the grete wisdom and the gode condiciouns that he fonde in Arthur" (81). The *PrM* presents an abbreviated version of the archbishop's words although the episode as a whole effectively conveys the tension between divine right and lineal legitimacy.[53] The conflict that occurs between the barons is a consequence of this contrast in justification. The barons are the final hurdle in the attempt to secure Arthur's position and their allegiance in the *VM* and *PrM* is undermined by his apparent lack of royal blood.

Before Arthur is crowned in *A&M*, the text explains that Merlin, Ulfin, Bretel and Jordan (those party to the deception of Ygerne and Arthur's conception) inform the bishop of Arthur's heritage:[54]

Þis barouns & eke Merlin
Wenten to þe bischopes in
& al him teld fair & ʒerne
Hou Arthour was biʒeten of Ygerne,
Þe bischop þonked God so gode
Þat he was of þe kinges blode. (lines 3035-3040)

The bishop's reaction adds to the difference in tone between the texts since the bishop is convinced, not by a demonstration of a miracle, but by the fact that Arthur's father was the king. The emphasis

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[53] The primary argument among the barons in the *VM* and the *PrM* is Arthur's apparent low-born status. The division between the barons becomes, therefore, an issue of those who submit to the will of God and those more concerned with birthright.

[54] This act is in distinct contrast to the *VM* and the *PrM* since they both demonstrate the willingness of the bishop to trust in the miraculous drawing of the sword from the stone.

is, therefore, quite different in *A&M* and places a greater weight on Arthur's parentage as a major factor in Arthur's claim.

The difference between the *PrM* and *A&M* concerning the claim to the throne is a question of narrative focus. The *VM* conveys the notion that Arthur was selected by God to inherit the kingdom and the sword in the stone is the expression of that divine selection. Through faithful translation, the *PrM* inherits the argument of divine selection. In contrast, *A&M* modifies the justification for Arthur's claim through greater attention to his lineage.

Arthur is a central character in the three texts and it is through him that the contrast between translation and adaptation is the most evident. Since the Merlin story is the history of Arthur's rise to power, it sets the tone for his reign. As part of the *matière de bretagne*, the *Merlin* story stands prominently as it establishes Arthur as the monarch.[55] In some other medieval romances that use the legend as the setting, such as the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, Arthur is a minor character, and the romances focus on the adventures of one of his knights. In this case he, with Merlin as the engineer of his existence, is the story. Even the Vulgate Cycle, with its alternative title of the Lancelot-Grail Cycle, places more emphasis on Lancelot and the Grail than King Arthur.

Arthur has, in the French romances, often been depicted as a *roi fainéant*, a passive and ineffectual king who remains at court while his knights carry out quests and adventures on his behalf. This label does not apply to the *VM* although it is Merlin who controls the extent and direction of his activity. One significant example of Arthur's more dynamic role is the battles against King Rion. In this instance, the French version details the King at the head of the first battalion alongside King Ban and King Bors. Guinevere girds Arthur's sword and armour and he kisses her before riding out:

> si laida a armer genieure moult bien & moult bel com cel qui bien sen sot entremetre
> & li chaint mismes lespee au coste…Quant li rois entent ce que la pucele li a dit si

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[55] The term Matière de Bretagne refers to the Celtic source material that was the inspiration for the French Arthurian Romances. See Tony Hunt and Geoffrey Bromiley, "The Tristan legend in Old French Verse" in *The Arthur of the French,* ed. Burgess and Pratt, 118.

court a lui & lenbrache & ele li ausi si entreacolent & sentrebaisent estroitement &
doucement comme iouene gent qui moult sentramoient. (*VM*, 218-219)

[And Guinevere was very deft at helping him put it on, for she knew well how to go
about it, and she herself girded on his sword at his side…When the king heard what
the maiden said to him, he ran to her and took her in his arms, and she put her arms
around him too, and they embraced and kissed each other sweetly, holding each
other tightly, for they were youthful and very much in love. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 287)]

The *PrM* expresses the French closely when it describes how "Gonnore hym helped for to arme right

wele and feire, as she that right wele cowde her thereof entermete; and hirself girde hym with his

swerde" (*PrM* 193). As in the source, King Arthur kisses and embraces Guinevere: "Then the kynge

toke hir in armes and kissed hir sweetly, as yonge peple that full well togeder loved" (194). By

means of these gestures, the *VM* and the *PrM* depict Arthur as a knight and champion; a warrior with

the favor of a beautiful lady with the kiss is a particularly significant element that marks Arthur's

success as king.

The kiss translates into Arthur's active, martial role through the battles with King Rion. It

becomes a touchstone for Arthur's legitimacy and a reminder of his duty to spouse and kingdom.

Merlin, as the voice of narrative significance, offers this reminder:

Quant Merlins le vint aprochant si dist au roy artu. artus fait il ore i para comment
vous le feres encore enqui. Ore gardes que li baisiers que vostre amie vous douna
soit anqui chier compares si que tous les iours de uostre vie en soit parle. (*VM,* 220)

[When Merlin saw him drawing nearer, he said to King Arthur, "Arthur, now we
will see what you can do here today. See to it that the kiss that your lady gave you is
dearly paid for, so that it will be talked about all the days of your life." (*Lancelot-
Grail,* 288)]

The warning voiced by Merlin has a broader meaning than merely the impending conflict with Rion.

The kiss heralds the kingship and Arthur must earn the title afforded to him for his actions will

define his reign. Likewise, the *PrM* conveys the same significance in the kiss when it states:

Whan Merlin saugh that he com nygh, he seide to the Kynge Arthur, "Arthur," quod
he, "now shall it be sene how well ye shull do, and loke that the kisse that youre love
yow yaf be to somme solde so dere that ever after thereof be spoken." (*PrM,* 196)

The translation reiterates the greater implication of Arthur's battle against Rion. As the defining

moment for the warrior king, Arthur must win in single combat against Rion. The *VM* tells us that

Arthur hesitates in his first conflict yet later succeeds in defeating Rion, depriving him of his sword,

Marmiadoise, and driving him from the field of battle.[56] Although not the final encounter between

Arthur and Rion, the defeat at Carohaise forms the apogee of Arthur's ascent and sets the scene for

the final encounter between the two characters.[57]

Graced with the new power of Marmiadoise, Arthur pursues the Saxons and displays great

prowess at arms.[58] When Rion returns to the story, Arthur again engages in single combat with him.

On this occasion, Arthur is successful in his defeat of Rion and finishes him with Rion's own

sword.[59] Merlin expresses the broader significance of the victory when the text states: "& merlin qui

lor auoit fait grant solas & grant compaignie sen uint al roy artu & li dist que des ore mais se pooit il

bien souffrir de lui car il a auques sa terre mise a repos sis en pooit bien aler esbatre vne partie de

tans."[60] (*VM,* 419) [Merlin came to Arthur and told him that, from then on, he could get along

without him, for he had brought a measure of peacefulness to his land, so now he could go and seek

pleasure elsewhere for a while. (Lancelot-Grail, 398)] Arthur has brought peace to his land and now

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[56] Marmiadoise is, according to the *VM*, the sword of Hercules from the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece. The sword becomes stuck in Arthur's shield and Arthur strikes back, wounding Rion in the arm so that he is unable to withdraw it.

[57] The author of *A&M* preserves the French name for the castle whereas the author of the *PrM* changes it to Carhaix.

[58] With the sword, the *VM* states that he kills ten Saxons singlehandedly: "Iluec assaia moult bien li rois artus marmiadoise la boine espee au roy rion. Car li contes tesmoigne que ses cors mismes en ochist plus de x." (239) [There King Arthur skillfully tried out Marmiadoise, the worthy sword that had belonged to King Rion, for the story bears witness to his having slain more than ten all by himself. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 298)] Arthur also uses the sword to kill the Giant of Mont St Michel since he has passed Excalibur to Gawain.

[59] In this conflict, Rion declares that he would rather die than live in defeat: "Et quant li rois artus uit quil ne le pot a ce mener quil se uoloit tenir por outresi li colpe le chief uoiant tous cels qui en la praerie estoient." (*VM,* 419) [And when King Arthur saw that he could not succeed in making him acknowledge that he was beaten, he cut off his head in plain sight of all who were in the meadow. (*Lancelot-Grail,* 398)]

[60] The *PrM* conveys the same meaning when it states: "And he com to Kynge Arthur and seide that from hensforth he myghte hym wele forberen, for he hadde somdell apesed his londe and sette it in reste." (303)

should no longer have need of Merlin. Until this juncture of the story, Merlin serves as the guiding factor in Arthur's ascent. According to Merlin, his role is complete in the creation of the Arthurian kingdom, yet we soon come to understand that Arthur needs Merlin. Merlin's role in the story draws attention to the narrative itself. He interprets events and reveals their purport. Just as Merlin guides Arthur, he is indispensible to the story as the author of his own and Arthur's narrative. For, as Arthur explains: "tous iours ai iou de vous besoing car sans uostre aide ne puis iou riens. & por ce uoldroie ie bien que iamis ne partisies de ma cort ne de ma compaignie a nul ior" (*VM,* 419) ["I need you every day, for I can do nothing without your help. That is why I would like you never to leave me or my court at anytime." (*Lancelot-Grail,* 398)]

The *PrM* includes the same statement of dependence: "Certes, seide the kynge, "every day and every hour have I to yow nede and myster, for without yow I can nought; and therefore I wolde we sholde never departe companye." (303). Arthur's comment demonstrates Merlin's importance in the story. As the King explains, he can do nothing without Merlin's assistance and the statement serves to reorient the focus in the *VM* and *PrM* back to Merlin. Furthermore, Merlin's departure is not long-lived for he returns as soon as Arthur has need of him in the conflict with Lucius and the Roman Empire. Indeed, Merlin's presence at court in the continuing narrative denotes his pivotal role.

Merlin functions as more than the mysterious puppeteer of the Arthurian world in the *VM* and *PrM*. His story is both the beginning and the end. The introduction of his character at the very start of the story signals his existence as the product of design. Likewise, the denouement is contingent on Merlin's separation from Arthur and his court. Merlin announces to Arthur that he will leave Arthur's court for the last time and, through his love for Viviane, he becomes the agent of his imprisonment.[61] Arthur's reaction to this event reveals Merlin's importance:

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[61] Viviane is known as Nimiane in the *PrM*.

iou pense a ce que iou quide auoir perdu merlin & que iamais a moi ne reuigne.quar il a ore pluse demoure quil ne soloit.Et moult mesmaie la parole quil dist quant il se departi de moi.quar il disoit que chou estoit la darraine fois si ai doutance quil ne die voir.quar il ne menti onques de riens.quil me deist.Et si mait diex que iou ameroie miex a auoir perdu la cite de logres que luj. (*VM,* 453)

["I am brooding because I think I've lost Merlin, and he'll never come back to me, for he has stayed away longer than he used to. He said it was for the last time, and I am afraid that he was telling the truth, for he never lied in anything he told me. God help me, I would rather have lost the city of Logres than him." (*Lancelot-Grail,* 417)]

The *PrM* expresses the same significance when it states:

I think on that I trowe I have lost Merlin, and that he will never more come to me; for now hath he abiden lenger than he was wonte. And gretly I am dismayed of the worde that he seide when he fro me departed, for he seide this is the laste tyme; therefore I am in doute that he sey soth, for he ne made never lesinge of nothinge that he seide. For so helpe me God, I hadde lever lese the cite of Logres than hym. (322)

The *PrM* repeats the *VM*'s view of Merlin as integral to the Kingdom, so invaluable that, for Arthur, he is worth more than the city of Logres. More importantly, however, Merlin's separation from the court represents the closure of the narrative. Since Gawain is unable to return Merlin to Arthur, all he carries back to court is the story of Merlin's fate at the hands of Viviane. The closing impression of the *VM* and the *PrM* resides, therefore, with Merlin as opposed to Arthur.[62]

The *PrM* and *A&M* are products of their source. They differ, however, in the manner in which they compare with the original. In the case of *A&M*, the plot of the *VM* is preserved yet adapted through selection of source material and translation processes that create a linear and focused story with a greater degree of independence from the *VM*. The result is a shift in focus away from Merlin toward King Arthur. King Arthur becomes a more active and prominent character who is less dependent on Merlin. As a version of the *VM*, *A&M* presents a recreation of the source insofar

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[62] The final section of the *VM* differs slightly from the *PrM*. Where the *PrM* breaks off in Gawain's journey to Cardoel, the *VM* relates the story of Evadeam, the dwarf knight, as well as the birth of Lancelot and the Roman conquest of Gaul. The closing line of the *VM* is worthy of note, however, when it states: "Explicit lenserrement de merlin diex nous maint tous a boine fin." (466) [Here ends the Imprisonment of Merlin. God lead us all to a good end! (*Lancelot-Grail,* 424)]

as the defining elements of the narrative are largely preserved. These elements are, however, rearranged and compressed to streamline the source and eliminate the French technique of *entrelacement*.

The *PrM* retains Merlin's central position and copies the narrative structure of the *VM* where Merlin's story frames the text. To recast Merlin as the focus of the *PrM*, the author follows the *VM* where Merlin's actions motivate the plot and Arthur returns to a less prominent role and one that is dictated by Merlin. Furthermore, Arthur's coronation and lineal inheritance is afforded by a combination of Merlin's strategy and divine selection, a theme concurrent in both the PrM and *VM*. The author of *A&M*, however, modifies the theme and places more emphasis on legitimacy through birth. Arthur is, in *A&M*, an English king whose birth, and therefore his future royal inheritance, is the basis for the story.

Both the *PrM* and *A&M* are translations of the *VM* although they exhibit two tendencies in the process of translation. They are useful examples of the variety in medieval translation since they serve as a contrast in narrative style. The English authors were not writing with the same degree of expectation that readers demand today. We cannot know for certain whether the English medieval audience viewed these texts as translations in the same way as a modern reader since the authors of *A&M* and *PrM* were working in a specific literary and historical environment. We can affirm, however, that there existed a difference of approach in how the source was translated from French into English. The English romances are unique and to recognize their treatment of narrative, not only as versions of the same source but also in comparison with each other, demonstrates two varieties of translation in England at this time.

Chapter 2

Ywain and Gawain: a Translation and Adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yvain)*

In the previous chapter, I identified two texts that exhibit close translation and free adaptation in medieval literature. What differentiated them was primarily the extent of equivalence, or close connection, to the source in opposition to a more independent, selective use of the original. These distinctions are, however, not mutually exclusive concepts in translation. This chapter will demonstrate that a combination of approaches in translation existed during the Middle Ages. The Middle English *Ywain and Gawain* (*YG*) is a good example of a text that can be considered both a translation and an adaptation of *Le chevalier au lion* (*Yvain)* by Chrétien de Troyes.[63] Scholars vary somewhat in their definition, but they generally use both "translation" and "adaptation" in regard to the relationship between *Yvain* and *Ywain and Gawain*. Mary Braswell in her introduction to *Ywain and Gawain* identifies the text as, "a translation and adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier au Lion*".[64] William Calin hyphenates the attribution as a "translation-adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes."[65] Other scholars such as Tony Hunt and and Keith Busby consider it to be an "adaptation" of Chrétien's *Yvain*.[66] Maldwyn Mills, however, has asserted that *Ywain and Gawain* is "the only surviving romance in Middle English that was translated directly from an original by Chrétien de

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[63] Middle English will henceforth have the abbreviation ME, Old English will be OE and Old French will be OF.

[64] *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Mary Braswell Flowers, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 77.

[65] *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 457.

[66] See Hunt, "Beginnings, Middles, and Ends" in *The Craft of Fiction*, ed. Leigh A. Arathoon (Rochester, MI: Solaris Press, 1984), 91 and Busby, "Chrétien de Troyes English'd," *Neophilologus*, 71:4 (1987), 596.

Troyes' *Yvain*, or *Le Chevalier au Lion*."[67] Friedmann and Harrington define *YG* as an "abridged free translation of *Yvain*, or *Le Chevalier au Lion*."[68]

In defining this type of translation, we must again consider the modern view of translation. Lawrence Venuti writes: "Let's ask the question of current translation practices. Today, translators of novels into most languages seek to maintain unchanged the basic elements of narrative form."[69] *YG* is a text that offers some basic elements of the foreign text yet there is also substantial variation. Venuti affirms that elements in modern translation are not free from variation and that "contemporary canons of accuracy are based on an adequacy to the foreign text."[70] However, Venuti concedes that "canons of accuracy vary according to culture and historical moment." In the case of *YG*, the degree of adequacy as a translation is irrelevant since accuracy is a concept that varies according to the views of the historical period. It is more appropriate to determine the extent that *YG* compares with *Yvain* in both language and content. It is possible for *YG* to be both a translation and an adaptation of its source.

The role of versification plays a significant role in *YG* since, as both a translation and adaptation; the romance demonstrates the inclusion of English and French poetic techniques. The alliteration in *YG*, while not the dominant poetic form in the poem, allies the language with popular English alliterative verse.[71] If we consider the opening stanza of *YG*, the alliteration is evident from the start:[72]

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[67] See *The Arthur of the English*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 117.

[68] *Ywain and Gawain*, EETS no.254, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), xiii.

[69] Venuti, "Translation, Community, Utopia" in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. L. Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2004), 484.

[70] By "adequacy," Venuti equates the preservation of the basic elements with the overall length of the text.

[71] As Friedmann and Harrington write, "The frequent presence of alliterative phrases and tags in YG indicates the continued popularity of this traditional feature of English verse among the writers of the rhyming romances." *Ywain and Gawain*, EETS no.254, lii.

> Almyghti God that made mankyn,
> He schilde His servandes out of syn
> And mayntene tham with myght and mayne
> That herkens Ywayne and Gawayne;
> Thai war knightes of the Tabyl Rownde,
> Tharfore listen a lytel stownde. (1-6)

The use of the consonantal header as the stress is clearly utilized in *made* and *mankyn*, *servandes* and *syn* then *maytene, myght* and *mayne* in line three. The characters of *Ywayne* and *Gawayne* feature as a rhyme of *mayntene* and *mayne* in line four. The association indicates that these two characters are the heroes of the text.[73] The use of alliteration is not consistent in each line of the text or the work as a whole and is not a defining characteristic of the poem to the same extent as, for example, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. The alliteration in *YG* is, therefore, a component of the poem yet not the determining form.

The verse form of *YG* is the rhymed four-stress couplet. If we reconsider the introductory stanza, the closing syllable of each couplet rhymes: *kyn/syn, mayne/wayne, Rownde/stownde*. This verse form is similar to the octosyllabic couplet used in Chrétien's *Yvain*.[74] The form of *YG* is, therefore, a combination of poetic structures. The text incorporates both alliterative verse and the rhymed couplet. Their use in conjunction reflects the practice of translation and adaptation. The rhyme scheme is an attempt to emulate the source. In contrast, alliteration was popular in English verse. In this regard, *YG* is a synthesis of equivalence and understanding of audience.

In addition to the combination of verse form in *YG*, we see a sophisticated blend of thematic treatment that differs from the source in some ways yet mirrors Chrétien in others. As illustration of

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[72] All *YG* citations are from *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Braswell.

[73] *Myght* and *mayne* are synonyms that mean *might* and *strength* respectively.

[74] Burton Raffel writes in reference to *Yvain* that, "Chrétien writes in octosyllabic couplets – syllable-counted couplets, of course, since Old French is still French, not English. These couplets rhyme." "Translating Medieval European Poetry" in *The Craft of Translation*, ed. John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 49.

difference, there are two examples in which scholarship has made distinctions between the English

version and the French. First, the character of Ywain appears over the course of the text to be more

blunt and matter-of-fact than the corresponding character in Chrétien's romance.[75] Second, *YG* often

closely translates parts of Chrétien's romance that focus on scenes of action, but omits passages in

Chrétien's work that present psychological introspection. *YG* also avoids the *entrelacement* of plot

lines found in parts of the French romance.[76]

The English poet elects to present the same character development found in *Yvain* despite

the apparent lack of interest in Ywain's thoughts. Ywain in *YG* goes through the same ordeals and

develops in a similar way to the Yvain in Chrétien's romance. In both romances there are three

episodes associated with the well, and in each case the hero learns a lesson. The adventures have the

same purpose: they direct Ywain towards Alundyne and away from Arthur. Indeed, the texts present

a contrast between life at court and at the well that parallels Ywain's conflicting responsibilities to

his lord (Arthur) and his wife. These episodes are not only parallels in terms of narrative function,

they are representative of close translation since the reproduction of detail and specifics from the

source are evident.

The first adventure occurs in *Yvain* when the hero leaves to challenge Esclados, the knight of

the well, who had defeated his cousin, Calogrenant. The episode is significant because it means that

Yvain's reputation rises due to his victory over Esclados. Chrétien describes the battle at the well in

great detail to describe how the combat unfolds with particular attention to the sword-play between

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[75] Busby remarks that scholars consider the characters in *YG* to be, "flatter", with less psychological depth than in Chrétien." *Neophilologus*, 71:4, 599. I would agree with Busby here and his argument reinforces my view that the *YG* poet omits much of the psychological dimension of the characters in favor of narrative momentum and a focus on battle scenes.

[76] The focus on action, as seen in *Of Arthour and Of Merlin*, demonstrates a preoccupation with combat in English Arthurian romance. See Chapter 1, 17-19. The interruption of battles to return to other plot threads is an early form of *entrelacement*.

the two characters. In this instance, Chrétien describes the manner in which the blows damage their

shields and armor:[77]

> Li uns l'autre a l'espee assaut
> Si ont au caple des espees
> Les guiges des escus copees
> Et les escus dehacies tous,
> Et par desus, et par desous,
> Si que les pieches en dependent (822-827)

> [They then drew their swords and struck each other with blows that sliced through the
> shield-straps and completely split the bucklers, both top and bottom, so that the pieces hung
> down (*Arthurian Romances*, 305)]

YG is not a line for line translation but the degree of equivalence is such that we see a clear

translation of this episode. In this instance, the *YG* poet recreates the specifics of the combat:

> Out thai drogh thaire swerdes kene
> And delt strakes tham bytwene;
> Al to peces thai hewed thaire sheldes,
> The culpons flegh out in the feldes. (639-642)

In both works, the sword fight results in the destruction of the shields with the added description of

the shields being cut to pieces.[78] As the battle continues, Chrétien proceeds to describe more of the

intensity of the combat:

> Li hiaume enbruncherent et ploient,
> Et des aubers les mailles volent
> Si que de sanc assés se tolent
> Car d'euz meïsmes sont si chaut
> Que li lor haubers ne lor vaut
> A chascun gaires plus d'un froc.
> Ens el vis se fierent d'estoc,
> S'est merveilles comment tant dure
> Bataille si pesme et si dure.
> Mais andui sont de si grant cuer
> Que li uns pour l'autre a nul fuer
> De tere un pié ne guerpiroit (840-851)

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[77] All citations are from *Le Chevalier au Lion* (Paris: Librarie Générale Française, 1994). For each reference in OF, I have included a modern English translation by William W. Kibler in *Arthurian Romances* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

[78] *Pece* is a derivation of the OF *pieche* as used in *Yvain*.

[Helmets were dented and bent, and links of mail flew from their hauberks, amid much loss
of blood. The hauberks grew so hot from their exertion that they gave scarcely more
protection than a frock. They struck one-another's faces with their blades: it's a wonder how
such a fierce and bitter battle could last so long. But each was so proud of heart that neither
would yield a foot of ground to the other on any account, (*Arthurian Romances*, 305)]

YG presents these details in a briefer yet still specific manner. Importantly, details of combat from
the French are reproduced:

> On helmes strake they so with yre,
> At ilka strake outbrast the fyre.
> Aither of tham gude buffetes bede,
> And nowther wald styr of the stede.
> Ful kenely thai kyd thaire myght
> And feyned tham noght forto fight.
> On thaire hauberks that men myght ken,
> The blode out of thaire bodyes ren;
> Aither on other laid so fast,
> The batayl might noght lang last. (643-652)

Chrétien's description of the heat generated by the blows is more vividly translated as fire (*fyre*)
breaking out. The two knights fight so courageously (*kenely*) that they will not give ground. This
description is a clear representation of the stout heart exhibited between the two knights in Chrétien's
work. *YG* also includes a specific detail from *Yvain* where they have fought so hard that blood is
visibly running from their hauberks. In the final line of the example, we see the same speculation
concerning the duration of the fight due to the vigour of the combat.

As demonstrated in the comparison, the details are faithfully reproduced, albeit in a different
order to the original. Despite the incongruence of sequence in the details, *YG* shows an intention to
present the battle in all its gory violence. More importantly, *YG* succeeds in combining translation
and poetry. As illustrated by the example, the English poet finds a parallel to describe the heat
generated by the repeated blows to the head in the use of "outbrast the fyre." The parallel works to
express not only the detail but also to form the rhyme in the preceding line with *yre*. Perhaps the
most consummate example in the translation of rhyme and meaning in the example is the reference
to the duration of the battle. In the French, Chrétien uses a clever homonym with *dure* to mean both

"hard" and "continuous." The *YG* poet uses *fast* and *last*, where "fast" in ME means "vigorously" or, again, "hard" and "last" has the same meaning as the modern English, "continue." In this case, the *YG* author shows himself to be both a skilled poet and translator as he conveys equivalence in meaning as well as equivalence of rhyme.

Yvain's victory in this conflict results in the encounter with Lunete and subsequently Laudine. His later return to the well is a pivotal juncture since Yvain has rescued the lion from the dragon and the arrival at the well is a reminder of his transgression against Laudine. The arrival at the well is a close translation of the French. If we compare the two episodes from each text, we again see striking equivalence in the use of detail:

> La par poi ne se forsena
> Mesire yvains autre feïe,
> Quant le fontaine ot aprochie
> Et le perron et le chapel.
> Mil fois las et dolent se claime,
> Et chiet pasmés, tant fu dolans;
> Et s'espee qui fu coulans
> Chiet du fuerre, si li apointe
> Ad mailles du hauberk la pointe
> Endroit le col, pres de la joe. (*Yvain* lines 3488-3497)

> [Alas, my lord Yvain nearly lost his mind again as he neared the spring, the stone and the chapel. A thousand times he moaned and sighed, and was so grief-stricken he fell in a faint; and his sword, which was loose, slipped from its scabbard and pierced through the mail of his hauberk at his neck, below his cheek.(Arthurian Romances, 338)]

> On a day so it byfell,
> Syr Ywayne come unto the well.
> He saw the chapel and the thorne
> And said allas that he was born;
> And when he loked on the stane,
> He fell in swooning sone onane.
> Als he fel his swerde outshoke;
> The pommel into the erth toke,
> The point toke until his throte –
> Wel nere he made a sari note!
> Through his armurs sone it smate,
> A litel intil his hals it bate; (*YG*, lines 2059-2070)

In both cases, Ywain falls from his horse, his sword also falls out and the point pierces him through his armor and into the neck (*hals*). Such details have no particular significance for the story as a whole and, instead, demonstrate parity with the source. In a similar number of lines, the English poet succeeds in recreating the same level of detail and includes the rhymed couplet that is evident in the French.

The third and final arrival at the well offers another close translation of the French. In this case, the episode represents the culmination of Yvain's growth as a character and the reconciliation with his wife. Yvain has unwittingly fought against his cousin Gawain and the matter of the disinherited sister has been resolved by King Arthur since neither of the knights could best the other. Chrétien describes the arrival at the well as follows:

> Maintenant que mesire Yvains
> Senti qu'il fu waris et sains,
> Si s'en parti que nus nel sot,
> Mais que avec li son leon ot,
> Qui onques en toute sa vie
> Ne vaut laissier sa compaignie.
> Puis errerent tant quë il virent
> La fontaine et ploouvoir i firent.
> Ne cuidiés pas que je vous mente,
> Que si fu fiere la tormente
> Que nus n'en conteroit le disme,
> Qu'il sambloit que jusque en abisme
> Deüst fondre la forest toute. (6517-6529)

> [As soon as my lord Yvain felt that he was sufficiently healed, he left without anyone noticing; but he had with him his lion, who would never leave him as long as it lived. Then they journeyed until they saw the spring and caused the rain to fall. Don't think I'm lying to you when I say that the storm was so violent that no one could relate a tenth of it, for it seemed that the whole forest was about to fall into hell. (*Arthurian Romances*, 376)]

YG includes the same episode and is a compelling illustration of equivalence:

> Sone so thai war hale and sownd,
> Sir Ywayn hies him fast to found.
> Luf was in his hert fest,
> Night ne day haved he no rest,
> Bot he get grace of his lady,
> He most go wode or for luf dy.

> Ful preveli forth gan he wende
> Out of the court fra ilke frende
> He rides rigt unto the well,
> And thare he thinks forto dwell.
> His gode lyon went with him ay,
> He wald noght part fro him oway.
> He kest water upon the stane:
> The storm rase ful sone onane,
> The thoner grisely gan outbrest;
> Him thought als al the grete forest
> And al that was obout the well
> Sold have sonken into hell. (3829-3846)

The arrival at the well includes the same specifics in a comparable number of lines. The dual description of Yvain's healing, *waris et sains*, which the *YG* poet translates as *hale and sownd*, is a parallel inversion of the French.[79] Ywain leaves covertly (*preveli*), as he does in the French ("Si s'en parti que nus nel sot"). Accompanying him is his lion that wished never to leave him ("wald noght part fro him oway") in the same spirit as Chrétien describes ("Qui onques en toute sa vie ne vaut laissier sa compaignie"). Ywain pours water on the stone causing the storm to break out and, with careful translation, the *YG* poet explains that the storm was so great it seemed to Ywain as if the forest should fall into hell. In these closing couplets, the English poet demonstrates clear knowledge of the French language. Chrétien uses *abisme* as opposed to the more specific *enfer,* yet, as an idiom, *fondre en abisme* is a patent reference to the mouth of hell.[80] Furthermore, the English poet manages to weave together the words "well" and "hell" not only as rhyming partners but as synonyms since both form a hole in the ground and the well is associated with distress and pain for Ywain, as if he were in a personal hell.[81]

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[79] *Waris*, a past participle from the verb *garir,* or "to save", and the adjective *sains*, as the equivalent to "healthy".

[80] Both modern English and French translations use "hell" instead of a direct translation of the modern French, *abîme,* that would more likely be a "chasm" or "pit".

[81] See lines 3488-3497 in *Yvain* and lines 2059-2070 in *YG* above. The second return to the well results in Ywain fainting at the realization of his errors and causes him to lament emphatically.

Central to Ywain's reconciliation and emergence from the ordeal is the character of Lunet.[82] She, like Chrétien's original character, is the exponent of ruse in the text and serves as a counterpoint to Gawain, who embodies the role of power. Of all the prominent characters in *YG*, Lunet is the most consistent with the French. She helps Ywain on several occasions, most importantly in the first and final episodes at the well. In these scenes, Lunet serves to promote Ywain as the most desirable suitor for her lady and, by use of cunning, twice succeeds in uniting them.

Lunet's role in *YG* is consistent with her role in Chrétien's source. As Ywain arrives at Alundyne's town, he is unhorsed and left at the mercy of hostile townsfolk. Lunet immediately demonstrates her intelligence and nobility as she recognizes Ywain from the kindness he showed at an earlier time. The French describes it thus:

> Et sachiés bien, se je pooie,
> Serviche et honnor vous feroie,
> Que vous le feïstes ja moi.
> Une fois a le court le roi
> M'envoia me dame en message;
> Espoir ne fui mie si sage,
> Si courtoise, ne de tel estre
> Comme puchele devoit estre,
> Mais onques chevalier n'i ot
> Qui a moi degnast parler mot,
> Fors vous tout seul, qui estes chi. (999-1009)

> [Rest assured that, if I am able, I will do you service and honour, for you have already done as much for me. Once my lady sent me with a message to the king's court. Perhaps I was not as prudent or courteous or correct as a maiden should be, but there was not a knight there who deigned to speak a single word to me, except you alone, standing here now. (*Arthurian Romances*, 307)]

The *YG* poet writes the passage as follows:

> And sir," sho said, "on al wise
> I aw the honore and servyse.
> I was in message at the king
> Bifore this time, whils I was ying;
> I was noght than savese,
> Als a damysel aght to be.

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[82] "Lunet" is the English spelling of the French "Lunete." They are the same character.

Fro the tyme that I was lyght
In cowrt was none so hend knyght,
That unto me than walde take hede,
Bot thou allane, God do the mede.
Grete honore thou did to me,
And that sal I now quite the. (719-730)

As evident in the English, the translation is close and presents Lunet as a woman to whom no one but Ywain gives attention. She acknowledges the kindness and gentility shown by Ywain and wishes to return the favor. The English poet uses the words *honore and servyse* as translation for *serviche et honnor*. Again, the poet inverts the wording yet carefully preserves the meaning of the French words. These words describe Lunet since her role in the story primarily concerns her service to Alundyne as a means to preserve her lady's status and honor. Lunet demonstrates how she has grown since their first meeting when she acknowledges her lack of *savese* attributed to her youth. The poet again uses an ME derivation directly linked to the OF *sage*. The knowledge implied by the French concerns the awareness of etiquette at court, and the ME is equivalent in both root form and meaning.

The wisdom embodied in Lunet is part of her role as Alundyne's counselor. In this guise, Lunet must use ruse as the means to overcome courtly sensibilities and convince Alundyne of more practical matters. In returning the favour to Ywain, Lunet likewise achieves the security of her liege-lady with her lord's killer as his replacement. As a prime example of her ability to orchestrate events, she pretends to leave as a messenger and find Ywain, who, unbeknownst to Alundyne, is hiding in the castle. The manner in which Lunet prepares Ywain for their first meeting is a close translation of the French. In this passage, Chrétien is particular about the manner in which Lunete clothes Yvain for this important introduction:

Et avec ci li apareille
Robe d'eskallaste vermeille,
De vair fourree a tout la croie.
N'est riens qu'elle me li acroie
Que il conviengne a li acesmer:
Fermail d'or a son col fermer,
Over a pierres precïeusses

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Qui mout font les gens gracïeusez;
Sainturestë et aumosniere
Qui fu d'une riche segniere.
Bien l'a del tout apareillié,
Et sa dame conseillié
Que revenus est son message,
Si a esploitié comme sage. (1885-1898)

[And in the meantime she prepared for him a robe of red scarlet, lined with vair with the chalk still upon it.[83] She was able to provide whatever he needed to adorn himself: a golden clasp at his neck, worked with precious stones, which makes the wearer especially fashionable, and a belt and purse made of fabric trimmed with gold. When she had outfitted him fully, she told her lady that her messenger had returned, having ably carried out his task. (*Arthurian Romances*, 318)]

In the example, Chrétien describes how Lunete dresses Yvain with an impressive set of clothes and readies him to meet Laudine. If we then look at the equivalent passage in *YG*, the English poet includes many of these details:

The maiden redies hyr ful rath.
Bilive sho gert Syr Ywaine bath
And cled him sethin in gude scarlet
Forord wele and with gold fret,
A girdle ful riche for the nanes
Of perry and of preciows stanes.
Sho talde him al he sold do,
When that he come the lady to,
And thus when he was al redy,
Sho went and talde to hyr lady,
That cumen was hir messagere. (1101-1111)

The English repeats the detail of Ywain's preparation and includes the fine scarlet, the fur lining (*forord wele*), the gold, the girdle and the precious stones. Although the translation is not an exact equivalent, the details are sufficient and conspicuous enough to warrant further comparison. The specifics concerning Ywain's attire are not necessary to convey the impression that he is well-dressed. Indeed, the *YG* poet could have simply condensed it to a more perfunctory description to achieve the same point. Instead, the poet preserved the features of the clothing as a significant part of

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[83] *Vair* is a fur thought to be from a squirrel used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Lunet's *ful rath*, or full plan, a plan that is integral to her narrative function; and she becomes the subtle manipulator of both Ywain and Alundyne.

Her power of manipulation is most evident in the final episode at the well when she designs the reconciliation of Ywain and Alundyne. In the closing scene of *YG*, Alundyne asks for advice from Lunet since she has no knight to defend her. Lunet knows that Ywain is the celebrated Knight with the Lion. In order for Alundyne to accept Ywain once more, Lunet tricks her into swearing an oath to reconcile with the knight (Ywain). Lunet views the deceit to be in her patron's best interests yet she must feign humility in order to gain her complete trust. Chrétien's original demonstrates how Lunet carries out this delicate stratagem:

> Tu, fait la dame, qui tant ses,
> Me di comment j'en penserai
> Et jë a ton los en ferai.
> Dame, certes, se je savoie,
> Volentiers vous conseilleroie.
> Mais vous ariés grant mestier
> De plus raisnaule conseillier. (6566-6572)

> ['You who are so clever,' said her lady, 'tell me what I should do about it, and I'll follow your advice.'' Indeed, my lady, if I had a solution I would gladly offer it; but you need a much wiser counselor than I.'(*Arthurian Romances*, 377)]

As shown in the French, Chrétien uses rhyme to denote important concepts in the passage linked to Lunete: intelligence ("qui tant ses") and wise counsel ("raisnaule conseillier"). The theme of counsel, or the OF *conseil,* features extensively in this episode and the English translation preserves the French root form and meaning:

> "Dere Lunet, what is thi rede?
> Wirk I wil by thi kounsail,
> For I ne wate noght what mai avail."
> "Madame," sho said, "I wald ful fayn
> Kownsail yow if it might gayn.
> Bot in this case it war mystere
> To have a wiser kownsaylere." (3866-3872)

As illustrated in the example, the English poet has again demonstrated an understanding of the French language through rhyme and conveyance of meaning. On three occasions we find the repetition of forms of *kownsail* and twice in the short passage it parallels their usage in the French (*Yvain* lines 6570 and 6572, *YG* lines 3870 and 3872). Furthermore, the poet uses the OF word, *mestier,* including it as the ME derivative, *mystere.* Both words imply 'need' or 'necessity' and sound similar in each language. The derived word fits seamlessly in the rhyme scheme without loss of content. The use and positioning of *mystere* and *kownsaylere* and the last two lines in their entirety are compelling evidence of equivalence in medieval translation.

Lunet's success as the mediator between Ywain and Alundyne is a product of her intelligence and cunning. Her presentation as an intriguing character is consistent with her portrayal in Chrétien's text. She is the lynchpin for the reconciliation between Ywain and Alundyne and the subtleties of her role are not lost in translation. Indeed, her role as the master manipulator is consistent in comparison with another character in the text, Gawain. In the case of Gawain, he is the exponent of power in both *Yvain* and *YG* and serves as a counterpoint to Lunet since he is Ywain's companion and advisor whilst Lunet fulfils that function for Alundyne. Gawain is at odds with the reconciliation between Ywain and Alundyne, and it is largely because of him that Ywain fails to return to his wife at the appointed time. Furthermore, the character of Gawain in *YG* is representative of power in the form of violence and conflict in its direct and physical form, a poignant contrast to Lunet who exerts influence through guile. As representative of this role, the final battle between Ywain and Gawain demonstrates continuity between source and translation in the preservation of details. If we first consider *Yvain*, Chrétien describes the destructive nature of their combat:

> Et les haubers ont si derous
> Et les escus si depechiés,
> N'i a celui ne soit blechiés.
> Et tant se painent et travaillent,
> A poi qu'alaines ne lor faillent;
> Si se combatant une chaude

Que jagonce në esmeraude
N'ont sor les hiames atachie
Ne soit molue et esquachie,
Car des poins si grans cops se donnent
Sor les hiames que tiut s'estonnent
Et par poi qu'il ne s'eschervelent. (6126-6137)

[And their hauberks were so torn and their shields so battered that neither knight escaped
unharmed; they struggled so hard that both were nearly out of breath. The combat was so
heated that all the jacinths and emeralds that decorated their helmets were knocked loose and
crushed, for they pummeled their helmets so hard that both knights were stunned and had
their brains nearly beaten out. (*Arthurian Romances*, 371)]

Some of the key details in this passage include the torn armor and shields, the breathlessness and the

jacinths and emeralds on the pummeled helmets. *YG* reproduces these details in a different order but

with the same degree of specificity:

On helmes thai gaf slike strakes kene
That the riche stanes al bidene
And other gere that was ful gude,
Was overcoverd al in blode.
Thaire helmes war evel brusten bath,
And thai also war wonder wrath.
Thaire hauberkes als war al totorn
Both bihind and also byforn;
Thaire sheldes lay sheverd on the ground.
Thai rested than a litil stound
Forto tak thaire ande tham till, (3545-3555)

The *YG* poet describes the gemstones on their broken helmets, the torn hauberks, the splintered

shields and the need to catch their breath. The hauberks are defined in OF as *derous*, or torn, and

therefore a parallel to the ME, *totorn*. Chrétien describes the shields as *depechies*, or broken into

pieces. The English poet finds the equivalent in *shevered*, and we see both languages use a word

meaning a piece or fragment as the root form for the verb. The English poet is not quite as specific

regarding the gems since Chrétien states they are emerald and jacinth whereas the English becomes

vague when it describes them as simply *riche,* or precious. *YG* does, however, include the fact that

the stones are on the helmets. Finally, Chrétien indicates that the fighting is so fierce that they were

nearly out of breath: "A poi qu'alaines ne lor faillent." In *YG*, the poet translates the source as the

knights requiring a moment to catch their breath: "Forto tak thaire ande tham till," where *ande-* or *onde taken* is an idiomatic form in ME with the same meaning as the OF.

YG presents the same degree of detail in a comparable number of lines and manages to combine content with poetic form. In addition, the English poet is familiar with the intricacies of the French language and has attempted to find equivalence in the details. The lexical choices involved are calculated and deliberate, as YG accurately reflects the semantics of its source. The *YG* poet understood the subtleties and linguistic components of his source and attempted to recreate the same level of form and meaning.

If we look at another example from this episode, we see the use of words of French origin in the English translation. The passage from *Yvain* establishes how the knights are perfectly matched in martial ability:

> Si qu'a tous est a grant merveille;
> Et la bataille est si pareille
> Quë on ne set par nul avis
> Qui ait le miels ne qui le pis.
> Et nes li dui qui se combatent,
> Qui par martire honnour acatent,
> S'esmerveillent et esbahissent; (6191-6197)

> [The battle was so even that there was no way to determine who was getting the better, or the worse. Even the two who were fighting, purchasing honour by their suffering, were amazed and astounded; (*Arthurian Romances*, 372)]

YG includes many words of French origin in important positions within the text, coupling rhyme with content:

> Al that ever saw that batayl,
> Of thaire might had grete mervayl.
> Thai saw never under the hevyn
> Twa knightes that war copled so evyn.
> Of al the folk was none so wise,
> That wist whether sold have the prise;
> For thai saw never so stalworth stoure,
> Ful dere boght thai that honowre. (3593-3600)

As illustrated in the example, five of the eight words used in the rhyme pattern are of French origin and most are clearly derived from the original. *Batayl, mervayl, prise, stoure* and *honowre* have their root in French. Of these words, *batayl, mervayl* and *honowre* are taken directly from the source.[84] *Prise* is the ME derivative of the OF *prise*, meaning booty or prey, and in this case the word is in reference to the prize of winning. *Stoure* derives from the OF *estor*, meaning combat or battle, and replaces the verb *se combater*. In each case, the use of these words as part of the rhyme highlights their role in *YG* and creates a direct correlation with *Yvain*. Such concentration of distinctly French words that fulfill the same meaning within the passage strongly suggests that the *YG* poet desired equivalence. It is an equivalence assisted by a common lexicon and similar pronunciation yet, more important, the passage is emblematic of the intention for parity. As such, we see how the passage above not only attempts to echo and emulate its source but succeeds in blurring, to an extent, the linguistic borders between the two languages.

Despite such convincing evidence of conceivably more modern practices in translation, there are omissions in *YG* that would suggest it to be more akin to an adaptation than a translation. The occurrence of these omissions, or "lacunae," could make *YG* appear as an incomplete translation or simply an adaptation since the English author has been selective in the use of source material. The gaps that appear in the English text reduce it to approximately three-fifths of Yvain's length, a reduction of about twenty-eight hundred lines.[85] I shall discuss several significant examples of omissions that demonstrate a variety of authorial choices that change the tone from the original.

Early in *YG*, there is an omission of the reference to Colgrevance's enemy, Esclados, looking like a lion. The detail is important in *Yvain* since it foreshadows the arrival of the lion later in the text. Indeed, the knight is soon to be the enemy of Ywain, and surprisingly Ywain finds love in the

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[84] *Bataille, merveille* and *honnour* in *Yvain*.

[85] See "Chivalric Romance" by Maldwyn Mills in *The Arthur of the English*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 117.

widow of his defeated foe. In *Yvain*, Calogrenant retells his story and describes the approaching

knight:

> Quant je le vi tout seul venant,
> Mon cheval restrains maintenant,
> N'au monter demeure ne fis;
> Et chil me vint mal talentis,
> Plus tost c'uns drois alerions,
> Fiers par samblant comme lions. (481-486)

> [When I saw him coming all alone, I caught my horse at once and did not delay in mounting;
> and he, as if with evil intent, flew at me swifter than an eagle, looking as fierce as a lion.
> (Arthurian Romances, 301)]

The corresponding passage in YG omits the details and reduces the description:

> Sone than saw I cum a knight;
> In riche armurs was he digt,
> And sone, when I gan on him loke,
> Mi shelde and spere to me I toke. (403-406)

The omission is conspicuous since this is the only reference to a lion before the episode when the

Ywain and the animal first meet. The allusion of the lion in *Yvain* serves as a precursor of the future

encounter when Yvain saves the lion. Later in the text, YG omits an important detail from Yvain

when the hero must choose between fighting the lion or the dragon. Yvain engages in an internal

debate, rationalizing between the two beasts:

> A lui meïsmes se conseille
> Auquel des deuz il aidera.
> Lors dist c'au lyon secorra,
> Qu'a enuious et a felon
> Ne doit on faire se mal non.
> Et li serpens est enuious,
> Si li saut par la goule fus,
> Tant est de felonnie plains.
> Che se pense Mesire Yvains
> Qu'il l'ochirra premierement. (3354-3363)

> [He asked himself which of the two he would help. Then he determined that he would take
> the lion's part, since a venomous and wicked creature deserves only harm: the dragon was
> venomous and fire leapt from his mouth because it was so full of wickedness. Therefore my
> lord Yvain determined that he would slay it first. (*Arthurian Romances*, 337)]

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Yvain evaluates the two creatures and determines that the dragon is deserving of harm since it spews fire and venom. *YG* includes no moral deliberation. Instead, there is an immediate and unexplained impulse to action on behalf of the lion:

> The lyoun had over litel myght
> Ogaynes the dragon forto fyght.
> Than Sir Ywayn made him bown
> Forto sucore the lyown; (1985-1988)

The English poet simply positions the lion as the weaker party in the fight and offers no further clarification as to why Ywain chooses to help the lion when he, like his French counterpart, assumes the lion is just as likely to attack him as the dragon.[86] Rather, the lion belies his ferocious reputation and subsequently acquiesces in gratitude to Ywain. It is possible the English poet assumed such knowledge on the part of the audience and therefore it was unnecessary to explain why Ywain chose to help the lion.[87] More importantly, the omission of the foreshadowing of the lion and the internal debate that establishes the premise for Ywain as the knight with the lion, are symptomatic of *YG*'s disregard for Chrétien's irony and greater psychological depth invested in his characters.

In terms of Chrétien's irony in *Yvain*, we see instances when events foreshadow the later narrative. For example, the initial quarrel between Keu and Yvain augurs their future combat after Yvain has become the knight of the well. The subtlety of Yvain's comments belies his future actions and serves as an ironic touch:

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[86] The French and the English show Ywain to anticipate an attack by the lion:
> Quant le leon deliver eut,
> Cuida qu'a li li couvenist
> Combatre et que sus li venist. (*Yvain,* lines 3388-3391)

> [Once he had rescued the lion, he still thought that it would attack him and he would have to do battle with it. (*Arthurian Romances*, 337)]

> He thoght, "If the lyoun me asayle,
> Redy sal he have batayle." (*YG,* lines 1999-2000)

[87] In medieval culture, the dragon or serpent is often associated with the devil, primarily through the biblical story of Eden; see Genesis, chapter 3. The lion is often associated with Christ as the Lion of Judah because of medieval interpretations of Revelation 5:5. Medieval bestiaries often associated the lion with Christ.

> Mais je n'ai cure de tenchier,
> Ne de mellee commenchier,
> Que chil ne fait pas le mellee
> Qui fiert la premiere colee,
> Ains le fait chil qui se revenge.
> Bien tencheroit a un estrange
> Qui ramposne son compaignon. (637-643)

> [But I have no wish to quarrel or start something foolish; because it isn't the man who delivers the first blow who starts the fight, but he who strikes back. A man who insults his friend would gladly quarrel with a stranger. (Arthurian Romances, 302-303)]

The equivalent passage in *YG* omits the irony when it fails to mention how a man that insults a friend will gladly quarrel with a stranger:

> "Thare sold na stryf be us bytwene.
> Unkowth men wele may he shende
> That to his felows es so unhende.
> And als, madame, men says sertayne
> That, wo so flites or turnes ogayne,
> He bygins al the melle:
> So wil I noght it far by me." (500-506)

The omission is significant since the reference to the conflict with both friend and stranger is the very same situation encountered between Ywain and Kay, and then later between Ywain and Gawain. In both cases, Ywain is ostensibly friends with Kay and Gawain, yet he is also a stranger since they do not recognize him.[88] The irony resides in the dichotomy of Ywain being equally a friend and a stranger to his companions, and in both episodes the revelation of identity reinforces the contrast.

Of greater importance yet of equal subtlety is the irony in the conversation between Ywain and Alundyne. In Chrétien's *Yvain*, the hero is disguised and tells his estranged wife that he cannot remain at court while his lady is angry with him:

> Et il dist: «dame, che n'iert hui
> Que je me maigne en chest point,
> Tant que ma dame me pardoinst

---

[88] Ywain recognizes Kay whereas both he and Gawain are mutually unaware of each other's identity during their battle.

Son mautalent et son courous.
Lors finera mes travax tous.
Chertes, fait ele, che me poise.
Je ne tieng mie por courtoise
La dame qui mal cuer vous porte.
Ne deüst pas veer sa porte
A chevalier de vostre pris
Se trop n'eüst vers li mepris. (4582-4592)

[And he replied: 'My lady, I cannot remain a single day in this place until my lady has ceased her anger and displeasure towards me. Only then will my task be ended.' 'Indeed,' she said, 'this troubles me; I don't consider the lady who bears you ill-will to be very courteous. She should not close her door to a knight of your renown unless he had grievously offended her.' (*Arthurian Romances*, 352)]

It is ironic because the angry lady is Laudine herself and the disguised knight is Yvain, the source of the grievous offence. The irony is, again, a foreshadowing of the reconciliation that will occur at the end of the story when Lunete reveals the knight with the lion to be Yvain and the self-realization that Laudine must not perjure herself in contravention of the oath to her maidservant.

YG omits entirely the irony of this episode. Instead, the emphasis resides in Ywain's wish to leave and the text gives no reason as to why he must go:

She wald wele lever have laten him pas;
And tharfore wald he noght be knawen
Both for hir ese and for his awyn.
He said, "No lenger dwel I ne may;
Beleves wele and haves goday.
I prai to Crist, hevyn kyng,
Lady, len yow gude lifing,
And len grace, that al yowre anoy
May turn yow unto mykel joy."
Sho said, "God grant that it so be." (2670-2679)

The omission of the oblique reference to themselves devalues the interaction between Ywain and Alundyne. Moreover, it loses a critical stance regarding their relationship. There is a subtext in *Yvain* that demonstrates how the hero has understood the gravity of his mistake and, conversely, Laudine already recognizes his nobility and acknowledges his efforts at reconciliation.

The loss of irony is tantamount to a reduction of narrative depth in *YG*. The omission

extends to the characters themselves in the reduced "psychology" evident in the internal narration.

The irony relates to characterization in *Yvain* since, as noted above, the paradox of what the

characters say and do demonstrates to the audience how they change and grow throughout the story.

For example, Yvain exhibits his fear that he will not avenge his cousin if he does not defeat

Esclados, and he reminds himself of Kay's mockery:

> Ainsi fuit chil, et chil le chace
> Si pres, a poi qu'il ne l'embrache;
> Et si ne s'en puet pas rataindre,
> Si est si pres quë il l'ot plaindre
> De la destreche quë il sent;
> Mais tous jours au fuïr entent,
> Et quil du cachier s'estvertue,
> Qu'il crient se paine avoir perdue
> Se mort ou vif ne le detient,
> Que des rampornes li souvient
> Que mesire Keus li ot dites. (883-893)

> [So the knight fled and Yvain pursued so closely that he could almost grab him. Yet he
> couldn't quite reach him, though he was so close that he could hear him groan from the
> distress he felt. Yet all this time he was intent upon escaping and Yvain likewise upon his
> pursuit. My lord Yvain feared his efforts would be wasted if he were unable to capture the
> knight dead or alive, for he recalled the insults that Sir Kay had flung his way. (*Arthurian
> Romances*, 306)]

Yvain fears the failure of his quest in particular because of Kay's insults. The corresponding passage

in *YG* omits any reference to Ywain's feelings:

> And fast he fled with al hys mayne,
> And fast folowd Syr Ywayne.
> Bot he ne might him overtake,
> Tharfore grete murning gan he make.
> He folowd him ful stowtlyk
> And wald have tane him ded or quik.
> He folowd him to the ceté;
> Na man lyfand met he. (663-670)

The language is more direct and matter-of-fact than in the French account. Most significantly, the

English poet has been selective in how he uses the source. Through the omission of the fear of

failure, *YG* offers no deeper dimension to the hero. Indeed, the English appears to present the opposite impression when it describes Ywain following the knight *stowtlyk* (boldly). Without the sense of doubt latent in the French narrative, the English Ywain appears to be more certain of his success. Even the direct translation of taking the knight *ded or quik* (dead or alive) has a more resolute presentation in *YG* with the omission of the potential shame that may result from defeat. Most important, the absence of any reference to Kay's insults prevents the audience from understanding Ywain's pride and concern for reputation that characterizes him at this point in the French source.

Ywain is not the only character that loses some depth through omissions in *YG*. Although the character of Laudine/Alundyne has an intermittent role in both texts, her internal struggle is more apparent in *Yvain* than *YG*. For instance, we gain a deeper insight into her character through an internal dialog when she imagines a conversation with Yvain:

> Si ce desraine tout ausi
> Com s'il fust venus devant li,
> Si ce commence a plaidoier:
> «Va, fet elle, puez tu noier
> Que par toi ne soit morz me sire?
> -Ce, fet il, ne pui ge desdire,
> Ainz l'otroy bien. –Di donc por coy!
> Feïs le tu por mal de moy,
> Por haïne, ne por despit?
> -Ja n'aie je de mort respit
> S'onques por mal de vous le fis.
> -Dont n'as tu riens vers moi mespris,
> Ne vers lui n'eüs tu nul tort,
> Que c'il peüst, il t'eüst mort;
> Por ce, mien escïent, cuit gié
> Que j'ai a droit et bien jugié.»
> Ainssi par li meïsmes pruesve,
> Que droit senz et raison i trueve, (1757-1774)

[So she debated just as if he had come into her presence and she had beg[u]n to plead the case with him: 'do you seek to deny,' she asked, 'that my husband died at your hands?' 'That,' he said, 'I cannot deny, and I fully acknowledge it.' Then tell me why. Did you do it to hurt me, or out of hatred or spite?' 'May death come swiftly if I ever did it to hurt you.' 'Then you have done no wrong to me, nor did you wrong him, for had he been able he would

have killed you. Therefore it seems to me I've given a just and rightful judgement.' In this manner she herself found good cause and reason for not hating him. (*Arthurian Romances*, 316-317)]

The passage reveals a rational side to Laudine that is absent in *YG*. The language in the French is intrinsically complex, compounded by several subjunctives that further emphasize the speculative nature of the conversation. Above all, the inner dialogue demonstrates that Laudine uses logic and that she is not entirely subject to Lunete's machinations. The English, on the other hand, transitions from the argument between Lunet and Alundyne to the latter's self-reproach for her harsh words:

> The lady thought than al the nyght,
> How that sho had na knight
> Forto seke hir land thorghout
> To kepe Arthurgh and hys rowt.
> Than bigan hir forto shame
> And hirself fast forto blame.
> Unto hirself fast gan sho fyte
> And said, "With wrang now I hir wite.
> Now hopes sho I wil never mare
> Luf hir als I have done are.
> I wil hir luf with main and mode;
> For that sho said was for my gode. (1021-1039)

Since Alundyne does not come to her own conclusion as to why Ywain has done her no wrong, she appears more dependent on Lunet and easily influenced by her maidservant's rhetoric.

The most striking omission in *YG* is the loss of the episode in which Yvain becomes a prisoner to love. The allegory in *Yvain* conveys more than the description of falling in love, it represents the powerful bond between Yvain and Laudine and makes her later rejection of him all the more profound. The French describes Yvain's inner revelation as follows:

> Ainsi mesire Yvains devise
> Cheli qui de duel se debrise,
> Ne mais ne quit qu'il avenist
> Que nus hom qui prison tenist
> Amast en soi fole maniere,
> Don't il ne fera ja proiere,
> Ne autres pour li, che puet ester.
> Tant fu Yvains a la fenestre
> Qu'il en vit la dame raler

> Et quë on eut fait avaler
> Ambedeuz les portes coulans.
> De che fust uns autres dolans,
> Que mix amast sa delivranche
> Qu'il ne feïst la demouranche.
> Et il met autrement a oevre:
> Ne li caut s'on les ferme ou oevre. (1511-1526)

> [Thus my lord Yvain observed the lady racked with grief, and I don't believe it ever
> happened that any man in prison – as my lord Yvain was imprisoned and in fear of losing his
> head – was ever so madly in love and yet unable to express his feelings to her or, even, find
> anyone to do so for him. He remained at the window until he saw the lady leave and both
> gates lowered again. Someone else, who preferred his freedom to remaining here might have
> been upset; but for him it was all the same whether the gates were closed or open. (*Arthurian
> Romances*, 313)]

The passage presents an allegory in which he is both physically and emotionally imprisoned. In the
case of the latter, Yvain is bound by love as opposed to walls or gates. The significance of this
allegory extends beyond this episode since it is in direct opposition to his actions after the marriage
with Laudine. She gives Yvain the freedom to go on tournaments and adventures for one year, and
he fails to return to the gates of her castle within the allotted time. *YG* omits the allegory and replaces
it with the more conventional allegory of love as a physical injury:

> Now lat we the lady be,
> And of Sir Ywaine speke we.
> Luf, that es so mekil of mayne,
> Sare had wownded Sir Ywayne,
> That whareso he sal ride or ga,
> His hert sho has that es his fa.
> His hert he has set al bydene,
> Whare himself dar noght be sene.
> Bot thus in langing bides he
> And hopes that it sal better be. (869-878)

As evident in the example, the effect of seeing Alundyne is quite different from the source. In *YG*,
the effect of love wounds him and exposes his heart. The implication is that love has made him more
vulnerable ("His hert sho has that es his fa. / His hert he has set al bydene, / Whare himself dar noght
be sene"). In both the French and English, the object of his love is his enemy. *YG* clearly positions
Alundyne as his *fa*, or foe, yet omits the section in the source that associates an enemy with hatred.

Both texts are in agreement that Alundyne is an enemy although in the French, Yvain

questions whether this is indeed the case:

> Et je m'anemie le claim
> Qu'ele me het, si n'a pas tort,
> Car che qu'ele amoit li ai mort.
> Et dont sui je ses anemis?
> Nenil, chertes, mes se amis,
> C'onques mais tan tamer ne vaux. (1460-1465)

> [And should she consider me her friend? Yes, indeed, because I love her. Yet I must call her
> my enemy because she hates me, and rightfully so, since I have killed the one she loved. Am
> I therefore her enemy? Indeed I am not, but her friend instead, for I've never before loved
> anyone so much. (*Arthurian Romances*, 313)]

Yvain theorizes that he is her enemy because she hates him whereas she is his friend because he

loves her. Thus we see a sophisticated wordplay in the opposition between love and hatred, friend

and enemy. The paradox is central to the appreciation of the relationship and foreshadows the

antagonism that occurs when Yvain fails to return to her after his time adventuring.

The irony of the situation is, again, lost in *YG*. The English poet offers a more simplified

version, omitting the connection between friend and foe, love and hate:

> Thus was Syr Ywayne sted that sesowne;
> He wroght ful mekyl ogayns resowne
> To set his luf in swilk a stede,
> Whare thai hated him to the dede.
> He sayd he sold have hir to wive,
> Or els he sold lose his lyve. (903-908)

As shown in the example, we see the contrast between love and hatred, yet the poet misses the

opportunity to highlight the paradox inherent in the physical situation. The English is more direct in

the presentation of Ywain's inner conflict since he cannot reconcile the opposition of his feelings and

those of the one he loves. Indeed, *YG* appears to offer a more pragmatic conclusion to Ywain's

dilemma: In order for Ywain to survive, he must find a way to make Alundyne his wife.

In addition to the interaction between Ywain and Alundyne, the author of *YG* perceived a

key theme in the source in the relationship between Ywain and Gawain and evidently drew it to the

forefront in his version. Indeed, the title of the work is deliberate and not a copyist's addition since the author refers to the title three times within the poem: in the initial and closing rubric, and in line four of the poem itself. The English title is significant since it represents the rejection of the French title: the knight with the lion.[89] The French title highlights the lion as Yvain's primary companion. The English title, therefore, presents Gawain ostensibly as the lion's replacement and Ywain's partner in arms. Ywain retains the identity of the knight with the lion in *YG* and the association with reputation is likewise the function of the lion in this case. The lion becomes emblematic of Ywain after Alundyne's rejection as opposed to being his companion. Above all, the change in the title diminishes the role of the lion and elevates the role of Gawain.

Gawain's narrative function is clearer and more defined in *YG*. He serves as a counterpart to Ywain and yet provides a sense of opposition. That is to say, Gawain represents the obstacle that Ywain must overcome to fulfil his marital duties to Alundyne. In *Yvain*, Gawain presents a detailed speech that expresses the central conflict between the demands of honour and conjugal duty. This rhetorical appeal draws on the old friendship between the two knights and suggests that by adventuring, a knight enhances himself as a lover:

> Or ne devés vous pas songier,
> Mais les tournoiemenz ongier
> Et emprendrë a fort jouster,
> Quoi quë il vous doie couster.
> Assés songe qui ne se muet.
> Chertes, vous en estuet
> Sans vous envoier autre ensengne.
> Gardés quë en vous ne remaigne,
> Biaus compains, notre compagnie,
> Qu'en moi ne faurra ele mie.
> Merveille est comment en n'acure
> De l'aisse qui tous jors li dure:
> Biens adoucist par delaier,
> Et plus est dolz a ensaier
> Unz petis biens, quant il delaie,

---

[89] Chrétien refers to this title on two occasions at the end of the poem: in the closing lines in which he uses his name in the third person as the originator of the tale and again in the explicit.

C'uns grans, qui tout adés l'ensaie. (2503-2523)

[Now is not the time to dream your life away but to frequent tournaments, engage in combat, and joust vigorously, whatever it might cost you. He who hesitates achieves nothing! Indeed, you must come along, for I'll fight under your banner. See to it that our friendship doesn't end because of you, dear companion, for it will never fail on my account. Its remarkable how one can come to luxuriate in a life of constant ease. But pleasures grow sweeter when delayed, and a small pleasure postponed is more delightful than a great one enjoyed today. (*Arthurian Romances*, 326-327)]

Gawain's speech involves two rhetorical elements: the first involves the commitment to the friendship and the second argues that he will be a better husband for the time spent away from his wife. In terms of their friendship, Gawain warns that if Yvain stays at home with Laudine, the friendship will end. However, by returning to Britain and tourneying with Gawain, Yvain will effectively kill two birds with one stone by enhancing his reputation and the love between him and his wife.

In *YG*, Gawain's speech to Ywain reiterates the concern with inciting a deeper love yet omits the duty to friendship:

> For when a knyght es chevalrouse,
> His lady es the more jelows.
> Also sho lufes him wele the bet.
> Tharfore, sir, thou sal noght let
> To haunt armes in ilk cuntré;
> Than wil men wele more prayse the.
> Thou hase inogh to thi despens;
> Now may thow wele hante turnamentes.
> Thou and I sal wende infere,
> And I will be at thi banere.
> I dar noght say, so God me glad,
> If I so fayre a leman had,
> That I ne most leve al chevalry
> At hame ydel with hir to ly. (1463-1476)

The English is more preoccupied with Ywain's commitment to chivalry than to the bond of friendship with Gawain. In essence, Gawain's speech in *YG* positions him as representative of *chevalry*. Gawain embodies all that is associated with the knightly profession, and he believes he would resist the temptation to remain idle at home with a beautiful lover. Gawain offers Ywain a

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different choice in each text: the choice between friendship and love in *Yvain* and a decision between chivalry and love in *YG*. The shift is subtle yet important. The English author has identified Gawain as an essential component in Ywain's personal struggle between chivalric and marital responsibilities and raises his status and profile within the story.

The culmination of Gawain's role is in the final battle with Ywain towards the end of the story. Friedmann and Harrington have concluded that "both Chrétien and the English author considered Ywain's ability to match Gawain in combat the climactic point of the romance."[90] Indeed, this battle serves to restore Ywain's reputation at court and signals the end of his identity as the knight with the lion. The two knights cannot best each other in combat and the lack of a clear victor speaks volumes as to an important theme in the romance. Gawain, as the exponent of all things chivalric, cannot defeat a knight who is attempting to redeem himself for a wrong committed against his wife. Yet, conversely, Ywain cannot defeat a knight who has rejected married life in favour of a life devoted to chivalry. As such, there is a tension in *Yvain* and *YG* that a knight must strive for balance between marital and chivalric duty since one cannot surpass the other.[91]

Characteristic of Chrétien's style in *Yvain*, we see a detailed narrative interlude in the middle of the battle about love and hate. The interpolation that breaks up the description of action is a commentary on the significance of the episode. Indeed, the narrator addresses the audience directly as a signal for the listener to pay attention to the meaning of the battle:

> Et or donc ne s'entr'aiment il?
> « Oïl », vous respond, et « nenil »,
> Et l'un et l'autre prouverai
> Si que raison i trouverai.
> Pour voir, mesire Gavains aime

---

[90] *Ywain and Gawain*, EETS no. 254, 110.

[91] William Calin suggest that Ywain morally surpasses "his companion and alter ego". I would disagree with this assertion since the inability of either knight to win represents a moral as well as physical impasse. Calin also argues that the replacement of Gawain with the lion as his companion is a rejection of Gawain's chivalric persona. Instead, I would argue the disappearance of the lion after the battle between Ywain and Gawain as well as Ywain's return to courtly society are emblematic of reconciliation between marriage and chivalry.

Yvain et compeignon le claime,
Et Yvains lui, ou quë il soit.
Nes ici, së il le savoit,
Feroit il ja de luy grant feste
Et si metroit pour lui sa teste;
Et cil la siue ausi pour lui
Anchois qu'en li feïst anuy. (5997-6008)

[And did they not love one another now? Yes, I answer you, and no. And I'll prove that each reply is correct. My lord Gawain truly loves Yvain and calls him his companion; and Yvain loves him, wherever he might be. Even here, if he recognized him, he would rejoice at once to see him and would give his head for Gawain, and Gawain his for Yvain, before he would let any harm befall him. (*Arthurian Romances*, 370)]

The passage illustrates another key opposition or tension within the text, the incongruity of emotion. The sentiment is highly reminiscent of the commentary about Yvain and Laudine. We see the same juxtaposition of affection and enmity as occurred in the preamble to Yvain and Laudine's meeting. In the instance of this later conflict, Ywain and Gawain are unaware of the identity of their enemy and likewise unaware of their love for one another.

As the passage proceeds, Chrétien describes the broader significance of the theme. Love and hate become characters themselves and have an allegorical function as representations of the external and internal:

Espoirs Amors s'estoit enclose
En aucune chamber celee
Et Haïne s'en iert alee
Es loges par devers la voie
Pour che qu'ele veut qu'on la voie.
Or est Haïne molt en coche,
Qu'ele esperonne et point et broche
Sor Amor quanquë ele puet.
Et Amor onques ne se muet.
Ha! Amors, ou iés tu reposte?
Car t'en is, si verras quel hoste
Ont sor toi amené et mis
Li ennemi a tes amis. (6031-6044)

[Perhaps Love is locked within some secret inner nook, and Hatred is on the balcony above the street, because she wants the folk to notice her. Now Hatred is in the saddle, for she spurs and charges and tramples over Love as hard as she can, while Love does not stir. Ah, Love!

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Where are you hidden? Come out and you'll see what an army the enemies of your friends have brought and set against you. (*Arthurian Romances*, 370)]

It is clear in *Yvain* that the conflict is not simply between Yvain and Gawain. Rather, it is an issue of how hatred can deceive and distract from love. The digression draws attention to the theme, and the personification of love and hate extends the significance from the two companions to other pairings such as Yvain and Laudine and the two sisters who are the cause for the duel between the knights.

In contrast, the English poet dispenses with the extensive narration in favor of a more direct summary of the contrast between love (*luf*) and hate (*envy*):

Ful grete luf was bitwix tham twa,
And now er aither other fa;
Ne the king kowth tham noght knaw,
For thai wald noght thaire faces shew.
If owther of tham had other sene,
Grete luf had bene tham bitwene;
Now was this a grete selly
That trew luf and so grete envy,
Als bitwix tham twa was than,
Might bath at anes be in a man. (3515-3524)

Love and hate do not take on identities of their own or display deeper significance. The focus of the passage remains with the two knights without any digression. The juxtaposition of love and hate has been preserved, yet the narrator maintains the pace of the action and does not directly address the audience. Nor do we see hypothetical questions or allegorical explanations of the relationship between love and hate. Instead, *YG* maintains narrative flow and binds the theme of love and hate closely to the battle between Ywain and Gawain.

In the battle between Ywain and Gawain, the revelation of their identities represents a victory of love over hate. Both knights concede defeat, yet the conflict enhances their reputation and honor and the two are reconciled as friends once more. In addition, the inheritance dispute between the two sisters of the Black Thorn (La Noire Espine) is brought to an accord by King Arthur's adjudication, a pronouncement afforded by the amicable conclusion to the battle. The episode is a

striking precursor to the final reconciliation between Ywain and Alundyne. Both texts display

parallels in the reconstitution of love and the surrender of enmity. Moreover, since the re-avowal of

marriage between Ywain and Alundyne appears at the end of the story, I would offer an addendum

to Friedmann and Harrington's view that the battle between Ywain and Gawain is the climax of the

story in each case. It is clear that Ywain's adventures are brought to a conclusion in the revelation of

identity, but only in the final reavowal of marriage between Ywain and Alundyne do the stories of

Yvain and *YG* strike their resonant note. Instead of an end to the martial conflict, it is the marital

tension that remains the most important theme of the story.

If reconciliation is the unifying goal in *Yvain* and *YG*, the reason for the struggle is different.

Where *Yvain* expounds love within marriage as the principle motivating factor in the story, *YG* shifts

the theme to the concept of a *trowth(e),* or troth. T*rowth(e)* has various meanings although, in the

case of *YG*, the significance of the word is bound to the concept of pledging an oath and similar to its

modern usage.[92] *Trowth(e)* can mean loyalty, constancy, truth, honour, promise, oath. All of them

vary according to context. The word has no direct parallel in OF since its root is in OE.[93] It appears

six times in *YG* and on each occasion, the author places the word in direct association with a

commitment or promise. Indeed, the opening prologue to the story the poet uses the word twice and,

in doing so, connects love to *trowth* and laments that people no longer keep their promises:

> For trowth and luf es al bylaft;
> Men uses now another craft.
> With worde men makes it trew and stabil,
> Bot in thaire faith es noght bot fabil;
> With the mowth men makes it hale,
> Bot trew trowth es nane in the tale. (35-40)

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[92] Although the word troth exists in modern English, the term is archaic and by means of analysis in texts such as *YG*, we may gain a deeper understanding of its usage and root meaning. I have, therefore, included some examples to determine the meaning of *trowth* as it pertains to *YG*.

[93]*trēowþ*, *trīewþ*.

The example above is one of the few occasions of narrative digression when the poet declares a purpose and contemporary message for his audience. Here the repetition of *trowth* suggests that men have lost their appreciation of the concept and offers the story of Ywain as an illustration of how a man must endeavour to fulfill his promises.[94] The aside does not appear in *Yvain*. The insertion of the comment by the narrator, combined with its position at the introduction to *YG*, highlights its prominence as a theme.

On three occasions, the English poet links *trowth* and *plyght* and each instance reveals the meaning of the word for this particular text.[95] The first references the desire on the part of Alundyne's household that they wish for Ywain and their liege-lady to be engaged and wed:

> And ilkane said thamself bitwene
> (So faire a man had thai noght sene),
> "For his bewté in hal and bowre
> Him semes to be an emperowre.
> We wald that thai war trowth-plight
> And weded sone this ilk nyght." (1201-1206)

The combination of *trowth-plight*, meaning to make a promise or to give one's word, conveys a deep-rooted oath that is bound by a code of honour.[96] Since the household voices this wish, the marriage between Ywain and Alundyne becomes a social function that will protect not only Alundyne, but the household as well. Indeed, Ywain promises to protect the well and by not returning to Alundyne, Ywain has also failed in his duty to his role as guardian of the spring.

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[94] Tony Hunt writes in reference to the *YG* prologue that "The English poet identifies this quality of trowthe in "þe flower of chevallry" represented by Arthur's court. His prologue is devoted not to generic indications (no reference to the Bretons' belief in Arthur's imperishable name) nor to an idealization of Arthur, but to the exemplification of the primacy of trowthe." "Beginnings, Middles, and Ends" in *The Craft of Fiction*, ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester, MI: Solaris Press, 1984), 91.

[95] "I pledge thee my troth" is part of a traditional Christian wedding ceremony from the Book of Common Prayer which dates from 1549.

[96] OE *pliht*.

The second use of *trowth* and *plight* occurs in a parallel situation where Ywain forces an earl, Syr Alers, to become the prisoner of a lady.[97] Although the earl and lady are not bound by marriage, or the promise of marriage, the analogy is clear. Ywain defeats the earl and forces him to commit himself to the lady's prison. The earl must also repair the damage he had wrought on her towers and fortresses:

> The eril saw al might noght gain;
> He yalde him sone to Sir Ywayn.
> And sone he has his trowth plyght
> To wend with him that ilk night
> Unto the lady of grete renowne
> And profer him to hir presowne,
> And to do him in hir grace
> And also to mend his trispase. (1923-1930)

The earl's *trispase*, or transgression, against the lady is reminiscent of Ywain's transgression against Alundyne. Thus, Ywain's actions are representative of his mission to mend the damage he caused against his wife. The use of *trowth* here becomes more symbolic of Ywain's oath than that of the earl. Indeed, all of Ywain's actions from this moment onwards are in the effort to win back Alundyne's favour and atone for his mistake.

The third and most revealing use of *trowth* and *plight* occurs in the reconciliation between Ywain and Alundyne. On this occasion, it is Alundyne who pledges her oath to Lunet that she will reconcile the knight with the lion and his lady, unbeknownst to her that she is the lady and the knight is Ywain:

> The lady answerd sone hir tyll,
> "That wil I do with ful gode will;
> Unto the here mi trowth I plight
> That I sal tharto do mi might."
> Sho said, "Madame, be ye noght wrath,
> I most nedes have of yow an ath,
> So that I mai be sertayn." (3899-3905)

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[97] Syr Alers is known as Comte (Count) Alier in *Yvain*.

Alundyne pledges this *trowth* to Lunet and is bound to it when she swears an oath on relics and a missal.[98] In this instance and in the previous example, *trowth* is preceded by a personal pronoun (*his, mi*). The word as a concept appears more as a personalized declaration of duty such as "giving one's word." As shown in the example, the *YG* poet uses *ath* in addition to *trowth* where Lunet requires a supplemental pledge. It would appear that Alundyne's personal *trowth* is insufficient by itself and that the oath must carry more pious weight.

The use of oaths continues in its importance and the declaration on the missal is the culmination of the story in both texts. There is a clear shift, however, in the reasoning of the oath between *Yvain* and *YG*. In *Yvain*, Lunete wishes to restore the love and affection that previously existed between Yvain and Laudine:

> Dame, fait el, hauchiés la main!
> Mes ne veul pas qu-aprés demain
> M'en metes sus ne che ne quoi,
> Que vous n'en faites riens pur moi.
> Pour vous meïsmes le ferés:
> Së il vous plaist, si juerrés
> Pour le chevalier au leon
> Que vous a boine entencion
> Vous penerés tant qu'il savra
> Que l'amor de same dame ara
> Tout en tout, si com il ot onques. (6629-6639)

> ['Raise your hand, my lady,' she said. 'I don't want you to blame me in the future for this or anything, because you are not doing me a favour. What you are doing is for your own benefit! If you please, swear now that you will do all that you can to see that the Knight with the Lion will be assured of having his lady's good favour, just as he once had it.' (*Arthurian Romances*, 378)]

In the example, Lunete asks Laudine to promise that she will do all she can to return the love of the knight's lady. As the passage continues, Laudine restates the oath to Lunete that she will return the love and good grace that the knight once enjoyed. As we see in Chrétien's work, the purpose for the reconciliation is the reconstitution of the relationship based on love.

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[98] Lunet than riche relikes toke,
  The chalis and the mes-boke; (3907-3908)

If we then consider the same episode in *YG*, the reasoning has more to do with the importance of upholding promises, or *trowth*, than the restoration of feelings between Ywain and Alundyne. There is no mention of love and no reference to the prior relationship:

> On knese the lady down hir set
> (Wit ye wele, than liked Lunet),
> Hir hand opon the boke sho laid,
> And Lunet althus to hir said,
> "Madame," sho said, "Thou salt swere here
> That thou sal do thi powere
> Both dai and night opon al wise
> Withouten anikyns fayntise
> To saghtel the Knyght with the Liown
> And his lady of grete renowne,
> So that no faut be funden in the."
> Sho said, "I grant, it sal so be." (3909-3920)

The omission of love is significant since the English author has left out the same emotion that inspired Ywain to marry Alundyne and then strive to regain her favour.[99] Instead, Lunet asks Alundyne to swear that she will reconcile the Knight with the Lion and his lady so that no fault can be found in her (Alundyne). Lunet is also specific in her preface to the oath when she states that she must fulfill the oath "withouten anikyns fayntise," or without any kind of deceit. Indeed, the oath and the adherence to it become more important than its purpose. The act of making the *ath* on the missal is paramount for the *YG* poet, and the passage advises that it is better to be beyond reproach than find cause for reconciliation.

The conclusion to YG brings full circle the goal highlighted in the narrator's prologue. Ywain, as representative of the importance of loyalty and constancy, achieves his goal to win back his lady's affection. The end result may not appear radically different from its source, *Yvain*, and that assumption is accurate. The *YG* poet has not drastically altered Chrétien's story and has followed the source through the poetic form, characters and lexical choice. We see the indelible mark of Chrétien's work throughout *YG*, not simply in the poetic structure and the overall plot progression

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[99] See *YG* lines 869-878.

but in the smallest of details with particular similarity in the episodes of battle. With these three facets of the text in mind, the form, the narrative and wording, YG can be viewed as a translation. It is a translation insofar as the English version demonstrates equivalence in all three areas.

Conversely, *YG* is an adaptation. The text reveals many omissions in comparison with *Yvain*. These omissions reduce some of the depth that is evident in the source. The missing sections in *YG* omit the foreshadowing or irony that serve to underscore a point within the text or to draw attention to the narrative as in the case of the conversation between Laudine and a disguised Yvain. Furthermore, the omission of internal dialog compounds the loss of depth in the English characters such as Ywain and Alundyne. This indicates the English adaptor's lack of interest in the psychology of the characters. His emphasis is on what characters say and do rather than upon what they think. Most notably, the bond between these characters and the emotional turmoil caused by Ywain's transgression is absent in *YG*. These "gaps" are more cause to label *YG* as an adaptation since they are a modification of the original.

The predominant theme of love in Yvain shifts to the importance of trowth in *YG*. The English text highlights the concept and applies it to both marital and chivalric duty as opposed to love and friendship as the uniting element in Yvain. The difference is subtle yet significant. The shift in emphasis is the most compelling argument for *YG* as an adaptation since the concept of *trowth* is an addition to the original both linguistically and thematically. With the focus on a different theme, *YG* becomes more than a translation since it seeks to make a new argument.

The question that remains is to what extent *YG* is a close translation or an adaptation. The text shows itself to be both and, therefore, neither exclusively. It could be argued that since it has elements of adaptation then it must be an adaptation. To do so would be to ignore the passages that are close to the original. Instead, *YG* requires its own classification as an adaptation that includes translation and therefore a distinct type of translation that does not conform to expectations of

equivalence. Such a combination of narrative techniques makes *YG* even more unique as a romance. It offers insight into medieval translation as a varied process that can both align and distance itself from the source.

Chapter 3

The Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*: an Adaptation of *La Mort le Roi Artu*

The stanzaic *Morte Arthur* is the only known English version of the French *La Mort le Roi Artu* [*Mort Artu*] produced before Malory's *Morte Darthur*.[100] It is an extensive reworking of the French source and, according to Carole Weinberg, the key features of the storyline "mirror, in outline, the narrative of the *Mort Artu*. But there are significant differences."[101] Indeed, the author of the stanzaic *Morte* makes changes that are immediately and obviously apparent such as the substantial reduction in length and the omission of the narrative interlace of its source. The poet does, however, preserve many of the core themes from his source, and the presentation of these themes demonstrates a sophisticated approach to adaptation. Weinberg asserts with regard to the stanzaic *Morte* that "Though seemingly naïve in its surface presentation of the story, it reveals a subtlety of treatment which at time approaches that of a modern novel."[102] It is an adaptation that exhibits obvious changes yet offers notable similarities with the French romance. As I will argue, the English poet succeeds in making a more straightforward version of the *Mort Artu* and manages to convey the psychological dimension of the source.[103]

The psychological dimension of the *Mort Artu* is a significant component of the text. The *Mort Artu* inherits the use of psychology from Chrétien de Troyes who introduced this narrative

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[100] *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* is believed to have been written late in the fourteenth century. See *Malory: Texts and Sources*, ed. P.J.C. Field (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1998), 37.

[101] Weinberg, "The Stanzaic Morte Arthur" in *The Arthur of the English*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 103.

[102] Weinberg, "The Stanzaic Morte Arthur" in *The Arthur of the English*, 111.

[103] As Jean Frappier states with regard to the author of the *Mort Artu*, "Il possède cette qualité, si rare à toutes les époques, et surtout au Moyen Age, de faire vivre des âmes de quelque complexité: entre tous les romanciers de son temps il mérite d'être appelé un romancier psychologue." *Étude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu* (Genève : Librairie Droz, 1972), 19.

dimension in the form of interior monologues.[104] The *Mort Artu* is different from Chrétien's work, however, since the narrator provides the insight into the character's thought process instead of the interior monologue. An example of this use of the narrator occurs when we learn of the shock experienced by Arthur upon learning from Morgan that Lancelot has committed adultery with Guinevere.[105] In addition, the narrator often provides insight into the thoughts and feelings of characters such as Gawain, who is described on one occasion as being "plus pensis qu'il ne seut" ["unusually deep in thought"].[106] Then, in his battle with Lancelot, we learn how Gawain's fear of losing compelled him to fight harder.[107] The narrator reveals the psychological dimension of the characters and, consequently, the thought processes have narrative significance.

The stanzaic *Morte* inherits the psychological dimension of the *Mort Artu,* and we have occasional insights by the narrator into the thoughts of the characters. In the case of King Arthur, the narrator informs us of the distress felt by the king when he learns that Mordred has usurped the throne:

> Suche message was hem brought:
> There was no-man that thought it goode.
> The kyng hy<m>-selfe full sone it thought
> (Full moche mornyd he in hys mode

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[104] See Robert W. Hanning's *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1977), 6.

[105] As Frappier notes in his *Étude sur La mort Le Roi Artu,* "l'auteur se montre bon disciple de Chrétien de Troyes : il laisse son goût d'étrangeté à l'aventure et use d'un merveilleux amenuisé, plus piquent que fantastique. Mais l'interêt de l'épisode réside surtout dans le jeu sournois de Morgain et les sentiments d'Artus à la révélation des amours coupables de Lancelot et de la reine : c'est donc un intérêt d'ordre psychologique." (291)

[106] OF quotations are all from *La Mort Le Roi Artu*, edited by Jean Frappier (Geneva: Librarie Droz, 1996). Modern English translations are primarily from *The Death of King Arthur*, translated with an introduction by James Cable (London: Penguin Books, 1971). *La Mort Le Roi Artu*, 182, [*The Death of King Arthur*, 169].

[107] "Et messire Gauvains, qui orendroit a la greigneur poor qu'il onques eüst et qui se voit en aventure de toute honte recevoir, s'il ne se puet deffendre, s'esforce por poor de mort et met ensemble toute sa proesce;" (*Mort Artu*, 200) ["Sir Gawain, who now had the greatest fear that he could ever have, and who saw he risked being completely dishonoured if he was unable to defend himself, strove under fear of death and made use of all his prowess." (*Death of King Arthur*, 183)]

That such treson in Ynglong shuld be wroght.) (lines 2946-2950)[108]

Furthermore, in the episode where Bedivere returns Excalibur to the lady of the lake, the narrator explains some of the thought process involved in the initial failure to perform the king's wishes: "Thanne carefully the knight forthe ranne, /And thought the swerd yit he wolde hyde, /And keste the scauberke in the flode:" (lines 3469-3471). Following Arthur's rebuke of Bedivere, the narrator explains how the knight accedes to the king's order and throws the sword into the lake: "Syr Bedwere saw that bote was beste, / And to the good swerd he wente, / In-to the see he hyt keste-- / Than myght he se what that it mente" (lines 3486-3489). Thus, the stanzaic *Morte* continues the narrative technique in which the narrator serves as a gateway to the psychological and emotional dimension of individual characters so that the audience may know the motivation and reasoning behind specific actions.

In spite of distinct similarities, there remains some debate among scholars as to whether the stanzaic *Morte* is indeed based upon the surviving version of *Mort Artu* or whether a different version of *Mort Artu* was the basis for the English translation. Most scholars since the early twentieth century have assumed that the stanzaic *Morte* is based on the version of the French Vulgate *Mort Artu* known today although some have argued for a now-lost variant. Rosalind Field has suggested that the stanzaic *Morte* is "a translation of a (lost) variant version of the French prose *Mort Artu*"[109], while W.R.J. Barron states that "In outline the narrative is that of the *Mort Artu*, the final branch of the vast Vulgate Cycle of prose romances, but so freely adapted as to suggest that the source was a variant version for which there is no objective evidence."[110] A variant version of the *Mort Artu* could

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[108] All ME quotations are from *Le Morte Arthur* (British Library MS Harley 2252), Medieval Texts Series 1, edited by Shunichi Noguchi (Tokyo: Centre for Mediaeval English Studies, 1990).

[109] See "Romance" in *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. I to 1550, ed. Roger Ellis (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 309.

[110] *English Medieval Romance*, (New York: Longman, 1987), 143.

possibly be the source of the stanzaic *Morte,* yet since a variant version has never been discovered, I believe that the *Mort Artu* as we now have it was the source of the stanzaic *Morte*.

As an adaptation, the stanzaic *Morte* is comparable with *Of Arthour and of Merlin* and *Ywain and Gawain*. *Of Arthour and Of Merlin* is an adaptation that is superficially similar in approach to the stanzaic *Morte*. Most notably, we see the similar change of French prose into English verse. Both English texts rearrange and reduce narrative elements of the source to streamline the story, and the character of Arthur is, again, presented in a more favorable light. The stanzaic *Morte* differs from *A&M*, however, in the greater interest in the psychological dimension of its characters. Where *A&M* was an adaptation whose emphasis was on "narrative action," the stanzaic *Morte* places significance on the role of human psychology as a plot device.[111] Unlike *Ywain and Gawain*, the stanzaic *Morte* shows no evidence of equivalence in conjunction with adaptation. The recreation of the subtlety of the *Mort Artu* is not necessarily an attempt for equivalence in translation. Rather it is a literary feature that characterizes both source and adaptation. The stanzaic *Morte* is not, therefore, an adaptation in the same way as *A&M*, nor is it a combination of equivalence and adaptation as in *YG*. Instead, it is a type of adaptation that presents a version of the source by virtue of its clear thematic and narrative parallels.

The *Mort Artu* is the final romance in the *Vulgate*, or *Lancelot-Grail*, *Cycle.* The moral subtext of the *Mort Artu* is significant since the text follows from the didactic and clearly moralizing *La Queste del Saint Graal*. The *Queste* with its prescriptive Cistercian doctrine punishes Lancelot for his sinful relationship with Guinevere and only through contrition does Lancelot receive a glimpse of the Holy Grail. Despite Lancelot's spiritual progression in the *Queste*, he immediately falls back into the adulterous affair with Guinevere at the beginning of the *Mort Artu*. Thus Lancelot regresses from his elevated spiritual status at the end of the *Queste*, and the court has been weakened by the loss of

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[111] See David Burnley, "Of Arthour and Of Merlin" in *The Arthur of the English*, 84.

many of its knights including the most virtuous in Galahad and Perceval. The threat of treachery within the kingdom returns, and both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte* narrate the events that start with the rekindling of the illicit affair and end with the fall of the Arthurian world and death of Lancelot.

Like *Ywain and Gawain*, the stanzaic *Morte* is a combination of poetic structures. It follows the English *abababab* rhyme scheme and includes frequent alliterative tags that are characteristic of English poetry. Indeed, English verse is based on stress rather than the number of syllables as in French.[112]As W.R.J. Barron points out, the stanzaic *Morte* includes a "combination of the octosyllabic line of French romance with a stanza form" and he proceeds to explain that "the stanza is unique in French and English."[113] The unique nature of the poetic structure is compelling evidence of the independence of this text and shows an active and conscious effort by the poet not to align his work with a specific literary tradition.

Like the author of *A&M*, the author of the stanzaic *Morte* dispenses with the French practice of *entrelacement*. This narrative style, which interlaces various plot threads in a non-linear fashion, was characteristic of many French romances and places emphasis on specific characters as the focus for each thread. The stanzaic *Morte* omits the *entrelacement* of the *Mort Artu* in favor of a linear narrative approach. The result is a contrast in approach to the story line. The *Stanzaic Morte* shows a rejection of the French style in favor of a more chronological narrative sequence.

The *Mort Artu* ties the narrative progression to its individual characters. The character-centric story line divides the French prose into distinct sections that more or less follow a chronological order. To signal the transitions between these narrative parentheses, the author of the

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[112] As Burton Raffel in "Translating Medieval European Poetry" states "English is a stress-timed language; French is syllable-timed." *The Craft of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 50. See also Chapter 1, page 9.

[113] *English Medieval Romance*, 143. See also Weinberg's "The Stanzaic Morte Arthur," in *The Arthur of The English*, 101.

Mort Artu uses repeated transitional phrases. The narrator will often explain that "Here the story recounts" or "In this part the story tells us" thus assigning authority over the story to a precursor. Furthermore, the use of signifiers such as "here," or "in this part," imply that the narrator is following the progression of this indeterminable source. These phrases signal the importance of the character as a marker for plot divisions. The customary phrase in the *Mort Artu* signals that the story will leave the character concerned in the preceding section and return to another. For example, the first of the transitions occurs when the plotline that leads to Lancelot's success at the tournament in Winchester as the unknown knight turns to the brother's Gawain and Gaheriet and their search for identity of the knight. In these cases, and in many more throughout the *Mort Artu*, the French text marks transitions between events by means of the characters involved. In combination with the technique of transitioning between characters and their respective story lines by means of a narrative interjection, the narrator highlights the separation of plot line in the reference to an undefined "story." The reference to the "story," supposedly the source story of the *Mort Artu*, draws attention to the *Mort Artu* being a version of a pre-existing tale and therefore not original.

The stanzaic *Morte*, however, transitions between events in a consecutive manner without need of the narrator's guidance. For example, the beginning of the story recounts Lancelot's journey from Camelot to Winchester as he engages in the tournament as an anonymous knight. After being wounded by Ector, Lancelot departs with the knight of Ascolot and the story continues to the knight's aunt where Lancelot receives medical attention. Subsequently, the narrative reverts to Arthur at Winchester where he announces another tournament. There is no transitional phrase in the English, instead, the story line is connected sequentially. The audience understands that Lancelot has been wounded at the tournament and the shift to Arthur and the announcement of another tournament is a related event. Indeed, the story swiftly returns to Lancelot when Arthur's heralds arrive at

Lancelot's location bearing news of the tournament.[114] The connection between events and characters, such as the transition between Arthur and Lancelot in the episode of the tournament, is a seamless progression. The absence of a narrator's interjection to direct the reader's attention affords a smoother negotiation between concurrent story lines. In the French, the storylines between Lancelot and Arthur are markedly separate at this point whereas the English text provides a fusion of character and event.

Indeed, the characteristic interlace of the French is similar to that of the earlier *Vulgate Cycle* romances of the Prose *Lancelot* and the *Queste del Saint Graal*. In the *Queste*, for example, transitions are signaled by the narrator stating that the story will stop talking of one character and move to another. In addition, the sentence following the transition repeats the statement that the story will now tell us, the audience, what the character concerned has been doing. Despite a marked difference in tone between the *Queste* and the *Mort Artu*, the use of *entrelacement* shows a continuity of narrative style between the two romances of the cycle. The technique does, however, diminish in the latter half of the *Mort Artu*. Thus we begin to see fewer transitions than in the *Queste* since the focus is on the characters of Arthur, Mordred and Lancelot.[115]

The focus on individual characters is emphasized in the *Mort Artu* by means of the narrative structure. By contrast, the stanzaic *Morte* shifts quickly between events to assist the narrative momentum. Transitioning between characters becomes integral to the progression of the story and highlights the pace of transition. In one episode, Lancelot rescues Queen Guinevere before she is burned at the stake, and the narrative shifts rapidly between Camelot and Joyous Gard. The episode

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[114]   Tille on a tyme þat it byfelle
               An heraude comys by the way
               And at the castelle a night gan dwelle
               There-as Launcelot woundyd lay
               And of the turnamente gon telle
               That shuld come on Son-day. (lines 353-358)

[115] See Pratt, "Mort Artu" in *The Arthur of the French*, edited by Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 312.

is unified and events occur at the same time. The transitions are present in the communication

between the two castles. In this case we see the dual perspectives of Lancelot and Gawain, as they

react to the knowledge that Gaheriet, Gawain's brother, has died at the hands of Lancelot:

> Off swounynge whan he myght awake,
> The hardy knight, syr Gawayne,
> Be God he sware and loude spake,
> As man that myche was of mayne:
> "Betwixte me and Launcelote du Lake
> Nys man in erthe, for soothe to sayne,
> Shall trewes sette and pees make
> Er outher of us have other slayne.'
>
> A squyer that Launcelot to court hadde sente
> Off the tythandes gonne he lythe;
> To the foreste is he wente,
> And tolde Launcelot also swythe
> How lordy[n]ges that were riche of rente
> Fele goode had loste hyr lyffe;
> Gaheryet and Gaheries sought here ende;
> Bot than was Launcelot no-thynge blythe. (lines 2006-2021)

As evident in the two stanzas above, the narrative transitions quickly between characters. The former

stanza is set at Camelot where Gawain has seen the dead body of his brother, Gaheriet, whereupon

he voices his anger towards Lancelot and desire for vengeance. The following stanza transitions by

means of a squire delivering the news of the death of Gaheriet and Gaheries to Lancelot at Joyous

Gard. The closing line of the stanza highlights how much this news saddens Lancelot.

If we compare this episode to the *Mort Artu*, we note that the French explains how Gawain

swears vengeance on Gaheriet's killer, yet there is no mention of Lancelot by name:

> Biaus frere, ce a ele fet por moi ocire et por ce que ge muire de duel de vos; certes ge ai grant droit, et bien m'i acort, que, puis que ge voi vostre mort avenir, je sui cil qui plus ne quier vivre, fors tant sanz plus que ge vos aie vengié del desloial qui ce vos fist. (131)

> ["Brother, she [Fortune] has done this to kill me, to make me die of grief for you. It would certainly be quite fitting if I did, and I would not object, because now that I have seen your death, I no longer wish to live, except until I have taken my revenge on the traitor who did this to you." (*Death of King Arthur*, 128)]

The content of the French and English is similar. Both texts foreshadow that Gawain knows that there can be no peace until one of them is dead.

The two episodes differ, however, in how they transition from Gawain to Lancelot. After Gawain's lament in the *Mort Artu*, the story remains at Camelot, and we learn of Arthur's reaction to the killings. Arthur is equally incensed at the death of his three nephews, Guerrehet, Agravain, and especially Gaheriet, and orders preparation for war against Lancelot at Joyous Gard. The news that reaches Lancelot, therefore, is not of Gaheriet's death as in the stanzaic *Morte*, but rather the warning that King Arthur is mustering his forces. Lancelot immediately sends word to the Kingdoms of Benoic and Gaunes to prepare for battle. The news brings closure to this episode, and the story proceeds with Arthur gathering his knights at Camelot.

By contrast, the stanzaic *Morte* is able to provide a fluid transference of events at Camelot and Joyous Gard. Once Lancelot hears of the deaths of Gawain's two brothers, Gaheriet and Gaheries Lancelot prepares his own forces to defend the castle and sends a maiden to Arthur with a declaration of war. With Arthur's response, the maiden then returns to Joyous Gard to inform Lancelot. This back-and-forth communication occurs several times and often in consecutive stanzas. The effect is a rapid transitioning between characters and reduces the separation between the settings of Camelot and Joyous Gard. The storyline preserves momentum as it quickly builds to direct conflict. The English omits the extensive politicking at Arthur's court where they decide what to do and justify their actions against Lancelot. The result is that the author presents two events taking place at the same time.

The pace and focus of the stanzaic *Morte* are important factors in its composition. The English poet dispenses with superfluous narrative digressions or elements that do not enhance the cohesion of the main story. The most significant and obvious changes in the stanzaic *Morte* concern its omission of Morgan le Fay's attempt to reveal the adultery and of Arthur's campaign against the

Romans and its change in the French account of the death of Gawain. Morgan le Fay's efforts to expose the adultery to Arthur may have been omitted to maintain momentum. Since Arthur in the *Mort Artu* is told on three occasions about the affair, with Morgan being the second person to tell him, the English poet may have found her revelation of the adultery unnecessary and repetitious. The war with the Romans is entirely omitted in the stanzaic *Morte*. Although it does not comprise a large section of the *Mort Artu,* the battle is important as testament to Arthur's power and claim over Gaul.[116] Furthermore, the campaign takes place at a critical juncture in the story. Gawain insists on fighting the Romans and, in the fighting, the head wounds inflicted by Lancelot at Gaunes are opened up once again and lead to his death. Gawain dies on the journey back to Camelot and Arthur is deeply upset by the loss of his favorite nephew. Arthur also learns of Mordred's treachery on the same day that he defeats the Romans.[117]

In a reversal of tradition for English depictions of Gawain, the stanzaic *Morte* presents Gawain's death in more concise fashion. Instead of a valiant combat with the Romans, it is the unfortunate blow of an oar that opens Gawain's old head wound as Arthur and his knights arrive on the shores of England. The English version makes no mention of the wielder of the oar, and we are left to assume that it is one of Arthur's men and thus accidental. Despite the change in the manner of Gawain's death the primary cause of the injury, that of Lancelot's initial blow, remains the same. Arthur is distraught at the death of Gawain, and the grief provides him with a resolute attitude regarding the forthcoming battle with Mordred, or as the poet explains, "And syr Arthur maketh game and glee, For myrth that they shuld be mette" (lines 3614-5).

The omissions of the Roman campaign and Morgan's efforts to reveal the adultery as well as the change in the circumstances surrounding the death of Gawain are further evidence of the stanzaic

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[116] Arthur's war against Rome is caused by a Roman incursion into Gaul (and therefore the kingdoms of Benoic and Gaunes belonging to Lancelot and Bors repectively), which Arthur regards as his territory.

[117] See Pratt, "Mort Artu" in *The Arthur of the French*, 217.

Morte's focus on the main storyline and concern for narrative momentum. The successful campaign against the Romans in the French highlights the reach of King Arthur's power, yet it does not have a clear relevance to the conflict with Lancelot and the treachery of Mordred, which are the focus of both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte* at this point. The war with the Romans may be considered, therefore, an unnecessary digression since, aside from the mortal injury to Gawain, the episode does not directly contribute to the fall of Arthur's kingdom at the battle of Salisbury Plain.

The end of the Arthurian world in the *Mort Artu* is a combination of tragic events and human failing. Arthur is repeatedly betrayed by members of his court, and he is profoundly grieved by the deaths of his nephews. These events contribute to Arthur's poor decision-making and ultimately to the inevitable demise of the kingdom. Thus the character of Arthur is predominantly a weak figure that is easily led and subject to his emotions.[118] The stanzaic *Morte* offers an alternative Arthur who is a more considered and rational character. Although the differences are subtle, the portrayal in the *Stanzaic Morte* is ultimately a more positive version of the king and intended to be more acceptable to an English audience.

First, we must consider the character of Arthur and how he differs between the two romances. In many of the French Romances, Arthur epitomizes a *roi fainéant*, a weak and ineffectual king who leaves the adventuring to his knights while he remains at court.[119] While the Arthur of the *Mort Artu* demonstrates weakness, he is also actively involved in the events that transpire at court

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[118] As Frappier states in *L'Étude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu*: "La caractère du roi Artus est lui aussi heureusement renouvelé ; pour la première fois dans le roman breton il est vraiment pathétique." 328.

[119] The tradition of Arthur as a weak king begins with Chrétien de Troyes and is in contrast to the Arthur of the Chronicles. See Edward Donald Kennedy's introduction to *King Arthur: A Casebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), xxiii. Edward Peters remarks that "Arthur's first appearance in twelfth-century literature had been that of a hero, the conquering ruler of the Britons against anarchic elements in British society and, more directly, against Saxon invaders and the rulers of territories outside of his realm of Logres. Certain aspects of legendary history, hagiography, and the traditions of the weak kings in the chansons de geste and its underlying social and political inspiration, however, have made the figure of Arthur potentially less heroic than he originally appeared." *The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature 751-1327* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 170. See also Frappier's *L'Étude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu*, 328-329.

and abroad. Arthur's character flaws cause him to make decisions that contribute to the end of the

kingdom. Thus Arthur's activity, as opposed to his passivity, is an influential factor in the fate of the

kingdom. His susceptibility to Gawain's influence and his own desire to exact justice on Lancelot

and Guinevere leave his position vulnerable to Mordred and lead, ultimately, the collapse of the

Arthurian world.

One of the weaknesses regarded as a significant theme by scholars is Arthur's "refusal to

accept and punish what is obvious, namely the queen's adultery."[120] For example, his approach to the

suspicion surrounding Lancelot and Guinevere is typified by disbelief and detachment. Despite the

apparent awareness at court of the affair, he is resistant to accusations of treachery, and it requires

the combined efforts of Morgan le Fay and Agravain to convince him of the relationship. Early in the

story, Agravain tells King Arthur of the adultery, yet the king demonstrates both indifference and

lack of concern since he does not believe it to be true.[121] Instead, Arthur appears not to care and

defers responsibility to Agravain:

> Conment, sire, fet Agravains, n'en feroiz vos plus? – Que voulez vos, fet-il, que g'en face? – Sire, fet Agravains, je volsisse que vos le feïssiez espïer tant que l'en les prist ensemble; et lors conneüssiez la verité, si m'en creüssssiez mieuz une autre foiz. – Fetes en, fet li rois, ce que vos voudroiz; que ja par moi n'en seroiz destournez. (*Mort Artu*, 5)

> ["What my lord!' exclaimed Agravain. 'Are you not going to do anything about it?'
> 'What do you want me to do about it?' he asked
> 'My Lord,' said Agravain, 'I should like you to order them to be watched closely until they can be caught together. Then you would know the truth, and next time you would be more ready to believe me.'
> 'Do what you like about it,' said the king. 'I shall not stop you.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 26)]

Arthur continues to disbelieve even while Morgan attempts to expose the relationship between

Lancelot and Guinevere displayed by the inscriptions in the *Salle aux Images*, the room in which

years before Lancelot, while a prisoner of Morgan, had painted pictures that showed the

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[120] See Pratt, "La Mort le roi Artu" in *The Arthur of the French*, 316.

[121] Lancelot's presence at the tournament assuages Arthur's fears since he believes that if they were involved in an affair, Lancelot would not come to the tournament and remain at Camelot with Guinevere.

development of his love for the Queen. Arthur is confused as to whether the paintings that depict

Lancelot's exceptional deeds were for love of him or the Queen.[122] Following the revelation by

Morgan, Arthur loses his sense of ambivalence and shows emphatic resolve:

> Iceste chose me dist avant ier Agravains meïsmes, mes ge ne le creoiemie, einz cuidoie que il se mentist; mes ceste chose qui ci est meinne mon cuer a greigneur certeineté que je n'estoie devant; por qoui ge vos di que ge n'en serai jamés a ese devant que ge en sache la pure verité. Et se il est einsi comme ces ymages isi le tesmoignent, que Lancelos m'ait fet tel honte comme de moihonnir de ma fame, je me traveillerai tant que il seront ensemble pris prové. Et lors se ge n'en faz tel joustisequ'il en sera parlé a touz jorz mes, ge otroi que ge ne port jamés coronne. (*Mort Artu*, 64-65)

> ['Agravain told me about this the other day, but I did not believe him, as I thought he was lying. However, what I have seen here makes me far more certain than I was before. For that reason I can tell you that I shall never be satisfied until I know the whole truth. If it is as these pictures witness, that Lancelot has brought me such great shame as to dishonor me through my wife, I shall never rest until they are caught together. Then, if I do not inflict such justice on them as will be spoken of for evermore, I promise I shall never again wear a crown.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 73)]

Arthur's determined attitude at this point is in contrast to his previous behavior with Agravain. He

admits that he did not believe Agravain; yet, at this earlier point, he did not decide to defend his wife

or Lancelot but rather needed clearer evidence that Morgan has now provided.

Despite Arthur's proclamation of justice he again appears to be incredulous of the adultery

when Agravain attempts to tell him after Lancelot defeats Mador de la Porte:

> Conment, fet li rois, me fet donc Lancelos honte? De quoi est ce donc? Dites le moi, car de lui ne me gardasse ge jamés que il ma honte porchaçast; car ge l'ai en nule maniere a moi honte fere. – Sire, fet Agravains, il vos est si loiaus qu'il vos fet desenneur de la reïne vostre fame et qu'il l'a conneüe charnelment. Quant li rois entent ceste parole, si mue couleur et devint pales, et dist: « Ce sont merveilles. » (*Mort Artu*, 109)

> ['What,' said the king, 'is Lancelot dishonouring me? What are you talking about? Tell me, because I have never suspected he might be bringing me shame, since I have always honoured and loved him so much that he should never cause me any dishonor.'
> 'My Lord,' said Agravain, 'he is so loyal to you that he is dishonouring you through your wife and has committed adultery with her.'
> When the king heard this his colour changed and he turned pale. He said:
> 'That is unbelievable.'(*Death of King Arthur*, 110)]

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[122] 'It is true,' said the king, 'that I did not notice it, but all the same it did happen exactly as you say. However, I do not know whether it was for the love of the Queen or of me.' *Death of King Arthur*, 71-72.

It is difficult to believe that Arthur has chosen to ignore two attempts to reveal the adultery and has seemingly forgotten his own resolution to discover the truth about the relationship. Again, Arthur briefly shows that he does not know what to do before deferring the responsibility to his vassals:

> De ceste chose est li rois pensis et dolenz et tant a malese qu'il ne set qu'il doie fere; et toutesvoies quant il parole, si dit: « Se vos onques m'amast, fetes tant que vous les preigniez prouvez; et se ge n'en praing venchement tel com l'en doit fere de traïteur, ge ne quier jamés porter coronne. (*Mort Artu*, 110)

> ['As as a result of this the king was so pensive and sad and distraught that he did not know what to do. However, when he spoke he said:
> 'If you have ever loved me, find a way to catch them together, and if I do not take my revenge on them as one should on traitors, I shall never want to wear a crown again.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 110)]

Arthur's statement above is similar to the conversation with Morgan, albeit with more venomous words. He wishes to catch Lancelot and Guinevere together and he states that if he is not able to exact justice, or revenge, then he cannot or will not wear the crown.

Arthur's words are prophetic since he is unable to deliver justice or revenge on the lovers. Instead, the ensuing conflict between Arthur and Lancelot and the conquest of Rome weaken the kingdom and enables Mordred to usurp the throne.[123] Arthur's military campaigns distract him from the true danger that existed in his own court because of Mordred. Moreover, Arthur repeatedly ignores warnings from his bishop, the goddess Fortuna, and the spirit of the dead Gawain not to rush into battle. The *Mort Artu*, therefore, places a large share of the blame on King Arthur for the fall of the realm. His concern for justice and retribution take him on a fool's errand leading to the battle of Salisbury Plain and the final conflict with Mordred. Although a victim of the affair between Lancelot and Guinevere, Arthur's fluctuating behavior and rash decision-making make him a primary agent of his downfall.

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[123] See Frappier, *Étude Sur La Mort Le Roi Artu*, 283-287.

If we compare the Arthur of the *Mort Artu* to that of the stanzaic *Morte*, we observe a difference in characterization that serves to challenge the impulsive portrayal in the French. The Arthur of the *Stanzaic Morte* is more consistent than the Arthur of the French romance, and he displays a more active and balanced attitude to the treachery by Lancelot and Guinevere. Arthur first learns of the affair from Agravain after Lancelot champions her against Mador de la Porte. The Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* is more trusting of Agravain and is more inclined to believe him despite his own view to the contrary:

> "Allas!" than sayd the king thore,
> 'Certes, that were grete pyte,
> So as man nad neyr yit more
> Off biaute ne of bounte,
> Ne man in worlde was nevyr yit ore
> Off so mykylle nobylte,
> Allas, full grete duelle it were
> In hym shulde any treson be!'

Arthur proceeds to ask for Agravain's advice regarding how best to expose the treason, as in the *Mort Artu*. The difference, however, lies in Arthur's less vehement response. In the *Mort Artu*, there is a gradual progression in Arthur's anger at the repeated news of the affair, as indicated previously. The lingering doubt and suspicion drive Arthur to become more resolute in his desire for retribution. At this stage, there is no indication that Arthur's war against Lancelot will cause the end of the kingdom nor are we told that Arthur would give up the throne if he is unable to catch them.

Arthur, despite being angered by the revelation of the treachery, consults with his advisors on several occasions. These consultations present Arthur as a rational and considered character who listens to advice before making decisions. In one stanza, the English suggests that Arthur's barons are the primary factor in determining Guinevere's death sentence:

> It was no lenger for to byde;
> Kynge and all hys knyghtis kene
> Toke there counselle in that tyde,
> What was beste do w<i>t<h> the queen.
> It was no lenger for to byde,

That day fo[r]brent shuld she bene. (lines 1920-1925)

The decision is a combined effort on the part of the king and his knights. E.D. Kennedy argues that the "reliance upon counsel, could reflect his [the author's] concern with both *speculum regis* literature and late fourteenth-century English politics."[124] With this in mind, we see the Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* as representative of the English form of kingship. Arthur embodies a proposed form of governance that is more rational and considered and less likely to make unilateral decisions.

By contrast, in the *Mort Artu*, it is Arthur who tells the barons that Guinevere should be condemned to death.[125] Although the barons suggest the punishment of burning, the French clearly states that they base their decision on the wish of the King:

A ceste chose s'acordent li un et li autre a fine force, car il voient bien que li rois le velt. (*Mort Artu,* 121)

[All the others were obliged to agree with this, because it was obvious that it was what the king wanted. (*Death of King Arthur*, 120)]

The French demonstrates that Arthur's counselors are merely telling him what he wants to hear. In spite of Gawain's complaint against the sentence, Arthur makes several commandments. First he orders a powerful fire in a jousting field outside Camelot. Next, he commands that the Queen be brought before him and then quickly taken away since he is unable to look at her out of pity. Finally, the King orders forty knights along with Agravain and Gaheriet to insure that Lancelot does not rescue the queen.[126] Arthur's resolve to guarantee Guinevere's punishment is at odds with the story's narrator. The French account describes the queen as "si bele dame et si avenanz qu'en tout le monde ne trovast l'en si bele ni si avenant de son aage." (*Mort Artu,* 122) ["so beautiful and so elegant that

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[124] See Edward Donald Kennedy, "The Stanzaic Morte Arthur" in *Culture and the King,* edited by Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 93.

[125] Et li rois commande a ses sergenz qu'il feïssent en la prairie de Kamaalot un feu grant et meveillex, *Mort Artu*, 121-122. [The king commanded his sergeants to light a great and powerful fire in the jousting-field of Camelot, (*Death of King Arthur*, 120)].

[126] Gaheriet initially refuses to go yet Arthur "threatens" him sufficiently to convince him otherwise.

she surpassed any other woman of her age one could have found in the world." (*Death of King Arthur*, 120)] Furthermore, the people of Camelot sympathize with Guinevere instead of Arthur. They say that she is "debonere seur toutes autres dames et plus cortoise que nule autre" (*Mort Artu*, 122) ["more kindly and courteous than all others" (*Death of King Arthur*, 121)] and say to Arthur, "Ha! Rois Artus, qui as porchaciee sa mort par ta desloiauté" (*Mort Artu*, 122) [you who have treacherously sought her death." (*Death of King Arthur*, 121)]

The stanzaic *Morte* omits most details concerning the events leading to Guinevere's punishment at the stake. Arthur does not order the pyre to be built and nor does he command Guinevere to be brought before him. However, he orders Gawain, Gaheriet and Gaheris to be present at the burning and, as in the *Mort Artu*, of the three only Gawain is absent. In contrast to the *Mort Artu*, the Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* is overcome with grief at the killing of his knights. The English account states how painful it was to hear and see the degree of sorrow exhibited by Arthur:

> The tithinges is to the kinge brought,
> How Launcelot has tan away the queen:
> "Such wo as there is wrought!
> Slain are all our knightes keen!"
> Down he fell and swooned oft;
> Grete dole it was to here and seen;
> So ner his herte the sorrow sought,
> All-moste hys lyffe wolde no-man wene. (lines 1966-1973)

The reader and audience are thus inclined to sympathize with Arthur as opposed to Lancelot and Guinevere. Whilst the narrator offers no outward indictment of Lancelot or Guinevere, the evolution of Lancelot from Arthur's greatest knight to his enemy becomes a turning point in the fortunes of the kingdom:

> But weil-a-way the reufulle rayne!
> That evyr Launcelot was my fo! (lines 1980-1981)

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The sympathy that we, the audience, feel for Arthur is compounded by the sympathy felt for the

kingdom as a whole. Arthur has lost his greatest knights, and they are lost to all of the Arthurian

realm.

The weak Arthur of the *Mort Artu* is further highlighted through his relationship with

Gawain. In the French, Arthur is easily led by Gawain, who is himself driven by a desire to punish

Lancelot.[127] Gawain takes the lead in the campaign against Lancelot, and Arthur's earlier anger at the

revelation of the affair turns into a need to placate and appease his nephew.[128] It is Gawain who

sends word to Lancelot to come and speak to the king. Although Lancelot addresses Arthur in this

meeting, it is Gawain who speaks on behalf of the king:

> Et messire Gauvains saut avant et respond por le roi: «Lancelot, fet messire Gauvains,
> messires li rois est ci venuz por fere ce que vos m'avez requis; vos savez bien queentre moi
> et vos avons emprise une bataille si grant commode traïson mortel por la mort de mes freres
> quevos oceïstes en traïson, desloiaument, ce savons nos bien tuit; si en sui apelerres et vos
> deffenderres.» (*Mort Artu*, 190-191)

> [Sir Gawain jumped forward and answered for the king.
> 'Lancelot,' said Sir Gawain, 'my lord the king has come here to do what you have asked me;
> you know that together we have undertaken a battle as great as mortal treason demands, in
> respect of my brothers whom you killed treacherously and disloyally, as we all know. I am
> the plaintiff and you are the defendant.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 175)]

Gawain assumes Arthur's former role as Lancelot's enemy. Gawain is single-minded enough to

disregard Arthur's advice to take Lancelot's proposal of peace. Instead, Gawain swears that only

Lancelot's death will satisfy him, and thus the two knights engage in battle against the wishes of all

the other parties.[129]

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[127] Lancelot kills three of Gawain's brothers: Gaheriet, Guerrehet, and Agravain. Gaheris is the Middle English
name of one of the brothers.

[128] Virginie Greene considers Gawain's change in attitude from moderate emotions and respect for Lancelot to
hatred and absolutism as a product of grief and distress. *Le sujet et la mort dans La mort Artu* (Saint-
Genouphe: Nizet, 2002), 302.

[129] The narrator explains that even King Arthur's men were dismayed that Gawain had refused Lancelot's offer
and wished to fight. The people of the city of Gaunes, on the other hand, evidently desire peace yet due to
Lancelot's courteous actions, they feel that their lord has a moral superiority.

Another symbolic infringement of Arthur's power is when Gawain takes Excalibur to use against Lancelot. Excalibur is Arthur's sword and represents the King's authority. The *Mort Artu* describes the scene when it states:

> Et messire Gauvains n'est mie plus lenz, einz cort a son escu qui li estoit volez del col et met la main a Escalibor, la bone espee le roi Artu. (*Mort Artu*, 195)
>
> [Sir Gawain was no slower than Lancelot, but ran to the shield that had flown from his neck, and put his hand to Excalibur, King Arthur's good sword. (*Death of King Arthur*, 179)]

In this conflict with Lancelot, Gawain becomes sufficiently tired and wounded so that Lancelot decides to leave the field and thus spare Gawain's life. Arthur is a passive figure during this fight. He does not intervene and is grateful to Lancelot for choosing to leave.[130]

The relationship between Arthur and Gawain in the stanzaic *Morte* is less a reversal of roles and more a question of loyalty to family and the kingdom. Arthur and Gawain act in unison as opposed to Gawain taking the king's place in the decision-making. If we consider the episode of Gaheriet's death and the subsequent conflict with Lancelot, the stanzaic *Morte* states that Arthur responds with "wordys that were kene and thro" to Lancelot's envoy, and Arthur and Gawain pledge their word together that they will fight him (lines 2070 and 2074). In the negotiations between Arthur and Lancelot, Gawain never speaks to the envoys. Arthur states his position, and then Gawain voices his intention to pursue the conflict with Lancelot. Although Arthur and the other knights advocate peace, Gawain holds to his position that no truce can exist between them. The stanzaic *Morte* does not explain why, but Arthur sides with Gawain. It is Arthur and not Gawain who responds to Lancelot and Arthur does so in an assertive manner:

> The king is comyn in-to the halle
> And in hys royall see hym sette;
> He made knight the mayden calle,
> Syr Lucan de Botteler, w<i>t<h>-outen lette:
> "Say to Launcelot and his knight<is> all,

---

[130] Lancelot speaks to Arthur telling him that he begged Gawain to stop fighting. Arthur replies that nothing would stop Gawain from continuing the battle and places the choice in Lancelot's hands whether to leave or continue.

> Such an heste I have hym hette,
> That we shall wend for no walle
> Tyll we w<i>t<h> myght<is> onys have mette.' (lines 2692-2699)

Furthermore, in the second duel between Gawain and Lancelot, Gawain does not take Arthur's sword and thus does not wield Arthur's symbol of authority. Arthur, in the stanzaic *Morte*, shows himself to accede to Gawain's desire for vengeance, yet Gawain does not speak for the king as he does in the *Mort Artu*. Arthur always makes the final decision; and he, not Gawain, answers all communication with Lancelot. Evidently, Arthur has a dual responsibility to his nephew and to the kingdom which plays out in this episode. As the duel with Lancelot concludes and Gawain is wounded, the news of Mordred's treachery reaches Arthur and the conflict with Lancelot ends immediately. The duty and responsibility to the kingdom has taken precedence over Gawain's need for revenge.

At all times in the stanzaic *Morte*, Arthur's primary concern is for the kingdom. Even in the conflict with Lancelot, Arthur laments the course of events and the ultimate effect it would have on his kingdom:

> Launcelot, I ne wende nevyr-more
> That thou wolde me have wroght thys woo--
> So dere as we samen were,
> There-undyr, that thou was my foo!
> Bot noght-for-thy me rewis sore
> That ever was werre bytwexte us two. (lines 2390-2395)

The sense of regret in Arthur's words demonstrates his reluctance to engage in war with Lancelot. Lancelot then offers a truce between him and Arthur. The Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* characteristically calls for counsel about this offer and states, "It were pite to sette warre us bytwene" (line 2675). Arthur knows that Lancelot is the greatest knight and knows that pursuing war with him will weaken his realm.

Arthur also acknowledges his subordination to the Holy See and his responsibility to the kingdom and the spiritual condition of his people. In both the stanzaic *Morte* and the *Mort Artu*,

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Arthur is ordered by the Pope to take the queen back. The Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* does so

graciously when the text reads:

> The kynge aȝeyne it wolde noȝte bene,
> To do the popys comaundemente,
> Blythely ayeyne to have the queen;
> Wolde he noght that Ynglonde were shente;(lines 2270-2273)

By contrast, the Pope's order is not as well received in the *Mort Artu*. Arthur's reaction is one of

anger and frustration since he has committed himself to revenge:

> Quant li rois ot ce mandement, si fu moult courrouciez; et non-pourquant il amoit la roïne de
> si grant amour, tot quidast il bien qu'ele li eüst meffait, que il fu legierement vaincus; mes il
> dist que, se la reïne revenoit, que ja por ce la gueree ne remeindra entre li et Lancelot, puis
> qu'il l'avoit emprise. (*Mort Artu*, 153)

> [When the king heard this order he was very angry; and yet he loved the queen so much,
> although he was sure she had sinned against him, that he was easily persuaded to obey it.
> However, he said that if she returned, that would not put an end to his war against Lancelot
> now that he had begun it. (*Death of King Arthur*, 146)]

The French passage illustrates the complexity of Arthur's character and his weakness. He displays

anger at the order to take back the queen; yet his love for the queen endures, and for this reason he

accedes to the Pope's wishes. Despite the acceptance of the queen's return, Arthur vows to continue

the war against Lancelot since his need for revenge is not yet sated. This passage is in contrast to the

response by the Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte*. In the French, he takes back the queen, not for the sake

of his country but rather for the deep rooted love he feels for Guinevere. The Arthur of the English

poem accepts the queen "blythely" (gladly) and consents immediately, unlike the recalcitrant Arthur

of the *Mort Artu*.

The Arthur of the *Mort Artu* has moments of weakness and shows anger, grief and distress.

The stanzaic *Morte* also portrays an Arthur that regularly displays emotion. These emotions that take

the form of crying and swooning are, however, not signs of weakness but rather appropriate reactions

to the respective events. Medieval heroes frequently cry and swoon. The difference between the two

versions is the comparative use of psychology, the mental state of the characters and the way that

they display emotion. The role of emotion in the *Mort Artu* serves to present the characters as complex individuals who are subject to their feelings. Arthur's anger towards Guinevere and Lancelot is understandable yet tragic since we are progressively more aware of the impact his actions will have on the kingdom.

The Guinevere of the *Mort Artu* is equally subject to her emotions, such as her jealousy of Elaine that manifests itself as acute anger towards Lancelot. The author of the *Mort Artu* highlights the negative impact of these emotions and emphasizes psychological complexity. The stanzaic *Morte*, however, uses emotion as a subtle method to direct the sympathy of the audience and show the emotional impact of traumatic events. That is not to say that the author of the stanzaic *Morte* did not understand or appreciate the psychological complexity of the *Mort Artu*; indeed I would argue the poet understood the subtleties of his source exceptionally well; rather the abstractions of thoughts and feelings are more focused and condensed without significant loss of subtlety.

In the episode of the Lady of Escalot in the *Mort Artu*, Guinevere exhibits moments of anger. The news of Lancelot wearing the lady's sleeve is misinterpreted, ironically, as infidelity to the queen. She is so furious with Lancelot that she wishes Bors had killed him in a joust (*Mort Artu*, 33). Her anger turns to hatred of Lancelot, and she tells Bors upon Lancelot's return to court at Camelot:

> Ge ne hé riens en cest siècle orendroit autretant comme ge faz lui, ne onques nul jor de ma vie ne l'anmai autant comme ge le hé orendroit. (*Mort Artu*, 69)

> [At the moment there is nothing in this world I hate as much as I hate him, nor have I ever in my life loved him as much as I hate him now. (*Death of King Arthur*, 77)]

Guinevere's words are emotional and the repetition of *hé* (hate) emphasizes how deeply these emotions are rooted. This hatred causes the queen to banish Lancelot from the court. To further the irony, Guinevere's actions, born of emotion, allay Arthur's fears of the adultery since he believes

that Lancelot would not stay away from court if he truly loved the queen. The combination of

emotion and misinterpretation motivate the plot and exacerbate the downward spiral of events.

The Guinevere of the stanzaic *Morte* is not as vengeful as her French counterpart and her

reaction to Lancelot wearing the lady's sleeve is tempered. Instead of anger and hate, her emotions

are characterized as sadness and regret:

> Allas, Launcelot du Lake,
> Sithe thou hast all my hert in wold,
> Th'erlis doughter that thou wold take
> Off Ascalot, as men me told!
> Now thou leviste for hyr sake
> Alle thy dede of armys bold,
> I may woefully wepe and wake
> In clay tylle I be clongyn cold.
>
> But Launcelot, I beseche the here,
> Sithe it nedelyngis shall be so,
> That thou nevir-more dys[ke]r[e]
> The love that hathe bene betwyxe us two;
> Ne that she nevir be w<i>t<h> the so dere
> Ded of armys þ<a>t thou be fro;
> That I may of thy body here,
> Sithe I shalle thus beleve in woo. (lines 744-759)

The sentiments expressed here are strikingly different from the ones in the corresponding scene in

the *Mort Artu*. Guinevere, although sad that Lancelot has seemingly betrayed her, is magnanimous in

her wish that he go on to win more acclaim. Once Lancelot leaves, Guinevere swoons three times

and wishes to die. In this light, Guinevere shows herself to be a more sympathetic character, and for

reasons comparable to Arthur's moments of fainting, the audience is inclined to pity her.

Later in the *Mort Artu* Guinevere displays acute fear of Mordred and of Arthur. She fears

that if Mordred defeats Arthur, he will kill her since she tricked him when she locked herself in the

Tower of London. Guinevere also fears that Arthur will kill her since he will assume that she slept

with Mordred in his absence. Due to this combined threat, she feels the need to find protection in a

convent.[131] The abbess of the convent is reluctant to admit Guinevere, and the queen must use

blackmail in order to convince her. Guinevere suggests that if she is not admitted, her safety would

be compromised and Arthur would punish the abbess for placing the queen in danger. The French

text is clear in the reasoning for Guinevere's choice to enter a convent when it states, "En tel maniere

demora la reïne leanz avec les nonnains et s'i mist por la poor qu'ele avoit del roi Artu et de

Mordret." (*Mort Artu*, 219) [So the queen stayed there with the nuns because she was so frightened

of King Arthur and Mordred (*Death of King Arthur*, 199)]. The queen fears for her own safety and

feels that she has no choice but to take the habit.[132]

In the stanzaic *Morte* Guenevere enters a convent for a different reason. The episode in

which Guinevere takes the veil is, unlike the *Mort Artu*, positioned after the battle at Salisbury Plain

where Arthur has been mortally wounded. Guinevere does not become a nun for fear of Mordred or

Arthur, rather she is consumed with regret:

> Whan queen Gaynor, the kynges wyffe,
> Wyste that all was gone to wrake,
> Away she went with ladys five
> To Aumysbery, a none hyr for to make.
> Ther-in she lyved an holy lyffe
> In prayers for to wepe and wake;
> Nevyr after she cowde be blythe;
> There weryd she clothys whyte and blake. (lines 3566-3573)

Guinevere displays sorrow and grief at the loss of Arthur and the fall of the kingdom. Her grief turns

to penitence in the convent, and she demonstrates her resolve in the final meeting with Lancelot

when she refuses a kiss from him and explains that:

> Isette I am in suche a place,

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[131] Guinevere makes the decision to enter the same convent as her mother, the Queen of Tarmelide, who spent her final days there.

[132] The interpolation in the Palatinus Manuscript states: "ele vint en tel habit pour doutance des dues fiz Mordret" (*Mort Artu*, 265) ['she took the habit for fear of the two sons of Mordred']. E.D. Kennedy explains that with Arthur gone and Mordred dead, Guinevere continues to fear the retribution of Mordred's sons ("The Stanzaic Morte Arthur" in *Culture and the King*, 102). Lancelot then reassures Guinevere that the sons have been killed and that she is now free to leave the convent.

My sowle hele I wyll abyde
Telle God send me som grace
Throw mercy of Hys woundys wyde,
That I may do so in thys place
My synnys to amende thys ilke tyde
After to have a sight of Hys face
At domys day on Hys right syde. (lines 3654-3660)

The stanzaic *Morte* clearly explains that Guinevere has chosen to stay "in thys place" in order to atone for her sins. She wishes to be on God's "right" side when Judgment Day comes since she knows that her adultery with Lancelot has damaged her soul.

The Guinevere of the *Mort Artu* is arguably more complex and true-to-life than her character in the *Stanzaic Morte*. She shows intense jealousy of the Maid of Escalot, and she fears for her life while seeking safety in a convent. Although we may applaud the more magnanimous and altruistic Guinevere of the *Stanzaic Morte* who wants the best for Lancelot when she thinks he loves Elaine or when she enters the convent because of her profound regret, the French Guinevere is inherently more human in her emotions. She is weak, but understandably so. The reasoning for her actions in the English version is the acknowledgement of her sinful actions, and thus the audience may understand and appreciate the regret signaled by her outward display of emotion. These emotions, combined with her altruistic attitude to Lancelot, portray the Guinevere of the stanzaic *Morte* as a strong and emotionally mature character.

Of greatest significance in the emotional dimension of the two texts is the final meeting between Lancelot and Guinevere. Interestingly, the final meeting between Lancelot and Guinevere occurs only as an interpolation in the Palatinus Manuscript and is found in no other extant copy of the *Mort Artu*.[133] The episode is, however, a fitting and satisfying conclusion to the story. By uniting the former lovers and having them commit to lives of celibacy, it leaves the characters in a better

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[133] Palatinus Latinus 1967. See Edward Donald Kennedy's "The Stanzaic Morte Darthur" in *Culture and the King*, 102, and J. Frappier's "Sur un remaniement de *La Mort Artu* dans un manuscript du XIVᵉ siècle : Le Palatinus Latinus 1967, *Romania* 57 (1931), 214-22.

moral position. Lancelot and Guinevere understand the gravity of their error and are attempting to atone:

> Et lancelot li prie que ele li pardoint tous mesfaiz, et ele dist que si fete le mout volantiers; si le bese et acole au departir; et il monte seur son cheval et se part de leanz; et la reïne remest ou servise Nostre Seigneur de si bon cuer qu'il ne li eschapa ne messe ne matine nuit ne jour, (Mort Artu, 266)

> [And Lancelot asked that she forgive him of all mistakes, and she said that she would do it most willingly. Then she kissed and embraced him before leaving. And he climbed onto his horse and went far away. And the queen returned to the service of our Lord so heartily that she never missed mass or matins, day or night.][134]

Guinevere voices her regret for the adultery. In tears, Lancelot asks Guinevere to forgive him, which she does willingly. She also kisses Lancelot and embraces him before they separate for the last time. This tender and emotional farewell is a contrast to an otherwise tempestuous relationship in the *Mort Artu*.

The author of the stanzaic *Morte* may have read a manuscript of the *Mort Artu* that included the interpolation and regarded it as essential to the emotional and moral core of the story.[135] The episode is positioned after Arthur has been taken to Avalon. There are differences between the French and English versions of this meeting. The primary change in the stanzaic *Morte* is the refusal of the kiss by Guinevere. As noted above, the French Guinevere kisses and embraces Lancelot after she forgives him. The English Lancelot does not ask for forgiveness and, instead, requests a final kiss. Unlike the more conciliatory Guinevere of the *Mort Artu*, the stanzaic *Morte* presents a forceful rebuttal:

> "Nay,' sayd the queen, "that wyll I not;
> Launcelot, thynke on that no-more;
> To absteyne us we muste have thought,
> For such we have delyted in ore." (lines 3714-3717)

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[134] This is my translation since the interpolation does not appear in James Cable's translation.

[135] E.D. Kennedy informs us that "The two scenes may have no relation to one another, however, and their similarities may be coincidental." "The Stanzaic Morte Arthur" in *Culture and the King*, 102.

The English is significant in its heightened moral stance. The poet does not allow the former lovers to enjoy one last moment of affection. Instead, their penance and suffering must continue. For, as the text states:

> W<i>t<h> that they gan departe in twene;
> But none erthely man coude telle
> The sorrow that there bygan to bene;
> Wrynynge ther hand<is> and lowed they yelle,
> As they nevyr-more shuld blynne,
> And sythe in swoune bothe downe they felle;
> Who saw that sorrow evyr myght it mene. (lines 3723-3729)

The stanza highlights the sorrow felt by Lancelot and Guinevere. Guenevere's refusal to kiss Lancelot indicates how sincerely she has renounced the world. The stanzaic *Morte* is, in this case, a more understandable depiction of the character's emotional state. The episode demonstrates that Lancelot and Guinevere still have strong feelings for one another, and yet the sense of regret displayed by Guinevere is the stronger force.[136]

Although the interpolation of the Palatinus manuscript emphasizes the guilt shared by Lancelot and Guinevere, the fact it does not form part of the original story cannot be ignored. The episode is somehow too convenient since the reconciliation takes place by chance when Lancelot arrives at the convent where Guinevere lives. The charged passions that characterize their previous relationship no longer exist. They appear to readily accept their fate and close the book on their past. The catharsis of emotion is not as immediate in the stanzaic *Morte,* and the lovers continue to suffer beyond their separation. After the two separate for the last time, the poem tells us how they needed the comforting of their servants. Lancelot shows particular distress at their separation. He laments that he was ever born, and he spends all night weeping and behaves as if he were mad. These displays of emotion are, again, appropriate for the circumstance. Lancelot and Guinevere are deeply in love and thus the end of their relationship must reflect the depth of emotion. This degree of feeling

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[136] As Weinberg states, "the emotion between them, the kiss they dare not exchange, acknowledge that it still endures." "The Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*" in *The Arthur of the English*, 104.

serves to promote sympathy for the couple, and Guinevere's refusal of the kiss is consistent with her

prior noble and repentant gestures.

Likewise, Lancelot finds his path to penance with Guinevere, yet he does not enter the

monastery until he witnesses Arthur's tomb.[137] Upon seeing the tomb, Lancelot immediately requests

to become a monk:

> An <hundreth> tymes hys hert ne[re] braste,
> Whyle syr Bewere the tale told.
> To Arthuris tombe he caste;
> His carefull corage wexid all cold.
>
> He threwe hys armys to the walle,
> That ryche were and bright of blee;
> Byfore the e[r]myte he gan downe falle
> And comely knelyd upon hys knee;
> Than he shrove hym of hys synnes alle
> And prayd he myght hys broder be, (lines 3774-3783)

Lancelot's distress at Arthur's death demonstrates his affection for the king. Arthur's death is the

ultimate turning point for Lancelot. He confesses his sins to the hermit at Arthur's tomb and then

asks to become one of them. The explicit emotion in the throwing of the arms against the tomb

highlights both his sense of regret and his feelings for the king.

The English poet, in a fashion similar to disentangling the narrative interlace, has extracted

the core emotion that befits the passionate themes of the source. If we consider how Guinevere and

Lancelot negotiate the love they share for one another, the regret for their actions and the feelings

they have for the king, the characters become more believable. By extension, Lancelot and

Guinevere deserve the sympathy of the audience. The narrator of the stanzaic *Morte* does not offer

overt moral judgment of these characters. Instead, the actions of the characters when faced with

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[137] Lancelot tells Guinevere:
> Unto God I yiffe a heste to holde—
> The same destiny that yow is dyghte
> I will resseyve in som house bolde
> To plese here-after God All-myght. (lines 3686-3689)

difficult emotional circumstances serve to direct our view of them. The view is positive since they are able to make the noble choice in spite of their evident emotional turmoil.

The psychology of the characters in the *Mort Artu* and stanzaic *Morte* is also bound to the concept of human fallibility and the role of Fortune in the stories. Where the *Mort Artu* attributes human weakness and the capricious will of Fortune as the causes of the death of Arthur and the kingdom, the stanzaic *Morte* shifts blame from Arthur and is redirected to other characters and the impartial nature of happenstance.[138] Indeed, one of the most pivotal decisions that leads to the insurrection against Arthur, that of Mordred becoming the steward of England, is a decision made by all the barons and not Arthur alone. The French text states that King Arthur thought about who would look after Guinevere while he was away. At this point Mordred "jumps forward" and volunteers to be her guardian. There is no mention of the stewardship of Logres. Instead, Guinevere becomes the primary cause for Arthur's concern while he wages war abroad. Arthur readily agrees to Mordred's offer and the text states, "li rois dist que il velt bien que il remaigne et que il la gart come son cors." (*Mort Artu*, 166) ["The king told Mordred he would be pleased if he stayed and looked after her as he would himself." (*Death of King Arthur*, 156)] Thus, Guinevere is the reason for Mordred's becoming regent of the kingdom, for Mordred becomes her official protector. This decision, taken by Arthur alone, becomes a grave mistake as the French narrator foretells: "cil firent le serement don't li rois se repenti puis si douleureusement qu'il en dut ester vaincuz en champ en la plaigne de Salesbieres ou la bataille mortex fu, si come ceste Estoire meïsmes le devisera apertement." (*Mort Artu*, 166-167) [This was the oath that the king later repented so grievously, because as a result of it he was to be defeated in the field on Salisbury Plain where the battle was a mortal one, as this very story will describe in detail. (*Death of King Arthur*, 156)]

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[138] Frappier argues of the significance of Fortune in the *Mort Artu* as a pivotal contributor to Arthur's downfall. Indeed, in his view, Fortune is the only winner in the final battle on Salisbury Plain. See *Étude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu*, 276-288.

The stanzaic *Morte*, however, reorients this episode to position the kingdom, not Guinevere, as the valuable asset:

> At hys knightis all bydene
> The kynge gan hys conselle take,
> And bad hem ordeyen hem bytwene
> Who beste steward were for to make,
> The reme for to save and 3eme,
> And beste were for Bretaynes sake;
> Full mykelle they dred hem all bydene
> That alyens the land wold take. (lines 2508-2515)

The council unanimously approves Mordred as the safest choice to govern England. As the narrator subsequently informs us, "Syr Mordreit they to steward chese; / That many a bolden sythen abought." (lines 2522-2523) This oath to protect the kingdom and pledge allegiance to Mordred also accounts for why so many of Arthur's men turned against him. The mistake that leads to Mordred's rise to power is, therefore, not Arthur's fault in the stanzaic *Morte*. Rather, it is the fault of his counselors who have poorly advised the king by choosing Mordred. It is their oath that is cause for regret and not Arthur's decision.

Arthur is warned of the impending doom facing his reign through visions. These visions that occur in both the *Mort Artu* and the *Stanzaic Morte* foreshadow events to come. The audience, along with Arthur, is made aware of the downward spiral of events that will happen. The clearest difference between the *Mort Artu* and the *Stanzaic Morte* is the order in which the visions occur. In the *Mort Artu*, the first vision consists of a message from a recently deceased Gawain who tells him to delay the battle against Mordred and send for help from Lancelot. The second dream vision is the encounter with Fortuna, personified as a beautiful woman who places him on the wheel of fortune.

Both dreams are an attempt to advise Arthur to shake his pride and enlist the help of Lancelot. Without him, Arthur will not be able to defeat Mordred. The vision of the goddess, Fortuna, is significant since she is an active character and, through the vision, allegorically pushes

Arthur off his seat atop the wheel of fortune with such force that he feels as if all his bones are broken:

> Et lors le prenoit et le tresbuschoit a terre si felenessement que au cheoir estoit avis au roi Artu qu'il estoit touz debrisiez et qu'il perdoit tout le pooir del cors et des menbres. (*Mort Artu*, 227)

> [Then she took him and pushed him to the ground so roughly that King Arthur felt that he had broken all his bones in the fall and had lost the use of his body and his limbs. (*Death of King Arthur*, 205)]

If we compare this scene to that of the stanzaic *Morte*, these visions have a different narrative function. In the English poem, the focus is on Gawain's advice to Arthur. The English also changes the order of the visions so that Arthur sees the wheel of fortune first:

> The whele was ferly ryche and rownd—
> In world was never none half so hye;
> There-on he satte rychely crownyd,
> W\<i>t\<h> many a besaunte, broche and be;
> He lokyd downe upon the grownd;
> A blake water ther undyr hym he see,
> W\<i>t\<h> dragons fele there lay unbownde,
> That no-man durst hem nyghe nyee. (lines 3176-3183)

The wheel is a more subtle theme in the stanzaic *Morte*. Although the wheel clearly represents Fortune with Arthur seated on top surrounded by great wealth, there is no mention of pride. Nor is Arthur violently knocked from his perch atop the wheel by Fortuna herself. Instead, the dragons that are fighting beneath him pull him off the wheel as it turns. Fortune is presented, in the case of the stanzaic *Morte*, as an impersonal and impartial wheel. The wheel turns inexorably, and it is the evil dragons that act to take him down from it. In the English version, Arthur's fall is not a malevolent act by Fortune but rather an inevitable consequence of his position on the wheel.

The dream in which Gawain offers Arthur advice is, however, more straightforward in the English than the French. Arthur ignores Gawain's advice to call a temporary truce with Mordred in the *Mort Artu*. The Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte*, by contrast, heeds Gawain's warning and issues an order to his nobles upon waking:

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Hastely hys clothys on hym he dyde,
And to hys lordys gan he saye;
"in stronge sweyneys I have bene stad
That glad I may not for no gamys gaye.
We must unto syr Mordred sende
And founde to take another day,
Or trewely thys day I mon be shende—
Thys know I in bed as I laye. (lines 3224-3231)

The reversal of the order of the two visions lends them a clearer purpose. The vision of the wheel is a warning of a possible fate. The vision of Gawain is wise counsel that can help Arthur avoid the fate that will kill him. The *Mort Artu* demonstrates that Arthur chooses to ignore both the advice and the warning in the visions and that ultimately Arthur seals his own fate. The issue is more problematic in the stanzaic *Morte* since Arthur understands the fate that is to befall him and chooses to do something about it by asking for a month-long truce with Mordred. Mordred agrees to discuss the truce and advises the messenger that he will agree to it provided that Arthur gives him the rule of Cornwall and Kent.[139] Arthur admits that, "To yonder trayto<ur> have I no truste" (line 3322), but he knows that "The wyse shuld come to and fro, / To make accord, the sothe to sayne." (line 3319) Arthur in the stanzaic *Morte* does not see himself as a pawn to Fortune, and he shows humility by acceding to Mordred's request. Again, the English Arthur places the security of his kingdom above his own personal agenda and listens to sound advice.

In both works Arthur has the opportunity to see what will happen to him. The narrator states explicitly: "Einsi vit li rois Artus les mescheances qui li estoient a avenir." (*Mort Artu*, 227) [In that way King Arthur saw the misfortunes that were to befall him. (*Death of King Arthur*, 205)] Arthur discusses the visions with the Archbishop who also advises the king to delay the battle and, again, Arthur ignores the advice. The stubborn rejection of the warnings and advice highlight the inevitability of the events that are about to unfold. The narrator, along with the audience, knows the

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[139] It is curious that these two counties are selected by Mordred. Since they are at opposite ends of the southern coast of England, it would suggest that this counter-proposal is a ruse to encircle Arthur.

course that Arthur's single-minded actions will take. Arthur seals his own fate through the rejection of advice; and his pride, the prime motivation at this juncture, is the reason for Fortune to cast him viciously from his seat on top of the wheel of fortune.[140]

The most significant presentation of fate as an impersonal force in the stanzaic *Morte* is an event that does not occur in the *Mort Artu*. In the French, the battle is initiated by a joust between Yvain and Arcan. Yvain kills Arcan in the duel, and others from both sides join in the battle. In the English *Morte*, however, Arthur attempts to arrange a truce with Mordred in order to give Lancelot time to arrive to help Arthur's troops. As Arthur and a small band of his knights attend the parley with Mordred and his men, an adder bites one of Mordred's knights.[141] The knight draws his sword in order to kill the adder, and Arthur's men, suspecting Mordred of treachery, attack. The pace of the events and the rapid transition from potential truce to open battle emphasize the volatility of the situation. The addition by the English author is notable since the change from the source highlights how a chance event can cause disaster. The fall of the kingdom is all the more tragic given the pivotal role of chance in the stanzaic *Morte*.

The *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte* share a morally complex story. In both cases, the cause for the fall of the Arthurian world is without a singular person or event to blame. The *Mort Artu* places a greater responsibility on Arthur's role in the fall of his kingdom than in the stanzaic *Morte*. Lancelot and Guinevere, who betray Arthur with their affair, are spared overt criticism in both texts. The characters of Mordred and Agravain are, however, portrayed similarly in the French

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[140] Arthur eventually learns to regret his decision during the battle of Salisbury Plain when he thinks back to the vision of his nephew, Gawain, and says "or ai ge poor que je ne me tiegne por fol de ce que je ne vos crui, quant vos me deists que je mandasse Lancelot que il me venist aidier et secorre encontre Mordret, car je sai bien, se je l'eüsse mandé, il I fust venuz volentiers et debonerement." *Mort Artu*, 240 [I am afraid I was foolish when you told me to ask Lancelot to come and help me against Mordred, because I am sure that if I had asked him he would have come willingly and courteously. *Death of King Arthur*, 216]

[141] The episode of the adder only occurs in Malory and two Iberian chronicles. See E. D. Kennedy, "Arthurian Material: The Iberian Peninsula" in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, gen. ed. Graeme Dunphy, 2 vols., (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 1.117-18. The adder, it would appear, is included by the author of the *Stanzaic Morte* to support the idea of fate, or simply bad luck, as an arbitrary force.

and the English, as the embodiment of deceit. They both attempt to expose the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere and to wrest the throne from Arthur. Mordred also plans to marry Guinevere, his father's wife. In these episodes, the two authors demonstrate how the morally thorny issue of adultery is supplanted by deceit as the greater form of treachery.

Agravain and Mordred are characterized by their plotting and scheming. Agravain is the main architect of the plan to expose the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere. His initial attempts to convince the king of the adultery are not successful, and he must resort to a ruse in order to capture the lovers *in flagrante delicto.* The *Mort Artu* explains that the adultery concerns Agravain more than any of the others. He desperately wants Arthur to know the truth, and his views are in opposition to those of Gawain who says to Arthur:

> Por dieu, lessiez ester; Agravains est plus ennuiex qu'il ne deüst; etne vos chaille de ce savoir, car nus preux ne vos en porroit venir, ne a vos ne a nul preudome. (*Mort Artu*, 107-108)

> ['for God's sake let us say no more on the subject; Agravain is being more unpleasant than usual, and you should not be interested to know, because no good could come of it for you or any noble man.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 108)]

Gawain's words are not only prophetic; they attribute blame to Agravain for the consequences of the truth. Arthur is deaf to Gawain's advice and goes as far as to threaten Agravain's life if he does not reveal the truth. Agravain's role in the plot grows as he engineers the plan to catch the lovers together. Gawain and Gaheriet attempt to distance themselves from Agravain's plot because they know of the greater harm that it will do to the kingdom. Furthermore, Gawain denies any guilt for keeping the relationship a secret when he says to the king: "Certes, fet messire Gauvains, onques ma traïson ne vos fist mal." (*Mort Artu*, 112)['My treason certainly never did you any harm,' replied Sir Gawain. (*Death of King Arthur*, 112)].

Gawain's reaction to Arthur's criticism is significant since he demonstrates the notion that keeping Arthur in ignorance is good for both the king and the kingdom.

The stanzaic *Morte* presents the same consternation and rebuke of Agravain. Gawain again explains that to tell Arthur the truth about the relationship will do more harm than good:

> 'Wele wote we,' sayd syr Gawayne,
> 'That we ar of the king<is> kynne;
> And Launcelot is so mykyll of mayne
> That such wordys were better blynne,
> Welle wote thou, brothyr Agrawayne,
> There-of shulde we bot harmys wynne;
> Yit were it better to hele and layne
> Than werre and wrake thus to begynne. (lines 1688-1695)

Gawain's words repeat the foreshadowing in the *Mort Artu* and, most significantly, he advises that it is better to *hele* and *layne*, or cover up and lie, than to instigate war and destruction (*werre* and *wrake*). The stanzaic *Morte* is clearer in its criticism of Agravain and explains how he tells the king with "simple chere" about the adultery.

In the *Mort Artu*, Agravain is primarily responsible for the exposure of the lovers. Both Gawain and Lancelot ascribe blame to him. Gawain views Agravain's plot against Lancelot and Guinevere as a greater treachery than the adultery and threatens to leave Arthur's service because of it:

> Sire, ge vos rent quanque qe tieng de vos, ne jamés jor de ma vie ne vos servirai, se vos ceste desloiauté soufrez. (*Mort Artu*, 121)

> ['My Lord, I return to you whatever fiefs I hold from you, I shall never serve you again in all my life if you tolerate this treachery.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 120)]

The treachery that Gawain refers to is not that by Lancelot and Guinevere, but rather Agravain's plot to expose the lovers. To him, the plan to reveal the affair is a greater threat to the kingdom than keeping it a secret. Unable to act against Agravain, he protests and abstains from involvement in the persecution of Lancelot and Guinevere until his brother, Gaheriet, is killed by Lancelot.

Lancelot also singles out Agravain for blame when he states that he intends to kill Agravain first for his plot:

> Voire, fet Lancelos; dame, or ne vos chaille; qu'il a sa mort porchaciee, car ce sera li premiers qui en morra. (*Mort Artu*, 116)

> ['Do not worry, my Lady,' said Lancelot. 'He has arranged his own death, because he will be the first to die.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 115)]

For Lancelot, Agravain is a traitor. Lancelot's words convey the same view that Agravain's plot is a greater treason than the love between himself and Guinevere. In Lancelot's final words before killing him, he summarizes Agravain's defining characteristics when he says "Cuiverz, traïtres, vos estes a vostre fin venuz." (*Mort Artu*, 123) ['Coward, traitor, you have come to your end.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 122)] The label of traitor is a repeated reference to Agravain's plot and the destabilizing effect it will have on the kingdom.

Lancelot and Guinevere's view of Agravain in the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* is similar to that in the *Mort Artu*. Guinevere says that Agravain is the origin of their misfortune:

> 'With Agrawayne that is so kene,
> That nyght and day hathe bene oure foo,
> Now I wote, w<i>t<h>-outen wene,
> That alle oure wele is tornyd to woo.' (lines 1820-1824)

Instead of Agravain fleeing the scene as explained in the *Mort Artu*, he fights Lancelot at the door to the bedchamber and Lancelot kills him. Despite being Gawain's brother, Gawain has little sympathy for Agravain. When Gawain learns that Lancelot has killed him, he replies:

> I warnyd wele syr Aggrawayne,
> Or evyr yit thys tale was tolde,
> Launcelot was so myche of mayne,
> Ayenste hym was strange to holde. (lines 1916-1919)

Gawain learns of the death of his brother, and yet he is impassive in his reaction. Instead of grief at this news, Gawain offers a criticism and indicates the futility of fighting against Lancelot.[142]

In addition to Agravain, Mordred is subject to the greater level of criticism in both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte*. Mordred is the ultimate villain of the two texts as the narrator positions

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[142] Gawain is later to go against his own advice when he encourages Arthur to go to war with Lancelot.

him as the least sympathetic character typified by his treacherous nature. The *Mort Artu* presents

Mordred as a malicious and excessively ambitious character who first appears about half-way

through the story, yet is provided with the responsibility for the kingdom while Arthur is fighting

against Lancelot in Gaunes. Mordred's usurpation of the throne is the ultimate form of treachery,

greater than adultery and greater than the revelation of the affair by Agravain. Mordred attempts to

replace Arthur and in doing so is the focus of the criticism in both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic

Morte.

Mordred's first signs of treachery occur when he is critical of King Yon's advice that Arthur

not declare war on Lancelot.[143] Mordred is the first among Arthur's barons to state that the king

should go to war. Mordred is also the first to offer himself as guardian of Guinevere:

Sire, s'il vos plesoit, je remaindroie por li garder, et ele sera plus salvement, et plus asseür en devez ester, que se ele estoit en autre garde. (*Mort Artu*, 166)

> ['My Lord, if you like, I shall stay to look after her. With me she would be safer, and you could be surer of her, than if she were in anyone else's keeping.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 156)]

Guinevere, unlike Arthur, is already fully aware of Mordred's character and the narrator explains:

> Si en fu la reïne moult corrociee de ce qu'ele li fu bailliee a garder, car ele savoit tant de mal en lui et tant de desloiauté qu'ele pensoit bien que corrouz et anuis l'en vendroiut; et si fist il assez plus grant qu'ele ne peüst cuidier. (*Mort Artu*, 166)

> [the queen was very angry that she had been given over to his charge because she knew such wickedness and disloyalty in him that she was sure that suffering and ill would come of it. In fact they were even greater than she could have imagined. (*Death of King Arthur*, 156)]

Considering the generally positive portrayal of Guinevere in the *Mort Artu*, her words reveal the core

criticism of Mordred. Mordred's disloyalty becomes evident once Arthur leaves the kingdom of

Logres. The narrator repeatedly refers to Mordred's act of treason. Arthur too calls him a traitor

when he says: "que li desloiax traïtres a assemble tout le pooir de mes terres a venir encontre moi."

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[143] King Yon warns that declaring war on one of King Ban's kinsmen (Lancelot) would engulf them in a war that would be very difficult to win.

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(*Mort Artu*, 212) [the traitor has assembled all the forces of my land against me. (*Death of King Arthur*, 193)]. We also see Mordred as a cowardly character who fears Arthur, and the fear of him is intensified because of his act of treason:

> Il en devint touz esbahiz et esperduz, car moult doutoit le roi Artu et son efforz, et meesmement il a grant poor de sa desloiauté, qu'ele ne li nuise plus que autre chose. (*Mort Artu*, 215)

> [he was quite dumbfounded and helpless, because he was very frightened of King Arthur and his forces, especially because of his treachery, which he feared might rebound on him and harm him more than anyone else. (*Death of King Arthur*, 195)]

In the stanzaic *Morte*, Mordred appears much earlier in the story and is depicted as a co-conspirator with Agravain against Lancelot and Guinevere.[144] In this episode, both Agravain and Mordred come to Guinevere's bedchamber in order to expose the lovers. With Agravain killed in the melee, it is Mordred who flees for his life, revealing his cowardice:

> Bot Mordreit fled as he were wod--
> To save hys lyff full fayne he was. (lines 1862-1863)

The narrator's critical view of Mordred grows and intensifies as the story unfolds. When Arthur learns of the insurrection in England the narrator offers a scathing rebuke of Mordred:

> That fals trayto<ur>, s<yr> Mordreid--
> The kynges soster sone he was,
> And eke hys owne so<n>ne, as I rede--
> There-fore men hym fo[r] steward chase--
> So falsely hath he Yngland ledde,
> Wete yow wele, w<i>t<h>-outen lese,
> His emeis wyffe wolde he wedde,
> That many a man rewyd that rease. (lines 2954-2961)

The repetition of "fals" as a description of Mordred highlights how his deceit is subject for criticism. Mordred bribes the English barons with Arthur's own money to turn against the king. His duplicitous nature is again illustrated by the narrator when it states that Mordred "sware by Judas that Jh<esu>

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[144] The narrator is clearly critical of Mordred and makes it seem appropriate that Mordred should be part of the plot: "And Mordreite, that mykelle couthe of wrake:" *Stanzaic Morte*, line 1675.

sold" (line 3250) in response to Arthur. The act of Mordred swearing by Judas Iscariot, the disciple

that betrayed Jesus for money, reinforces the association between Mordred and the theme of deceit.

While Agravain and Mordred are the antagonists of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere, both

texts emphasize that no singular character is responsible for the fall of the kingdom. The *Mort Artu*,

offering a complex web of cause and effect combined with equally complex protagonists, provides a

delicate moral question. With Lancelot and Guinevere finding a degree of redemption and Agravain

and Mordred finding ignominious death, it would appear that the author of the *Mort Artu* excuses

their relationship without condoning it. Arthur, on the other hand, ends his life by defeating Mordred,

the most treacherous character in the story. Yet, his victory comes at a price, and Arthur receives a

mortal wound from Mordred. As he is dying, Arthur conveys the tragedy of the event to his vassal,

Girflet:

> Girflet, Fortune qui m'a esté mere jusque ci, et or m'est devenue marrastre, me fet user le remenant de ma vie en douleur et en corrouz et en tristesce. (*Mort Artu*, 247)

> ['Girflet, Fortune, who has been my mother until now, but has become my step-mother, is making me devote the remainder of my life to grief and anger and sadness.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 222)]

Arthur suggests that he has fallen out of favor with Fortune and that he is being punished for his

actions.

The stanzaic *Morte* also places no specific blame on a single character. In this regard,

however, the English text is different from the French in that the level of blame attributed to Arthur

is minimal. The English poet introduces an episode, not present in the *Mort Artu*, when Arthur has

died and where Bedievere pledges to join a monastery:

> 'Ermyte,' he sayd, 'w<i>t<h>-oute lesynge,
> Here lyeth my lod that I have lorne,
> Bold Arthur, the beste kynge
> That evyr was in Bretayne borne,
> Yif me som of thy clothynge,
> For Hym that bare the crowne of thorne,
> And leve that I may w<i>t<h> the lenge,

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Whyle I may leve, and pray hym forne.'(lines 3550-3557)

Bedeivere's comments reflect the tone of the stanzaic *Morte*. Arthur's death is tragic but it is also a celebration of him as the greatest king that Britain has ever known. In the closing episode of both texts we sense this distinction in the more prominent and lauded role of Arthur. The *Mort Artu* does not mention Arthur in the final episode. Instead, Lancelot is the prominent character and we are told, via his tombstone, that he was the greatest knight that ever entered the kingdom of Logres, except for his son Galahad.

The stanzaic *Morte* preserves significant themes of the *Mort Artu,* yet presents them in a different manner. Just as the poet unravels the many intricate narrative threads of his source, the English author teases out the key character traits and addresses the delicate moral questions posed by the source. The changes in the English are often clearly evident yet it is more relevant to understand how the changes serve to emphasize or de-emphasize elements of the French romance. The stanzaic *Morte* is not an example of equivalence in translation. Rather, it is an adaptation that draws on the source for storyline, characters and themes. There may be changes such as the reduced blame attributed to Arthur or the relegation of Fortune to a function more akin to tragic coincidence than design, but the changes serve to illustrate the connection with the original.

The stanzaic *Morte* effectively frees itself from the structural bonds of its source. The English author rejects the prose of the French and opts for an unusual poetic form. The poet actively rearranges the complex technique of narrative interlace to present a more focused and streamlined story. There are significant changes yet the commonalities of themes and psychology, combined with the careful treatment of blame in the story, demonstrate a close relationship between the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte*. In this regard, we may continue to view the stanzaic *Morte* as an adaptation that inherits and preserves key elements of the source. The author did not intend to achieve

equivalence with his translation but selected pertinent themes and changed the structure and narrative

style of the French to make it less complex but yet have characters with similar traits.

Chapter 4

"The Tale of the Sankgreal": A Translation of *La Queste del Saint Graal*

Malory's "Tale of the Sankgreal" is regarded by scholars as a close version of *La Queste del Saint Graal*.[145] Ralph Norris states that the tale is a "close adaptation of the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*" and that "Malory follows the major source of this tale with greater fidelity than that of any other of the eight tales."[146] P.J.C. Field also states that the *Queste* is "the only source where he begins at the beginning and relates all of the episodes in the same order through to the end, sometimes word for word."[147] Thus, although Norris has described the tale as an adaptation, the assertion by Field would suggest, given the equivalence-based understanding of what constitutes a translation and adaptation, that "The Tale of the Sankgreal" is a close, or equivalent, translation. Indeed, Eugene Vinaver called "The Tale of the Sankgreal" a "translation," as opposed to an adaptation, of the *Queste*. It is significant that, in comparison to other tales in his collection of works, Malory elects to follow the *Queste* so closely. *The Tale of the Sankgreal*, or Tale Six, is remarkable as a close version of the source, and the tale highlights an active intention on the part of the author to achieve equivalence.

The extent of equivalence to the *Queste* is, however, variable throughout Tale Six. We know that Malory viewed the *Queste* as a religiously significant text, yet we also know that Tale Six reduces some of the religious dogma and allegory present in the French romance. Mary Hynes-

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[145] There remains some debate as to the extent that Malory translates the *Queste*, but as Dhira B. Mahoney has asserted "Although no critic denies that he reduced it considerably, with many omissions and small alterations, many insist that what remains is still a close translation of the source romance." "The Truest and Holiest Tale: Malory's Transformation of La Queste del Saint Graal" in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985), 109.

[146] *Malory's Library: The Sources of the Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 114.

[147] "Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur" in *The Arthur of the English*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 238.

Berry argues that, "Malory creates an entirely different perception of the significance of the Grail story."[148] I agree with Hynes-Berry that Malory reduces some of the allegorical emphasis of the Grail story, yet I would add that he underlines the importance of the Grail and its spiritual significance by means of close translation. Malory presents what he considers to be vital truths in Tale Six by means of adherence to his source. The degree of closeness between the *Queste* and Tale Six is largely revealed through Malory's reproduction of the allegorical style of the French source.

Both romances consist of several interlaced plots telling of the adventures of several of Arthur's knights, the most important of which are Galahad, Lancelot, Gawain, Bors and Perceval. The unifying thread that links the various plotlines is, however, the Holy Grail. Galahad's arrival heralds the beginning of the quest for the Holy Grail. Galahad's quest, like that of the other knights, is to find the Grail. It represents a pinnacle of chivalric achievement only attainable by a select few. The Grail is the core of the storyline and its eventual proximity to the individual knight forms the benchmark by which all are judged.

In addition to the Grail, the characters, specifically the knights on the quest for the Grail, are exemplars of a spiritual hierarchy and models for allegorical interpretation. For this chapter, I have selected Galahad, Gawain and Lancelot as illustrations of Malory's presentation of different types of knight found in the *Queste*. In addition to the knights, the Grail functions as a narrative device to re-mold and re-interpret perception of chivalric ideals. Just as the New Testament redefined the teachings of the Old, the *Queste* criticizes much of Arthurian romance as spiritually errant and reorients chivalric endeavors as Christian work.[149] Malory, despite adapting many examples of

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[148]"Malory's Translation of Meaning: The Tale of the Sankgreal," *Studies in Philology,* 74 (1977), 243.

[149]Catherine Batt and Rosalind Field state that the Queste "rewrites chivalric heroism in the language and morality of Scripture." "The Romance Tradition" in *The Arthur of The English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 67. Andrea Williams also asserts that "the author of *La Queste* presents his tale not merely as an invented fable aimed at the edification of the reader, but also as a pseudo-history: just as scripture depicts the 'Truth', so the adventures of the Grail are intended to be read as 'true', that is, true not in the literal sense, but in the transcendental sense." *The Adventures of the Holy Grail*, (Oxford: Lang, 2001), 169-170.

Arthurian romance in his other tales, recaptures much of the *Queste*'s didacticism and likewise highlights the Grail quest as the redemption of Arthurian chivalry.

Aside from the similarity in plot and themes, Tale Six also displays structural connections and commonalities in narrative technique with the *Queste*. This chapter will address Malory's use of interlace, the relationship and continuity between Tales Five, Six and Seven, as well as Malory's use of stock phrases and transitions that he inherits from his source. Tale Six stands apart from the other tales in *Morte Darthur* since its narrative technique is considerably different. The structural comparison, especially in light of the other tales, supports the view that Malory sought equivalence for Tale Six.

Although scholars agree that Tale Six is a close version of its source, there are some notable differences. Two significant differences are the reduced exegesis of the knights' adventures and several additions by Malory that do not occur in the *Queste*. Some of the additions, like the conclusion, are original with Malory, but others are elements he recalled from having read the post-Vulgate versions of the story of Merlin and most likely the post Vulgate *Queste*.[150] The latter was also the final part of the French *Tristan en prose*, Malory's source for his fifth tale. Malory indicates in his explicit to Tale V that he is skipping that part ("But here is no rehersall of the thirde booke") and turning instead to the "noble tale of the Sankgreale" (*Works*, 2.845). He obviously preferred the Vulgate *Queste*, a work that is considerably shorter and has more allegorical content than the post-Vulgate version. It also provides a smooth transition to the *Mort Artu*, the final romance of the Vulgate Cycle, which Malory chose as a major source for his final tales.

Tale Six is significantly shorter than the *Queste* (by about one third). Much of the reduction in content is the omission of superfluous detail. This reduction of detail aligns Malory's tale with other English versions of the French romances since, not only are the English versions shorter, they

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[150] See Edward Donald Kennedy's "Malory's 'Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake,' the Vulgate *Lancelot*, and the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*," *Arthurian and Other Studies Presented to Shunichi Noguchi*, ed. T. Suzuki and T. Mukai (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 107-29.

tend to focus on action and disregard extraneous narrative. The significant reduction creates a conundrum: how can the tale be considered a close translation when there is such reduction of content? The answer, I believe, lies in the comparison of structure, use of language and the core themes between source and translation. In this chapter, I will acknowledge the notable differences and then demonstrate structural and thematic equivalence as well as linguistic parity.

Despite the general agreement among scholars that Malory closely followed the *Queste* in writing his sixth tale, Malory's reductions of the explications of the knights' adventures by various hermits and holy men, present a slight difference in the overall tone of the romance. In the case of the *Queste*, the allegorical significance of the adventures is essential to the story's progression. The adventures of each knight provide him with an opportunity to succeed or to fail in a test of his spiritual condition. The explanation, or exegesis, by a hermit or spiritual superior awakens the knights, and the audience, to the allegorical significance of earthly actions.[151] Tale Six reduces the role of these explanations and, therefore, the allegorical dimension of Malory's tale is equally reduced.

The first example of Malory's briefer use of exegesis I wish to address is Lancelot's experience at the ancient chapel. In this episode in the French *Queste*, Lancelot is granted a second vision of the Holy Grail.[152] Lancelot remains in a torpor, neither moving nor speaking at the sight of the Grail. A squire subsequently takes Lancelot's arms and armor and hands them to the knight of the litter, who has been healed by the power of the Grail. Soon after leaving the chapel, Lancelot comes upon a hermitage and confesses his sin of adultery. He explains to the hermit what happened at the chapel and asks the hermit for advice as:

> Et lors li conte coment il avoit veu le Saint Graal si q'onques ne s'estoit remuez encontre lui, ne por honor de lui ne por amor de Nostre Seignor.

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[151] The explanations are exegetical since they serve to inform and educate both the knight and the reader.

[152] The first vision occurs at the feast of Pentecost in Camelot.

Et quant il ot au preudome conté tout son estre et toute sa vie, si li prie por Dieu qu'il le conseult. (*Queste*, 66)

[Then Lancelot told him how he had seen the Holy Grail and how neither reverence for the vessel nor love for Our Lord had stirred him from his torpor. And when he had laid open his life and soul to the gaze of the holy man, he besought him in God's name to counsel him. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 89-90)]

The hermit interprets the events at the chapel and explains to Lancelot how he has become mired by his sin. Furthermore, the hermit provides extensive allegorical explanations of his actions and how they have separated Lancelot from a connection with the divine. The hermit explains why the voice told him that he is "plus durs que Pierre, plus amers que fuz, plus nus et plus despris que figuiers." (*Queste*, 67) ["harder than stone, more bitter than wood, more barren and bare than the fig tree." (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 91)] For example, the hermit proceeds to explain that such a heart is not open to God:

Et par la pierre ou len troueve durté puet len entendre le pecheor, qui tant s'est endormiz et endurciz en son pechié que ses cuers en est si endurciz qu'il ne puet estre amoloiez ne par feu ne par eve. Par feu ne puet il estre amoloiez, carli feus dou Saint Esperit n'i puet entrer ne trover leu, por le vessel qui est orz et les desviez pechiez que cil a acreuz et amoncelez de jor en jor. et par eve ne puet il estre amoloiez, car la parole dou Saint Esperit, qui est la douce eve et la douce pluie, ne puet estre receue en son cuer. (*Queste*, 68)

["And by the temper of the stone one should understand the sinner whose heart is so numbed and hardened by sin that it cannot be softened either by fire or by water. Not by fire, for the fire of the Holy Ghost cannot enter or find lodging therefore filth of the vessel, where day on day aberrant sins have gathered and accumulated. Nor by water, for the word of the Holy Ghost, which is the sweet water and thew gentle rain, cannot penetrate such a heart." (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 91)]

The hermit's explanation is not only exegetical, but also biblical. Specifically, the *Queste* author includes Deuteronomy 32:2 and Matthew 21:19 as direct parallels between Lancelot's actions and their spiritual significance.[153] Thus, here we see the *Queste* narrative as a clear form of biblical exegesis.

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[153] My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass (Deut. 32:2), And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it and found nothingthereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. (Matt. 21:19)

Significantly, Lancelot asks specifically for an explanation of the three allegorical references made by the voice. In the *Queste* Lancelot states:

> Et por Dieu, fet il, dites moi la senefiance de ces trios choses. Car n'oï onques mes parole que je desirrasse tant a savoir come ceste. Et por ce vos pri je que vos m'en façoiz certain: car je sai bien que vos en savez la verité. (*Queste*, 67)

> ['For the love of God,' he added, 'tell me the meaning of these three words. For I never heard anything said, which I so thirsted to understand. Wherefore, I pray you, set my mind at rest, for I am certain that you know the truth.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 90)]

The *senefiance,* or meaning, of the three words is essential information for Lancelot. He explicitly requires the hermit to interpret for him since he cannot see the truth for himself.

In addition to the explanation of his vision, the hermit advises him how to change his behavior and become a more faithful servant of God. He must, from that moment forward, end his relationship with the queen. It is the first and most important step on Lancelot's path to redemption. His ignorance of his spiritual condition is manifest in his sleepy condition, unaware of the presence of the Grail. Through the hermit's explanation, Lancelot becomes conscious of his error and he pledges an oath to renounce his former life and pursue a more spiritual form of chivalry: a knightly identity that is independent of the queen's favor.[154]

As in the French *Queste*, Malory's Lancelot asks the hermit to counsel him. In contrast to the *Queste*, the Lancelot of Tale Six does not ask specifically for an explanation of the comparisons. Lancelot says "I mervayle of the voice that seyde to me mervayles words, as ye have herde toforehonde" (*Works*, 2.897). The difference in request is subtle yet significant. Lancelot's request in the *Queste* is a clearer presentation of the allegorical meaning of the words spoken by the disembodied voice. Malory does not call attention to the exegesis. Instead, the hermit offers his

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[154] Lancelot confesses to the hermit that, "Ce est cele por qui amor j'ai faites les granz proeces dont toz li mondes parole. Ce est cele qui m'a fet venir de povreté en richece et de mesaise a toutes les terriannes beneurtez." (*Queste*, 66) ["For her love alone I accomplished the exploits with which the whole world rings. She it is who raised me from poverty to riches and from hardship to the sum of earthly bliss." (*Quest of the Holy Grail,* 89)]

explanation as a response to Lancelot's ignorance of his diminished spiritual standing, and he re-

states the necessity for the explanation:

> 'Have ye no mervayle,' seyde the good man, 'thereoff, for hit semyth well God lovith you.
> For men may undirstonde a stone ys harde of kynde, and namely one more than another, and
> that ys to understonde by the, sir Launcelot, for thou wolt nat leve thy synne for no goodness
> that God hath sent the." (*Works*, 2.897-88)

The passage is significant since Malory suggests that Lancelot needs to understand the truth. The

words of the hermit are different from those of the hermit of the *Queste*, who states that he will

gladly explain the allegory because Lancelot wants to know the truth, and not because he needs to

know:

> Certes, fet il, Lancelot, je ne me mervoil mie se ces troi paroles vos ont esté dites. Car vos
> avez esté toz dis li plus merveille se len vos dit plus merveilleuses paroles qu'a autres. Et
> puis que vos avez talent de savoir en la verité, je la vos dirai volentiers. Ore escoutez.
> (*Queste*, 67)

> [Truly, Lancelot, I am in no way amazed that these three words were spoken to you. For you
> have ever been the most wondrous of men, therefore it is no marvel if more wondrous things
> are said to you than another. And since you would know the truth I will gladly tell it you: so
> heed my words. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 90-91)]

The exegetical emphasis of the *Queste* is also evident in the explanation of the vision of the

bulls given to Gawain and Hector. In this vision, Gawain sees a hundred and fifty bulls in a meadow

where all are black except for three, which are white. Two of the white bulls are unblemished, and

one is white except for a black spot. After seeing this vision, Gawain and Hector encounter a hermit,

and the hermit explains to them the significance of the vision. As exhibited in Lancelot's episode at

the chapel, the knights in the *Queste* ask pointedly for an explanation of the vision:

> Et quant il li ont tot conté, si li prient por Dieu qu'il lor en die la senefiance : car sanz grant
> senefiance ne lor ert ce mie avenu en dormant. (*Queste*, 155)

> [When they had recounted it all they asked him in the name of God to tell them what it
> meant; for no such vision would have come to them in their sleep unless it had some signal
> meaning. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 169-170)]

Malory's translation omits the desire on the part of Gawain and Hector to know the significance of

the vision. Instead, the hermit takes it upon himself to provide *counceyle* in light of their wish to

confess:

> 'Fayre lordis,' seyde he, 'what adventure brought you hydir?'
> Than seyde sir Gawayne, 'to speke with you for to be confessed.'
> 'Sir,' seyde the ermyte, 'I am redy.'
> Than they tolde hym so muche that he wyste welle what they w[e]re, and than he thought to counceyle them if he myght.
> Than began Sir Gawayne and tolde hym of hys avision that he had in the chapel. And Ector tolde hym all as hit ys before reherced. (*Works*, 2.945-46)

The hermit informs them of the significance of their vision, yet Malory again presents the exegesis as

impromptu advice and not in response to a request by the knights for an explanation. Furthermore,

the explanation of the vision is significantly reduced. The hermit tells the knights of the meaning of

the black and white bulls, yet some of the details are omitted. Malory tells us that the black bulls are

the sinful knights, whereas the pure white bulls represent Galahad and Percival, with the spotted bull

being Bors.[155] He does not, however, provide select information such as the deeper significance of

the yoke around the neck of the bulls. The *Queste* states:

> Li troi toriel estoient lié par les cox, ce sont lit roi chevalier en quoi virginitez est si durement enracineequ'il n'ont pooir des chiés lever, ce est a dire qu'il n'ont garde que orgueil se puisse entrer en els. (*Queste*, 156)

> [The three bulls were yoked together at the neck, which is to say that virginity is so engrafted in these knights that they are powerless to lift their heads: meaning that they are secure against the assaults of pride. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 170)]

If we compare this explanation of the yoke to Tale Six, Malory condenses and reduces this allegory.

The reference to the yoke is omitted and so is the resultant inability to raise one's head in a gesture

of pride:

> And why tho three were tyed by the neckes, they be three knyghtes in virginité and chastité, and there ys no pride smitten in them. (*Works*, 2.946)

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[155]Bors has committed one act of sexual indiscretion yet subsequently has devoted himself to a chaste life. Hence, the bull has one blemish.

In addition, Malory reduces the exegesis of dreams and adventures in Tale Six. By reducing these explanations, Malory minimizes their significance in the tale as a whole. The choice to reduce these elements of the *Queste* is important since the allegorical dimension of the *Queste* is integral to the French romance. Indeed, the Grail itself is allegorical and its symbolic role in the *Queste* is as important as its physical presence. In the episode of Galahad's glimpse into the Grail, there is a contrast in some close translation and notable omission between the French and English. In the *Queste*, the narrator explains what Galahad sees:

> Et il se tret avant et regarde dedenz le saint Vessel. Et si tost come il ot regardé, si commence a trembler molt durement, si tost come la mortel char commença a regarder les espiritex choses. Lors tent Galaad ses meins vers le ciel et dit: «Sire, toi ador ge et merci de ce que tu m'as acompli mon dessirrier, car ore voi ge tot apertement ce que langue ne porroit descrire ne cuer penser. Ici voi ge l'a commençaille des granz hardemenz et l'achoison des proeces; ici voi ge les merveilles de totes autres merveilles! (*Queste*, 277-278)

> [Galahad drew near and looked into the Holy Vessel. He had but glanced within when a violent trembling seized his mortal flesh at the contemplation of the spiritual mysteries. Then lifting his hands up to heaven, he said:
> 'Lord, I worship Thee and give Thee thanks that Thou hast granted my desire, for now I see revealed what tongue could not relate nor heart conceive. Here is the source of valour undismayed, the spring-head of endeavour; here I see the wonder that passes every other! (*Queste of the Holy Grail*, 283)]

> By contrast, *Tale Six* omits the specific information concerning Galahad's Grail vision:

> And than he began to tremble right harde when the dedly fleysh began to beholde the spirituall thynges. Than he hylde up his hondis towarde hevyn and seyde,
> 'Lorde, I thanke The, for now I se that that hath be my desire many a day. Now, my Blyssed Lorde, I wold not lyve in this wrecchyed worlde no lenger, if hit myght please The, Lorde.' (*Works*, 2.1034)

> Some of the English sentences show a close translation of the French. Although the concepts are abstract and ostensibly defy explanation, the author of the *Queste* describes Galahad's experience as seeing what no tongue can relate nor heart conceive, and they are wonders surpassing all others.[156]

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[156]The "wonders" are plural in OF. Matarasso translates this as a singular noun.

Malory, too, provides a vague reference to the "spirituall thynges" seen by Galahad.[157] In both cases, the description of the experience states that the mysteries transcend human comprehension. The vision is sufficient that Galahad no longer wishes to live in the world and thus die.

In contrast to the use of omission as a means to change his translation, Malory employs some additions to Tale Six that do not occur in the *Queste*. There are three significant additions that I will present here. The first is the introduction by Perceval's sister to Perceval. The *Queste* includes the familial connection as part of her greeting to Perceval, and she states that she is the daughter of King Pellehen:

> "Savez vos, fete le, qui je sui?"
> "Certes, fet il, nanil; onques a mon escient ne vos vi."
> "Sachiez, fete le, que je sui vostre suer et fille au roi Pellehen." (*Queste*, 201)
>
> ['Do you know who I am?'
> 'Indeed, I do not; I never saw you to my knowledge.'
> 'Let me then tell you that I am your sister, the daughter of King Pellehen.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 213)]

Tale Six also establishes the sibling relationship between Percival and his sister, yet she identifies herself as the daughter of King Pellynor. The difference in spelling may appear insignificant until we consider the post-Vulgate *Queste*. The post-Vulgate uses the name Pellinor, and not Pellehen. The difference in this case is likely that the result of Malory remembering the use of Pelinore from the post-Vulgate *Merlin*, which he uses as the major source for his first tale.[158]

The second addition is the reference to Balin in the episode of the drawing of the sword from the stone. The *Queste* makes no reference to Balin whereas Malory sees fit to reiterate the heritage of the sword that "somtyme was the good knyghtes Balyns le Saveaige, and he was a passynge good knight of hys hondys; and with thys swerde he slew brothir Balan, and that was grete pité, for he was

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[157] Matarasso explores the possible nature of the Grail mysteries in the *Queste*, likening the experience to the idea od seeing the face of God such as in the biblical stories of Moses and Jacob, Exodus 33:20 and Genesis 32:30 respectively. *Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the Queste del Saint Graal*, 197-99.

[158] See *Works*, 1.51-52.

a good knight." (*Works*, 2.863) Malory's inclusion of the history regarding the sword is notable since

it reminds the reader of the passage included in "The Tale of King Arthur."[159] The passage in Malory

is taken from the Post-Vulgate *Story of Merlin*. The passage in Malory's Tale of King Arthur (Tale

One) and the Post-Vulgate *Merlin* foreshadow the events in Tale Six. Malory's inclusion is, again, a

reminder of the coherence of the story and assists the reader to establish narrative connections

between his works.

The third is Arthur's lament before the knights depart on the quest of the Holy Grail. The

Arthur of the *Queste* is tearful to see his knights leave on the quest, and he says to Gawain that,

"Onques ma cort n'amenda tant de vos come ele en est ore empoiriee. Car ja mes ne sera honoree de

si haute compaignie ne de si vaillant come vos en avez ostee par vostre esmuete." (*Queste*, 21)

["Never again will my palace be graced by so brave and brilliant a company as you are stealing from

it at your going." (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 49)] Malory, on the other hand, presents a more detailed

premonition as to the consequences for embarking on the quest for the Holy Grail:

> "ye have nygh slayne me for the avow that ye have made, for thorow you ye have berauffte
> me the fayryst and the trewyst of knyghthode that ever was sene togydir in ony realme of the
> worlde. For whan they departe frome hense I am sure they all shall never mete more togydir
> in thys worlde, for they shall dye many in the queste." (*Works*, 2.866)

Furthermore, the Arthur of the *Queste* identifies Gawain and Lancelot as the knights he will

miss the most.[160] Malory, on the other hand, does not specify the two knights as the most valued in

Arthur's eyes. Instead, Malory's Arthur says that he loves the fellowship of the Round Table "as

well as my lyff." (*Works*, 2.866) The difference between the *Queste* and Tale Six is, in this case, that

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[159] See *Works*, 1.89.

[160] "Gauvain, Gauvain, vos m'avez trahi! Onques ma cort n'amenda tant de vos come ele en est ore empoiriee. Car ja mes ne sera honoree de si haute compaignie ne de si vaillant come vos en avez ostee par vostre esmuete. Ne encore ne sui je pas tant corrouciez par aus come je sui por vos deus." (*Queste*, 21) ['Gawain, Gawain you have betrayed me! The lustre you conferred on my court was not so great as the loss it now suffers at your hand. Never again will my palace be graced by so brave and brilliant a company as you are stealing from it at your going. And yet their departure grieves me less than Lancelot's and yours. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 48-49)] It is interesting to note that in Malory's final tale, he reiterates that Gawain and Lancelot are the knights he loved the most. See *Works*, 3.1230.

Malory's Arthur is more definitive when stating the impending loss to the kingdom, and his lament is reserved for all the knights and without emphasis on Gawain and Lancelot.

Malory's inclusion of Arthur's tearful lament and the theme of being together (*togydir*), referenced twice in the passage above, suggest the influence of a different source: Hardyng's Chronicle.[161] At the start of the Grail quest in the *Chronicle*, Arthur makes reference to the idea of *hole togedirs*, a declaration of the completeness that he feels with his knights together at court:

> O God [if] deth wold brest myne hert on twayne,
> Who shall mayntene my crowne & my ryghtes,
> I trowe nomore to see you eft agayne
> Thys hole togedirs and so goodly knightes;
> Would God I might make myne auowe & hightes,
> To passe with you in what land so ye go,
> And take my parte with you both in well and wo.[162]

The influence of the *Chronicle* is appropriate for the scene and supplements the tone initiated in the *Queste* yet is more emphatic in its connection with Arthurian chivalry. Malory may have found this episode to be lacking in his primary source and found Hardyng's version to be more fitting as a means to highlight the magnitude of loss caused by the quest for the Grail.

Despite Malory's changes, Tale Six's similarity, or rather equivalence, to the *Queste* is evident on a variety of levels. Structurally, the tale employs the *Queste*'s technique of *entrelacement*. The use of interlace, characteristic of the Vulgate romances, is unusual for Malory. Indeed, Malory, like other English authors, tends to reduce and rearrange the interlaced French romances in favor of a condensed, linear narrative progression. For example, Malory reduces many of his French sources such as the *Prose Tristan*, which is six times longer than Malory's *The Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones*, or Tale Five. Malory attempts, as Rosalind Field points out, "to unravel the intricacies of

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[161]The *Chronicle* serves as an important source for both Tale One (The Take of King Arthur) and Tale Eight (The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Darthur Sanz Guerdon). See Kennedy, Edward D., "Malory and His English Sources" in *Aspects of Malory*, edited by Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), 27-55.

[162]Hardyng, John. *The Chronicle of Iohn Hardyng*. edited by Henry Ellis, 1812; rptd. (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 134.

their interlace by separating their linked stories."[163] Malory employs *entrelacement* in Tale Five, but the *Works* as a whole follow a linear and chronological progression. Tale Five is also something of an anomaly in which, as stated by P.J.C. Field, "the Fifth Tale hardly promotes the coherence of Malory's 'Whole book': it simply stands at its centre, the place where the chivalric world of quests and tournaments exists in its purest form."[164]

Tale Six, like all chivalric romances with interlaced structures, adheres to the pattern of following individual or a select few knights as their adventures intersect with a concurrent timeline. As mentioned previously in this dissertation, the transitions between characters, and thus the different narrative threads, are signaled by the narrator. The narrator announces that the story will leave one character and turn to another. Malory follows the French closely in this manner, and the language of his transitions mimics the same style. For example, at the end of Lancelot's adventure where he loses his arms and armor due to his spiritual ignorance at the chapel, the *Queste* and Tale Six transition to the story of Perceval. The *Queste* begins the tale of Perceval as follows:

Mes atant lesse ores li contes a parler de lui et retourne a Perceval. (*Queste*, 71)

[But here the tale leaves him and returns to Perceval (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 94)]

Likewise, Tale Six states:

HERE LEVITH THE TALE OF SIR LANCELOT AND BEGYNNYTH OF SIR

PERCYVALE DE GALIS (Works, 2.899)

Malory is more specific in this case to identify Lancelot and also to state Perceval's full name, yet the function of the sentence remains the same. More importantly, the transitional phrase becomes a recurring feature throughout Tale Six, and Malory uses it to mark the end of an episode and the

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[163]"Romance" in *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Vol. I To 1550*, edited by Roger Ellis, (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 325.

[164] "Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur" in *The Arthur of the English*, 237.

beginning or return of another. It is important to note that the transitional phrase is not characteristic

of Malory's other tales, and strongly suggests that he is copying the *Queste*.

On occasion, the *Queste* includes a brief recapitulation of earlier episodes when returning to

a narrative thread. These summaries appear at the end of the episode. They remind the reader of prior

events and highlight pertinent information. For example, once the storyline following Perceval's

adventure comes to a close, the narrator explains that the story will turn to Lancelot and provides a

reminder as to where Lancelot is, and what he is doing:

> Mes a tant lesse ore li contes a parler de lui et retorne a Lancelot, qui ert remés chiés le
> preudome qui si bien li ot devisee la senefiance des trios paroles que la voiz li avoit dites en
> la chapele. (*Queste*, 115)

> [But here the tale leaves him [Percival] and takes up the story of Lancelot, who was lodging
> still with the hermit from whom he had received so clear an explanation of the words the
> voice had spoken to him in the chapel. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 133-134)]

Tale Six, however, does not follow the lead of its source in these instances. Malory is more

formulaic and consistent in his transitions between threads. The transitions follow the same concise

pattern.[165] Malory repeatedly states the names of two characters: the one that the story leaves, and the

character that the story will subsequently join. There is no recapitulation of the prior narrative to

remind and reorient the reader. We have, in this case, a blend of approaches. Malory dispenses with

superfluous information in the form of the reminder, whilst preserving the core form and function of

the narrative transition.

In addition to the stock transitional phrases, there is a notable detail in common that starts

the new narrative thread. The *Queste* uses another stock phrase that states: "Or dit li contes…"

["Now the story relates..."]. Malory adopts this recurring introductory phrase and translates directly:

"Now seyth the tale." This type of phrase to introduce a new episode in the story is not characteristic

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[165] The only instance where there is a notable absence in transitional phrase is between the sections of the
departure and the miracles. At this point, the storyline does not require a transitional phrase since the knights
all depart together and the story segues into Galahad's adventure. Furthermore, the division between episodes
is the point at which the knights separate and is, therefore, the beginning of the interlaced structure.

of Malory's writing and does not appear in the other tales. Its usage is, moreover, consistent throughout Tale Six. The extent and idiosyncrasy of this phrase in Tale Six, vis-à-vis the other tales, demonstrate adherence to the source and illustrate Malory's commitment to both structural and linguistic equivalence.

The opening paragraph of Tale Six, like its source, shifts the focus from Lancelot to his son and spiritual superior in Galahad. Galahad has the qualities that Lancelot would have had if he had not engaged in the adulterous relationship with Guinevere.[166] In the *Queste*, Galahad supersedes Lancelot as the greatest knight and the former functions as a paragon of spiritual chivalry. The beginning of the *Queste* identifies various key elements that preview and establish the primacy of Galahad over Lancelot. The didactic tone of the *Queste* is a reflection of the ascetic principles of its author.[167] Thus, the character of Galahad is the embodiment of a new spiritual chivalry and a rejection of the earthly chivalry that the *Queste* author attributes to the prevailing trend in Arthurian Romance.

Tale Six is interesting in its somewhat amended presentation of the chivalric ideals present in the *Queste*. As previously stated, Tale Six minimizes some of the allegorical dimension of its source. Despite this reduced emphasis on the spiritual significance of visions and adventures, Malory maintains the celebration of ascetic practices and criticizes the chivalric pursuits that feature prominently in medieval romance. Foremost among the examples of this approach are Galahad and Gawain. The contrast between these characters is not only a rebuke of romance conventions, but also a means to invert popular views of knighthood. Gawain, the most beloved of Arthur's knights and a knight lauded for his many chivalric accomplishments, fails repeatedly to accomplish anything of note in the *Queste*. Conversely, Galahad, who has not yet embarked on any adventures and hence

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[166] In the French Prose *Lancelot*, Lancelot was baptized Galahad.

[167] The *Queste* is widely believed to have been written by someone trained in Cistercian doctrine.

achieved any knightly renown, succeeds in all of his endeavors for the simple reason that he is destined to be the Grail winner and thus the greatest knight.

To foreshadow the arrival of Galahad and to symbolize his predestination in the *Queste*, a sword embedded in a stone arrives floating down the river. The hilt of the sword bears an inscription stating that "JA NUS NE M'OSTERA DE CI, SE CIL NON A CUI COSTÉ JE DOI PENDRE. ET CIL SERA LI MIELDRES CHEVALIERS DEL MONDE." (*Queste*, 5) [NONE SHALL TAKE ME HENCE BUT HE AT WHOSE SIDE I AM TO HANG. AND HE SHALL BE THE BEST KNIGHT IN THE WORLD. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 35)] The inscription on the hilt in *Tale Six* is a close translation of the French: "NEVER SHALL MAN TAKE ME HENSE BUT ONLY HE BY WHOS SYDE I OUGHT TO HONGE AND HE SHALL BE THE BESTE KNYGHT OF THE WORLDE." (*Works*, 2.856)

Although Arthur's greatest knights attempt to draw the sword, they fail since none of the aspirants is the best knight in the world. Galahad arrives at court accompanied by a monk, who attests to Galahad's lineage and calls him the desired knight. Galahad sits in the perilous seat and is taken to the sword by Arthur. Galahad proceeds to explain to Arthur and the court that he alone is able to draw the sword:

> Sire, veez ci l'aventure don't je vos parlai. A ceste espee trere fors de cest perron ont hui faille des plus proisiez chevaliers de mon ostel, qui onques de l'em porent trere.
> - Sire, fet Galaad, ce n'est mie de merveille, car l'aventure estoit moie, si n'est pas lor. (*Queste*, 12)

> [Sir, here is the adventure that I told you of. Some of the most valiant knights of my household have today failed to pluck this sword from the stone.
> 'Sire,' said Galahad, 'that is not to be wondered at, for the adventure was not theirs but mine. I was so sure of this sword that I came to court without one, as you may have seen.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 41)]

Malory translates the interaction between Arthur and Galahad as follows:

> 'Sir,' seide the kynge unto sir Galahad, 'here ys a grete mervayle as ever as y sawe, and ryght good knyghtes have assayed and fayled.'

'Sir,' seyde sir Galahad, 'hit ys no mervayle, for thys adventure ys nat theirs but myne. And for the sureté thys swerde I brought none with me, but here by my side hangith the scawberte.' (*Works*, 2.862)

This passage is a close translation in both language and content. It is evident in the structure and phrasing of the interaction that Malory repeats the source, largely replacing the French with English. In each case, Galahad's response is notable. His assertion that the adventure of the sword is his alone is not a haughty statement but an irrefutable truth. The comment is significant since adventures that show that Galahad is the desired knight, such as the account of the acquisition of his shield, dominate both the *Queste* and Tale Six. Galahad, as the symbol of predestination, engages in episodes that further his progression towards the Grail and serve to illustrate his role as the perfect knight. The shield, as the second token of spiritual chivalry afforded through divine providence, comes to Galahad by order of the white knight. King Baudemagus, who is known as Bagdemagus in Tale Six, steals the shield from a church, and the mysterious white knight defeats the king and instructs a squire to give the shield to Galahad. The shield symbolizes Galahad's spiritual lineage and inheritance and Malory repeats the extensive history of the shield that is present in the *Queste*.

The shield is a spiritual symbol, both literally and figuratively. It is white and bears a red cross. The mysterious white knight who sends Galahad the shield also tells him its history. The red cross emblazoned on the shield was made with the blood of Josephus, the son of Joseph of Arimethea. Like the sword in the stone, the shield is intended for the greatest knight and thus is destined to belong to Galahad. A squire takes the shield to Galahad and informs him of the white knight's intention:

Sire, saluz vos mande li bons chevaliers as armes blanches, cil par qui li rois Baudemagus fu navrez, et vos envoie cest escu; et vos mande que vos le portoiz des ore mes, de par le Haut Mestre. Car il n'est ore nus, si come il dist, fors vos seuls, qui le doie porter. (*Queste*, 30-31)

[Sir, I bring you greetings from the good knight in white armour, he by whom King Baudemagus was wounded. He sends you this shield and bids you wear it from now on in the name of the Master. For there lives, at this time, so he says, none but you that has the right to bear it. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 57)]

Galahad later encounters the white knight, who explains the story of the shield. The white knight suddenly vanishes once he has finished explaining the story to Galahad.[168] The white knight's identity is not revealed in the *Queste* or Tale Six. Interestingly, once the white knight disappears, Galahad's identity becomes that of the knight with the white shield. The repeated reference to Galahad as the knight with the white shield denotes the continuation of a spiritual legacy and emphasizes his role in the adventure as God's champion. Galahad represents the preservation of chivalric ideals as they pertain to spiritual perfection. Galahad embodies predestination and perfection. Galahad's death is not a failure in the quest of the Holy Grail, rather, it evokes the ideal that the attainment of spiritual perfection releases the individual from the bonds of imperfection, in other words, an earthly existence.

The character of Gawain is a contrast to Galahad. Gawain, in many of the English romances, is a highly esteemed knight.[169] Gawain is less prominent in the French romances, and he is often criticized for being a lustful character. The *Queste* follows the French tradition, and Gawain is at a low rank on the spiritual scale due to his love of earthly chivalry and propensity for senseless killing. Indeed, the contrast between Galahad and Gawain in the *Queste* is clearly stated by a monk who describes Gawain as " a bad and faithless servant" and Galahad as a "model of knighthood." In the spirit of the *Queste*'s reimagining and redefining of chivalric ideals, Gawain is the inverse of Galahad's model. He is a "bad and faithless servant" because he does not follow a spiritual path, and he is aware of his inadequacy. For example, Arthur instructs Gawain to remove the sword from the stone. Gawain initially refuses to attempt the feat since Lancelot refuses before him:

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[168]"Et quant il ot ce conté, si s'evanoï en tel maniere que onques Galahad ne sot qu'il estoit devenuz ne quel part il estoit tornez." (*Queste*, 35) [When he had finished speaking he vanished in such a manner that Galahad never knew what had become of him nor where he had gone. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 61)]

[169] Thompson and Busby assert that "In English, he [Gawain] is treated favorably for the most part, and he is the attractive (if imperfect) hero of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, one of the greatest works of Arthurian Literature." Introduction to *Gawain – A Casebook*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

"Biax niez, essaiez i." – "Sire, fet il, sauve vostre grace, non ferai, puis que messires Lancelot n'i velt essaier. G'i metroie la main por noient, car ce savez vos bien qu'il est assez mieldres chevaliers que je ne sui." (*Queste*, 6)

[Good nephew, you try your hand.'
No, Sire,' said he, 'saving your grace, since my lord Lancelot will not attempt it, neither will I. Nothing would be gained by my laying a hand to it, for you are well aware that he is a far better knight than I.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 35)]

In response to Gawain's refusal, Arthur orders him again to try the sword:

"Toutes voies, fet li rois, i essaierez vos por ce que je le voil, ne mie por l'espee avoir." (*Queste*, 6)

You shall try all the same,' he insisted, 'not to win the sword, but because I ask it.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 35)

Gawain inevitably fails to draw the sword,

"Sire, fet messires Gauvains, je n'en poi mes; se je deusse orendroit morir, si le feisse je por la volenté mon seignor acomplir." (*Queste*, 6)

['Sir,' said Gawain, 'what is done is done; were I to die of it here and now. I was only obeying my lord's command.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 36)]

Gawain attempts to engage on a spiritual path yet, ultimately, he is too entrenched in his irreverent and violent ways that he must give up in the quest for the Grail. Gawain is conscious of his failings and, consequently, he knows that he cannot draw it.

Malory's Gawain in Tale Six likewise, has many failings and demonstrates understanding of his spiritual inferiority. If we compare the same passages from the French to those in Tale Six, we see a similar interaction:

'Now, fayre nevew,' sayde the kynge unto sir Gawayne, 'assay ye for my love.'
'Sir,' he seyde, 'sauff youre good grace, I shall nat do that.'
'Sir,' sayde the kynge, 'assay to take the swerd for my love and at my commaundemente.'
'Sir, youre commaundemente I woll obey.' (*Works*, 2.857)

It is interesting that, although Galahad's arrival heralds the appearance of the Holy Grail, Gawain is the knight in both romances who initiates the quest. In this respect, Gawain embodies much of the cause and impetus to set out on the Grail quest. Gawain, like Arthur's court, is in a

sinful condition and requires divine intervention in order to place him on a more righteous path. Galahad is, conversely, the embodiment of this heavenly assistance, and he becomes a literal and figurative beacon for Gawain to follow.

While Gawain is searching for the Grail, he comes across the same abbey where Galahad learns about the shield. Gawain then learns about Galahad and the new knight's accomplishments. Gawain asks the monks to direct him on Galahad's path. Thus Gawain's journey becomes, allegorically, the attempt to follow in Galahad's stead. This journey is metaphorical since Gawain begins to understand the spiritual path of knighthood, symbolized by Galahad. Unfortunately for him, Gawain's quest is short-lived because he has spent too long following earthly chivalry and is locked in a state of sin. Again, a holy man is required to explain to Gawain his misdeeds and, eventually, Gawain concedes that he must give up on the quest with the realization that it is impossible for him to achieve the Grail:

> "Sire, fet messires Gauvains, pas ceste reson que vos me dites m'est il avis que puis que nos serions en pechié mortel, por noiant irions avant en ceste Queste; car je n'i feroie noiant." (*Queste*, 161)

> ['Sir,' said Sir Gawain, 'by reason of what you say it seems to me that since we should be in mortal sin, it would be pointless for us to pursue this quest any further; for I should accomplish nothing.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 174)]

Since Gawain was a celebrated knight in the English romances prior to Tale Six, it would seem likely that Malory would temper some of the criticism of him evident in the *Queste*. This is not the case, however, and we see that Malory is as critical of Gawain as is the author of the *Queste*. For example, if we consider the episode in which Gawain is compared to Galahad, Malory evokes the same contrast:

> For ye be wicked and synfull, and he ys full blyssed. (*Works*, 2.890)

Also, the futility of Gawain's quest is explained to him by a hermit who says:

> For whan ye were made first knight ye sholde have takyn you to knightly dedys and virtuous lyvyng. And ye have done the contrary, for ye have lyved myschevously many wyntirs. And

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> sir Galahad ys a mayde and synned never, and that ys the cause he shall enchyve where he goth that ye nor none suche shall never attayne, nother none in youre felyship, for ye have used the moste untrewyst lyff that ever I herd knight lyve. (*Works*, 2.891)

The tone and content between the French and English passages are close. The words of the hermit are scathing in their criticism and draw attention to Gawain's deeds as being in opposition to true chivalry.

Where Gawain and Galahad are diametrically opposed in terms of chivalric ideals in the *Queste* and Tale Six, Lancelot features as a uniquely formative character. He is neither a paragon of spiritual chivalry like Galahad, nor is he as spiritually insufficient as Gawain. Instead, he is somewhere in-between. Through Lancelot, we see a model of the Everyman: an Adam-like character who commits sin through the temptation of a woman (Guinevere), yet subsequently embarks on a path towards redemption. The balance between the symbolic function of Gawain and Galahad, in the form of Lancelot, is present in both the *Queste* and Tale Six. Galahad is the unachievable model, the epitome of perfection more akin to Jesus Christ than to Mankind. Gawain is the model of Mankind mired by sin. Lancelot is the repentant sinner who renounces his former ways in the attempt to achieve perfection. Where Gawain refuses to perform the penance required by the hermit, Lancelot does it willingly.

Lancelot was not a popular character in the English romances, and we have few translations of stories that feature him in English. Gawain, on the other hand, was very popular. The reason for Lancelot's minimal presence in the romances preceding Malory's *Works* can primarily be attributed to the association with Lancelot as a knight originating from northwestern France. As a French knight, his popularity in England was not as high as the homegrown knights. Nevertheless, Lancelot plays a significant role in many of the parts of Malory's book that are derived from the French sources. Malory's treatment of Lancelot throughout the *Works* is complex and inconsistent, just as we see in the French Vulgate romances.

Despite a lackluster English literary heritage and variable depiction in the *Works* as a whole, Tale Si*x* maintains the *Queste*'s portrayal of Lancelot as the repentant sinner and worthy of admiration. From the beginning of the story, Lancelot confesses his spiritual inadequacies and acknowledges his unsuitability for the quest of the Holy Grail. For example, in the adventure of the sword in the stone that floats down the river to Camelot Lancelot refuses to try to draw the sword, despite the request by his king:

> "Certes, sire, ne ele n'est moie ne je n'avroie le corage de mettre i main, ne le hardement: car je ne suiz mie dignes ne soffisanz que je la doie prendre. Et por ce m'en tendrai je et n'I metrai ja la main: car ce seroit folie se je tendoie a avoir la." – "Toutes voies, fet li rois, i essaaierez vos se vos la porriez oster." – "Sire, fet il, non ferai ge. Car je sai bien que nus n'i essaiera ja por qu'il i faille qu'il n'en reçoive plaie." (*Queste*, 5-6)

> ['Indeed, Sire, this sword is not meant for me, neither have I the courage nor the audacity to lay hand on it, for I am in no way worthy or fit to wear it. Wherefore I will refrain from putting my hand to it: such presumption would be folly.'
> 'Nonetheless,' said the king, 'try whether you can withdraw it.'
> 'Sire, I will not. For I know full well that none shall fail in the attempt but he receive some wound.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 35)]

Lancelot's disobedience is the recognition of his spiritual inadequacy. He demonstrates an awareness of his sin and observance of divine authority over that of his king.

Malory translates Lancelot's piety and includes the same assertions that the sword is not meant for Lancelot, and those who attempt to draw it and fail will receive a wound of some kind:

> 'Sir, that ys nat my swerde; also, I have no hardiness to sette my honed thereto, for hit longith nat to hange be my side. Also, who that assayth to take hit and faylith of that swerde, he shall resseyve a wounde by that swerde that he shall nat be longe hole afftir.' (*Works*, 2.857)

Lancelot, like Gawain, follows in Galahad's wake on the quest for the Grail. Lancelot, however, encounters Galahad, who is in disguise, and the two knights engage in combat. This episode is significant, not only for the romance, but for the genre as a whole. In the romances that predate the *Queste*, Lancelot, as Arthur's greatest knight, never loses a battle. In the episode where Lancelot faces an incognito Galahad, the latter unhorses Lancelot. It is a pivotal moment since

Galahad's defeat of his father, and the hitherto ultimate knight, signifies the rejection of traditional

chivalric romance. Galahad's replacement of Lancelot is all the more significant in light of Malory's

Works. Malory generally celebrates Arthur and his kingdom, which includes Lancelot and Gawain,

as a model of chivalry. This is not the case in Tale Six, where we see Gawain and Lancelot at the

core of the criticism, and Malory appears to support the redefinition of chivalric ideology.

As Lancelot's adventure progresses, the *Queste* repeats the theme of unhorsing. On this

occasion, however, Lancelot's horse is killed, yet he is not perturbed by the event. The loss of his

horse does not concern him because he knows that it is God's will:

> Quant il voit son cheval desoz lui ocis, si se relieve, et si n'est pas mout dolenz puis qu'il
> plest a Nostre Seignor. (*Queste*, 146)
>
> [When Lancelot found his horse slain under him he scrambled to his feet, not fretting
> overmuch since such was Our Lord's pleasure. (*The Quest of the Holy Grail*, 161)]

Malory takes this supplication even further and suggests that Lancelot is grateful for the unhorsing:

> Withoute ony worde he smote Launcelottis horse to the dethe. And so he paste on and wyst
> nat where he was becom.
> And than he toke hys helme and hys shylde, and thanked God of hys adventure. (*Works*,
> 2.934-35)

The loss of Lancelot's horse represents a symbolic crossroads in his quest for the Grail.

Lancelot has reached a point at which he must decide where to place his faith. He has reached the

river Marcoise, a reference to the river Jordan. The *Queste* tells us that upon reaching the river,

Lancelot is trapped on all sides by three barriers, the river in front of him, the cliffs either side and

the forest behind him. As a result, Lancelot prays to God for guidance:

> Cest trios choses le font remanoir a la rive et ester en proieres et en oroisons vers Nostre
> Seignor, que Il par sa pitié le viegne conforter et visiter, et doner li conseil par sa coi il ne
> puisee chaoir en temptacion d'anemi par engin de deable, ne estre menez a desesperance.
> (*Queste*, 146)
>
> [These three considerations kept him in prayer and supplication on the bank, beseeching Our
> Lord to come in His mercy to comfort and visit him with His counsel, lest through the
> devil's wiles he fall into temptation or be dragged down into despair. (*Quest of the Holy
> Grail*, 161)]

Lancelot has removed his helm, shield, sword and lance as he waits for guidance.[170] This shows that

he has placed his faith in God to resolve his dilemma as opposed to his chivalric ability. Lancelot has

learned to follow a new path, and he has raised his level of spiritual understanding, symbolized by

the radiance that appears when he wakes from his vision:

> Et quant il fu endormiz, si li vint une voiz qui li dist: "Lancelot, lieve sus et pren tes armes et entre en la premiere nef que tu trouveras." Et quant il ot ceste parole, si tressaut toz et oevre les eulz et voit entor lui si grant clarté que il cuide bien qu'il soit granz jorz; me ne demore gueres que ele s'evenoïst, en tel maniere qu'il ne set que ele devint. Et il lieve sa main et se seigne et prent ses armes et se comance a Nostre Seignor, puis s'apareille. (*Queste*, 246)

> [As he lay sleeping, a voice made itself heard to him, saying: 'Lancelot, rise and take thine arms and enter into the first boat thou shalt find.' He started at these words, and opened his eyes, and saw so bright a radiance round about that he thought it was broad daylight: but within a few moments it had faded away without his knowing how or why. He raised his hand and blessed himself, and taking up his arms he commended himself to Our Lord before donning his harness. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 254)]

> Malory evokes the same symbolism in this episode when he says:

> And so he leyde hym downe and slepte, and toke the adventure that God wolde sende hym. So when he was aslepe there cam a vision unto hym that seyde,
> 'Sir launcelot, aryse up and take thyne armour, and entir into the firste shippe that thou shalt fynde!'
> And whan he herde thes wordys he sterte up and saw grete clerenesse aboute hym, and than he lyffte up hys honde and blyssed hym. And so toke hys armys and made hym redy. (*Works*, 2.1011)

Malory translates "grant clarté" as a "grete clerenesse." A "clerenesse" means, in addition to a literal

bright light, clear-sightedness and mental acuteness. Thus Malory conveys accurately the dual

significance of the light that appears. It is both a tangible and spiritual illumination.

Lancelot's journey on the miraculous ship continues his spiritual enlightenment, and

God rewards Lancelot for his deference to His will by providing him with a boat to cross the river.

Lancelot's journey from this moment on emphasizes Lancelot's new level of understanding. In

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[170] Et quant il est venuz jusqu'a l'eve et il ne voit pas coment il puisse oultre passer, il s'arreste et oste son hiaume et son escu et s'espee et son glaive, et si se couche lez une roche, et dist qu'il atendra ilec tant que Nostre Sires li envoierra secors. (*Queste*, 146) [When he reached the river and saw no means of crossing, he halted, and laying down helm and shield and sword and lance, stretched his length under a rock, intending to wait there until Our Lord should send him succour. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 161)]

recompense for Lancelot's new-found piety, he is rewarded with the company of Perceval's sister

and, later, Galahad. The continuation of the journey reflects his change in direction, away from

earthly chivalry to a consciously devout path. We see this ever increasing spiritual standing in the

advancement towards Corbenic.

Despite Lancelot's significant progress at this juncture, the arrival at Corbenic illustrates a

threshold or limit to his spiritual development. Lancelot and Galahad have parted company. Two

knights usher Galahad away so that he may continue in the quest of the Holy Grail. Lancelot,

however, does not join Galahad and, instead, remains on the miraculous ship for a month until

arriving at Corbenic.[171] A mysterious voice instructs Lancelot to leave the ship:

> "Lancelot, is de cele nef et entre en cest chastel, out tu trouveras grant partie de ce que tu quierz et que tu tant as desirré a veoir." (*Queste*, 253)

> ['Lancelot, leave the boat and enter the castle, where thou shalt find in part the object of thy search and of thy deepest longings.' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 260)]

Tale Six includes the same instruction and, moreover, it tells Lancelot that he will "see a grete parte

of thy [Lancelot's] desire." (*Works*, 2.1014) Just as we see in the *Queste*, Lancelot's reward is a

limited, albeit significant, glimpse of the Grail. Lancelot has reached the end of his journey.

He has the opportunity to receive his reward, yet he lapses once more into the actions of a

worldly knight. At the castle gates, Lancelot encounters two lions. In response to the lions'

appearance, Lancelot draws his sword. The *Queste* explains how a divine power physically chastises

and disarms him:

> Einsi come Lancelotot trete l'espee et s'aparesgarde contremont et voit venir une main toute enflamee qui le feri si durement par mi le braz que l'espee li vola de la main. (*Queste*, 253)

> [No sooner had he drawn his sword than glancing up he saw a flaming hand plunge earthwards, which struck him so hard on the arm that the sword flew out of his grip. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 260)]

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[171] Tale Six states that Lancelot was on the ship for "more than a moneth."

Tale Six also presents a physical rebuke, although in this case the divine force takes the form of a

dwarf, an addition of Malory:

> [Thenne sette he hand to his suerd and dr]ewe hit. So there cam [a dwerf sodenly and somte hym the]e arme so sore [that suerd felle oute of his hand. (*Works*, 2.1014)

Following the physical disarming, a heavenly voice states and explains Lancelot's mistake:

> Ha! hons de povre foi et de mauvese creance, por quoi te fies tu plus en ta main que en ton Criator? Molt et chetis, qui ne cuides mie que cil en qui servise tu t'es mis ne puisse plus valoir que tes armes! (*Queste*, 253)

> ['O man of little faith and most infirm belief, why placest thou greater trust in thine own arm than in thy Maker? Thou art but a sorry wretch to hold that He whom didst choose to serve can stand thee in no better stead than shield and sword!' (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 260)]

Malory includes a close translation of the explanation:

> 'O, man of evylle feyth and poure believe]! Wherefore trustist thou more on thy harneyse than in thy Maker? For He myght more avayle the than thyne armour, in what servyse that thou arte sette in.' (*Works*, 2.1014)

The differences between the *Queste* and Malory's translation are minor. The purpose of the passage

is the same in the two romances; Lancelot has progressed along his spiritual journey, yet his earthly

chivalric instincts continue to dominate even in a spiritual setting. Lancelot fails where Galahad

succeeds. As previously stated, Galahad understands the spiritual significance of the events that

involve him. Lancelot still requires an explanation for his misdeeds, unlike Galahad who does not

commit any sin.

The quest to find the Grail is as symbolic as the Grail itself, while the knights undergo tests

to determine their spiritual worth. From the start, the romance tells us that Galahad is the only perfect

knight, yet there are varying degrees of spiritual standing among the other knights. Indeed, Bors and

Perceval are also judged worthy to receive a glimpse of the Grail at the conclusion to the story,

although not to the same extent as Galahad. In this final episode, Galahad is the winner of the quest

and is rewarded with a look into the Grail and to witness its secrets. Once he looks inside the Grail,

Galahad no longer wishes to remain alive and desires death: a request granted by God.

The spiritual or allegorical significance of the Grail is present in both the *Queste* and Tale Six.[172] Thus, Malory closely translates the passages that feature the Grail. The initial appearance of the Grail occurs at the feast of Pentecost after Galahad has drawn the sword from the stone. The *Queste* describes the arrival of the Grail:

> Et quant il se furent tuit asis par laienz et il se furent tuit acoisiez, lors oïrent il venir un escroiz de tonoire si grant et si merveilleus qu'il lor fu avis que il palés deust fondre. Et maintenant entra laienz uns rais de soleil qui fist le palés plus clers a set doubles qu'il n'estoit devant. Si furent tantost par laienz tot ausi come s'il fussent enluminé de la grace dou Saint Esperit, et comencierent a resgarder li un les autres; car il ne savoient don't ce lor pooit estre venu. (*Queste*, 15)

> [When they all were seated and the noise was hushed, there came a clap of thunder so loud and terrible that they thought the palace must fall. Suddenly the hall was lit by a sunbeam which shed a radiance through the palace seven times brighter than had been before. In this moment they were all illuminated as it might be by the grace of the Holy Ghost, and they began to look at one another, uncertain and perplexed. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 43)]

If we compare the French to Malory, he presents the episode with the same degree of detail:

> Than anon they harde crakynge and crying of thunder, that hem thought the palyse sholde all to-dryve. So in the myddys of the blast entyrde a sonnebeame, more clerer by seven tymys than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Goste. Than began every knight to beholde other, and eyther saw other, by their semynge, fayrer than ever they were before. (*Works*, 2.865)

The details, such as the sound of the thunder causing such a noise that they thought the palace would fall and the sunbeam that lit the room with a light seven times brighter, are notable. The sound of the thunder signifies the potential for the destruction or rebirth of the Arthurian kingdom.

The episode is comparable to the highly symbolic rite of Pentecost. Pentecost celebrates the appearance of the Holy Spirit before the apostles after Christ's ascension. As E. Gilson has stated, these two episodes, the first Pentecost after Christ's ascension and four hundredth and fifty fourth Pentecost at Arthur's court, are linked through the symbolic representation of the fire of the Holy

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[172] In this regard, I disagree with Hynes-Berry who has argued that "When Malory approached the *Queste del Saint Graal*, he clearly read the story, not its allegorical import." See "A tale 'Breffly Drawyne oute of Freynshe'" in *Aspects of Malory*, 102. I posit that the allegorical dimension of the story is clearly present and of great importance to Malory's translation.

Spirit.[173] In the biblical version of events, a sound like a mighty wind enters the house of the apostles

and fills them with the Holy Ghost.[174] Likewise, as indicated above, the *Queste* and Tale Eight

describe a sound of thunder that pierces Arthur's palace, and all those present are illuminated as it

were by the grace of the Holy Ghost. The biblical reference is clear and designed to further establish

the allegorical significance of the episode.

The *Queste* proceeds to describe the arrival of the Grail itself. The Grail is, however,

covered by a cloth of white samite:

> Et quant il orent grant piece demoré en tel maniere que nus d'aux n'avoit pooir de parler, ainz s'entreresgardoient autresi come bestes mues, lors entra laienz li Sainz Graal covers d'un blanc samit; mes il n'i ot onques nul qui poïstveoir qui le portoit. (*Queste*, 15)

> When they had sat a long while thus, unable to speak and gazing at one another like dumb animals, the Holy Grail appeared, covered with a cloth of white samite; and yet no mortal hand was seen to bear it. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 43-44)

The Grail, being hidden from view, has an allegorical meaning. Gawain, surprisingly, is the one to

voice the allegory when he says:

> Et ce n'avint onques mes en nule cort, se ne fu chiés le Roi Mehaignié. Mes de tant sont il engignié qu'il nel porent veoir apertement, ançois lor en fu coverte la vraie semblance. (*Queste*, 16)

> [Such a thing was never seen at any court save that of the Maimed King. But we are so blinded and beguiled that we could not see it plain, rather was its true substance hidden from us. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 44)]

In *Tale Six*, Gawain conveys the same allegory:

> But one thing begyled us, that we might nat se the Holy Grayle: hit was so preciously coverede. (*Works*, 2.866)

Malory closely translates the allegory using the anglicized "covered" in place of the French

"coverte." The French word has a literal and abstract meaning since it describes something being

covered or concealed. The ME word shares its double meaning with the French, and thus the cloth of

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[173] Cited by Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, 43-44.

[174] See Acts of the Apostles 2:2-4.

white samite *is* and *represents* the veil that separates Arthur's court from the secrets of the Grail. Malory evidently understood much of the allegorical technique of the *Queste*, and he is able to maintain the same degree of symbolism.

The role of allegory is the inverse in the city of Sarras. The figurative and symbolic actions in the earthly world, such as at Camelot, become literal in a spiritual place, such as Sarras. Sarras is the counterpart to Camelot. The two cities represent the differing worlds of earthly and spiritual foci, and both have parallel allegorical significance. Galahad, Perceval and Bors have journeyed to Sarras and the narrator of the *Queste* explains that Galahad first sees the city upon awakening from a sleep on board the miraculous ship:

> Grant piece demorerent li compaignon en mer, tant qu'il distrent un jor a Galaad. "Sire, en cest lit qui por vos fu apareilliez, si come cez letres dient, ne vos colchastes vos onques. Et vos l'en devez fere, car li briés dit que vos reposeroiz dedenz." Et il dit qu'il s'i reposera. Si s'i cloche et dort grant piece. Et quant il se fu esveilliez, si regarda devant lui et vit la cité de Sarraz. (*Queste*, 275)

> [One day, when the companions had been long at sea, Bors and Perceval said to Galahad:
> 'Sir, you have never slept in this bed which, according to what we have read, was made and prepared for you, and this is something you ought to do, for the letter said you would rest there.'
> Galahad declared himself willing and, lying down in the bed, slept long and deep; and when he awoke, he looked ahead and beheld the city of Sarras. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 280)]

As Albert Pauphilet argues, the bed represents the perfect repose of death, therefore the death of Jesus Christ.[175] The awakening is the transition into a spiritual realm where that which is symbolic in the real world become literal in the celestial.

The episode of the Grail at Camelot ends abruptly once the knights have a taste of the mystical food. If we compare this episode with the parallel scene at the end of the *Queste*, there is a greater degree of detail that provides more information regarding the function of the Grail. In this later episode, Galahad, Perceval, and Bors have reached Sarras and are welcomed by Josephus, the

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[175] See *Études sur La Queste del Saint Graal attribué à Gautier Map* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1921), 150-51.

son of Joseph of Arimathea. The Grail, as described in the initial appearance at Arthur's court, is

paraded before the knights. However, the procession is, on this occasion, a more elaborate affair. The

Grail is preceded by a cloth of red samite and a bleeding lance. The lance is the lance of Longinus,

the legendary name for the anonymous Roman soldier who pierced Christ's side at the Crucifixion

(John 19:34). The ritual nature of the procession is evident in the detail afforded by the narration.

The *Queste* describes the procession as initiated by the arrival of Josephus, the first Christian bishop:

> Et quant il ot ilec grant piece esté, si escoute et ot l'uis de la chambre ouvrir et flatir molt durement. Et il regarde cele part et ausi font tuit li autre: et en voient issir les anges qui Josephes avoient aporté; dont li dui portoient deus cierges, et li tierz une touaille de vermeil samit, et li quarz une lance qui saignoit si durement que les goutes en chaoient contreval en une boiste qu'il tenoit en s'autre main. Et li dui mistrent les cierges sus la tablet li tierz la toaille lez le saint Vessel, si que li sans qui contreval la hanste couloit chaoit dedenz. Et si tost come il ont ce fet, Josephes se leva et trest un poi la lance en sus dou saint Vessel le covri de la toaille. (*Queste*, 269)

> [After a lengthy interval the sound of the chamber door flying suddenly open burst upon his ear. He turned his head towards it, as did the others too, to see the angels who had borne him thither proceeding from the room; two had candles in their hands, the third bore a cloth of red samite, the fourth a lance which bled so freely that the drops were falling into a container which the angel held in his other hand. The first two placed the candles on the table, and the third laid the cloth beside the Holy Vessel; the fourth held the lance upright over the Vessel so that the blood running down the shaft was caught therein. As soon as these motions had been carried out, Josephus rose and lifted the lance a little higher above the Holy Vessel, which he then covered with the cloth. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 275)]

If we compare this description to Malory, the detail remains as exacting in its translation:

> So with that they harde the chamber dore opyn, and there they saw angels. And two bare candils of wexe, and the third bare a towel, and the fourth a speare which bled mervaylously, that the dropis felle within boxe which he hylde with hys other hande. And anone the sette the candyls uppon the table, and the thirde the towel uppon the vessel, and the fourth the holy speare evyn upright uppon the vessel. (*Works*, 2.1029)

Malory's translation includes the specifics of the candles, the cloth (towel), and the spear that bled

into a container and then placed over the Grail. The details that explain the order of the procession

and the actions that take place are ritualistic.

The procession as a ritual is subsequently highlighted by the narrator:

Lors fist Josephes semblant que il entrast ou sacrement de la messe. Et quant il i ot demoré un poi, si prist dedenz le saint Vessel une oublee qui ert fete en semblance de pain. Et au lever que il fist descendi de vers le ciel une figure en semblance d'enfant, et avoit le viaire ausi rouge et ausi embrasé come feu; et se feri ou pain, si que cil qui ou pales estoient virent apertement que li pains avoit forme d'ome charnel. Et quant Josephes l'ot grant piece tenu, si le remist ou saint Vessel.

Quant Josephes ot ce fet qui a provoire apartenoit come del servise de la messe, si vint a Galaad et le besa et il li dist qu'il besast autresi toz ses freres. (*Queste*, 269)

[Next Josephus acted as though he were entering on the consecration of the mass. After pausing a moment quietly, he took from the Vessel a host made in the likeness of bread. As he raised it aloft there descended from above a figure like to a child, whose countenance glowed and blazed as bright as fire; and he entered into the bread, which quite distinctly took on human form before the eyes of those assembled there. When Josephus had stood for some while holding his burden up to view, he replaced it in the Holy Vessel.

Having discharged the functions of a priest as it might be at the office of the mass, Josephus went up to Galahad and kissed him, bidding him kiss his brethren likewise, which he did. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 275)]

Malory, likewise, presents the same level of detail in the description of the transubstantiation:

And than the bysshop made sembelaunte as thoughe he wolde have gone to the sakeryng of a masse, and than he toke an obley which was made in the lyknesse of a chylde, and the visage was as rede and as bight os ony fyre, and smote hymselff into the brede, that all they saw hit that the brede was fourmed of a fleyshely man. And than he put hit into the holy vessel agayne, and than he ded tha[t] longed to a preste to do masse. (*Works*, 2.1029)

In both texts, there is a contrast between literal and figurative action. In this episode, the ritual is literal. The bread is consciously and tangibly turned into the body of Jesus Christ as a child. The figurative aspect of the ritual is, ironically, the similarity that the ritual shares with mass. In both the *Queste* and Tale Six, the authors describe the ritual as like the mass, yet it is not the mass. The French underscores the association with "*semblant*" and "*come*" to suggest that the event is analogous to mass. Malory also uses the same word, "sembelaunte," to show how the ritual shares the same characteristics with mass. Furthermore, Malory states that by means of the placement of the transformed bread back into the Grail, the bishop "longed to a preste to do masse." The ME expression "longed to" means "characteristic of" or "to be logically or symbolically associated with." Thus, again, Malory preserves the distinction that the knights are witnessing a rite that compares to mass, yet it is not so.

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Sarras, in spite of the demonstrated inversion of literal and figurative rituals, is not Heaven. It is a spiritual place where the chosen few have arrived to witness mysteries of the divine. Galahad's perfection affords him a full vision into the Grail. Galahad, upon witnessing the spiritual mysteries, no longer wishes to remain in the world of the living and so dies:

> Lors revint Galaad devant la table et se mist a coudes et a genolz; s'i n'i ot gueres demoré quant il chaï a denz sus le pavement del palés, qar l'ame li eirt ja fors del cors. Si l'en porterent li anglere fessant grant joie et beneissant Nostre Seignor. (*Queste*, 278)

> [Returning then to the table he prostrated himself on hands and knees before it; and it was not long before he fell face downwards on the flagged floor of the palace, for his soul had already fled its house of flesh and was borne to heaven by angels making jubilation and blessing the name of Our Lord. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 283)]

Once Galahad dies, Perceval and Bors bury him in the same location. Perceval then goes to a hermitage and takes up a religious habit. Bors on the other hand, as described in the *Queste*, never quits his secular dress. Again, the contrast between the characters reinforces the symbolic dimension of the story. Percival, like Galahad, has rejected the earthly world, and therefore dies. Bors, on the other hand, chooses not to fully embrace a spiritual existence and remains attached to the physical world. His attachment is, most likely, due to his one spiritual blemish. Nevertheless, Bors puts on his armor once more and leaves Sarras. He returns to Camelot to great fanfare and relates the adventure to the court. The *Queste* explains that the story was chronicled and preserved at the library in Salisbury:

> Et quant Boorz ot contees les aventures del Seint Graal telles come il les avoit veues, si furent mises en escrit et gardees en l'almiere de Salesbieres, don't MESTRE GAUTIER MAP les trest a fere son livre del Seint Graal por l'amor del roi Henri son seignor, qui fist l'estoire translater de latin en françois. (*Queste*, 280)

> [When Bors had related to them the adventures of the Holy Grail as witnessed by himself, they were written down and the record kept in the library at Salisbury, whence Master Walter Map extracted them in order to make his book of the Holy Grail for love of his lord King Henry, who had the story translated from Latin into French. (*Quest of the Holy Grail*, 284)]

The story is, therefore, to be retold as a lesson for future generations. Indeed, the didactic style of the *Queste* forms a clear correlation with this earlier *urtext*, and the author of the French romance continues the tradition.

Likewise, Malory concludes his tale with reference to the story of the Grail being written in books and deposited at Salisbury:

> So whan sir Bors had tolde hym of the hyghe aventures of the Sankgreall, such as had befalle hym and his three felowes, which were sir Lancelot, Percivale and sir Galahad and hymselff, than sir Launcelot tolde the adventures of the Sangreall that he had sene. And all thys was made in grete bookes and put up in almeryes at Salysbury. (*Works*, 2.1036)

Malory uses the ME almery derived from the French *almiere*. The repository is in a church and would suggest that, like many holy relics, the story of the Grail holds a similar value to be stored in such a location.

Malory changes the ending of the tale here from the *Queste*. Tale Eight describes the reunion of Bors and Lancelot. This meeting is a happy one and it serves to renew their friendship. The addition by Malory reminds the reader that Bors and Lancelot have returned to the secular world and foreshadows the events that will occur in the ensuing two tales:

> Than sir Launcelot toke sir Bors in hys armys and seyde,
> 'Cousyn, ye ar ryght wellcom to me! For [all that ever I may do for you and for yours, ye shall fynde my poure body redy atte all tymes whyle the spyryte is in hit, and that I promyse you feythfully, and never to fayle. and wete ye well. gentyl cousyn sir Bors,] ye and I shall never departe in sundir whylis our lyvys may laste.'
> 'Sir,' seyde he, 'as ye woll, so woll I.' (Works, 2.1036-7)

The promise to each other establishes the strong oath of kinship and loyalty that eventually positions Bors and Lancelot against Arthur and Gawain, once the adultery between Lancelot and Guinevere is revealed in Tale Eight. Lancelot, at the end of Tale Six, reaffirms his commitment to terrestrial chivalry by means of this promise to Bors.

In the closing words of the French romance, the *Queste* states that the story was written by

Walter Map, who translated the story from Latin to French for love of his King Henry.[176] These

words serve to highlight the story as a chronicle or pseudo-history of events. The *Queste* explicitly

states that the record existing at the library at Salisbury was written by Arthur's clerks and preserved.

The author of the *Queste* is, therefore, asserting that the story is based on truth or, at least, lends itself

to truth more than a story purely for the purposes of entertainment. The idea that Map needed to

translate the original text from Latin to the vernacular (French) would support this notion. As we

know, Latin was the lingua franca of the period, and historical or religious documents were

traditionally written in Latin as the scholarly language and the language of truth.

Malory makes no mention of Walther Map here, nor does he state that the tale was

originally written in Latin. In the explicit to the tale, as he does in the explicit to Tale Five, Malory

refers to the story as being "drawyn oute of freynshe." This is usual for the period, and Malory often

mentions a French source throughout his works. Furthermore, Malory typically ends each of his

works with an explicit. The explicit of Tale Five, however, is interesting and unusual. Instead of a

concise closing statement regarding the Tale of Tristram de Lyones, it offers an introduction to the

Tale of the Sankgreal:

> HERE ENDYTH THE SECUNDE BOKE OFF SYR TRYSTRAM DE LYONES,
> WHYCHE DRAWYN WAS OUTE OF FRENSHE BY SIR THOMAS MALEORRÉ,
> KNYGHT, AS JESU BE HYS HELPE. AMEN.
> BUT HERE YS NO REHERSALL OF THE THIRDE BOOKE.
> BUT HERE FOLOWYTH THE NOBLE TALE OFF THE SANKEGREALL, WHYCHE
> CALLED YS THE HOLY VESSELL AND THE SYGNYFYCACION OF BLYSSED
> BLOODE OFF OURE LORDE JESU CRYSTE, WHYCHE WAS BROUGHT INTO THYS
> LONDE BY JOSEPH OFF ARAMATHYE.
> THEREFORE ON ALL SYNFULL, BLYSSED LORDE, HAVE ON THY KNYGHT
> MERCY. AMEN. (*Works*, 2.845)

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[176] Despite this acknowledgment of his source by the *Queste* author, there is no evidence to show that Walter
Map wrote any French romances. As Pauline Matarasso states, "We know now that Walter Map *read* French
romances. It cannot be proved that he wrote one." *The Redemption of Chivalry: A study of the Queste del Saint
Graal,* (Geneva: Droz, 1979), 234.

Malory states that he will not repeat the events of the "thirde booke" in which we find the account of the quest for the Holy Grail that includes Tristan. Instead, Malory elects to turn to the Vulgate Queste that does not include Tristan as one of the questing knights

The explicit to Tale Six is also notable in its content. In this case, Malory reveals his reverence for the story by describing it as one of the truest and holiest tales in the world:

> THUS ENDITH THE TALE OF THE SANKGREAL THAT WAS BREFELY DRAWY[N] OUTE OF FREYNSHE – WHICH YS A TALE CRONYCLED FOR ONE OF THE TREWYST AND OF THE HOLYEST THAT YS IN THYS WORLDE – BY SIR THOMAS MALEORRÉ, KNYGHT.
> O, BLESSED JESU HELPE HYM THOROW HYS MYGHT! AMEN. (*Works*, 2.1037)

Malory regards the tale of the Sankgreal, maybe not as a true story, but rather as a story that holds truth. In light of this explicit, it is certainly possible and, I would argue likely, that Malory elected to preserve the integrity of the source and translate closely because of the tale's inherent "truth."

Malory's explicit, the repeated references to the French text, and the emphatic language that he uses to describe the story exhibit a sense of distance from his source and, to a degree, from his own work. Malory evidently respected the intrinsic value of the story and, as such, his approach to the *Queste* is different than we may see in his other tales. Malory defers to the primacy and authority of the *Queste* and the tale that preceded it. Tale Six shows the possible influence of other sources, such as Hardyng's *Chronicle* and the post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin*, and omits a proportion of the didactic 'weight' of the *Queste*, yet the form, style and content are significantly similar. If any of Malory's works can be determined to be close, or equivalent, translations, then Tale Six is the clearest example.

Tale Six offers, like the Middle English *Prose Merlin* discussed in chapter 1, compelling evidence that close translation was known and practiced in the later Middle Ages. In terms of both linguistic and narrative equivalence, Malory's Tale Six largely mirrors the *Queste*. The role of allegory in Tale Six is reduced in comparison with the source, but it remains a significant factor.

Malory understood the allegorical dimension of the *Queste*, and, despite reducing the details and extensive dogma of the allegory, maintains the symbolic focus of the source.

Thus, Tale Six is a reduction of the *Queste*. That does not, however, preclude it from being a translation. Perhaps a new terminology is needed, such as reduced close translation. It does not include all the details of the Queste, but the content that it does include is a close equivalent. Malory does not leave out the significant allegorical dimension, and the characters generally remain as they are portrayed in the *Queste*. If there is to be a contrast between Tale Six and the Queste, then it is in the attention given to the various holy men. Malory dispenses with much of the detail in the explanations by these allegorical interpreters. The allegory is, instead, self-evident. The details of the episodes, particularly in relation to the Grail are close translations since these highly symbolic events are the lessons to be understood.

Malory orients the didacticism of Tale Six towards the knights. Malory does not preach to us like the author of the *Queste*, instead he guides the reader and allows us greater power to interpret for ourselves. As Malory states, the story is one of the holiest and truest in the world, and thus the story can convey truth by itself. This statement reveals much of Malory's approach to Tale Six. Unlike some of his other tales that disentangle and unravel the French for the reader, Malory composed Tale Six as an English equivalent, as opposed to a version, of the *Queste*.

Chapter 5

"The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur Saunz Guerdon": An Adaptation of an English and a French Romance

Malory's *The Most Piteous Tale of King Arthur Sanz Guerdon*, or Tale Eight, is primarily a combination of two romances, the English stanzaic *Morte Arthur* and the French *La Mort Le Roi Artu*.[177] Although Malory uses prose as opposed to verse like the stanzaic *Morte*, Tale Eight follows the English source by unraveling much of the interlace of the *Mort Artu*. Furthermore, the stanzaic *Morte* is a more positive re-imagining of Arthur, and Malory continues this portrayal of a national hero. However, the *Mort Artu*, with its more critical view of Arthur and preoccupation with emotion and weakness, is not forgotten. Rather, the French source exists within Tale Eight at its thematic and emotional core. Malory's intimate knowledge and understanding of his two sources enabled him to combine these romances and produce an original work. Elizabeth Edwards states that the stanzaic *Morte* is significant in the "mediation" it offers between the *Mort Artu* and Malory.[178] I concur with Edwards' assessment and would add that Tale Eight is a blend of elements from both the French *Mort Artu* and its English verse adaptation. Malory captures the core elements of the *Mort Artu* and consciously adopts the changes made in the stanzaic *Morte* that are more appropriate in light of his other tales. As such, Malory shows himself to be a flexible author who understands his sources well and is able to incorporate them both seamlessly into his final tale. Thus, Tale Eight is significant in terms of the evolution, not only of Arthurian romance, but also of medieval translation.

As stated in the title of Malory's final tale, it is indeed "piteous" in that it moves one to compassion and evokes powerful emotions of sadness and commiseration. Through the characters,

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[177] See P.J.C Field, "Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur," *The Arthur of the English* edited by W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 240. Also see, Ralph Norris, *The Sources of the Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 140.

[178] *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 144.

the tale presents intense feelings and likewise, the audience is prompted to recognize and sympathize with these emotional outbursts. Furthermore, the audience receives little solace from the tragic demise of King Arthur and the institution of the Round Table.[179] Instead, the reader is left to come to terms with a series of events that precipitate the decline of a kingdom that spanned the European continent and defeated the Roman Empire. These events are indiscriminate at times and inevitable at others, or Fortune has a hand to play. At the center of this dual tension, that of the tragedy of Arthur's demise and the causes for his death, we find the characters of Arthur, Gawain, Guinevere and Lancelot. Their divided loyalties and responsibilities, and their duty and affection for each other, add a fascinating emotional dimension to the story.[180] While Tale Eight and its sources often ascribe blame for the end of the Arthurian world to both human weakness and the role of Fortune, the guilt and responsibility exhibited by these characters convey the tragedy of the legend's final chapter.

Both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte* are emotionally charged romances. The characters display emotion in various ways that capture the intensity and importance of Arthur's demise. Indeed, since the death of Arthur is the climax of the legend, it is appropriate that the authors would seek to heighten the emotional import of this event and provide their audience with a suitable conclusion to the epic nature of the story. The characters convey the magnitude of the tragedy through many outbursts of lamentation and regret. Indeed, the characters Tale Eight, like their counterparts in the *Mort Artu* and the *stanzaic Morte*, review their actions and identify their mistakes.[181] The audience, through narrative omniscience, is aware of the role of fortune and this

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[179] Malory tells us that some people believe that Arthur is not dead and that written on his tomb is the inscription *Rex quondam rexque futurus* (the once and future king), yet this is a minor recompense from the sadness that pervades the closing episodes of the *Morte Darthur*. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, edited by Eugène Vinaver, revised by P.J.C. Field, 3rd ed., vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1242.

[180] See Vinaver, *Works*, 3.1621.

[181] As E.D. Kennedy argues in "Malory's Morte Darthur: A Politically Neutral English Adaptation of the Arthurian Story," "Arthur and the other major characters make mistakes that cause catastrophes, and they realize too late that they have done so." *Arthurian Literature XX* (2003), 165.

broader knowledge serves to accentuate the tragedy of these errors. The mistakes are often a result of human weakness. The *Mort Artu* combines this interest in human failing with the role of fortune as an active participant in the fall of Arthur's kingdom. The stanzaic *Morte*, as I have argued in chapter three, places greater blame on Mordred and Agravain as conspirators against Arthur and streamlines the French romance. However, the author of the stanzaic *Morte* adopts the role of cause and effect from the *Mort Artu*, and this concept is also clearly evident in Tale Eight.[182]

Most scholars today would argue that the English stanzaic romance was an important source for Malory's final tale.[183] The argument for the importance of the stanzaic *Morte* within Tale Eight is based on the view that Malory uses key elements from the English romance that do not occur in the French. Two important examples are the episode of the adder and the final meeting between Lancelot and Guinevere, which occur towards the end of Tale Eight.[184] There is no doubt, however, of the importance of both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte* in the composition of Tale Eight.

Before I identify how Malory inherits his story from the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte*, it is important at this point to identify an important omission between Tale Eight and the *Mort Artu*. Of the subsidiary stories that appear in the *Mort Artu* and are not in the stanzaic *Morte* or Tale Eight, the most prominent is the story of the Roman War. As Ralph Norris states "The Roman War motif thus occurs three separate times in the Vulgate Cycle, in the *Suite du Merlin*, *Lancelot* and the *Mort Artu*

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[182] As Tadahiro Ikegami states in regard to the stanzaic *Morte* "The French story is now changed into an English four-thousand-line poem, with a simple and straightforward narrative with a clear chain of causes and effects." While I disagree that the stanzaic *Morte* has a "simple" narrative, I agree that the author creates a clear progression of causality. "The Structure and Tone of the Stanzaic Morte Arthur," *Arthurian and Other Studies Presented to Shunichi Noguchi*, edited by Takashi Suzuki and Tsuyoshi Mukai (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 170.

[183] Vinaver identifies several examples where it appears Malory copied sentences directly from the stanzaic *Morte*. He states, however, that "we must conclude that the whole of the Death of Arthur story was derived by Malory from a French MS." *Malory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 150-53. Since Vinaver, scholars tend to agree that the stanzaic *Morte* was used in conjunction with the *Mort Artu* as Malory's main sources for Tale Eight.

[184] E.D. Kennedy points out that the stanzaic *Morte* "became his major source for the concluding pages of his final tale." Malory and his English Sources, *Aspects of Malory*, edited by Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), 48.

branches."[185] The war with the Romans is, therefore, an important element of the Vulgate Cycle.

Since the Vulgate Cycle is the most influential source for Malory's tales, and Malory himself

repeatedly references his *Freynshe Booke* in Tale Eight, it is interesting that he leaves out this

important narrative thread. I have conjectured in chapter three that the author of the stanzaic *Morte*

elected to omit this narrative tangent to maintain focus on the more important conflict between

Lancelot and Arthur. The stanzaic *Morte* is not part of a cycle that includes such wide-reaching

conflicts. Thus, the Roman war would be an unnecessary digression for the stanzaic *Morte* as an

independent romance. Malory's decision to omit this section of the *Mort Artu* is also logical. Malory,

in Tale Two, includes the story of Arthur's war against the Roman Empire that was based on the

alliterative *Morte Arthure*. It would seem appropriate, therefore, to exclude war against the Romans

since he has covered the Roman War in his second tale and already established Arthur as an imperial

figure.[186] We must conclude that Malory, like his English source, elected to maintain narrative focus

and concentrate the plot on the characters and events that cause Arthur's demise.

　　　Four characters are significant in the comparison between the *Mort Artu*, the stanzaic *Morte*

and Tale Eight: Arthur, Gawain, Lancelot and Guinevere. These characters are connected to the

themes of loyalty and betrayal. The tension that arises from their various allegiances to each other is

a central factor in the series of events that lead to Arthur's death. Foremost in this intricate web of

allegiance is the love triangle between Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere. As mentioned in chapter

four, Lancelot in the *Queste* and Tale Six is able to redeem himself before God as he regrets his

relationship with Guinevere and begins to understand his spiritual deficiencies. Nevertheless,

Lancelot and Guinevere quickly fall back into their adulterous relationship at the beginning of the

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[185] *Malory's Library*, (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 2008), 54.

[186] It was a commonly held notion, in the Middle Ages, that a king functions as an emperor in his kingdom, or 'Rex in regno suo est imperator.' See Felicity Riddy's "Contextualizing Le Morte Darthur: Empire and Civil War" in *A Companion to Malory*, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), 69.

Mort Artu, the stanzaic *Morte* and Malory's *Tale of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenevere* (Tale Seven). Their betrayal that comes to light in Tale Eight is a primary cause for the complex web of loyalties and vendettas between Arthur, Gawain, Lancelot, and Guinevere.

Once the adultery is exposed, Lancelot flees the court. Guinevere is subject to a trial, and Lancelot must rescue her before she is burned at the stake. In attempting to free Guinevere from her punishment, Lancelot accidentally kills Gawain's brothers Gaherys and Gareth. The death of Gareth causes Gawain to seek revenge against Lancelot for his death. Later, Lancelot returns Guinevere to Arthur, and they reconcile under orders from the Pope. However, Gawain, as Arthur's nephew and the most favored of his knights aside from Lancelot, has significant influence over Arthur and encourages the king to go to extreme lengths in pursuit of Lancelot. Thus, we have a complex and volatile interconnectivity between the four characters. The relationships between these characters, who are the most important members of Arthur's court, largely determine the future, and fall, of the kingdom.

A product, or evolution, of the tension between loyalty and betrayal is the theme of responsibility. This theme binds and fractures this group in equal measure. The responsibilities they share are related not only to their familial and feudal obligations, but also the responsibility, or blame, for the fall of the kingdom. This significant theme of the *Mort Artu* evolves through the stanzaic *Morte* and into Tale Eight. The *Mort Artu*, as previously stated, has an important emotional dimension. This pathos transfers to the stanzaic *Morte*, and we have many examples of outward expression of feeling. Likewise, Malory presents highly emotional characters that voice their feelings and exhibit physical signs of distress such as fainting and wailing. Thus, the theme of responsibility is often conveyed in all three texts by means of how and to what extent it is felt and expressed by each character.

The theme of responsibility has been explored by scholars such as E.D. Kennedy and C. David Benson, who have examined the speeches given by the main characters as powerful moments that deepen the pathos of the conclusion to this series of tales. Kennedy, in particular, has argued that "the four major participants increase in stature by acknowledging their failures and limitations."[187] I would agree with this assertion, and I would add that the tragedy of the romance is equally heightened by the cognizance and expression of their mistakes.

In all three works, Agravain and Mordred take it upon themselves to expose the lovers as traitors to the kingdom. The malevolent intention generates suspicion in those at court, yet Arthur initially rejects any notion of treachery. For example, when Agravain warns Arthur of the affair in the *Mort Artu*, Arthur's response is to deny that his wife and greatest knight would ever do such a thing. Agravain is then encouraged to prove their guilt to his liege lord. The trap is set when Lancelot spends the night in Guinevere's bedchamber. Agravain, Mordred and a select few knights lie in wait and attempt to enter the room. Lancelot succeeds in fighting his way out of the room and flees from court, their affair now exposed. Of course, Arthur's defense of Guinevere and Lancelot is now undermined, and he is left betrayed and a cuckold. In Malory's version, unlike the *Mort Artu*, Lancelot acknowledges that their affair has come to an end: "'Well, madame,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'syth hit ys so that the day ys com that oure love must departe," and he tells her that: "I never fayled you in ryght nor in wrong" (*Works*, 3.1166). In both Tale Eight and the stanzaic *Morte*, Guinevere declares the end of their relationship:

> 'Wel-a-way!' than sayd the quene,
> 'Launcelot, what shall worthe of us twoo?
> The love that hath bene us betwene,
> To suche endynge that it shuld goo!' (lines 1816-1819)

> "I dred me sore oure longe love ys com to a myschyvus ende." (Works, 3.1165)

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[187] See C. David Benson's "The Ending of The Morte Darthur," in *A Companion to Malory*, 234-238, and Kennedy's "Malory and his English Sources," 55.

The key transition here is the end of the Arthurian world as it previously existed, and the English versions state this change in the status quo. The delicate equilibrium of Arthur's court, with its superficial sense of harmony, is lost and henceforth a spiral of events, perpetrated by this loss of stability, directs the tale inexorably towards tragedy.

The tragedy of Tale Eight is heightened by the affinity that the audience has for Arthur. His death is caused by a sequence of events that originate in the adultery between Lancelot and Guinevere. Their betrayal adds to the sympathy we feel for Arthur, yet the lovers are not the ultimate cause of the fall of the Arthurian world. Instead, we may attribute a variety of factors to the decline in the kingdom's fortunes. Indeed, I would argue that Fortune, and the subtle variations in its role between the romances, is the narrative device that punctuates the sense of tragedy. Tale Eight inherits tragic elements from both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte*. That is to say, Tale Eight captures the core tension, the opposition of loyalty and betrayal, and incorporates the significant role of cause and effect that are important to both the *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte*.[188]

As the titular character and focus for the three romances, it is important to begin with Arthur and discuss the ways the three romances portray him. In the *Mort Artu*, Arthur is a weak king, often guided by his desire for revenge against Lancelot and Guinevere and his wavering between his love for Guinevere and his desire to have her killed. The stanzaic *Morte* portrays Arthur in a more positive light than the *Mort Artu*. The English poem achieves this portrayal by reducing weak portrayal of Arthur and ascribes blame to Agravain and Mordred for the fall of the kingdom. Likewise, Malory offers a more sympathetic and noble depiction of Arthur in his conclusion to the Arthurian legend. Thus, Malory's version of Arthur more closely resembles the Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* than the *Mort Artu*. The tone of the depiction in Tale Eight is significant since, as

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[188] As E.D. Kennedy explains regarding the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, "Lancelot's loyalty to Guenevere leads to instability in the kingdom because that loyalty to Guenevere leads to Lancelot's disloyalty to Arthur and to Lancelot's own instability, his forgetting the promise he had made on the Grail quest to renounce the world and Guenevere." "Malory's Guenevere: 'A Woman Who Had Grown a Soul,'" *Arthuriana*, vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1999), 41.

E.D. Kennedy states, "although the stanzaic *Morte* is known primarily to specialists in Middle English, the author's portrayal of Arthur influenced through Malory the conception of Arthur that many readers have today."[189] The stanzaic *Morte* as a main source for Tale Eight is, therefore, in light of the *Works* as a whole, a logical and understandable choice. Malory's Arthur, albeit not a flawless character like Galahad in Tale Six, is worthy of admiration and, for the most part, serves to illustrate good governance.

The Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* is not a weak king. Rather, he is a victim of malicious forces that undermine his reign for their own purposes. Malory aligns himself with the stanzaic *Morte* and his Arthur attempts to act in the best interests of the kingdom, showing little of the obsessive need for retribution that typifies the Arthur of the *Mort Artu*. In the *Mort Artu*, we see Arthur refuse to listen to advice and show clear obstinacy in the face of a calm and considered response. For example, in the punishment of Guinevere, Arthur states to his adviser, King Yon, that his mind is set and the only choice is how she will die:

> Je bé, fet li rois, que por ce mesfet qu'ele a fet l'en en face grant justise. Et ge vos commant, fet il, tout premierement, por ce que vos estes rois, et as autres barons, qui ceanz sont, aprés, et si le vos require seur le serement que vos m'avez fet, que vos esgardoiz entre vos de quell mort ele doit morir; que sanz mort n'en puet ele eschaper, se vos meïsmes vos teniez devers lui, en tel maniere que, se vos disiez qu'ele ne deüst pas morir, si morra ele. (*Mort Artu*, 120)

> ['I intend,' replied King Arthur, 'that severe justice should be taken on her for this crime she has committed. And I command you first of all, because you are a king, and then the other barons present here, to determine among you how she should be put to death, because she will not escape with her life, and even if you yourself took her side and said she should not die, she would die nevertheless.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 119)]

Moreover, Arthur asserts that he will disregard any advice opposing a sentence of death. The stanzaic *Morte*, by comparison, suggests that it is a joint decision between Arthur and his barons to

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[189] "The Stanzaic Morte Arthur: The Adaptation of a French Romance for an English Audience", *Culture and the King*, eds. Martin B. Shichtman and James B. Carley (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 107.

determine Guinevere's punishment; there is no clear mention of Arthur's involvement in her

sentence:

> It was no lenger for to byde;
> Kynge and and all hys knyghtis kene
> Toke there counselle in that tyde,
> What was beste do w<i>t<h> the quene,
> It was no lenger for to byde,
> That day fo[r]brent shuld she bene. (lines 1920-1925)

Malory develops this consensus-, as opposed to vengeance-based, approach to Guinevere's

punishment and adds that the law determines that she should be put to death:

> So than there was made grete ordynaunce in thys ire, and the quene muste nedis be jouged to
> the deth. And the law was such in tho dayes that whatsomever they were, of what astate or
> degré, if they were founden gylty of treson there shuld none other remedy but deth, and other
> the menour other the takynge with the dede shulde be the causer of their hasty jougement.
> (*Works*, 3.1174)

Malory distances Arthur from the judgment in two ways. He states that the law required such a

punishment and refers to the lovers being caught in overwhelmingly incriminating circumstances, as

opposed to being caught in the act.[190]

Arthur's uncompromising attitude in the *Mort Artu* will come to define Arthur's actions

going forward. Arthur, on multiple occasions, hears warnings or advice and chooses to disregard

them since they do not align with his need for vengeance. The refusal of advice occurs in the

warnings he has before the battle with Mordred and in his refusal to ask for Lancelot's help. For

example, Gawain appears to Arthur in a vision and warns him to avoid fighting Mordred. Arthur's

response is, again, resolute:

> "Sire, gardez vos d'assembler a Mordret; se vos i assemblez, vos i morroiz ou vos seroiz
> navrez a mort. – Certes, fet li rois, g'i assamblerai voirement, neïs se ge en devoie morir; car
> adonques seroie ge recreanz, se ge ne deffendoie ma terre encontre un traïteur." (*Mort Artu*,
> 225)

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[190] See Vinaver's commentary (*Works*, 3.1633).

['My Lord, avoid fighting against Mordred; if you fight against him you will die or be mortally wounded.' 'I shall quite certainly fight him,' said the king, 'even if I have to die as a result, because I should be a coward if I did not defend my land against a traitor.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 204)]

The stanzaic *Morte* includes the vision, although in this case, Gawain instructs Arthur to call a truce with Mordred to which Arthur accedes:

> A monthe day of trewse moste ye take,
> And than to batayle be ye bayne;
> Yow cometh to helpe Lancelot du Lake
> W<i>t<h> many a man mykell of mayne;
> To-morne the batayle ye moste forsake,
> Or ellys, certis, ye shall be slayne. (lines 3216 – 3221)

Likewise, Tale Eight includes a similar vision where Gawain warns Arthur not to engage in battle with Mordred and arrange a month-long truce:

> And for the grete grace and goodness that Allmyghty Jesu hath unto you, and for pyté of you and many mo other good men there shall be slayne, God hath sente me to you of Hys speciall grace to gyff you warnyng that in no wyse ye do batayle as to-morne, but that ye take a tretyse for a moneth-day. (*Works*, 3.1234)

As in the stanzaic *Morte*, Arthur follows this advice and sends for his lords and bishops to organize the cessation of hostilities.

Arthur is a more considered character and less prone to rash or vindictive action in the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight. Thus, these 'English Arthurs' are more sympathetic characters and do not receive the same share of blame as Arthur does in the *Mort Artu*. The author of the stanzaic *Morte* and Malory create this more favorable depiction because their Arthurs are generally less consumed by revenge. Instead, the author of the stanzaic *Morte* assigns this role to Gawain. For example, when the Pope orders Arthur to take the queen and reconcile with Lancelot, we see that while Arthur wishes to have peace once more, whereas Gawain is bent on Lancelot's destruction:

> The kynge aȝeyne it wolde noȝte bene,
> To do the Popys comaundemente,
> Blythely ayeyne to have the quene;
> Wolde he noght that Ynglonde were shente;

> Bot Gawayne was of herte so kene
> That to hym wolde he nevyr assente
> To make acorde hem bytwene,
> While any lyffe were in hym lente. (lines 2270-2277)

Likewise, Malory's Arthur desires peace with Lancelot, yet Gawain will not accept any peace with him:

> Full fayne he wolde have bene acorded with sir Launcelot, but sir Gawayn wolde nat suffir hym, but to have the quene he therto agreed. (*Works*, 3.1194)

The portrayals above are in stark contrast to the Arthur of the *Mort Artu*. In this same interaction with Gawain, the French romance isolates the king as the agent of persecution:

> Quant li roi sot ce mandement, si fu moult courrouciez; et nonpourquant il amoit la roïne de si grant amor, tot quidast il bien qu'ele li eüst meffait, que il fu legierement vaincus; mais il dist que, se la reïne revenoit, que ja por ce la guerre ne remmeindra entre li et Lancelot, puis qu'il l'avoit emprise. (*Mort Artu*, 153)

> [When the king heard this order he was very angry; and yet he loved the queen so much, although he was sure she had sinned against him, that he was easily persuaded to obey it. However, he said that if she returned, that would not put an end to his war against Lancelot now that he had begun it. (*Death of King Arthur*, 146)]

By assigning the theme of vengeance to Gawain, it mitigates criticism of Arthur and the king is a minor target for reproach.

Although Arthur is a stronger and more regal character in the English romances, the Arthur of Tale Eight and the stanzaic *Morte* remains indelibly human and relatable. The character exhibits a sympathetic dimension by means of emotional reactions. These emotions are often a product and indication of the loyalty and affection that he holds for his vassals, and I would argue that these emotions are amplified in Tale Eight. If we consider the episode where Lucan, Arthur's butler, dies, we see a more emphatic expression of grief than the stanzaic *Morte*. The stanzaic *Morte* simply describes Lucan's death as follows:

> Whan the kynge had swounyd there,
> By an auter up he stode;

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Syr Lucan, that was hym dere,
Lay dede and fomyd in the blode. (lines 3438-3441)

The example above shows that Arthur was fond of Lucan, yet the subsequent lines explain that

Bedivere, Lucan's brother, is the one to display grief, not Arthur:

Hys bold brothyr, sir Bedwere,
Full mykell mornyd in hys mode;
For sorow he myȝte not nyghe hym nere,
But evyr wepyd as he were wode. (lines 3442-3445)

Tale Eight, on the other hand, includes a more sorrowful Arthur, who voices his sadness at Lucan's

gruesome and tragic death:

> And whan the kynge awoke he behylde sir Lucan, how he lay fomyng at the mowth and pare
> of his guttes lay at hys fyete.
> 'Alas,' seyde the kynge, 'thys ys to me a fulle hevy syght, to se thys noble deuke so dye for
> my sake, for he wold have holpyn me that had more need of helpe than I! Alas, that he wolde
> nat complayne hym, for hys harte was so sette to helpe me. Now Jesu have mercy upon hys
> soule!' (*Works*, 3.1238)

Malory's affection for his knights is particularly apparent in relation to Gawain and Lancelot.

Malory's Arthur is distinct in this respect, and he shows more concern for these two knights than for

any other.

The *Mort Artu* emphasizes the close relationship between Arthur and Gawain. When Arthur

learns of Gawain's death, he is highly emotional:

> Li rois en pleure, et fet grant duel, et se pasme seur lui souvent et menu, et se clainme las,
> chetis, doulereus, (*Mort Artu*, 221)

> [The king wept, and grieved greatly and swooned over him many times; he called himself
> wretched and miserable and unhappy, (*Death of King Arthur*, 200)]

The *Mort Artu* continues to describe Arthur's grief in response to Gawain's death:

> Moult est li rois Artus corrouciez de ceste mort, et tant ena grant pesance qu'il ne set qu'il
> doie dire; si se pasme si souvent que li baron ont doutance qu'il ne muire entre leur mains; si
> l'enportent en une chambre por ce qu'il ne vuelent pas qu'il voie le cors, car tant comme il
> le verroit, ne cesseroit il sa plainte. (*Mort Artu*, 221)

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[King Arthur was greatly angered by his death, and he felt such deep grief that he did not know what to say. He swooned so many times that the barons feared he might die in their hands. They carried him into another room where he could not see the body, because he would never stop lamenting as long as it was before him. (*Death of King Arthur*, 200-201)]

Arthur's response to Gawain's death is not as emphatic in the stanzaic *Morte*. The grief is evident, yet the weight of emotion is not as extensively described at the sight of Gawain's dead body:

> But whan he fand syr Gawayne
> In a shyppe laye dead by a maste,
> Or evyr he coveryd might or mayne,
> An <hundreth> tymes hys hert nyghe braste. (lines 3132-3135)

There is no conversation between Arthur and Gawain as the latter lies dying. The stanzaic *Morte* quickly moves the narrative to the battle at Salisbury and Gawain's death is treated in a hurried fashion by comparison.

Malory, on the other hand, chooses to include the deathbed conversation between Arthur and Gawain. In this exchange, Arthur voices his affection for Gawain and tells him that he and Lancelot are his favorite knights:

> 'Alas! Sir Gawayne, my syster son, here now thou lyghest, the man in the worlde that I loved moste. And now ys my joy gone! For now, my nevew, sir Gawayne, I woll discover me unto you, tha<t> in youre person and in sir Launcelot I moste had my joy mand myne affyaunce. And now have I lost my joy of you bothe, wherefore all myne erhely joy ys gone fro me!' (*Works*, 3.1230)

Tale Eight does not, however, state that Arthur felt particular distress at the sight of Gawain's body. Instead, his words express his strength of feeling and the loss that he feels in relation to both Gawain and Lancelot.[191]

In the *Mort Artu* and Tale Eight, Arthur exhibits a varying degree of guilt and responsibility for the fall of his kingdom. For example, the Arthur of the *Mort Artu* is unwavering in the belief that

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[191] Lancelot is not dead at this point. He is, however, no longer a part of Arthur's court and therefore the king has effectively lost him.

he is right to fight Mordred, despite all the warnings. In Arthur's conversation with the archbishop, who advises Arthur to not to fight Mordred, he says:

> Sire, fet li rois Artus, g'en voi tant que, se ge ne fusse tant venuz avant, je retournasse, quel que talent que ge eüsse eü jusques ci. Mes or soit Jhesucrist en nostre aide, car ge n'en partirai jamés jusques a tant que Nostres Sires en ait donee enneur a moi ou a Mordret; et se il m'en meschiet, ce sera par mon pechié et par mon outrage, a ce que ge ai greigneur plenté de bons chevaliers que Mordrés n'a. (*Mort Artu*, 229)

> ['My Lord,' said King Arthur, 'now I see so much that if I had not come so far I should turn back, whatever my plans had been up till now. But may Jesus Christ help us now, because I shall never leave until Our Lord has granted victory to me or to Mordred. If it turns out badly for me, that will be a result of my sin and my folly, because I have a greater number of good knights than Mordred.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 207)]

Arthur's words not only foreshadow his fate, but they are also vitally revealing as to the author's position regarding the king. It demonstrates that Arthur knows, to an extent, that he has come too far on his destructive path. It also shows a turning point in the cognizance of his actions.[192] Arthur says the only way that he will lose is through his own mistakes. Thus, his impending defeat is the ultimate revelation and recompense for his past errors.

In Tale Eight, Arthur begins to understand and reflect upon his mistakes as the battle against Mordred takes a turn for the worse. The king laments the conflict with Lancelot. He states that he wished he not gone to war with Lancelot and regrets his actions when he says " A, sir Launcelot! Thys day I have sore myssed the! And alas, that ever I was ayenste the!" (*Works*, 3.1238) The episode demonstrates a reversal of attitude by Arthur. The king is aware of his mistake and shows his regret for not following a different course of action. This course of action, the need to reconcile with Lancelot, becomes a narrative feature of Tale Eight. As we see on various occasions, the characters

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[192] As Frappier states with regard to the conversation with the archbishop: "Le moment est venu pour Artus de prendre une attitude nette en face de son destin: il l'accepte en connaissance de cause." *Étude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu*, 282.

look back on their actions and define what they should have done, and lament what they did.[193]

Arthur reflects on his decision to fight Lancelot, and he knows he is in a weak position because of it. Interestingly, during the episode in which he dies, he reveals a fascinating display of despondency and introspection. He says to Bedivere that "in me ys no truste for to truste in." As such, Arthur is telling Bedivere that his time is passed and so is the time of his kingdom; the king now feels unable to reign and must go to the Isle of Avalon. His final comment to Bedievere is to say "if thou here nevermore of me, pray for my soule!" (*Works*, 3.1240) The episode is interesting as a moment for reflection. As we will see again in the case of Gawain in Tale Eight, the approach of death compels him to consider his actions and offer a form of confession.

The Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* does not show the same level of regret and there is no evidence that he feels responsibility for the fall of the kingdom. In the interaction with Bedivere, Arthur makes no lamentation nor voices any regret. Neither does he ask Bedivere to pray for his soul. The *Mort Artu* suggests that the king feels remorse for what has happened, although he believes he is powerless to act in opposition to his fate. After the battle with Mordred, and once he has been mortally wounded, Arthur goes to the Black Chapel and spends the whole night in prayer. Once Lucan sees him he says: "Ha! rois Artus, tant est de vos grant douleur!" (*Mort Artu*, 246) ['Ah! King Arthur, how great is your grief! (*Death of King Arthur*, 221)] Lucan's words are an assertion that we, the readers, must acknowledge how much sorrow Arthur feels at this point. Indeed, we are subsequently compelled to feel more sorry for him after he inadvertently kills Lucan by embracing him so heavily that his heart bursts. I would argue, moreover, that the bursting of the heart is metaphorical as well as literal. Since the heart is often associated with both suffering and joy, it is certainly appropriate that the bursting of the heart is a reflection of the emotional distress of the

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[193] As E.D. Kennedy argues, Malory's version of the tragedy is not one that results from the punishment of sin, but rather "human error and recognition became more important, the errors of people who are basically good." They are characters "who finally accept responsibility for what they have done." "Malory's *Morte Darthur*," 169.

episode. Once Arthur realizes what he has done, we see the grief amplified, and yet the king blames

Fortune, not himself, for his suffering:

> Girflet, Fortune qui m'a esté mere jusque ci, et or m'est devenue marrastre, me fet user le remenant de ma vie en douleur et en corrouz et en tristesce. (*Mort Artu*, 247)
> ['Girflet, Fortune, who has been my mother until now, but has become my step-mother, is making me devote the remainder of my life to grief and anger and sadness.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 222)]

We see, in the case of Arthur in the *Mort Artu*, a significant demonstration of emotional pain, a

degree of suffering that continues into Tale Eight.

A literal and thematic counterpart to Arthur is Gawain. Their relationship is a prime example

of familial and feudal responsibility. Arthur is open to Gawain's influence through a duty to his

nephew and vassal. Conversely, Gawain's judgment is clouded by a desire for revenge and veiled in

the form of responsibility. They appear to act in the interest of the kingdom, but with a different

agenda. Indeed, on several occasions in the *Mort Artu*, the author states that Gawain is the

motivating factor in the aggression against Lancelot and that Arthur is a passive facilitator. For

example:

> oï nouveles Lancelos que li rois Artus vouloit venir a ost sus li, et vendroit sanz faille, maintenant que l'ivers seroit passez, car ja avoit fet auques son estorement, et toute ceste chose estoit par l'esmuete monseignor Gauvain. (*Mort Artu*, 164)
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> [Lancelot heard that King Arthur wished to attack him, and would do so without fail once winter had passed. He had already prepared some of his equipment, and the whole thing was due to the incitement of Sir Gawain. (*Death of King Arthur*, 155)]

Arthur in the stanzaic *Morte* shows more regret for engaging in battle with Lancelot in

contrast to the vengeful attitude of Gawain. For example, the stanzaic *Morte* describes Arthur crying

and lamenting the prospect of fighting Lancelot whereas Gawain remains intent in the conflict:

> The kynge Arthur answered thore--
> the terys from hys yȝen ranne:
> "By Jh<es>u Cryste!' he there swore,
> "That all thys worlde wroght and wan,

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In-to thy landys whann thou willt fare,
Te shall lette no lyvand man.'
He sayd, "Allas! withe syghynge sare,
That evyr yit thys werre byganne!'

Sythe that I shall wende awaye,
And in myn awne landys wone,
May I saffly wone thet aye,
That ye wythe werre not come me on?'
Syr Gawaine than sayd: "Naye,
By Hym that made sonne and mone,
Dight the as welle as evyr thou may,
For we shall after come full sone!' (lines 2436-2451)

Tale Eight suggests that Arthur is more independent of Gawain's actions although Gawain is, again,

positioned as the motivating factor in the hostilities with Lancelot . Indeed, as Gawain says to

Lancelot, the king can decide as he pleases, but he will never reconcile with him:

'Sir, the kynge may do as he wyll,'seyde sir Gawayne, 'but wyte thou well, sir Launcelot, thou and I shall never be acorded whyle we lyve, for thou hast slayne   three of my brethyrn.' (*Works*, 3.1199)

Arthur and Gawain's pursuit of Lancelot is a product of the upheaval at court. Arthur has

lost his preeminent knight due to the revelation of the adultery, and Gawain replaces Lancelot as

Arthur's greatest vassal. Gawain serves to counsel Arthur and his need for retribution and revenge is

initiated by the death of his brother Gareth (Gaheriet), at the hands of Lancelot.[194] Gawain shows

intense grief at the death of his brother and, like Arthur's comment to Girflet above, he blames

Fortune for his grief:

Biaus douz frere, comment pot soufrir Fortune vostre destruisement si let et si vilain, qui vos avoit garni de toutes bontez? Ja vos seut ele estre si douce et si amiable et vos avoit levé en sa plus mestre roe. Biaus frere, ce a ele fet por moi ocire et por ce que ge muire de duel de vos; certes ge ai grant droit, et bien m'i acort, que, puis que ge voi vostre mort avenir, je sui cil qui plus ne quier vivre, fors tant sanz plus que ge vos aie vengié del desloial qui ce vos fist. (*Mort Artu*, 131)

[Dear brother, how could Fortune allow you to suffer such a base and ugly death when she had endowed you with all good qualities? She used to be so kind and friendly to you and

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[194] Malory refers to Gaheriet as Gareth, but they are the same character.

raised you up in her principal wheel. Brother, she has done this to kill me, to make me die of grief for you. It would be quite fitting if I did, and I would not object, because now that I have seen your death, I no longer wish to live, except until I have taken my revenge on the traitor who did this to you. (*Death of King Arthur*, 128)]

The example shows the progression from grief, to vengeance, and then death. Gawain prophesizes his own fate when he says that he will die of grief for Gaheriet since his need for revenge will cause him to fight with Lancelot, who gives him a blow from which he will eventually die.

The stanzaic *Morte* does not make the same connections between grief, fortune and death, although the English romance conveys the same prophetic statement when Gawain says:

Betwixte me and Launcelote du Lake
Nys man in erthe, for soothe to sayne,
Shall trewes sette and pees make
Er outher of us have other slayne. (lines 2010-2013)

Tale Eight is very similar to the stanzaic *Morte* in this episode as Gawain swears an oath of vengeance:

'My kynge, my lorde, and myne uncle,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'wyte you well, now I shall make you a promise which I shall holde be my knyghthode, that from thys day forewarde I shall never fayle sir Launcelot untyll that one of us have slayne that othir.' (*Works*, 3.1186)

Where the *Mort Artu* ties together the grief and desire for revenge, the English romances focus on Gawain's determination to avenge his brother at the cost of his life. It is particularly interesting in Tale Eight, however, that Malory adds, in the oath, the appeal to Arthur as Gawain's king, lord, and uncle. Indeed, Gawain repeats his appeal to Arthur, as his lord and king, to wage war against Lancelot: "therefore I requyre you, my lorde and kynge, dresse you unto the warre, for wyte you well, I woll be revenged upon sir Launcelot." (*Works*, 3.1186) Arthur is compelled to act on his nephew's request. In this manner, Gawain expresses the feudal and familial relationship between the

characters.[195] This relationship leads to more grief and regret and illustrates how responsibility may

be misappropriated for a personal cause.

Gawain channels his desire for revenge through his influence over Arthur. Much like the

collaboration between Mordred and Agravain to expose the adultery, the *Mort Artu* presents Gawain

as a co-conspirator with Arthur. They are intent on Lancelot's destruction. The romances show this

conflation of revenge and loyalty to be a negative. Gawain's unrelenting need for vengeance leads

him on a self-destructive path that culminates with his eventual death from a blow by Lancelot. In

this episode, Lancelot and Gawain engage in single combat, and Lancelot deals Gawain a severe

blow to the head from which he never fully recovers. Through Gawain, we witness some of the first

examples of responsibility and guilt. Gawain shows profound regret in the *Mort Artu* after his defeat

by Lancelot:

> Je sai bien que je ne vivrai ja quinze jours; si sui plus dolenz de ce que ge ne puis veoir
> Lancelot, ainz que ge muire, que ge ne sui de ma mort; que, se ge veïsse celui que ge sei au
> meilleur chevalier del monde at au plus cortois et ge li peüsse crier merci de ce que ge li ai
> esté si vilains au derrien, il m'est avis que m'ame en fust plus a ese aprés ma mort. (*Mort
> Artu*, 212)

> [I am quite sure I shall not last a fortnight; and I am sadder at not being able to see Lancelot
> before I die than I am about the thought of dying. If I could only see the man I know to be
> the finest and most courteous knight in the world and beg his forgiveness for having been so
> uncourtly to him recently, I feel my soul would be more at rest after my death. (*Death of
> King Arthur*, 193)]

Gawain says his primary concern is to see Lancelot and ask for forgiveness. His words demonstrate

that he knows he has made a mistake and must atone for it before he dies.

The stanzaic *Morte* includes no words of regret in its comparable episode. Instead, he suffers

a rather sad and abrupt end when an oar reopens the wound inflicted by Lancelot and kills him.

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[195] As Helen Cooper explains in her explanatory notes to her edition of the *Morte Darthur*, she states "As king,
he has to uphold a legally just quarrel (Gareth and Gaheris were unlawfully killed while they were acting under
Arthur's orders);as Gawain's lord, he has to uphold Gawain in his quarrels just as Gawain has given him his
own 'service and love'; and as his uncle, it is his blood-feud as much as it is Gawain's." *Le Morte Darthur*
(London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 560.

Malory, on the other hand, does include the regret felt by Gawain towards Lancelot. Gawain recognizes the mistake that he made and takes responsibility for his own death when he says: 'now I woll that ye wyte that my deth-dayes be com! And all, I may wyte, myne owne hastynes and my wylfulnesse, for thorow my wylfulnes I was causer of myne owne dethe." (*Works*, 3.1230) The guilt he feels is bound to his role as an advisor. He understands that he has guided Arthur down a dangerous path that caused the kingdom to fall into the hands of Mordred. Furthermore, Gawain urges Arthur not to make the mistake that he made by not reconciling, and to send for Lancelot and elevate him to his previous status.

This episode becomes more interesting when we consider another addition by Malory that appears to have a root in the *Mort Artu* and is not present in the stanzaic *Morte*. The *Mort Artu* states that Gawain tells Arthur to write a letter and ask for Lancelot's help against Mordred:

> Sire, fait mesire Gauvains, toutes voies vous loeroie je que vous mandissiés a Lancelot qu'il vous venist secourre, et je sai veraiement qu'il i venra, so tost comme il verra vos letres, car il vous aime assés plus que vous ne quidiés. (*Mort Artu*, 213)

> ['My Lord,' said sir Gawain, 'in any case I recommend you to ask Lancelot to come and help you, and I know that he will definitely come as soon as he receives your letter, because he loves you much more dearly than you imagine.' (*Death of King Arthur*, 194)]

The stanzaic *Morte* makes no mention of Gawain suggesting that Arthur seek Lancelot's help, although Arthur's vision of Gawain tells him that Lancelot is on his way to help in the battle with Mordred. Malory, instead, develops the episode from the *Mort Artu* and, in this instance, Gawain writes a letter to Lancelot as his dying act. Gawain's letter serves a dual function. It is an offer of reconciliation between himself and Lancelot and a direct request for help against Mordred. Gawain recognizes his mistake and shows humility: "And I woll that all the worlde wyte that I, sir Gawayne, knyght of the Table Rounde, soughte my dethe, and nat thorow thy deservynge, but myne owne sekynge." Gawain's statement reads like a confession. He wants the world to know that he made a mistake. In addition, Gawain requests that Lancelot come and pray at his tomb and that he should

"make no taryying, but com over the see in all the goodly haste that ye may, with youre noble

knyghtes, and rescow that noble kynge that made the knyght, for he ys full straytely bestad with an

false traytoure which ys my half-brothir, sir Mordred" (*Works*, 3. 1231). The letter is a clearer

statement of Gawain's regret and desire for reconciliation than the *Mort Artu*, and it reinforces the

bond of loyalty between the three characters. In this respect, Malory's Arthur does not refuse

Gawain's request, since it is not clear whether Arthur knows what Gawain has written. Again,

Malory states that he took the contents of the letter from his Freynshe booke, even though there is no

mention of the contents of the letter, or indeed any letter sent to Lancelot in the *Mort Artu*. The letter

is, however, an interesting device so that Malory can convey the desire for reconciliation and the

regret that Gawain feels for the events that led to his death.

The *Mort Artu* and the stanzaic *Morte* present Gawain in a similar light, although the English

poet transfers much of Arthur's desire for revenge in the *Mort Artu* to Gawain. Malory also presents

Gawain as the revenge-driven character, yet we see a heightened sense of regret in Malory's version.

Gawain's story becomes another illustration of the importance of responsibility. Gawain understands

his mistakes and takes direct action to rectify his errors by writing a letter to Lancelot. Malory

understood this significant dimension of Gawain's character in the *Mort Artu* and provided a clearer

declaration of Gawain's regret.

In addition to Gawain, Guinevere also displays remorse for her actions in the stanzaic *Morte*

and Tale Eight. Upon hearing the news of Arthur's death, Malory tells us that Queen Guinevere goes

to Amesbury and there "she lete make herself a nunne, and wered wyght clothys and blak, and grete

penaunce she toke upon her, as ever ded synfull woman in thys londe." Malory makes it very clear

that Guinevere is not forced to take the habit. Rather she is conscious and committed to her past,

forever consumed by her mistake. "Never creature coude make her myry, but ever she lyved in

fastynge, prayers, and almesdedis, that all maner of people mervayled how virtuously she was changed." (3.1243)

Likewise, the stanzaic *Morte*, the clear source for this episode in Tale Eight, explains that:

Whan quene Gaynor, the kynges wyffe,
Wyste that all was gone to wrake,
Away she went with ladys five
To Aumysbery, a nonne hyr for to make.
Ther-in she lyved an holy lyffe
In prayers for to wepe and wake;
Nevyr after she cowde be blythe;
There weryd she clothys whyte and blake. (lines 3566-3573)

The stanza is very similar to the passage in Tale Eight. Her outward displays of weeping and prayer show her to be troubled and remorseful. Her entry into the convent in these romances is, in itself, an act of contrition. Thus the sins of her past continue to torment her, but through the knowledge and understanding of her mistakes, she has taken steps to atone.

The Guinevere of the *Mort Artu*, however, is not as penitent as her English versions. The reason for her decision to enter the convent is for a less noble purpose. The *Mort Artu* tells us that Guinevere's motivation is fear. Guinevere tells the Abbess that she must let her stay because she fears for her life no matter who may win between Arthur and Mordred: "En tel maniere demora la reïne leanz avec les nonnains et s'i mist por la poor qu'ele avoit del roi Artu et de Mordret." (219) ["So the queen stayed there with the nuns because she was frightened of King Arthur and Mordred." (*Death of King Arthur*, 199)] Guinevere chooses to remain in the convent as a refugee from Arthur and Mordred. The *Mort Artu* states that her later decision to become a nun is for fear of Mordred's sons: "Quant la reïne sot la mort le roi Artu et l'en li ot conté que cil aloient la terre sesissant, ele ot poor que cil ne l'oceïssent, s'il la poïssent tenir, si prist meintenant les dras de la religion." (252) ["When the queen heard of the death of King Arthur and had been told that Mordred's sons were seizing the country, she was frightened they might kill her if they could catch her; so she straight

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away took nuns' habits." (*Death of King Arthur*, 226)] There is no indication in the French romance

that she feels regret, at this stage, for what has transpired.

That is not to say that Guinevere shows no regret at all in the *Mort Artu*. Indeed, the narrator

states that:

> Il [Lancelot] estoit si corrouciez et si tristres que nus plus; car le jor meïsmes que la bataille
> dut estre li furent nouveles dites que la reïne sa dame estoit morte tierz jor avoit passé; et
> tout einsi estoit il avenu com l'en li avoit dit, car la reïne estoit trespassee de ceste siecle
> nouvelement; mes onques haute dame plus bele fin n'ot ne plus bele repentance, ne plus
> doucement criast merci a Nostre Seigneur qu'ele fist. (*Mort Artu*, 254)

> [Lancelot was as sad and grief-stricken as could be, because that same day on which he
> battle was to be fought he heard the news that his lady the queen had died and passed out of
> this world three days previously. This had in fact happened just as he was told, because the
> queen had just died, but never had a high-born lady had a finer and more repentant end to her
> life, or more tenderly begged Our Lord for forgiveness." (*Death of King Arthur*, 228)]

We can speculate as to what may have happened at the convent. Maybe with the threat of death

removed, Guinevere had the opportunity to reflect on her mistakes. In any case, the Guinevere of the

Mort Artu is redeemed in the eyes of the readers and evidently regretted her actions.

The clearest expression of guilt and responsibility by Guinevere occurs in Tale Eight in a

different episode. This scene, in which Lancelot and Guinevere have the opportunity to say a final

farewell, does not happen in most manuscripts of the *Mort Artu*.[196] The meeting of the lovers occurs

after Arthur has died and Lancelot searches for Guinevere. In the stanzaic *Morte*, Guinevere offers

her statement of responsibility before Lancelot and the abbess:

> Abbes, to you I knowlache here
> That throw thys ylke man and me--
> All thys sorowfull were hathe be!
> My lord is slayne, that hath no pere,
> And many a doughty knyght and free; (lines 3638-33643)

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[196] As stated in chapter 3, the author of the stanzaic *Morte* may have used a copy of the *Mort Artu* that included
this scene as his source.

Guinevere's statement to the abbess, much like Gawain's exhortation that he sought his own death,

reads like a confession. It is a public declaration of guilt and regret.

Malory follows his English source closely at this juncture:

"Thorow thys same man and me hath al this warre be wrought, and the deth of the moste
nobelest knyghtes of the worlde; for thorow oure love that we have loved todydir ys my
moste noble lord slayne." (3.1252)

Guinevere lays the blame on both of them. In the stanzaic *Morte*, Guinevere tells Lancelot that she

must atone for her sins and be on the "right side" of God:

Isette I am in suche a place,
My sowle hele I wylle abyde
Telle God send me som grace
Throw mercy of Hys woundys wyde,
That I may do so in thys place
My synnys to amende thys ilke tyde,
After to have a syght of Hys face
At domys day on Hys ryght syde. (lines 3654-3660)

Tale Eight shows the clear connection with the stanzaic *Morte* in the notion of seeing the face of God

and being on His right side upon her death.[197] For, as she says to Lancelot:

And yet I truste, thorow Goddis grace and thorow Hys Passion of Hys woundis wyde, that
aftir my deth I may have a syght of the blyss[ed] face of Cryste Jesu, and on Doomesday to
sytte on Hys ryght side; [fo]r as synfull as ever I was, now ar seyntes in hevyn. (*Works*,
3.1252)

Again, there is a distinct parallel in this passage between the two romances in terms of language and

theme. They both express Guinevere's hope to redeem herself and the acknowledgement of her sins,

often with the same wording.

Furthermore, Lancelot requests a final kiss, which Guinevere refuses. In both romances,

Guinevere tells Lancelot that they must "absteyne" from such things.[198] This steadfast rejection of

Lancelot is important. It signifies an understanding of her mistake, yet also she is trying to help

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[197] Unlike the stanzaic *Morte*, Malory specifies that Guinevere wishes to see the face of Jesus Christ. This is
not a significant difference since, to Christians, Christ, as a part of the trinity, is God.

[198] Stanzaic *Morte* line 3716 and *Works*, 3.1253. The use of *absteyne* is important here as it conveys the notion
of restraint and sexual abstinence in particular. See also Edward Donald Kennedy's "Malory's Guenevere," 39.

Lancelot understand in turn. At this point, Lancelot does not fully acknowledge his part in the fall of the kingdom. Guinevere, in the English romances, serves as a teacher for Lancelot. He does not yet understand that even a parting kiss is a return to the affair, which, according to Guinevere, is the cause of all the death and sorrow that befell the kingdom.

Guinevere's resolute attitude may appear cold considering the depth of their affections, yet in the description of their farewell, the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight convey the magnitude of the distress caused by this final meeting. Malory writes: "And they departed; but there was never so harde and herted man but he wold have wepte to see the dolour that they made, for there was lamentacyon as they had be stungyn with sperys, and many tymes they swooned. And the ladyes bare the quene to hir chambre." (877) Malory, again, gives the audience emotional markers by saying that anyone would weep in sympathy for their pain, and he describes their suffering as physical as if they had been pierced with spears. I posit, moreover, that the characters punish themselves through the pain and anguish caused by their regret. As in the *Mort Artu*, Malory and the stanzaic *Morte* use the emotion displayed by characters as a type of penalty for prior misdeeds.

In the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight, Lancelot makes a promise to Guinevere that he will spend the rest of his life in service to God. It is a clear statement that he will follow her example. The Lancelot of the stanzaic *Morte* says to Guinevere:

> Forbede it God that evyr I shold
> Agaynste yow worche so grete unryght,
> Syne we togedyr upon thys mold
> Have led owre lyffe by day and nyght!
> Unto God I yiffe a heste to holde--
> The same destiny that yow is dyghte
> I will resseyve in som house bolde
> To plese here-after God All-myght. (lines 3682-3689)

Likewise, Lancelot in Tale Eight promises Guinevere that he will look for a hermit who will take him in and then spend the rest of his life in penance and prayer:

> But sythen I fynde you thus desposed, I ensure you faythfully, I wyl ever take me to penaunce and praye whyle my life lasteth, yf that I may fynde ony heremyte, other graye or whyte, that wyl receyve me. (*Works*, 3.1252)

In both romances, Lancelot's decision to live an ascetic life is a result of Guinevere's request. He appears to recognize the mistake of their relationship at this point, and we know that Lancelot spends seven years as a priest in penance and prayer.[199]

The Lancelot of Tale Eight, on the other hand, offers a more emphatic recognition of guilt after Guinevere's death. Following her funeral, Lancelot passes out from the emotional distress and is subsequently confronted by the former bishop of Canterbury. The bishop says that Lancelot displeases God with such sorrow-making.[200] In response, Lancelot argues that his sorrow is not for his sinful love of Guinevere, but rather recognition of his respect for both Guinevere and Arthur who are now buried together. Furthermore, Lancelot proceeds to say that "I remember me how by my defaute and myn orgule and my pryde that they were bothe layed full lowe, that were pereles that ever was lyvyng of Cristen people, wyt you wel,' sayd syr Launcelot, 'this remembred, of their kyndenes and myn unkyndenes, sanke so to myn herte that I might not susteyne myself.' (*Works*, 3.1256) Lancelot demonstrates the full awareness of his guilt, and Malory has again made a clearer statement of remorse than the stanzaic *Morte*. As we see in the cases of Arthur and Guinevere, the recognition of guilt heralds their death, and Lancelot dies soon after his comments to the bishop.

In it interesting to note that Lancelot is lauded following his death. Malory states that many psalters and prayers were read over and about him. His casket was open so that people would see, which, as Malory explains, "was the custom in tho dayes that al men of worship shold lye with open visage tyl that they were buryed." (*Works*, 3.1258) Thus, from the audience's perspective, we should

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[199]   Holyche all tho sevyn yerys
        Lancelot was preste and masse songe
        In penance and in diverse prayers,
        That lyffe hym thought no-thyng longe. (lines 3826-3829)

[200] 'Ye be to blame, for ye dysplese God with suche maner of sorrow-makyng.' (*Works*, 3.1256)

feel likewise and not hold any negative sentiments towards Lancelot. We know that Lancelot has understood his mistake and we sympathize with the suffering he endured in the knowing of his guilt.

Intrinsically associated with the themes of guilt and responsibility is the role of cause and effect in Tale Eight. I use the term 'cause and effect' since it can be applied to all three romances.[201] The *Mort Artu* often refers to the idea of cause and effect in the context of Fortune or destiny.[202] Fortune represents a supernatural force that represents the instability of life on earth. While this theme is important for all three romances there are some differences between the *Mort Artu*, the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight.[203] In the *Mort Artu,* Fortune is personified as the capricious figure that seeks to knock Arthur from the top of the wheel in inglorious fashion. Arthur sees Fortune in a dream, and the vision serves to prefigure what will happen to him:

> Et lors le prenoit et le trebuschoit a terre si felenessement que au cheoir estoit avis au roi Artu qu'il estoit touz debrisiez et qu'il perdoit tout le pooir del cors et des menbres. (*Mort Artu*, 227)

> [Then she took him and pushed him to the ground so roughly that King Arthur felt that he had broken all his bones in the fall and lost the use of his body and his limbs. (*Death of King Arthur*, 205)]

The English romances take a slightly different approach, although fortune remains a significant theme. The most significant difference between the French and English romances is the

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[201] Although 'cause and effect' are often terms used in reference to the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight, E. Jane Burns also points out that, "the order of episodes in La Mort is locked into a distinct and inalterable hierarchy of cause and effect." *Arthurian Fictions: Rereading the Vulgate Cycle* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), 153.

[202] J. Frappier asserts that "Le thème de Fortune – du Destin – est sans doute le thème majeur de *La Mort Artu*." *Étude sur La Mort Le Roi Artu* (Genève: Droz, 1972), 287. Donald C. Macrae takes issue with Frappier's view of the primacy of fate and states that "There is no doubt about the importance of fate in the *Mort Artu*, but to suggest, as Frappier and others have done, that the role of this one motif is so striking that it dominates all others would seem to place too great an importance upon its function to the detriment of other important themes in the story." "Appearances and Reality in La Mort Le Roi Artu," *King Arthur: A Casebook*, edited by Edward Donald Kennedy (New York: Garland, 1996), 105.

[203] As P.J.C. Field states regarding Tale Eight, "this tale is driven not by chance but by cause and effect, or fate, or both." *The Arthur of the English*, 240. I agree with Field insofar as it is not clear whether cause and effect and/or fate (Fortune) dictate the progression of events.

episode of the adder. This episode highlights the vicissitudes of fortune and life in the Middle Ages

The adder appears at the most inauspicious moment when Arthur and Mordred meet to establish a

truce. In the stanzaic *Morte*, one of Mordred's knights draws his sword to kill the adder and Arthur's

forces interpret it as a hostile act. Interestingly, Malory does not specify which side the knight

belongs to. This lack of specificity serves to highlight the arbitrariness of the event. In the ensuing

battle, Arthur kills Mordred, and Mordred gives Arthur a mortal wound. The adder does not appear

in the *Mort Artu*. The inclusion by Malory is important since the episode is the pivotal moment when

Arthur's fate is sealed. I would argue that Malory used this episode from the stanzaic *Morte* as a

means to highlight the tragedy of the story. The adder functions as a narrative device to show that

Fortune is sometimes random and that the most insignificant event can have severe consequences for

the main story line.

Elizabeth Edwards expresses this idea very well in when she explains that Malory follows

the stanzaic *Morte* in that "all the events are linked, and yet the actual cause is constantly giving way

to some contingent element which has occurred as an accidental result of what appears to be the

main plot. There is a slippage or deferral in the plot." By slippage and deferral, Edwards posits, and I

agree, that whatever happened before loses importance or significance in light of the next step in the

narrative sequence. For example, once the adultery is revealed, the betrayal of the lovers is the

primary tension at court. Thereafter, the illicit relationship is somewhat lost in the narrative when

Lancelot kills Gareth and Gaherys. At that point, the focus shifts to Gawain and his desire for

revenge. Then, once Mordred takes the throne and imprisons Guinevere, he becomes the apparent

enemy of the kingdom. Finally, as Edwards states: "even the massed armies give way to the

adventitious arrival of the snake."[204]

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[204] *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's Morte Darthur*, 174.

Malory understood the importance of the episode and embellishes some of it in comparison to the stanzaic *Morte*. In Tale Eight, both Arthur and Mordred give the same warning to their forces that if they "se ony swerde drawyn, loke ye com on fyersely." (*Works*, 3.1235) The meeting is predicated in an atmosphere of suspicion. The drawing of a sword is a sign, not only of aggression, but also of betrayal. Both the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight emphasize the distrust between the two forces. Malory heightens the tension through the similarity of words spoken by Arthur and Mordred. The repetition of the warning serves to anticipate the event that triggers the battle of Salisbury Plain.

In the *Mort Artu*, battle is joined without any suggestion of a truce.[205] Much like the rest of the French romance, Arthur's demise seems inevitable and he is seemingly powerless against Fortune.[206] The stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight provide the audience with a glimmer of hope and a small respite from the continuing decline in Arthur's predicament with the negotiations between Arthur and Mordred. Where the *Mort Artu* suggests inevitability in Arthur's fate, the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight are more uncertain.[207] Indeed, much like the characters in the tale, the audience does not see the adder coming. The adder does not represent a malign power, and neither English author provides its origin or any sense of purpose. It represents the uncertainty, the capriciousness, the unfairness of life. Instead, its presence serves to trigger the latent fear of treachery on both sides. The stanzaic *Morte* says that:

But as they acordyd shulde have bene,

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[205] As opposed to a truce, Mordred offers Arthur an ultimatum: he will spare Arthur's life if he leaves the battlefield. Arthur naturally refuses.

[206] Vinaver suggests that Fortune acts as a response to the actions of the characters. She is, however, present and active in the romance and it appears that she plays a role in Arthur's downfall. More importantly, characters attribute blame to her for their misfortunes. Edward Peters argues in relation to the *Mort Artu*, and I agree, that: "Arthur's final dream of the Wheel of Fortune translates the causes of his disaster to extrapersonal forces but at the same time diminishes his own greatness as an individual." *The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 206.

[207] As Larry Benson argues: "But one cannot escape the feeling that save for a series of unhappy accidents the catastrophe might have been avoided." *Malory's "Morte Darthur"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 240.

An edder glode forth upon the grownde;
He stange a knyght, that men might sene
That he was seke and full unsownde.

Owte he brayedw<i>t<h> a swerd bright--
To kylle the adder had he thogh[t]e;
Whan Arthur p<ar>ty saw that syght,
Frely they togedyr sought; (lines 3340-3346)

The poem shows that the truce should have taken place, but the adder causes a knight to draw his

sword in order to kill it. The misinterpretation of the action is the cause for the battle to take place.

Malory evidently understood and appreciated this dramatic turn of events and captures the

importance of the episode. Tale Eight describes the meeting between the opposing forces as follows:

And so they mette as thir poyntemente was, and were agreed and accorded thorowly. And
wyne was fette, and [they] dranke togydir. Right so cam oute an addir of a lytyll hethe-
buysshe, and hit stange a knyght in the foote. And so whan the knyght felte hym so stonge,
he loked downe and saw the adder; and anone he drew hys swerde to sle the addir and
thought none othir harme. And whan the osteoste on bothe parties saw that swerde drawyn,
than they blewe beamys, trumpettis, and hornys, and shouted grimly, and so bothe ostis
dressed hem togydirs. (*Works*, 3.1235)

As the example indicates, the knight meant no harm to anyone else. Thus, the culprit in this episode

is an adder. The mistake by the knight, albeit a foolish error, is inadvertent. Arthur's comment

captures the sentiment of the episode perfectly when he states: "Alas, this unhappy day!" (3.1235) It

is indeed "unhappy" (i.e., unlucky, disastrous) as a hundred thousand end up dead on the battlefield,

and Arthur receives his mortal wound. It is more than an objectionable day, however; Arthur's words

state that it is an ill-fated day. This is not the outcome that Arthur desires. He knew the cost that the

war with Mordred would impose on the kingdom, yet it is out of his control. Moreover, we could

argue that this episode is beyond anyone's control. Thus, in this manner, Tale Eight and the stanzaic

Morte return to the inevitability of the *Mort Artu*. The narrative function of the adder, however,

heightens the tragedy of Arthur's death. The adder is a very small snake and, as Malory tells us, it

appears from a *lytell hethe-buysshe*. It becomes a tragedy in the medieval sense, a tragedy caused by

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the capricious nature of life. Its effect on the plot is far more significant than its narrative presence. Indeed, the very randomness and brevity of the episode makes the ensuing destruction all the more tragic.

The characters make mistakes, recognize their own actions and they suffer as a consequence. The most effective way to explain this dual cognizance of guilt and responsibility is the expression of regret. By voicing their regret, they at once identify and acknowledge the mistake that caused a negative outcome, and also express the emotional impact of their actions. Some may view this expression of regret as a confession, a means to absolve themselves of the guilt. The story is a difficult one for the audience, an emotional tug-of-war where our sympathies for specific characters vacillate as we seek to assign blame. Tale Eight has, as E.D. Kennedy argues, some of the some of the nature of Aristotelian tragedy since the characters accept responsibility for their own actions.[208] No singular character can assume responsibility for the end of Arthur's kingdom in Tale Eight, not even Mordred. Instead, we have a spiral of causality. There is no clear determiner of blame in Tale Eight, but a variety of mistakes. In the space that exists between right and wrong actions, we find a complex and fascinating state of regret. To an extent, the audience may understand that the characters have earned our sympathy and forgiveness because they show regret.

Thus, Tale Eight is an evolution of the *Mort Artu* since the characters take greater responsibility for their actions. The psychological dimension of the *Mort Artu* develops through the stanzaic *Morte* and into Tale Eight as a heightened awareness of mistakes. Any form of judgment of Arthur and the other main characters is voiced by the characters themselves. The characters become their own jury and either accept their fate, as in the case of Arthur and Gawain, or seek penance, as in the case of Guinevere and Lancelot. Tale Eight and the stanzaic *Morte* inherit the inexorable progression of events from the *Mort Artu*, and they expound and amplify the displays of regret by the

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[208] "Malory's Morte Darthur," 168-169.

main characters. The episode of the adder, moreover, epitomizes the shift between the *Mort Artu* (where it is missing) and the stanzaic *Morte* and Malory's Tale Eight. Its appearance does not, ultimately, change the outcome of the plot, but the nature of the tragedy changes. Where Arthur in the *Mort Artu* rushes into battle with Mordred, disrgarding the warnings, the Arthur of the stanzaic *Morte* and Tale Eight wishes to make peace with Mordred. The battle is not caused or desired by Arthur, instead the adder, as a symbol of inevitability or a quirk of fate, initiates the battle that leads to Arthur's death. Consequently, although much of Tale Eight owes its content to the *Mort Artu*, Malory's decision to follow the stanzaic *Morte* in his last few pages changes the nature of the tragedy and adds to the pity a reader may feel for the death of King Arthur.

Conclusion

The romances discussed in this dissertation illustrate a variety of types of translation during the Middle Ages. The English Prose *Merlin* and *Of Arthour and Of Merlin* are examples of the two ends of the spectrum between translation and adaptation. The Prose *Merlin* is identifiable as a close translation since the author largely achieved equivalence with the French Prose *Merlin*. *Of Arthour and Of Merlin*, on the other hand, varies significantly from the French in both form and narrative structure. Nevertheless, the English poem remains intimately connected to the French in terms of the overall plot and the thematic focus and is, therefore, an adaptation.

Ywain and Gawain combines elements of translation and adaptation when compared to its source, *Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yvain*). It follows the verse form of its Chrétien's romance yet does so in a distinctly English style. The English poet reorients his version to increase the role of Gawain in the poem, yet there are notable parallels in the content and narrative details between the two romances. The stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, by contrast, is closer to what we would call an adaptation of the *Mort Artu*. The English author not only opts for English verse as opposed to prose, but also makes significant changes in the content of the plot. The stanzaic *Morte* presents a more sympathetic Arthur and streamlined the French romance.

Tale Six is a reduced, yet close, translation of *La Queste del Saint Graal*. Malory viewed the *Queste* as a romance that held significant "truths" and wrote a tale that is generally faithful to his source. Tale Eight, by contrast, is an adaptation of a French and an English romance. Like the *Mort Artu*, the stanzaic *Morte* concerns itself with the various reasons for Arthur's death and the fall of the kingdom, although the role of Fortune is emphasized less than in the French. Tale Eight inherits the interest in fortune from these two romances and also channels their preoccupation with grief and

regret. Malory chooses to align himself more closely with his English source in the final pages of this tale.

Although Malory refers repeatedly to his *Freynshe booke* throughout his tales, he incorporated a host of sources, both French and English, to create the cohesive work we know as *Le Morte Darthur*; and at times, like other medieval writers such as Chaucer, he cited his source in order to hide the fact that he was adding something new. The two tales from the *Morte Darthur* discussed in this dissertation reflect the contrast between translation and adaptation in the Middle Ages. However, the fact that they appear together in the same collection and were written by the same author is revealing. The contrast between them illustrates that translation was a fluid concept to the medieval author. To have a close translation and an adaptation as part of a series of texts is evidence that there were no expectations as regards a translation. Malory shows himself to be a capable translator who understood his sources well. He made, however, authorial decisions to translate or adapt as he deemed appropriate.

The examples in this dissertation include both well-known and lesser-studied romances. The romances that have not received much scholarly attention, such as the English Prose *Merlin* and the stanzaic *Morte*, are nevertheless important in the broader scheme of Arthurian romance. The romances, whether they are adaptation or translations of other texts, demonstrate the interconnectivity and transference of texts and manuscripts between France and England between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. The translation and adaptation of the French romances popularized the genre in England, but one English version, Malory's, largely accounts for the survival of the legend in popular culture today. If it were not for the more positive imagining of Arthur by the English writers, derived in large part from the heroic Arthur found in English chronicles, we may have a very different conception of the king.

Although there may be a distinction between a translation and an adaptation, they are not, as I hope to have demonstrated, mutually exclusive approaches. Instead, they are terms that bracket a variety of types of translation. We see today a broadening of perspective regarding types of translation and new ways to think about translation. This is also relevant to the study of literary translation as it took place in the past. Consequently, translation as a literary art will strengthen and we may continue to find new insights into literature through innovative approaches to literary translation. Medieval literature, in particular, offers new opportunities for scholarship as we evaluate, and re-evaluate, how writers adapted and translated texts during this period.

This dissertation offers a view of medieval translation as a broad idea. Thus, medieval translation shares much in common with the field of modern translation theory. Translators and translation theorists are evolving in their understanding of translation as a literary art. There are many types of translation, and the value that we, as literary critics, may assign to translations should adjust accordingly. Can adaptation be regarded as a type of translation? Certainly. Can we make a distinction between a translation and an adaptation? Again, the answer is yes. It is important for both translation theorists and literary scholars to continue to study the variety in translation and explore the many approaches to translation and adaptation. Translation is a sophisticated literary art and, thus, it should not be relegated to the status of a sub-genre of literature. The medieval writers featured in this dissertation did not view their work as simply translations of earlier stories. Indeed some of the translations, with Malory as a prime example, have surpassed their sources in the scholarly attention that they received. Medieval translation is a spiritual ally of modern translation theory. Medieval writers did not view translation merely in terms of equivalence and nor do modern theorists. Instead, the translation of texts, both modern and medieval, can be attributed to a host of authorial decisions that may seek to replicate the source, or to change it.

The other thought that may appear in light of this multifarious view of translation is the implication for modern translations of medieval texts. I do not address this issue in the main body of the dissertation, yet it is germane to consider how modern translators may translate medieval literature. For the purposes of scholarship, we may expect and require accurate and equivalent translations of medieval texts. Yet that does not preclude the possibility of translations that adapt the source to make them appealing to new audiences. Seamus Heaney is a good example of a translator who has provided a translation of *Beowulf* that may be considered to be an adaptation. Authors and translators, such as Heaney, have the knowledge and desire to bring new life to dead languages and literary traditions. Adaptation can serve as a means to present literature that has both the barrier of language and history between author and audience. Just as medieval English writers brought French Arthurian romances to English audiences in a variety of ways, we may see increasing numbers of modern translators taking the opportunity to do likewise.

Arthurian Romance is a fertile genre for continued research into medieval translation. The Arthurian legend, as indicated in these chapters, was rewritten and redefined by authors linguistically and thematically over several hundred years. My study remains, however, limited in relation to the many other examples of translation and adaptation of Arthurian Romance in the Middle Ages and between many other languages. Indeed, the synthesis of translation theory and textual analysis can provide further insights into how medieval writers interpreted a text and their use of sources. This approach will yield additional knowledge for both lesser known romances and those that have received more scholarly attention. French and English Arthurian romances are not the only literary traditions that may benefit from a more fluid definition of translation. Arthurian romances have been, and continue to be, adapted and translated around the world, and we may yet see a greater appreciation for translations and adaptations as a literary art and their contributions to development of the genre.

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